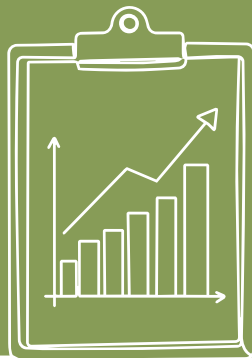


CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

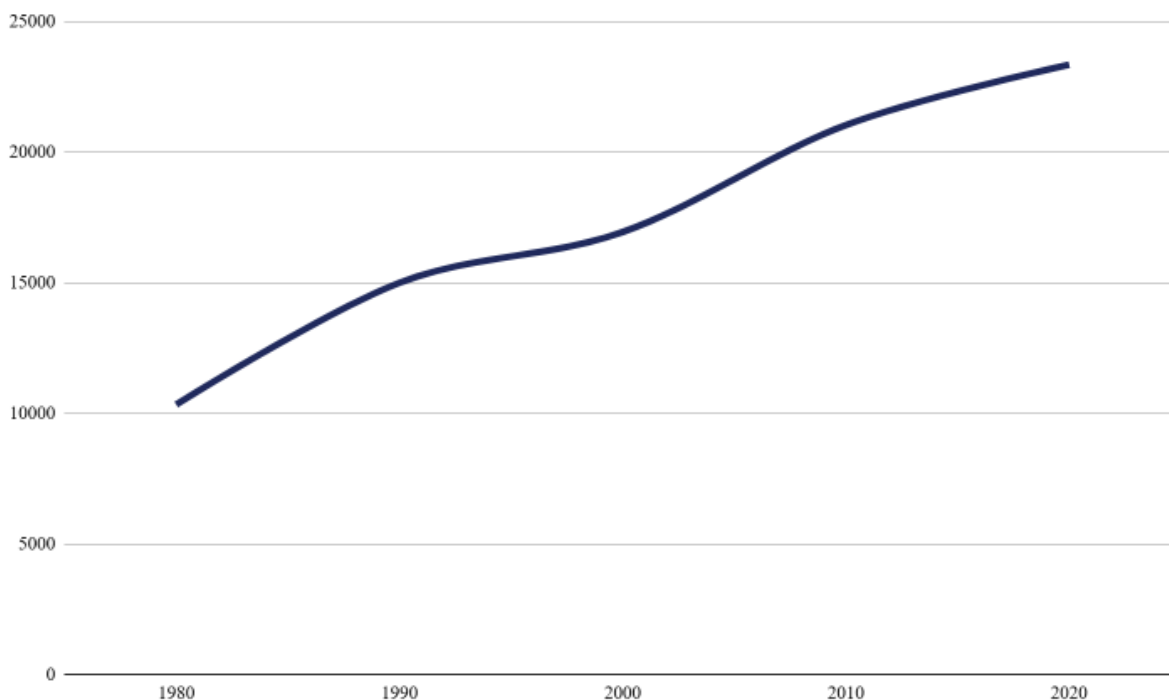
Community & Workforce Foundation

Christiansburg's economy is rooted in its role as a home for residents while also serving as a regional center for employment, shopping, services, public institutions, and connections across the New River Valley.

In **2024**, Christiansburg was home to **22,720 residents** (Source: ACS DP05, 2024). This reflects significant long-term growth from 10,345 residents in 1980, showing that the Town has more than doubled in population over the past several decades. **The Town's median age was 39.2 years old**, nearly the same as **Virginia's median age of 39** years old (Source: ACS DP05, 2024). Christiansburg includes young adults, families, established households, and older residents, giving the Town a broad community base that supports local businesses, public services, schools, recreation, and the workforce.



Decennial Population Growth



Source: U.S. Decennial Census

The Town also benefits from a well-educated population and proximity to higher education institutions. In 2024, **94.8% of Christiansburg residents age 25 and older had a high school diploma or higher**, and **44.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher**. Christiansburg is located near **Virginia Tech, Radford University, and New River Community College**, which support workforce training, entrepreneurship, professional employment, and employer partnerships. The Town benefits from graduates remaining in the area creating a next-generation workforce, and aims to continue retention efforts.

Recent income and labor force trends show steady gains. Per capita income increased from **\$25,437 in 2010 to \$34,622 in 2020**, and then to **\$42,322 in 2024**. Median household income increased from **\$63,372 in 2020 to \$77,147 in 2024**. Median earnings for workers increased from **\$38,526 in 2020 to \$45,739 in 2024**. In 2024, **Christiansburg's unemployment rate was 2.4%, below Virginia's 4.3%** unemployment rate in the same ACS 5-year dataset.

