Community & Economic Development

Christiansburg recognizes the fundamental connection between economic development in the community and quality of life. New commercial and industrial development, redevelopment, tourism, regional cooperation and partnerships, and workforce development are all vital to maintain service provision and improve the community. Economic development increases the tax base which allows for enhanced service provision and a high standard of living. Christiansburg's economy is closely linked with the surrounding New River Valley through cross-employment and cross-residency. Christiansburg must implement a sustainable economic development plan that values diverse economic sources.

According to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), the largest employers in Christiansburg include diverse fields such as government, service, retail, and industrial. This range suggests the Town is relatively insulated from economic dips within specific industry types. Specific goals and strategies which address regional cooperation and partnerships, the downtowns, the regional business centers, commercial development, industrial development, tourism, and workforce development emphasize the importance of maintaining and cultivating this diverse economic base.

While economic development builds physical wealth, community development focuses on enhancing the social and cultural wealth of the community. The development and eventual realization of collective community goals is fundamental to this enrichment process. While outcomes from this process are often immeasurable, successful community development enhances the community identity and establishes a distinct sense of place. In order to create more measurable outcomes, Town Council established the Vision 2020 which reflects the Town's desired identity.

Primary Community & Economic Development Goal

Develop a viable economic development approach that provides diverse and sustainable employment opportunities; maintains the Town's revenue base; and improves quality of life for all Town residents. Enhance the identity of the Town through historic preservation, aesthetic and visual continuity, and strong neighborhoods.

Regional Cooperation and Partnerships

The Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, housed at the Montgomery County Government Center, is the primary contact for economic development for all of Montgomery County. The Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the quality of life throughout Montgomery County by encouraging positive economic growth that creates meaningful career opportunities for county residents, expands the commercial tax base to support the delivery of vital public services and protects our enviable quality of life. This department markets the Falling Branch Corporate Park within Town limits.

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber), located at 1520 North Franklin Street, serves Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County. The Chamber has over 600 members and is responsible for the promotion of the service area and members to prospective and existing businesses, visitors, and residents. The Chamber exists to promote and

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develop a positive environment for the operation and growth of business in Montgomery County and the New River Valley.

The New River Valley Economic Development Alliance (EDA) is a private-public partnership created to strengthen the economy of the New River Valley by recruiting new businesses to the region. The EDA's mission is to market the New River Valley, to foster job creation, to facilitate new investment, and to nurture and improve quality of life in the Valley.

The New River Valley Development Corporation (NRVDC), located at the New River Valley Business Center, is comprised of representatives from the Counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski, the Towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Pulaski, and the City of Radford. The NRVDC exists to grow businesses and jobs through the provision of business assistance. The NRVDC provides incubator and multi-tenant facilities at the New River Valley Business Center, financial assistance through management of the New River Valley Revolving Loan Fund, and information and referral services. The New River Valley Business Center is a 54,000 square foot incubator and regional office facility that offers tenants shared meeting spaces, shipping and receiving, and photocopying and faxing services.

Virginia's First Regional Industrial Facility Authority (VFRIFA), comprised of 13 jurisdictions including Christiansburg, exists to enhance the economic base for the members by developing, owning and operating one or more facilities on a cooperative basis. VFRIFA is currently pursuing the development of the approximately 1,000-acre New River Valley Commerce Park adjacent to the New River Valley Airport.

Christiansburg also has representatives on the Montgomery Regional Economic Development Corporation (MREDC) which acts in an advisory capacity to encourage existing business and industry to expand and solicit new business and industry for the County. MREDC's goals are to increase jobs and payrolls, decrease taxes, and increase the standard of living for residents.

The Montgomery-Blacksburg-Christiansburg (MBC) Development Corporation is certified by the State Corporation Commission as a not-for-profit community development corporation. The MBC exists to enhance and broaden the employment base in Montgomery County by providing small business with low interest loans not available from conventional sources. The MBC seeks to fund small business needs where a financial supplement may be needed to bridge the gap between private investment and traditional borrowing and where capital for a project is required to facilitate the participation of others.

The Tourism Council is a joint cooperative between Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Montgomery County.

Regional Cooperation and Partnerships Goal
Support regional cooperation and economic development partnerships as essential to achieving a diversified regional economy that will be sustainable for the long term.

