

Town of Mineral

Physical Improvements, and Implementation Plan July 27, 2010



Physical Improvements, and Implementation Plan

Prepared by the:

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Planning District Commission

Report Outline	
Physical Improvements Plan	
Defining the "Town to Be"	
Blight Removal/Prevention Program	
Ordinances	
Façade Improvement Program	
Demolition(Redevelopment)	
Public Improvements	
Existing Plans and Studies	
Recent Improvements	
Roadway Improvements	
Pedestrian Infrastructure	
Road Signage	
Street Amenities	
Parking	
Water and Sewer System	
Funding Sources	
Responsible Parties/Sequence of Implementation	
<p>Objectives of Physical Improvements/Implementation Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish the community's vision, or "Town to Be" - Outline the programs that will support the community vision - Inventory the individual projects that will realize the "Town to Be" - Identify the funding sources that will finance those programs and projects - Identify the sequence, costs and responsible parties that will implement the programs and projects listed in this plan 	

Physical Improvements/Implementation Plan

This report is the implementation piece to the Town of Mineral's application for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. It is a companion to several other plans and studies that are required as part of this grant. While those previous reports identified existing needs, data and public input, this document establishes the community's vision, referred to here as the "Town to Be." It also identifies the programs and projects that are required to bring this vision into reality. The elements of this plan are based on findings from the companion documents. The following is also a product of public input from public forums, community surveys and discussions with local stakeholders.

This document satisfies CDBG application requirements to complete a Physical Improvements Plan. It includes various infrastructure and public improvements, which focus on downtown revitalization. This includes recommendations on road design, sidewalks, lighting, bike lanes, parking and other street improvements. The plan also addresses public and commercial activities to be undertaken, as part of the envisioned "Town to Be." Finally, this report defines a sequence of local, regional, county and state directed/funded steps to be taken to achieve the plan, with the planning horizon of 2020.

Due to significant overlap, this document also functions as the Implementation Plan, a required subset of the Economic Restructuring Plan. To meet those grant obligations, this document serves as a multi-phase, multi-year strategy for achieving the "Town to Be." The following sections establish the framework for the Structural Repair and Blight Removal/Prevention Program and Façade Improvements Program. It provides graphics of the "Town to Be" and sets the priorities, sequencing, estimation of costs, responsible parties, and funding sources for each activity.






Defining the “Town to Be”

Before staff developed the infrastructure projects and program activities in this report, the primary task was establishing a defined vision for the Town’s future. This vision statement is referred to as the “Town to Be” and was based on comments from public forums, surveys, interviews with stakeholders and technical reports. The following statement is the foundation for the project recommendations that are listed in the subsequent pages. The “Town to Be” states that:

The Town of Mineral wishes to become a thriving community that maintains its historic appearance, while fostering business and residential growth. The Town wishes to create an attractive, engaging downtown that is safe, accessible and an integral part of the surrounding area. The Town wishes to be a destination and place where people live, work and visit.

The basic elements of this vision are to create a destination and to provide the needed resources to local residents and businesses, so they can reinvest in their properties and the overall community. Those efforts focus primarily on two parts of the CDBG Study Area, the Mineral Avenue and Louisa Avenue corridors. The priority for the Town’s efforts is Mineral Avenue, which serves as both the main gateway and center for Mineral. Most of the local businesses are located along this stretch, along with several of the area’s most historic homes. Mineral Avenue has the highest traffic counts in town, the greatest density and the most stable economy. The success of the entire community is closely linked with this corridor. Given the importance of Mineral Avenue, Louisa Avenue serves as the secondary priority. This corridor is still critical to the Town, which is why it is included in the CDBG Study Area. This stretch functions as a primary gateway into town and is home to many of the local landmarks, such as the Train Depot, Mineral School and Luck Field.

In order to establish Mineral Avenue as a destination, the first steps involve investments in the Town’s public spaces, primarily the streetscape. The “Town to Be” envisions Mineral Avenue with extensive, but incremental improvements. Starting with the roadway, this includes a landscaped median, bulb-outs, crosswalks, bike lanes, and clearly defined on-street parking. Along the edges of Mineral Avenue, the “Town to Be” will have additional sidewalks, refurbished curb-cuts, street benches, trash receptacles, new street lighting and plantings. Other investments include the relocation of utilities poles and repair to critical infrastructure, such as water and sewer facilities. The existing perception in the community is that Mineral serves as a pit-stop, as people drive to other places in the region. With these public investments, the goal is to establish Mineral as a competitive destination, where people want to visit, live, work and shop. Beyond these projects, the “Town to Be” includes the adjoining property and business owners, who will have access to resources that will help them reinvest in their storefronts and properties. This will provide local residents and businesses with the resources they need to be successful, but will also create an attractive street wall for Mineral Avenue. The following images depict this vision for the downtown corridor, which serves as the first priority for revitalizing the Town of Mineral.

Planning Concepts for Mineral Avenue – “Town to Be”	
Before	After
	
	

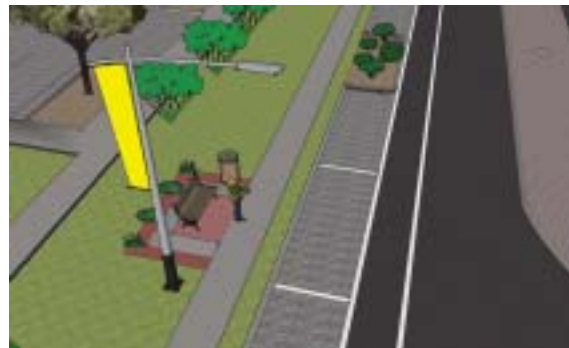
Typical Section of Mineral Avenue: This segment is located between Second and Third Streets, but serves as a typical treatment for Mineral Avenue. The before graphics depict the existing conditions along the street, while the after represents the “Town to Be.” These illustrations show the public investments in the street, along with infill development and private improvements. Those private efforts are important for creating the consistent street wall of storefronts, attractive buildings and activity in the community. All of these help establish Mineral as a unique destination.

