



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

January 13th, 2026

Good evening, Members of Town Council,

Here are some updates on key long-term initiatives we are actively working towards as of January 7th, 2025.

Downtown Revitalization

- The Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan, facilitated by RVARC, is underway. We expect to have a draft for staff, Council, and Planning Commission review in early February.
- Branding project – The branding unveiling event is scheduled for January 28th from 5 to 6pm at the Historic Masonic Theatre. This will include a brief presentation followed by a celebration event with cake and giveaways. We hope to see you there!
- We submitted a grant on August 20th to DHCD for a downtown master plan. We are still awaiting the decision. According to my most recent communication with the grants specialists in December, the planning grant applications are currently going through the briefing process in the Governor’s Office.
- Business Spotlights: We have sent letters to brick-and-mortar businesses in town to invite them to participate in the business spotlight program. So far, we have nine businesses signed up.
- We sent out a survey to downtown business owners to gather their opinions on downtown seating options. To date, we have not received any responses yet.

Housing Development & Revitalization

- Housing Needs Assessment/Local Market Assessment project (funded by Virginia Housing). S. Patz & Associates sent us a draft report in December and we requested a few minor changes. We expect the final report to be publicly available soon.
- 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 a draft report ready in the next month.

Building & Site Redevelopment

- Jefferson School: We received a \$1M grant from Virginia Housing from their Workforce Development Program! Additionally, we are awaiting decision on a \$228,530 Brownfields Remediation grant and plan to resubmit for a BIPOC grant when it reopens in February.
- 608 Main Street: Stabilization work is in progress and should be wrapped up this month. 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 is still in progress. We received preliminary results in December.

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.

Misc.

- I was recently accepted into the 2026 cohort of the Community Investment Training program, offered by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's Rural Investment Collaborative. The program began this month (January) and will run through June.
- I have been invited to speak at the 2026 National Community Investment Conference in Pheonix, Arizona, in March. This conference is hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank.
- We are working with Tom Saxton, Forester & Restoration Ecologist, who secured funding for us to establish 1.4 acres of urban forest or forested riparian buffer in Clifton Forge across five sites: Smith Creek/Sensory Trail, Booker T. Washington Park, Memorial Park, Reservoir Dam area, and the Reservoir Sediment Pond (see attached document). If we move forward, these plantings would occur in March. They would be entirely grant-funded.

Respectfully Submitted,

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