Christiansburg's households reflect a range of economic conditions. In 2024, the Town had **10,253 households**. Approximately **31.1% of households had incomes below \$50,000**, while approximately **36.4% had incomes of \$100,000 or more**. The Town's poverty rate was **11.7%**, with **2,635 residents** living below the poverty level. While poverty data can be influenced by local household composition, student populations, and other factors, these figures still point to the importance of career pathways, local business growth, and services that help residents connect to work.

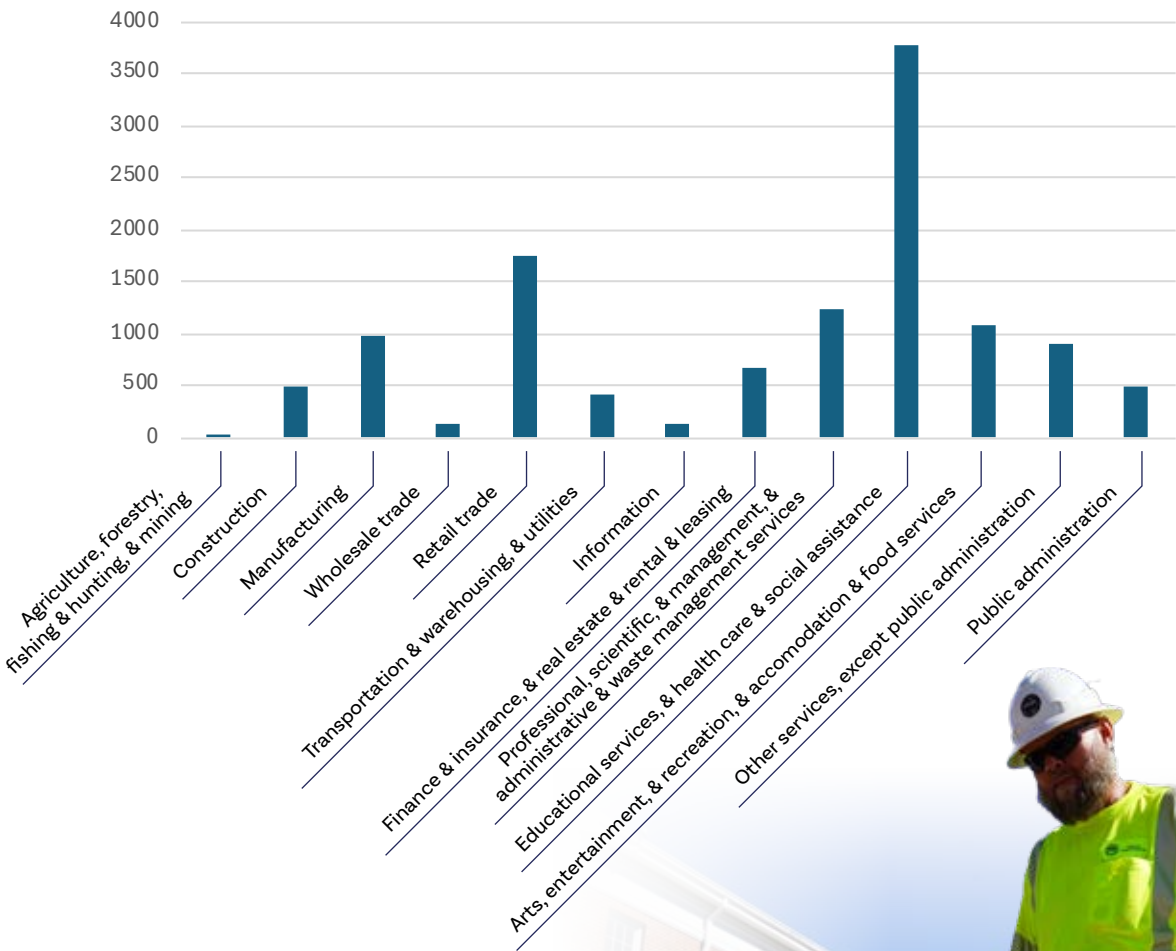


Employment & Regional Economic Role

Christiansburg residents work across a wide range of industries. In 2024, the largest employment category for Christiansburg residents was **educational services, health care, and social assistance**, with **3,785 workers**, representing **31.3%** of employed residents by industry. **Retail trade** was the second-largest category, with **1,749 workers**, or **14.5%**.

Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services accounted for **1,242 workers**, or **10.3%**. **Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services** accounted for **1,082 workers**, or **9.0%**, while **manufacturing** accounted for **978 workers**, or **8.1%**

Source: ACS DP03, 2024



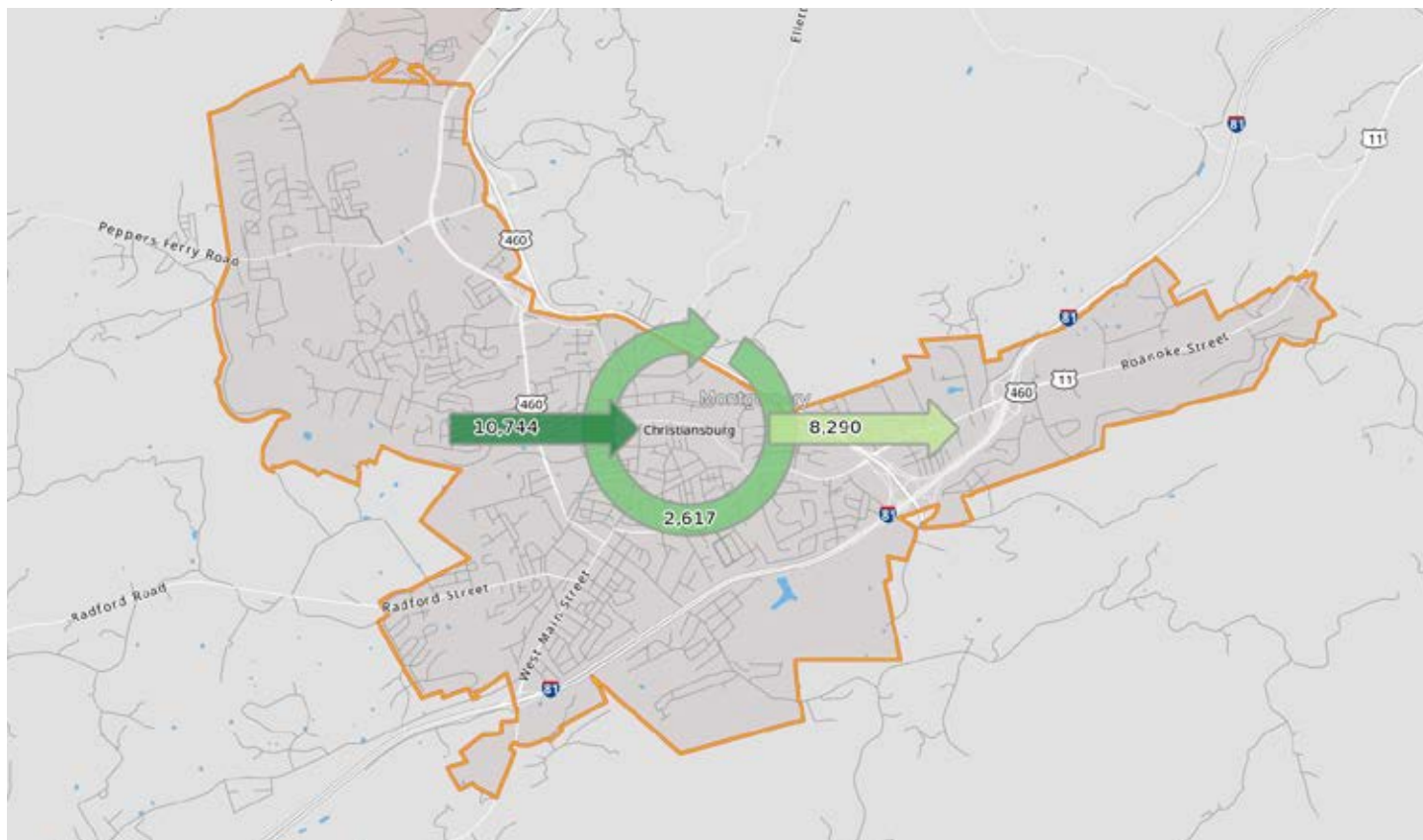
This mix gives Christiansburg a wider employment base than any single sector alone. It also reinforces the need to support regional employers, small businesses, workforce training, commercial reinvestment, and the long-term health of retail and service areas.