Planning Concepts for Mineral Avenue – “Town to Be”	
Before	After
	

Typical Section of Mineral Avenue: This is the intersection at Mineral Avenue and First Street. The “Town to Be” image shows the addition of crosswalks and the improvements needed to make those crossings safe to pedestrians. While this is a specific location, these concepts apply to the entire downtown.

The second priority for revitalization is the Louisa Avenue area. While Mineral Avenue is the major access point into this community and home to a higher concentration of local businesses, the Louisa Avenue portion of the study area also holds significance. This is also a major gateway into Mineral and is flanked by local landmarks, recreational facilities and other places that are important to local citizens. The following images depict the vision for this part of the study area. The basic concepts are the same as those shown for Mineral Avenue.

Planning Concepts for Louisa Avenue – “Town to Be”



Louisa Avenue “Town to Be”: All of these images depict the envisioned “Town to Be” for the Louisa Avenue corridor. The top left graphic shows the intersection of Louisa Avenue and Lee Street. Improvements include new crosswalks, and bulb-outs. The top right illustrates typical street lights and furniture. The bottom left is a depiction of the Mineral School, which would be reused as either the farmer’s market or mixed use development, depending on the engineering report. The bottom right shows the corridor from above. The community’s vision consists of a road median, bike lanes and on-street parking.

The “Town to Be” vision is divided into three main goals, which are included below. The following also includes objectives for how to accomplish these goals. The project and program recommendations in this report serve as action items for these objectives.

Goal 1: Maintain the Town’s Historic Resources and Appearance

Throughout the planning process, it was apparent that the Town’s heritage was important to its residents. Mineral is home to a designated historic district, which is recognized by the State of Virginia. There were four objectives, drafted from previous reports and public comments, that could help reinforce those historic resources.

Objective 1A
Maintain Traditional Architecture:

Apply the Town’s existing architectural style to new construction, through design standards



Objective 1B
Preserve Existing Buildings:

Where feasible, preserve the Town’s historic buildings by providing incentives to property owners, which encourages renovation and property maintenance



Objective 1C
Preserve the Historic Train Depot:

Preserve and reuse the train depot as a trailhead for the Rails-to-Trails project planned for this area, connecting the Town of Mineral with Lake Anna



Objective 1D
Preserve the Mineral School Building:

Preserve the school building and reuse as the farmers’ market or mixed use (residential over commercial) development



Goal 2: Foster Business and Residential Development

Strengthening the local economy is a significant part of downtown revitalization. Without healthy business and residential growth, the Town would continue to experience decline. As a result, the project team identified three objectives for focusing resources and efforts.

Objective 2A
Focus on Infill:

Provide resources and incentives to develop the existing, vacant lots for infill and redevelopment



Objective 2B
Actively Recruit New Businesses:

Make efforts to attract more businesses to the Town: specifically a building supplier and specialty retail



Objective 2C
Provide resources to local businesses that helps them be successful:

Establish a program that offers low-to no-interest loans on façade improvements and other local business assistance



Objective 2D
Build on Success of the Farmers' Market:

Find a permanent location for the farmers' market and provide a covered structure



Goal 3: Create an Attractive, Engaging Downtown that is Safe, Accessible and an Integral Part of the Surrounding Area

There are several surrounding areas that serve as economic and service centers for the region. In order to maintain its competitive edge, the Town of Mineral must revitalize their downtown in a way that would create a unique destination. Rather than being a pass-through, Mineral needs to establish itself as a place where people would like to visit, live and work. The following seven objectives are intended to accomplish that goal.

Objective 3A
Build and Improve
Pedestrian Facilities:

Install needed sidewalks and
crosswalks along Mineral and Louisa
Avenue



Objective 3B
Build/Regulate/Incentivize
Better Sign Design:

Make efforts to improve the
aesthetic appearance, design and
function of signage throughout
downtown



Objective 3C
Pursue Roadway
Improvements:

Install medians and bike lanes along
Mineral and Louisa Avenues



Objective 3D
Install Traffic Calming:

Install measures that control the
speed of traffic and aid pedestrian
safety



Objective 3E
Shield Unattractive Utilities:

Relocate utility poles away from
Mineral Avenue



Objective 3F
Improve Street Lighting:

Install street lights that are effective at illuminating the roads and sidewalks, and that are aesthetically pleasing



Objective 3G
Eliminate Physical and Economic Blight:

Implement strategies for renovating or removing blighted buildings, along with redeveloping vacant and underutilized properties.



Blight Removal and Prevention Program

Under the Town's vision for the future, blight removal or mitigation is an integral part to all three goals. According to the State Code, blight means any area that is detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare because structures or improvements are dilapidated, or deteriorated or because such structures or improvements violate minimum health and safety standards. While the items of health and safety are relatively straightforward, public welfare has traditionally been open to interpretation. It is the welfare clause that acts as the legal justification for common government tools, such as historic districts and design guidelines. In the discussion of blight, the public welfare may include the impact on property values, aesthetics or economic development.

The 2010 Downtown Needs Assessment (a companion report to this document) included a detailed inventory of property conditions throughout the downtown business district, also known as the CDBG study area. That report studied 57 structures within this area. While there were several buildings in poor to very poor condition, the Needs Assessment classified 18 as blighted. This makes up about 32 percent of the study area. *(Refer to the Appendix of the Downtown Needs Assessment for a detailed description on the methodology for defining blight.)*

Blighted or dilapidated properties can cause significant problems for communities, particularly small towns. These properties give people the perception that the area is in decline, which can discourage potential pardons and investors from visiting the town. Consequently, communities with adequate resources tend to focus their efforts on mitigating or preventing blight. There are typically three different strategies for addressing blight. They include: (a) an ordinance that mandates certain property conditions; (b) a low- to no-interest loan program that provides property owners with the necessary means for making those improvements themselves; or (c) acquisition of blighted properties that are later demolished and/or redevelopment with public facilitation or funds. Each of these approaches has inherent costs and benefits, which a community must weigh carefully. Under the CDBG application and downtown revitalization efforts, the Town of Mineral will implement a combination of these approaches. In terms of implementing the "Town to Be", blight removal and prevention represents the main programmatic side of Mineral's efforts.