Implementation Strategies

- Continue to participate in regional economic development activities including the Chamber, EDA, NRVDC, VFRIFA, MREDC, MBC, and Tourism Council.

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- Continue to participate in other regional partnerships that shape future economic development including the New River Valley Airport Commission, Virginia Tech-Montgomery Regional Airport Authority, Blacksburg-Christiansburg-VPI Water Authority, and the Montgomery Regional Solid Waste Authority.
- Recognize the need to address large regional opportunities and challenges on a regional basis.

Downtowns
Christiansburg is unique in that it contains two separate downtown areas influenced by the historic centers of Christiansburg and Cambria. These downtown areas are characterized by traditional development patterns with reduced setbacks, pedestrian scale and orientation, and mixed use structures. Both downtowns also include local, state, and national historic districts which can aid in funding revitalization efforts. The downtown centers can support mixed land uses including employment providers, retail and entertainment opportunities, public activity spaces, and residential options to provide 24 hour footprints.

Downtowns Goal
Promote Live/Work/Play/Shop downtowns focused on the historic centers of Christiansburg and Cambria.

Implementation Strategies

- Support renovation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings within the downtowns.
    - When appropriate, provide flexibility in Town Codes within the historic centers.
- Support pedestrian accessibility between downtown destinations with parking to be provided primarily around the periphery of the downtown.
    - When appropriate, provide flexibility in Town Codes for parking within the downtowns.
    - Discourage the demolition of historic buildings for new parking lots.
- Study the expansion of established streetscape practices and designs (e.g. signage, landscaping, lighting, etc.) beyond Franklin and Main Streets.
- Encourage upper floor housing within the downtowns as a means of increasing night-time activity within the historic centers.
- Support special events, such as Wilderness Trail Festival, that showcase the historic downtowns and contribute to the overall quality of life.

Commercial and Industrial Development
Commercial development in Christiansburg includes a regional retail hub surrounding the Peppers Ferry Road/North Franklin Street intersection and a regional automotive center along eastern Roanoke Street. In addition to these regional business centers, commercial development is located along the North Franklin Street corridor, Roanoke Street corridor, Radford Street corridor, and in the two downtown areas. Maintaining the regional commercial hubs and focusing on redevelopment of existing underutilized commercial property is a priority for economic development in Christiansburg.

Industrial development in Christiansburg is concentrated in two industrial parks within Town. Additional large-scale industrial sites pocketed throughout the Town include Chandler Concrete,

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Corning, and Hubbell Lighting with smaller sites located along Scattergood Drive NW and at the Roanoke Street/Depot Street NE intersection. The Town developed the 109-acre Christiansburg Industrial Park, located less than a mile from Interstate 81. With the exception of two stormwater management parcels owned by the Town, all lots within the park have been sold for industrial development. The Industrial Development Authority of Montgomery County developed the 175-acre Falling Branch Corporate Park, located off Parkway Drive SE within Town limits. The park is served by Town water and sewer and is adjacent to Interstate 81. Lots of varying sizes are currently available for development within the park. Additional industrial and business parks serving the area include the Blacksburg Industrial Park, Elliston-Lafayette Industrial Park, New River Valley Commerce Park, and the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center.

Commercial Development Goal

Promote both the development of commercial centers as opposed to strip development and the redevelopment of aging and underperforming shopping centers and strip commercial areas into mixed use developments. Support two regionally scaled business centers within the Town: the regional retail center and the regional automotive center.

Implementation Strategies

- Diversify the Town tax base and create a positive, welcoming image of the Town through the commercial development within the regional business hubs.
- Facilitate multi-modal connections (vehicular, transit and pedestrian) of commercial areas within the regional retail area.
- Create a visually appealing gateway business center along East Roanoke Street that draws both local customers and those from the larger region and beyond.
- Support the clustering of commercial centers and residential centers along major highways.
    - Prevent the development of adjacent conflicting land uses and reduce visual clutter.
- Provide incentives to encourage the redevelopment of older shopping centers and strip commercial areas into more intensive, mixed use developments.
- Provide incentives to encourage new mixed use developments that effectively combine housing, office, retail, dining and entertainment uses and reduce vehicular traffic.
- Create equivalent incentives for new businesses to start and existing businesses to expand.