Christiansburg's regional role is shaped by its location as the Montgomery County seat and its **access to Interstate 81, U.S. Route 460, and U.S. Route 11**. These connections bring workers, customers, visitors, and residents from surrounding communities into Town for employment, shopping, dining, health care, lodging, recreation, public services, and daily needs.

Commuting data reinforces Christiansburg's role in the regional labor market. In 2023, there were 13,361 people employed in Christiansburg (Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap / LEHD Inflow-Outflow, 2023). Of those workers, 2,617 or 19.6%, both lived and worked in the Town, while 10,744, or 80.4%, lived outside the Town and commuted in for work.

Additionally, 8,290 Christiansburg residents worked outside the Town. (Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap / LEHD Inflow-Outflow, 2023). This pattern shows Christiansburg as both a job center and a home base for workers connected to opportunities across the New River Valley and surrounding areas.





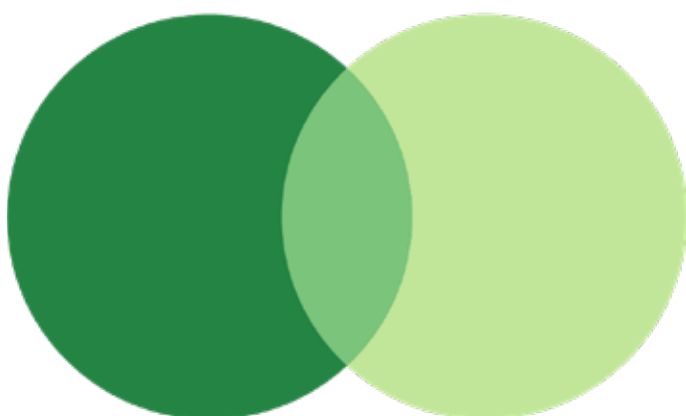
Note: Overlay arrows do not indicate directionality of worker flow between home and employment locations.

**Employed
in selection
area, live
outside**

**Employed
& live in
selection
area**

**Live in
selection area,
employed
outside**

Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2023 All workers



- 10,744 - Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- 8,290 - Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside
- 2,617 - Employed and Live in Selection Area



Major Employers & Business Base

Major employers show the range of activity located in Christiansburg. The Town includes employers and institutions in health care, manufacturing, retail, automotive services, public administration, education, nonprofit services, and workforce development. Because official largest-employer data is available at the county level but not consistently at the municipal level, this chapter does not present a ranked top-employers list. Instead, county-level employer data, ArcGIS Business Analyst, JobsEQ, and local review help identify major employment anchors with a clear Christiansburg presence.

Examples include **Carilion New River Valley Medical Center / Carilion Clinic, Current Lighting Inc., Corning Inc., Shelor Motor Mile, Walmart, Kroger, Target, Lowe's, The Home Depot, the Town of Christiansburg, Montgomery County offices and courts, Montgomery County Public Schools, New River Community College, and Community Housing Partners** (Source: *Virginia Works/QCEW county-level data, ArcGIS Business Analyst, JobsEQ, and local review*). These employers and institutions reinforce Christiansburg's role as a regional center for health care, manufacturing, retail, public services, education, and workforce activity.

Looking across Christiansburg's mix of industries, community input, and focus group discussion, another important part of the Town's economic identity comes into focus: Christiansburg is a regional center for retail and services while

also proudly supporting businesses that produce, repair, build, and support goods and infrastructure. Manufacturing, skilled trades, automotive services, construction, repair, and related technical businesses contribute to the local economy and create ongoing demand for workforce training, apprenticeships, and career pathways.

Community input reinforced that residents want Christiansburg to continue growing as a place with more dining, entertainment, local businesses, cultural activity, and destinations that feel distinct to the Town. Retail and services are especially important to Christiansburg's role as a regional destination. People from surrounding communities come to Town for shopping, dining, health-related services, lodging, recreation, and daily needs. This activity supports local revenue and provides access to goods and services that benefit the larger region. Stronger dining, entertainment, local business activity, cultural programming, and destination development can help Christiansburg build on that role.