Ordinances

A common approach to maintaining property conditions is to create a local ordinance that mandates certain standards. The extent of those regulations is controlled by the community's governing body, such as the Town Council. Those local officials can also set the fines or other means for enforcing these standards. According to comments from a public forum, town residents favored this approach to implement some sort of maintenance regulations.

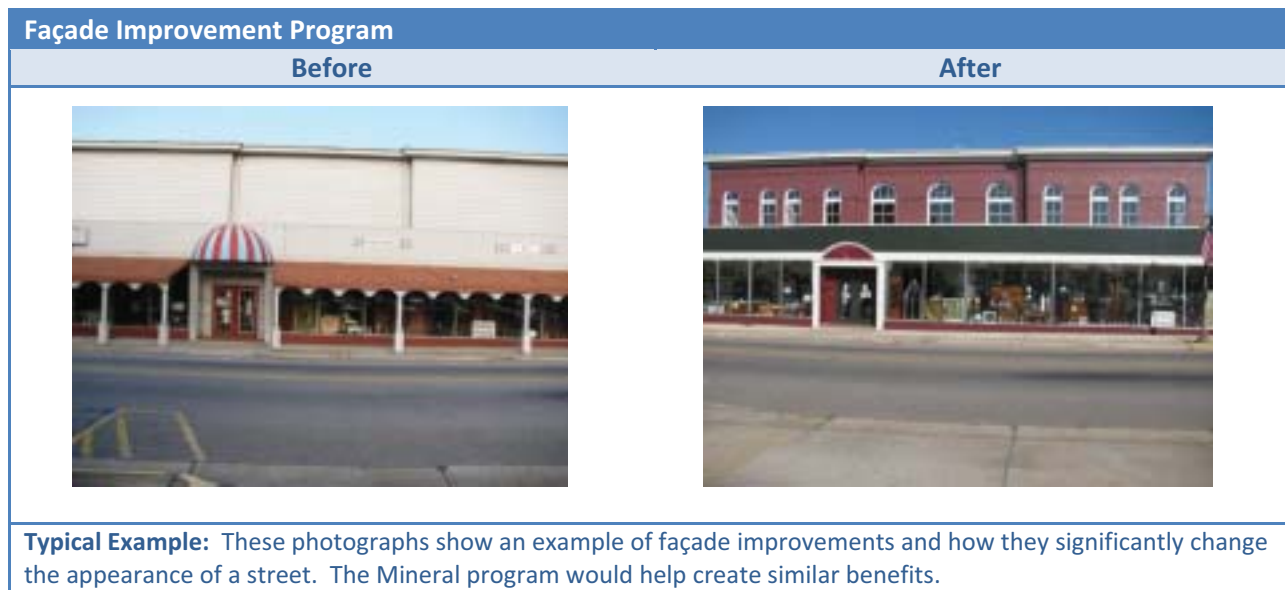
In the Town of Mineral, the extent of these maintenance standards would be minimal. The ordinance could require that lawns be cut, so that grass is no longer than a set length. An ordinance could also flag structures with severe paint problems, such as peeling or chipping. In terms of enforcement, the Town would assess fines for those that failed to maintain these basic standards. Any ordinance should also include a program that provides financial assistance to those that lack the means for making these improvements. Such a program would be financed by the CDBG construction grant.

While an ordinance is an effective option, the Town should be cautious with these ordinances. The standards should be carefully crafted and recognize the blurred line between refuse and personal

treasures. It should also consider the limited resources of many property owners in the area and the staff time required to inspect properties, write letters and work with property owners on compliance.

Façade Improvement Program

Mineral businesses can improve the appearance of their buildings by participating in the CDBG funded, Façade Improvement Program. The purpose of the program is to aid the Town’s economic redevelopment efforts by providing funds to business owners to refurbish their storefronts and building facades. These façade improvements are intended to enhance the appearance of the town by emphasizing Mineral’s historic character, and stimulate reinvestment in commercial properties, thus developing the economic viability within the project area.



The Town can elect to make CDBG funds available to business owners to make improvements under the Façade Improvement Program for up to \$15,000 for building façades, visible from the public right of way (such as rear, front, and side). Under this program, rental properties are considered a business, and rental property owners are encouraged to apply. Funds for businesses and rental properties are for exterior work only, and may include refurbishing cornices, gutters, downspouts, doors, windows, signs, exterior lighting, canopies, masonry cleaning & repair, and painting.

To apply for these funds, business owners within the study area may submit an application to the Town of Mineral for a 0% interest deferred loan. The loan is forgiven at a rate of 20% each year for five years, and is completely forgiven at the end of the five year term after completion of the improvements, provided certain conditions are met (see appendix for detailed loan application). The loans available under the Façade Improvement Program also require the building owner to match the loan amount dollar for dollar with expenditures on other exterior and/or interior building improvements. Improvements made prior to the grant application may be counted towards the matching fund amount.

Under the conditions of the Façade Improvement program, CDBG funds will provide additional design development assistance in the form of an architect for the Town’s façade improvements. This architect will oversee construction and will provide services such as site inspection, owner consultation, façade

improvement design and color rendering, preliminary cost estimate, work write-up for purposes of construction bidding, and may offer additional consultation to the building owner as needed.

This program will allow the Town to make cost-effective aesthetic improvements that will help to increase customer volume to local businesses. As noted earlier in the report, a significant amount of traffic passes through Mineral every day, but few drivers stop to make purchases. Improving Mineral’s visual appeal may attract some of these passers-by, and encourage people to stop and spend time in the downtown area.

