

Department of Planning & Community Development
Report to Town Council

February 10th, 2026

Good evening, Members of Town Council,

Here are some updates on key long-term initiatives we are actively working towards as of February 4th, 2026.

Downtown Revitalization

- We should receive the draft Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan from RVARC this week. Once received, we will send out to Council and the Planning Commission for review.
- Branding project – The branding unveiling event was rescheduled for February 11th from 5 to 6pm at the Historic Masonic Theatre.
- We have received a \$75,000 Planning Grant from DHCD to do a downtown master plan. Chuck and I are meeting with Kelly Charapich, Planning Grants Specialist, on February 5th for an onboarding session. We will soon be issuing an RFP for this project.
- Business Spotlights: Our first Business Spotlight was the Alleghany Highland Arts & Crafts Center. The Spotlight was posted on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, our website under 'Business Directory', and will be advertised by the Alleghany Journal and Virginian Review.

Housing Development & Revitalization

- We received the final Housing Needs Assessment/Local Market Assessment report by S. Patz & Associates, which was funded by Virginia Housing. This is now publicly available on our website and we are working on closing out the grant.
- The Town of Clifton Forge is officially a part of the Housing Adopters Program under the Housing Supply Accelerator Challenge, an initiative of National League of Cities and the American Planning Association. Our local team roster includes representatives from town staff, town residents, Alleghany County, and the City of Covington.

Lodging Needs Assessments

- SERCAP expects to have their final report submitted this week.

Building & Site Redevelopment

- Jefferson School: This past month, we received a \$50,000 Brownfields Remediation grant for the Jefferson School. This upcoming month, we are submitting a pre-application for

DHR's BIPOC grant (final grant due in July, amount TBD), and a grant to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for \$150,000.

- 608 Main Street: Stabilization work has been slightly delayed due to weather but should be finished in February. This stabilization work has been entirely grant-funded.
- Yard Office Building: We have signed a Purchase Agreement for the Yard Office building and are officially in the due diligence period. We are awaiting required paperwork from Amtrak that is required prior to closing. The EDA voted to hire Zack Miller with VCDC Development Works to serve as a development advisor for the project.
- The BAD Buildings Inventory team is scheduled to hold a community meeting on March 19th to share their findings.

Transportation Efforts

- We received a grant from the Virginia Department of Health for \$8,000 to participate in the Virginia Walkability Action Institute. This project kicked off with a multi-day work session in Richmond the week of Feb. 19th. We are using these funds to study pedestrian safety opportunities between the Mountain View Apartments/Clifton Woods Apartments and the Kroger/CVS shopping center.
 - Our regional team is looking into additional grant opportunities to support this project.
- We worked with RVARC and regional partners to submit a grant to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for a microtransit feasibility study for the Alleghany Highlands.
- We have submitted an application to RVARC for an updated Bike and Pedestrian Plan. If awarded, this would be conducted in FY27.

Other Grants Updates

- DCR grant in the amount of \$148,400.00 for a restroom facility at the Smith Creek: environmental and historical reviews in progress. We should begin construction late spring or early summer.

Misc.

- I am participating in the 2026 cohort of the Community Investment Training program, offered by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's Rural Investment Collaborative. The program will run through June.
- I have been invited to speak at the 2026 National Community Investment Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in March. This conference is hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank.

- Tree plantings at the Smith Creek/Sensory Trail, Booker T. Washington Park, Memorial Park, Reservoir Dam area, and the Reservoir Sediment Pond are scheduled for March. These are entirely grant funded through the Virginia Department of Forestry.
- We are working with Olde Town Covington, Clifton Forge Main Street, Alleghany County, and the City of Covington on plans for a Restaurant Week to be held Feb. 20 – March 1.

Respectfully Submitted,

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