Christiansburg's next step is to build from this mix rather than rely on one type of growth. The Town should continue supporting retail and service activity while also retaining existing employers, helping businesses expand, supporting sectors that fit local strengths, and maintaining the infrastructure needed for private investment. Health care, manufacturing, technology, professional services, retail, hospitality, and trade-related businesses each have a role in the local economy.



Reinvestment, Corridors, & Place-Based Development

Input from the planning process pointed to a strong interest in reinvestment, mixed-use redevelopment, walkability, and stronger connections between the Town's commercial areas and community destinations. Commercial corridors and employment areas hold much of the Town's business activity. They support employment, shopping, services, lodging, restaurants, and investment, while also shaping first impressions of Christiansburg. For residents, these corridors are part of daily life. For visitors, they are often the first places they experience. For businesses, they provide visibility, access, and customer activity.

As Christiansburg continues to grow, more attention should be placed on reinvestment in established areas. New development will continue to matter, but more value can also come from places that are already built and served by infrastructure. Older commercial properties, underutilized sites, aging shopping centers, large parking areas, and vacant spaces offer opportunities for reinvestment, reuse, better access, stronger design, and broader mixed-use development.

Downtown, Cambria, Midtown, and Uptown each contribute to Christiansburg's economic geography, along with the Town's larger commercial corridors. Downtown and Cambria offer historic character, smaller-scale business activity, adaptive reuse, and public gathering spaces. Midtown, Uptown, and larger commercial areas can support reinvestment, mixed-use activity, hospitality, and stronger connections between destinations. Cambria also has a unique opportunity tied to the planned return of passenger rail service, including stronger walkability, wayfinding, Depot Park connections, and nearby business activity.

Sidewalks, crossings, signage, access management, stormwater upgrades, broadband, utilities, and streetscape improvements can make commercial areas easier to use and more attractive for private investment. These improvements matter most where reinvestment, small business activity, tourism, and transportation connections overlap.



Small Business, Workforce, & Entrepreneurship

Christiansburg continues to support small business development and workforce development as part of its broader economic development work. As industries and technology changes, residents need clear pathways to quality jobs, and employers need access to skilled workers. The Town's proximity to schools, New River Community College, Radford University, Virginia Tech, workforce partners, and regional employers create opportunities to support career pathways, skilled trades training, apprenticeships, adult education, and upskilling. Additionally, transportation, childcare, eldercare, and related services also affect whether people can access jobs, stay employed, and advance over time. As for small businesses, they are important as they help to fill storefronts, activate commercial areas, provide services, create jobs, and give Christiansburg more of its own local identity. The Town's economic strength comes from a healthy mix of supporting large employers, small businesses, and from residents and entrepreneurs who choose to start, grow, and invest locally.

A program the Town has provided previously in this direction is Launch Christiansburg. The program took its first flight in 2024 and has supported entrepreneurs intending to open or grow their business within Town limits (Source: Launch Christiansburg program guide). Participants have had access to Town staff, local mentors, and a cohort of other entrepreneurs. The program has covered practical startup topics including customers, branding, pricing, capital, business structure, taxes, and business planning (Source: Launch Christiansburg program guide). This type of support gives entrepreneurs a clearer path from idea to operation and helps strengthen the Town's local business pipeline. The Town intends to continue programs like these to support local entrepreneurs and business development initiatives.

Supporting local businesses also supports place. Restaurants, shops, personal services, professional offices, entertainment uses, and creative businesses help define how people experience Christiansburg. They make the community feel more active and distinct. When the Town supports entrepreneurs and small businesses, it also supports the character and energy of the places where those businesses are located. The Town intends to continue offering one-on-one support for new and existing businesses and providing connections to resources slated to encourage growth and success.



Tourism, Recreation, Partnerships, & Looking Ahead

Recreation and tourism actively contribute to Christiansburg's economy. Recreation facilities, events, sports-related activity, parks, trails, cultural activities, historic resources, cycling routes, and regional recreation connections bring visitors into Town and support restaurants, lodging, retail, and services. These assets also strengthen the reasons people choose to live, work, and invest in Christiansburg.

Because many of these opportunities cross local boundaries, partnerships will continue to matter. Business development, transportation, workforce, tourism, recreation, broadband, and infrastructure all involve partners beyond Town government. Continued collaboration with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce, regional economic development partners, educational institutions, workforce organizations, tourism partners, and neighboring jurisdictions can help Christiansburg move shared priorities forward.