Industrial Development Goal

Continue the development of industrial parks in close proximity to Interstate-81 interchanges in order to accommodate major new employers.

Implementation Strategies

- Support expansion of the Falling Branch Industrial Park and the Parkway Drive Extension to connect existing Parkway Drive to South Franklin Street.

Tourism

Tourism is a key element in the regional economy. According to *The Economic Impact of Domestic Travel on Virginia Counties 2011* published by the Virginia Tourism Corporation,

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domestic travel generated over $121 million in expenditures, over $22 million in payroll, and 1,090 jobs in Montgomery County in 2011. This created over $5 million in state tax receipts and $2 million in local tax receipts. Fixed attractions in Christiansburg and the region include historic resources, regional retail opportunities, and natural resources. In addition, dynamic events throughout the region, in the form of recreational tournaments, university events, and festivals, attract countless visitors. Christiansburg provides retail shopping and entertainment, hospitality, and food service for tourists. A sizable number of eating and lodging establishments are available in Town due to its central location in the New River Valley and its proximity to Interstate-81.

Events and Attractions
Since its inception in 1973, the annual Wilderness Trail Festival, hosted by the Kiwanis Club of Christiansburg, celebrates the Town's pioneer heritage and features live music, craft sales, food vendors, informational booths, and a classic car show. The Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center sponsors Heritage Day featuring music, food, and activities at their downtown location. The Museum also holds several art and history exhibits and events throughout the year. Downtown Cambria hosts the Depot Day Festival celebrating Cambria's railroad heritage with live music, food, and activities. 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network is a non-profit organization created to promote sustainable economic development of the region's communities by assisting local artisans with marketing, education, and entrepreneurial opportunities. The organization has developed 15 Artisan Trails and partners with the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission, Heartwood (Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway), and the Crooked Road (Virginia's Heritage Music Trail).

The Town hosts numerous events including several parades and an Independence Day celebration. The Aquatics Department coordinates a number of competitive events on the local, state, and national level at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center. The Parks and Recreation Department also hosts various local, state, and national baseball and softball tournaments at the Harkrader Sports Complex.

Tourism Goal
Support tourism as an economic development opportunity that generates tax revenues through visitor expenditures without heavy demands on Town's services.

Implementation Strategies

- Utilize designated meals tax revenues to fund tourism initiatives.
- Develop tourism initiatives directed at out-of-town visitors to the Aquatic Center and the Harkrader Sports Complex.
- Continue to utilize wayfinding signs where appropriate to increase tourism.
- Continue to attract local, state, and national athletic and aquatic events to the community to further develop tourism and increase economic impact. See Parks and Recreation/Aquatics chapter.

Workforce Development
Workforce development is a critical component of economic development in Christiansburg. Workforce development helps keep young adults in the community, strengthens existing businesses, attracts new businesses, and improves the standard of living through increased skilled

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jobs. Employers need workforce development to stay competitive in a changing market, retain workers, increase productivity, and attractive prospective employees. Workers need workforce development to improve their skills, ensure long-term employability, and increase their standard of living.

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board (NRV/MR WIB) serves Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smythe, Wythe, and Washington Counties and the Cities of Bristol, Galax, and Radford. The NRV/MR WIB strives to increase the employment, retention, earnings and occupational skill attainment of participants. The NRV/MR WIB seeks to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the local area.

Montgomery County Public Schools, New River Community College, Radford University, and Virginia Tech and private organizations provide Christiansburg employers and workers with continuing education opportunities and workforce development programs.

Workforce Development Goal

Support the development of a local labor force that can succeed in the global market place.
Support the development of local businesses that can succeed in the global market place.

Implementation Strategies

- Support education and training programs offered by MCPS, NRCC, Radford University, Virginia Tech and private providers that meet the needs of Christiansburg's employers and enhance the skills of local employees.

Historic Preservation

Christiansburg was named in honor of Colonel William Christian, an early settler of the region, brother-in-law of Patrick Henry, one of the first justices of Fincastle County (which Montgomery County formed from), and a member of the Virginia Legislature. Originally a concentration of taverns and rest stops along the Great Wilderness Road (U.S. Route 11 today), the original 1.1-square mile Town was established on November 10, 1792 by the Virginia General Assembly and later incorporated on January 7, 1833. The Town of Cambria was consolidated into Christiansburg on December 31, 1965. For additional details on Christiansburg's history, please refer to the appendix. Some of the early buildings and sites from Christiansburg's rich history are preserved today. The following table identifies Christiansburg's historic sites as listed on the *Virginia Landmarks Register* and the *National Register of Historic Places*.