Demolition/Redevelopment

The final element of the blight removal program is demolition and redevelopment. The Town has already been successful in removing blighted buildings that were in very poor condition or beyond repair. Recently, the Town purchased a property on Mineral Avenue and removed the dilapidated house to redevelop the site for the new Town Hall offices and DMV. There are other properties throughout the Town, where structures could be removed or redeveloped. The Town would purchase some of these properties outright. With improvements to the public right-of-way, there may be incentives for investors to purchase these properties and redevelop them with private funds and public facilitation.

Redevelopment – Town Hall Site



Mineral Town Hall: The Town recently purchased a blighted property for redevelopment. The plan is to build a new Town Hall and DMV offices on the site. A conceptual image of how the building could look is included on the right.

Summary of Blight Removal and Prevention Program:
 The Town of Mineral would use three strategies concurrently for addressing blight in the downtown area.

- Ordinance: mandating standards for minimum property conditions
- Façade Improvements Program: providing businesses with resources to reinvest in their storefronts and properties
- Demolition/Redevelopment: acquiring property that will later be demolished and/or redeveloped

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Responsible Parties/Sequence of Implementation	
Public investment may focus on infrastructure, such as roadways, sidewalks and utilities, but signage is another important consideration that defines a downtown.	
	

Public Improvements and Investments

The following sections discuss the projects that will implement the "Town to Be" vision. This represents the physical or capital investments that the Town makes in roadways, pedestrian facilities, bike lanes and other public infrastructure. The public space and streetscape is a critical part to the redevelopment of Mineral's downtown. Improving the street environment has a substantial effect on the appearance of the town and how people perceive the community. With strategic investments, Mineral will define itself as a distinct place, or destination, providing a unique experience to visitors and residents alike. As a result, these public investments are critical to encouraging businesses and property owners to reinvest in their own properties. Consequently, without these public improvements Mineral would continue to lose its competitive advantage over surrounding commercial areas.

Existing Plans and Studies

There are several existing plans and studies that address Mineral's downtown corridor. As the Town moves forward with the following projects and programs, it is important to consider all of the existing plans and studies for this area. Reviewing these materials serves two roles in this report: feeding additional data into the recommendations; and acknowledging projects that have already been identified by the County of Louisa or State.

Each year, the Virginia Department of Transportation holds a public hearing on the local level, allowing jurisdictions to submit their primary road priority list, or six-year plan. In Louisa County, the Louisa County Board of Supervisors designated eleven projects in this plan. Three of these may significantly influence the Town of Mineral and the recommendations in this report. The first of these local priorities is to study, design and construct a road system that will alleviate the traffic issues within the Town of Mineral, the Town of Louisa and the Route 22/208 corridor. The primary six-year plan calls for safety improvements at the intersection of Mineral Avenue and First Street, in the Town of Mineral. The six-year plan also includes a project to design and construct a bypass for the Town of Mineral. Aside from the six-year plan, Louisa County is pursuing grant opportunities to build a trail facility, connecting the Town of Mineral with the Lake Anna area. This trail will follow an historic rail bed and may qualify for "Rails to Trails" funding. The County is also working on a Transportation Plan, which calls for several new roadways within and around the Town. While those roads may increase access in this area, they may also divert traffic from the downtown.

On the state level, VDOT began an initiative that focuses on transportation in the rural areas of Virginia, called the Rural Long Range Plan (RLRP). These efforts fall under the Transportation and Mobility Planning Division (TMPD) of VDOT, which is working with other modal agencies to develop VTrans 2035, the Commonwealth's multimodal long range plan. The RLRP feeds into the highway element of the State's 2035 plan and creates regional transportation plans for the rural areas of the State. The Town of Mineral is included in these rural areas. In the draft RLRP, the plan lists information and recommendations for Mineral Avenue. According to that document, the downtown area will begin to experience unacceptable levels of traffic congestion (Level of Service E) by the year 2035. A major contributor to this congestion will be access on Mineral Avenue. To address this issue, the RLRP recommends widening the road to a 3-lane urban section. The third lane would function as a turn lane, which keeps left turns from interrupting thru traffic.

Summary of Existing Plans and Studies:

There are several existing plans and studies that may influence the Town of Mineral. While the exact consequences to Mineral are unknown at this time, the following is an inventory of those county and state level recommendations.

County:

Primary Six-Year Program:

- Design and construct a road system that will alleviate the traffic issues within the Town of Mineral, the Town of Louisa and the Route 22/208 corridor
- Install safety improvements at the intersection of Mineral Avenue and First Street, in the Town of Mineral
- Design and construct a bypass for the Town of Mineral

Rails to Trail Grant:

- Build a trail facility connecting the Town of Mineral with the Lake Anna area, using an historic rail bed

Comprehensive Plan:

- Construct roads that run parallel with Rte 22
- Construct new connections on the north and east side of town that allow travel around Mineral
- Add road connections with the Town of Mineral, on the east end of town

State:

Rural Long Range Plan:

- Forecasted Level of Service E (high traffic congestion) for Mineral Avenue by 2035
- Expand Mineral Avenue to a 3-Lane Urban Section

Recent Improvements and Local Efforts

Before and during the application for CDBG funds, the Town of Mineral has continued to dedicate significant time and money into beautifying the community. These projects represent a consistent investment in the Town and show how the block grant application is just another step in a more substantial initiative.

The Beautification Committee is the main group that is responsible for these beautification projects. This is a subcommittee of the Town Council, which coordinates local volunteers to plant, weed and care for several public spaces. The Committee has continued to invest in the community and build support for investing in downtown.