The Town's next phase of economic development builds on the strengths already visible across Christiansburg. Regional access, major employers, active commercial areas, local businesses, recreation assets, and historic places with room for reinvestment all shape the priorities that follow: retaining and growing businesses, preparing workers for changing industry needs, reinvesting in established commercial areas, improving connections between places, preparing Cambria for rail-related activity, and using tourism, recreation, and partnerships to support local business activity.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Goals, Objectives, & Policies:

Goal ED.1: Enhance economic competitiveness by diversifying industries, strengthening local businesses, and creating opportunities that benefit the entire community.

Small Business Support

Objective ED.1.1:

Strengthen the foundation for local small business growth and entrepreneurship.

Policy ED.1.1.1:

Provide local small businesses and startups with access to resources such as mentoring, technical assistance and funding.

Policy ED.1.1.2:

Promote local programs to support small businesses and enhance their visibility.

Policy ED.1.1.3:

Streamline licensing and permitting processes to reduce barriers for new and existing small businesses.

Policy ED.1.1.4:

Partner with chambers of commerce and local business groups to build a strong support network for small businesses.

Policy ED.1.1.5:

Help small businesses adopt digital tools and e-commerce to reach wider markets.

Policy ED.1.1.6:

Create targeted incentives for startups and growing small businesses to thrive in the community.

Policy ED.1.1.7:

Provide tailored support, resources, and mentoring for new startups and existing businesses seeking to grow or relocate in Christiansburg.

Policy ED.1.1.8:

Explore supporting and the creation of small business hubs, incubators, or coworking spaces, with the option to potentially collaborate with universities and other organizations.

Policy ED.1.1.9:

Continue to provide investments that support the growth and stability of existing small businesses while encouraging entrepreneurs and small business owners to relocate or expand into Christiansburg.

Policy ED.1.1.10:

Explore opportunities to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses with identifying commercial real estate, navigating local government processes, connecting with resource organizations, and accessing funding opportunities.

Policy ED.1.1.11:

Establish and maintain regular communication and support networks for small businesses.

Policy ED.1.1.12:

Support businesses in maintaining attractive, well-maintained storefronts, improving the town's visual appeal, and encouraging private investment in commercial properties.

Business Development

Objective ED.1.2:

Attract, retain, and grow businesses across diverse industries.

Policy ED.1.2.1:

Engage with existing businesses regularly to understand their needs and create opportunities for growth and retention.

Policy ED.1.2.2:

Focus on recruiting industries that align with local strengths, such as healthcare, manufacturing and technology.

Policy ED.1.2.3:

Acknowledge the town's status as a regional retail destination and continue to sustain its appeal.

Policy ED.1.2.4:

Continue to foster a thriving retail environment by maintaining its viability and recruiting a diverse retail mix.

Policy ED.1.2.5:

Continue to enhance infrastructure like broadband, transportation networks, and utilities to support new and existing businesses.

Policy ED.1.2.6:

Establish better connections between commercial areas with pedestrian, transit, and vehicle-friendly infrastructure.

Policy ED.1.2.7:

Work with local and regional organizations to market available commercial and industrial properties.

Policy ED.1.2.8:

Consider offering incentives to attract businesses that provide well-paying jobs and contribute to economic stability.

Policy ED.1.2.9:

Promote the expansion of dining, hospitality, and entertainment options to make the community more attractive to residents and visitors.

Policy ED.1.2.10:

Support the town's trade and manufacturing industries by highlighting their economic impact and creating opportunities to expand their reach through partnerships and targeted initiatives.

Policy ED.1.2.11:

Redevelop underdeveloped or vacant commercial properties into mixed-use spaces with housing, dining, retail, and offices.

Policy ED.1.2.12:

Continue to develop industrial parks near major transportation hubs, such as Interstate-81 interchanges, to attract employers.

Policy ED.1.2.13:

Highlight the region's natural and recreational resources as key selling points for attracting businesses and workers.



Economy and Workforce Development

Objective ED.1.3:

Develop a skilled, adaptable workforce to meet the needs of a changing economy.

Policy ED.1.3.1:

Collaborate with schools, community college and universities to provide training, apprenticeships, and career pathways in high-demand industries, with a specific focus on skilled trades.

Policy ED.1.3.2:

Encourage partnerships that connect high school students to trade programs, promote awareness of local trade businesses, and support adult CTE and upskilling centers with industry-preferred access.