Christiansburg Historic Sites

DHR Inv. #	Common Name(s)/Site Description	Address	Original Construction	Original Use	Current Use
060-5053	Prehistoric and Historic Resources in Montgomery County	- -	- -	- -	- -
154-0001	East Main Street Historic District	- -	- -	- -	- -
154-0001-05	The Oaks/Major W.L. Pierce house	311 E. Main Street	1889	house	bed and breakfast
154-0003	Christiansburg Presbyterian Church	107 W. Main Street	1853	church	church
154-0007	Phlegar Building (formerly T.F. Sullivan's Law office in 1880)	4 S. Franklin Street	Early 19th c.	offices	Montgomery County Magistrate office
154-0010	South Franklin Street Historic District	- -	- -	- -	- -
154-0025	Barnes-Surface Motor Company	4 W. Main Street	1911	auto sales	antique store
154-0027	Christiansburg U.S. Post Office	2 E. Main Street	c. 1940	Post Office	Post Office
154-0043	Surface house	515 High Street, NE	3rd ¼ 19th c.?	House	house

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DHR Inv. #	Common Name(s)/Site Description	Address	Original Construction	Original Use	Current Use
154-0048	Cambria Historic District	- -	- -	- -	- -
154-0048-01	(old) Christiansburg (Cambria) Depot	610, 630 Depot Street, NE	1868-70	Depot	True Light Photography, offices, residence
154-5004	Hill School/(old) Christiansburg Industrial Institute / Schaeffer Memorial Baptist Church	570 High Street, NE / 580 High Street, NE	1883-85 / 1885 (church)	school / church	community center / church
154-5008	Edgar A. Long Building (Christiansburg Industrial Institute – second site)	140 Scattergood Drive, NW	1927	School	vacant (museum planned)
154-5025	Christiansburg Downtown Historic District	- -	- -	- -	- -

*Note: All entries are listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.
Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Christiansburg has four historic districts and a number of additional historic structures recognized by the *Virginia Landmarks Register* and the *National Register of Historic Places*.

Historic District Maps including structures

Historic Preservation Goal
Support, promote, and protect historic cultural resources within the community.

Implementation Strategies

- Support and promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures while maintaining historic character.
- Support the expansion and protection of the historic and cultural resources in the community to enhance the community identity and further develop tourism.
- Protect local cemeteries.
- Publicize and market the historic and cultural resources of the Town.

Community Character
Despite considerable development in recent years, Christiansburg is a diverse and unique place. In order for the Town to fully embody its motto, "Progressive small town living at its best", Town Council developed nine tenets represented in the Vision 2020. Christiansburg will be:

- everyone's hometown
- a retail, commerce, and tourist destination
- a town of well-informed and effectively engaged citizens
- a green community
- a clean, healthy, safe place to live
- a recreational, cultural, and entertainment mecca
- a model for effective land use
- a sound financial entity
- an interconnected community

In order to achieve these guiding principles, the community must recreate and strengthen Christiansburg's identity.

Community Character Goal

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Recreate and strengthen the community identity, improve aesthetics and visual continuity, and reinforce neighborhood character.

Implementation Strategies

- Improve Christiansburg's gateways by creating a distinct streetscape.
- Enhance the Town's core areas and develop visual continuity with uniform landscaping and streetscaping.
    - Reduce sign clutter with stricter enforcement of sign regulations.
    - Expand and maintain the flower boxes within Town.
- Create visual ties between neighborhoods that convey the Town brand and maintain distinct neighborhood characteristics.
- Work with residents and businesses to improve the overall aesthetics of the community.
- Preserve strengthen and reinforce the stability and diversity of neighborhoods to improve residential quality in Town.
- Ensure that new residential neighborhoods in Town are compatible and integrated with the existing community character.
- Create opportunities to assist new residents in learning about and connecting with the community.
- Support community building events and businesses.
    - Support the Christiansburg Farmers' Market.
    - Encourage community gardens.
    - Encourage and support events by partnering with civic organizations.

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