Summary of Recent Improvements and Local Efforts:

The Beautification Committee coordinated several efforts to improve the appearance of downtown. In 2009, the Town spent \$3,143 on beautification efforts. The Town also invested in other projects as well. Some of these projects included the following:

Public Spaces and Buildings:

- Repainting the Mineral Train Depot
- Designing and renovating Walnut Park

Plantings:

- Planting flowers in 2010 - \$2,574
- Constructing new flowerbed - \$528
- Planting flowers in 2009 - \$224

Banners:

- New banners - \$2,198
- Second purchase - \$2,207

Events:

- Town Hall Beautification festival - \$450
- Christmas lights - \$499
- Christmas tree ceremony - \$300

Roadway Improvements

Roadway improvements are a significant piece to the “Town to Be” and are critical to how people travel to and thru the Town. The specific roadway recommendations include new medians, traffic calming measures, bike lanes and on-street parking. The following tables review those projects.

Roadway Improvements: Medians and Traffic Calming	
Louisa Avenue	Mineral Avenue
	
<p>Medians: The “Town to Be” calls for medians along both Louisa and Mineral Avenue. On the east side of the study area, Louisa Avenue would have a median from First Street to the Mineral School building. It would be surfaced with either pavers or a stamped pattern that mimicked pavers, and would include several low bushes. Along Louisa Avenue, the median would be approximately 8 feet in width, with 6 inch curbs. On Mineral Avenue, there would be a slightly different design. The median would be 11 feet wide, with turn lanes at the intersection, which would allow for efficient turning movements and comply with VDOT recommendation to make this stretch a 3-Lane Urban Section. Along Mineral Avenue, the medians would extend three blocks, between Second and Fifth Streets. The remaining blocks lack the width to accommodate a full median and turn lane, or have other circumstances that create difficulties.</p> <p>Traffic Calming: On Louisa and Mineral Avenue, the main traffic calming measure is a bulb-out. This device narrows the roadway, encouraging motorists to slow down. The bulb-outs are designed to allow vehicles to still access the on-street parking easily. Many of the bulb-outs are located at an intersection or with crosswalks. Others are in mid-block locations, landscaped with low bushes. Medians also help to slow traffic, because they make the roadway appear to be narrower.</p> <p>Bike Lanes: Throughout the study area there is sufficient space to allow standard 4-foot bike lanes. These lanes would go the entire length of Louisa and Mineral Avenue.</p> <p>On-street Parking: While there is currently on-street parking along Louisa and Mineral Avenue, these areas are not marked. This plan recommends that these spaces be clearly marked and surfaced with pervious paving, to better manage storm water runoff. These markings would traverse the entire length of Mineral and Louisa Avenue.</p>	

Pedestrian Infrastructure

Pedestrians are important to any thriving downtown. As part of the “Town to Be” vision, there are several infrastructure improvements that would help improve the safety and ease of walking around the downtown area. These recommendations include new crosswalks, repaired/improved curb cuts, bulb-outs, new sidewalks, street lights and a bus stop.

Pedestrian Improvements

Crosswalks, curb cuts and bulb-outs: There are currently no crosswalks in the Town, which presents safety concerns for pedestrians. This plan recommends new crosswalks along Mineral and Louisa Avenue. The priority areas are the intersections of Mineral/First Street, Louisa Avenue/Lee Street, the new Town Hall site and Mineral Avenue/Fifth Street. There should also be improvements to deficient curb cuts, to allow for better access to wheelchairs. Bulb-outs will help decrease the distance that pedestrians must travel to cross the street and provide greater safety.



Additional Sidewalks and Street Lights: There is currently insufficient lighting in the downtown area of Mineral. This plan recommends new overhead lighting that would help illuminate the adjacent sidewalks and roadways, while minimizing light pollution on private property. This lighting would be compliant with dark-sky standards.



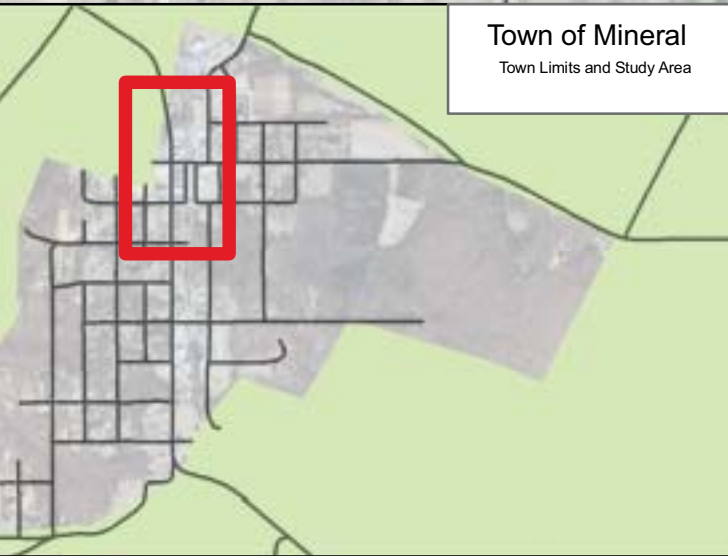
Bus Stop: JAUNT, the region’s para-transit provider, plans on installing a covered bus stop along Mineral Avenue. This stop would be located in front of the new Town Hall and could also serve as a stop on a proposed shuttle service, between the towns of Louisa and Mineral.



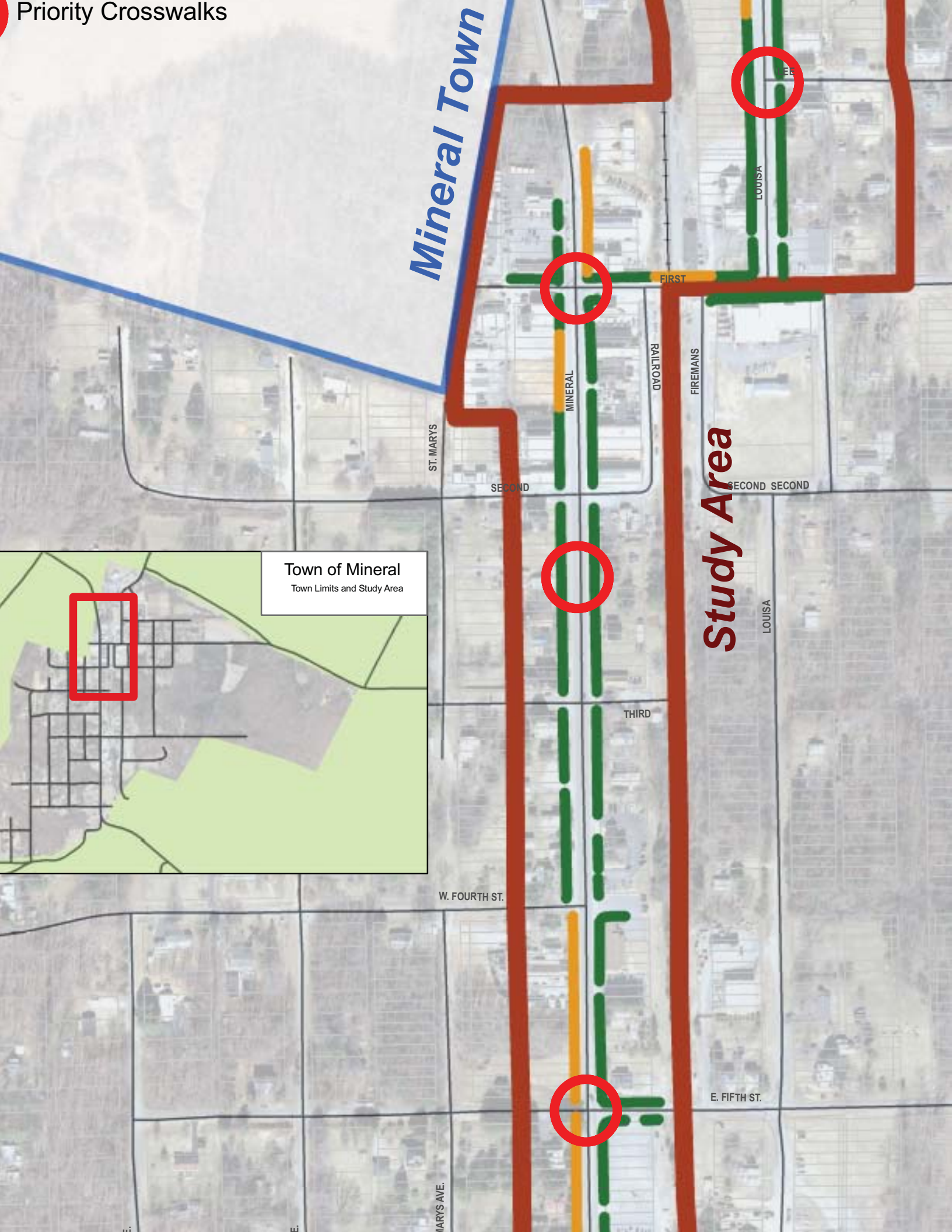
Mineral Town

Study Area

Town of Mineral
Town Limits and Study Area






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Road Signage

Signage is another critical aspect of the downtown recommendations. In terms of public projects, this plan recommends improvements and installation of new directional and street signs, along with civic banners. These recommendations are described in the following table.

Signage Improvements	
<p>Street Signs: There are approximately eight “street name” signs within the study area and eleven stop signs. All of these existing signs should be replaced with a design that communicates that downtown is a unique destination. The following image represents the type of sign that would be installed.</p>	
<p>Directional Signs: The Town would install three directories within the downtown study area. These signs would function as a “way finding” device, directing people to businesses and other destinations in the downtown area. The three signs would be located along Louisa Avenue, near the First Street/Mineral Avenue intersection and Fifth Street/Mineral intersection.</p>	
<p>Civic Banners: There are fifteen civic banners throughout the downtown area. The banners are anchored to utility poles, held in place by two horizontal bars. They read, “Welcome to Mineral Virginia.” There are dogwood flowers on the sign, with the dominant colors being either tan or purple. As part of the Marketing and Branding Plan, there may be a new slogan and symbol for the Town, which would go on new banners.</p>	

Street Amenities

There are several recommendations involving street amenities. These improvements are intended to focus primarily on beautification of the street, safety and pedestrian comfort. The following recommendations include plantings, relocated utility poles, trash containers and street furniture.

Street Amenity Improvements

Relocated Utilities and Additional Plantings: There are opportunities for plantings along both Mineral and Louisa Avenue. This includes low bushes in the road medians and bulb-outs. There is also room for new street trees on the west side of Mineral Avenue, between Second and Third Streets. Throughout the entire study area, utility poles would be relocated to behind the buildings that face Mineral and Louisa Avenue. This would further contribute to the beautification of downtown.



Trash Containers and Street Furniture: The street improvements along Mineral Avenue would include street benches and trash receptacles. There would be several of these fixtures between First and Fourth Streets.



Parking

Parking is another important element to downtown revitalization. The location and design of parking areas can significantly influence the economic vitality of a community. This section discusses potential parking improvements at Millers Market and the new Town Hall site.

Off-Street Parking Improvements

Millers Market: Millers Market is located on the southern end of Mineral Avenue, on the edge of the study area. As a gateway into town, this is a critical location. The current lot also serves as a largely underutilized resource and opportunity. Refurbishing this parking area could help encourage the development and interest in commercial properties along this portion of Mineral Avenue. It could also serve as a Park and Ride lot.



The new Town Hall: The Town of Mineral purchased a property on Mineral Avenue, between Second and Third Street, as the site of the new Town Hall and DMV offices. This parking lot would serve as another opportunity to supply parking to the downtown area.



Water and Sewer System

Water and sanitary sewer are fundamental parts of a community and a basic public service. The Town of Mineral has both a public water and sewer system, along with storm water infrastructure. While these services cover a majority of the Town, all three have significant deficiencies. In order to truly foster growth and reinvestment in the community, these issues must be corrected. The main challenge is the relatively high costs that are required to repair and replace these systems.

The Town has already invested considerable resources towards its water system, which it maintains. The system consists of a 60,000 gallon water tower that is fed by the Northeast Creek Reservoir and two wells located in the town limits. The reservoir lies between the two towns of Louisa and Mineral, south of the Route 22 corridor that connects those communities. In terms of the wells, one is located at Walton Park and the other is on 337 Spring Road. The Town treats the water at the wells, adjusting the Ph and adding chlorine, along with rust inhibitors. There are several basic maintenance issues with the water system, which are mostly a result of the aging infrastructure. To address these issues, the Town has contributed \$60,000 per year for a USDA loan program that is focused on making the needed repairs. Since 2005, approximately \$1.2 million has gone into improving Mineral's water system.

The sanitary sewer system presents the most significant issues for the Town. The main issues involve inflow and infiltration, also known as I/I. Several years ago, the Town operated the lagoon that treated this water, but Mineral handed those responsibilities over to the Louisa County Water Authority, who charges for this service. Due to I/I, Mineral's monthly costs can increase from \$2,000 to \$8,000 per month, depending on the amount of rain and storm water that enters the system. The Town hired Civil Consulting Group to assess these issues. Their report was completed in June 2010, where they provided several recommendations and preliminary cost estimates. According to their findings, the minimum costs to repair the system would be \$22,000. In 2007, an engineering firm (Dewberry) conducted a study of several sanitary sewer systems, contributing to the Louisa County Wastewater Treatment Plan. The study showed the potential for other potential deficiencies with the Town's system, such as exfiltration.

Inflow versus Infiltration:

Inflow is storm water that directly enters into the sanitary sewer lines, because of improper or illegal connections. Various sources contribute to the inflow, including footing/foundation drains, downspouts, outdoor basement stairwells, drains from driveways, groundwater/basement sump pumps, and even streams. That water should be entering the storm water sewer system or allowed to soak into the ground without entering the sanitary sewer system. Infiltration is groundwater that enters sanitary sewer systems through cracks and/or leaks in the sanitary sewer pipes. Cracks or leaks in sanitary sewer pipes or manholes may be caused by age related deterioration, loose joints, poor design, installation or maintenance errors, damage or root infiltration. Groundwater can enter these cracks or leaks wherever sanitary sewer systems lie beneath water tables or the soil above the sewer systems becomes saturated.

Mineral's storm water system is very limited. There are several drop inlets along Mineral and Louisa Avenue, though even these have areas with limited coverage. With the new Town Hall site, on the 200 block of Mineral Avenue, there are no surrounding facilities that can currently handle the runoff. This could result in a significant increase in constructions costs, since many new developments would need to install storm water measures themselves.

Funding Sources

The previous sections of this report discuss the various program and project recommendations for achieving the “Town to Be” vision. The next step is to identify the funding sources that will finance these actions. The following is an inventory of grants, public assistance and local activities that can serve to make these recommendations a reality.

CDBG

The Virginia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides funding to eligible units of local government to address critical community development needs, including housing, infrastructure, and economic development.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

HSIP is a federal program established in 2005 to help reduce traffic fatalities and injuries nationwide. HSIP disperses \$220 million a year to improve the safety of railway crossings and another \$90 million for the High Risk Rural Roads program. Bicycle and pedestrian safety grants are also awarded. VDOT administers these funds and accepts applications from localities. Preference is given to projects with low costs that target high crash sites.

Transportation Enhancement Grants (TEA)

The Transportation Enhancement Program is intended to encourage alternative transportation projects, such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, beautification projects, and environmental mitigation. Funds are administered through VDOT as a reimbursement to localities for up to 80% of eligible project costs.

VDOT Revenue Sharing Program

VDOT accepts applications from localities for additional state funds to match local funds for specific transportation projects. Construction, reconstruction, or improvement projects can be submitted by the local governing body for evaluation.

Virginia Recreational Trails Fund

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation administers federal FHWA funds set aside specifically for trail facilities. The fund is used for motorized or non-motorized trails, although the largest portion is allocated to multi-use trails. Up to 80% of the costs incurred by the locality for trail construction or maintenance are eligible for reimbursement by Virginia DCR. The primary purpose is to promote recreational trails, but there may be a secondary transportation function.

Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School program exists to “enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school.” Funding is distributed by VDOT for both a preliminary planning phase and a secondary implementation phase. Projects can be program-based or include infrastructure improvements.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants

The FTA manages several grant programs, many of which may be dispersed directly to local governments. Relevant programs may include but not be limited to Rural and Small Urban Areas, Bus and Bus Facilities, Rural Transit Assistance Programs, and New Freedom Programs for persons with disabilities. Application procedures are different for each grant.

Federal Earmark Funds

A Virginia Representative of the U.S legislature may be able to secure funds for a specific project within a congressional bill. Often funds for the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) program are secured through congressional earmarks.

Enterprise Zones

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Development and Revitalization office administers the Enterprise Zone program, guided by the Virginia Enterprise Zone Program Regulations. These regulations establish the criteria and procedures for the designation, amendment, and administration of enterprise zones along with qualification criteria for participating businesses. Virginia's Enterprise Zone program provides state and local incentives to businesses that invest and create jobs within Virginia's enterprise zones, which are located throughout the state.

USDA Grants

Program assistance is provided in many ways, including direct or guaranteed loans, grants, technical assistance, research and educational materials. The USDA offers services under their Business and Cooperative Grant Assistance, Housing and Community facilities grant assistance and Utility grants.

Special Taxing Districts

One type of assessment district that Mineral may consider is a Service District. These are common throughout the state and are created for a wide range of infrastructure improvements, including transportation. A county can create a district if it has the approval of over 50 percent of the property owners, and if these are the owners of at least half the property to be served. A tax rate can be set to fund construction, maintenance, and general upkeep of streets and roads. Usually the improvements stimulate private sector development. One of the challenges with a Service District is to set the tax rate high enough to pay for specific projects.

A second type of assessment district enables the use of a tool known as Tax Increment Financing. In this case, before development begins or improvements are made, the tax rate is frozen. The taxes continue to be paid but the difference between the original assessed tax and the tax on assessed value after the improvements (the increment) is deposited into a special account that is used to pay off the bonds that were sold to finance the improvements. This money can also be leveraged for more improvements in the district. To date, this tool has been used primarily in urban areas of Virginia. A risk of using TIF is that it diverts property tax revenue from other potential uses.

Community Development Authorities (CDA)

Community Development Authorities (CDAs) can be authorized and created by a local governing body upon petition by at least 51% of the land owners within the proposed CDA boundaries. CDAs are authorized and created for the purpose of providing public infrastructure associated with the development or redevelopment of an area. A CDA is empowered to issue tax-exempt bonds for many different kinds of infrastructure improvements, including roads.

Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

Louisa County or the Town of Mineral may choose to include projects in the 5-year CIP of the annual budget. Specified projects may be bonded if approved by voters through a referendum. Many assistance programs require local matching funds.

Proffers

Proffers are voluntary payments made by developers to localities to offset any expected adverse impacts from a proposed development. Proffers may include direct transportation improvements, or they can be cash proffers that may be used to improve transportation infrastructure of their own choosing. To be proffered, a project must be previously approved as part of a locality's Capital Improvement Plan. In fiscal year 2006 the largest share of revenue proffered by Virginia localities went for roads and other transportation improvements.

Volunteer Labor

Sometimes localities are able to leverage significant local volunteer labor for projects. Volunteer labor may sometimes be counted, depending on the program, toward a local match for assistance funds.

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan sets the direction for growth in the locality over a five-to-20-year period. The Plan is a critical step in identifying opportunities, providing legal justification for local activities and creating a detailed vision for the community.

Zoning Ordinance

While the comprehensive plan sets the vision for the community, the zoning ordinance is a major tool for implementing that vision. This is one of the most fundamental tools that are available to localities. By better managing the uses of land and layout of new development, the Town can fulfill several elements of the "Town to Be."

Subdivision Ordinance

Subdivision ordinances are just as important as zoning, but manage the division of land, along with the layout of roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure associated with subdivisions. With an effective ordinance, the Town can help shape the appearance and function of new developments, ensuring they are consistent with the surrounding areas and "Town to Be" vision.

Responsible Parties and Sequence of Implementation

With the funding options established, the final step is to identify who is responsible for each activity and the sequence of those programs and projects. The following spreadsheet provides that information, along with a budget for the recommendations included in this report. These projects and pre-design costs are divided into six categories: signage, street furniture, landscaping, utilities, facilities and hardscape. The sequencing is allocated into three groups: short-term (1 to 5 years), mid- (5 to 10 years) and long-term (over 10 years). Several of the funding sources include specific grants, such as the CDBG funds, but others would fall under separate programs, such as the establishment of an enterprise zone, community development authority or other local strategies. The preparation of these programs would require additional research, outreach and development. As a result, any potential programs are included under the "Town", in terms of funding source, since Mineral would be establishing those efforts.

Unit	Unit \$	Subtotal	Sequence	\$ Source	Responsibility
EA	\$475	\$4,750	Short-term	CDBG	Town, VDOT
EA	\$500	\$5,000	Short-term	CDBG	Town, VDOT
EA	\$1,000	\$3,000	Short-term	CDBG	Town, VDOT
EA	\$600	\$1,800	Short-term	CDBG	Town, VDOT
EA	\$500	\$6,000	Short-term	CDBG	Town, VDOT
EA	\$280	\$4,200	Short-term	CDBG	Town, VDOT
	Total:	\$24,750			

Unit	Unit \$	Subtotal	Sequence	\$ Source	Responsibility
EA	\$5,000	\$5,000	Mid-term	JAUNT Grant	JAUNT
EA	\$1,200	\$9,600	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town
EA	\$900	\$10,800	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town
EA	\$500	\$2,000	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town
EA	\$4,000	\$120,000	Long-term	CDBG, TEA, Town	Town
	Total:	\$147,400			

Unit	Unit \$	Subtotal	Sequence	\$ Source	Responsibility
EA	\$350	\$5,250	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town, VDOT
EA	\$30	\$1,500	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town, VDOT
SF	\$3	\$15,000	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town, VDOT
	Total:	\$21,750			

Unit	Unit \$	Subtotal	Sequence	\$ Source	Responsibility
EA	\$22,000	\$22,000	Mid-term	CDBG, Town	Town
EA	Under Review	U/R	Long-term	CDBG, TEA, Town	Town, VDOT, Utility Companies
	Total:	\$22,000			

Unit	Unit \$	Subtotal	Sequence	\$ Source	Responsibility
EA	Under Review	U/R	Short-term	Town, USDA	Town
EA	Under Review	U/R	Mid-term	Town, County, CSX	Town, County
EA	Under Review	U/R	Mid-term	Town, CDBG, USDA	Town
EA	Under Review	U/R	Long-term	Town	Town
	Total:	\$0			

Unit	Unit \$	Subtotal	Sequence	\$ Source	Responsibility
LF	\$30	\$40,650	Short-term	VDOT Grants	Town, VDOT
EA	\$80	\$1,120	Short-term	VDOT Grants	Town, VDOT
EA	Under Review	U/R	Short-term	VDOT Grants	Town, VDOT
EA	Under Review	U/R	Long-term	VDOT Grants	Town, VDOT
EA	\$10	\$2,000	Mid-term	VDOT Grants	Town, VDOT
LF	\$2	\$12,040	Mid-term	VDOT Grants	Town, VDOT
	Total:	\$55,810			

Total Cost
Total
Short-term:
Mid-term:
Long-term:

* Final costs pending