Policy ED.1.3.3:

Promote workforce housing initiatives to ensure talent can afford to live and work locally.

Policy ED.1.3.4:

Expand access to childcare options to support families, enabling more people to participate in the workforce.

Policy ED.1.3.5:

Support eldercare programs that help Christiansburg residents in remaining active in the workforce.

Policy ED.1.3.6:

Collaborate with employers and care providers to develop flexible solutions that reduce barriers to employment, strengthen small business support, and improve workforce retention.

Policy ED.1.3.7:

Work with employers and community organizations and workforce development organizations, including pipelines from high school to trade employment, to provide continuing education and skills training for workers, enabling workers to grow professionally and remain competitive in their careers.

Policy ED.1.3.8:

Encourage the use of new technologies to help the workforce adapt to shifting industry needs.

Policy ED.1.3.9:

Collaborate with workforce development organizations, educational institutions, economic development entities, and both public and private sector partners to develop programs that upskill current employees, so they can adapt to technological advancements and meet evolving industry demands.

Policy ED.1.3.10:

Attract young professionals and entrepreneurs through targeted marketing campaigns.

Policy ED.1.3.11:

Strengthen regional partnerships to address shared economic opportunities and challenges.

Policy ED.1.3.12:

Collaborate with workforce development organizations, educational institutions, and industry leaders to develop programs tailored to key industries and trade-focused pathways and apprenticeships, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled workers.

Policy ED.1.3.13:

Expand broadband and internet access to support remote work and attract businesses in the digital economy.



Goal ED.2: Foster a thriving and vibrant economic environment in Downtown, Cambria and Midtown by developing and maintaining these areas as destinations with strong identities.

Downtown, Cambria, and Midtown

Objective ED.2.1:

Strengthen local identity, enhance activities and boost investment in these areas to create vibrant destinations.

Policy ED.2.1.1:

Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized or vacant buildings through the use of targeted economic development programs, zoning, land use regulations, public investments in infrastructure, and incentives.

Policy ED.2.1.2:

Reduce number of vacant buildings to improve economic vitality.

Policy ED.2.1.3:

Promote collaboration between public and private sectors to drive redevelopment and revitalization initiatives.

Policy ED.2.1.4:

Develop and maintain attractive public spaces to promote economic growth and active community participation.

Policy ED.2.1.5:

Enhance vibrancy by attracting new investments.

Policy ED.2.1.6:

Strengthen efforts to create a business-friendly environment and retain businesses.

Policy ED.2.1.7:

Ensure land use policies and zoning regulations support redevelopment and infill development.

Policy ED.2.1.8:

Create a downtown area that includes a mix of employers, restaurants, and retail businesses.

Policy ED.2.1.9:

Revise zoning regulations to allow for a mixed-use area in Downtown.

Policy ED.2.1.10:

Maintain pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and bike lanes to encourage connectivity and accessibility.

Policy ED.2.1.11:

Promote adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings to preserve historical and cultural heritage.

Policy ED.2.1.12:

Coordinate capital improvement projects to enhance public areas and construct community amenities.

Policy ED.2.1.13:

Utilize branding and marketing to establish and reinforce local and cultural identities.

Policy ED.2.1.14:

Support destination attractions including but not limited to events and festivals.

Policy ED.2.1.15:

Explore participation in the Virginia Main Street program to support downtown development, provide resources for new and existing businesses, and strengthen the town's identity as a vibrant destination.

Cambria

Objective ED.2.2:

Facilitate readiness for the arrival of passenger rail in Cambria by enhancing pedestrian access, promoting walkability, and supporting infrastructure improvements to encourage economic growth and connectivity.

Policy ED.2.2.1:

Improve pedestrian facilities and walkability between the Amtrak platform and Cambria businesses through sidewalk improvements, crossings, and other pedestrian facilities.

Policy ED.2.2.2:

Install wayfinding signage to guide passengers to key destinations, including businesses, parks, and community assets.

Policy ED.2.2.3:

Promote investment in nearby businesses and services that cater to rail users, such as retail, dining, and rest areas for passengers during delays or schedule changes.

Policy ED.2.2.4:

Partner with local businesses and other car rental services to provide transportation options for Amtrak passengers, ensuring seamless mobility.

Policy ED.2.2.5:

Prioritize projects like the Cambria Trail to create a safe, connected corridor within the area.

Policy ED.2.2.6:

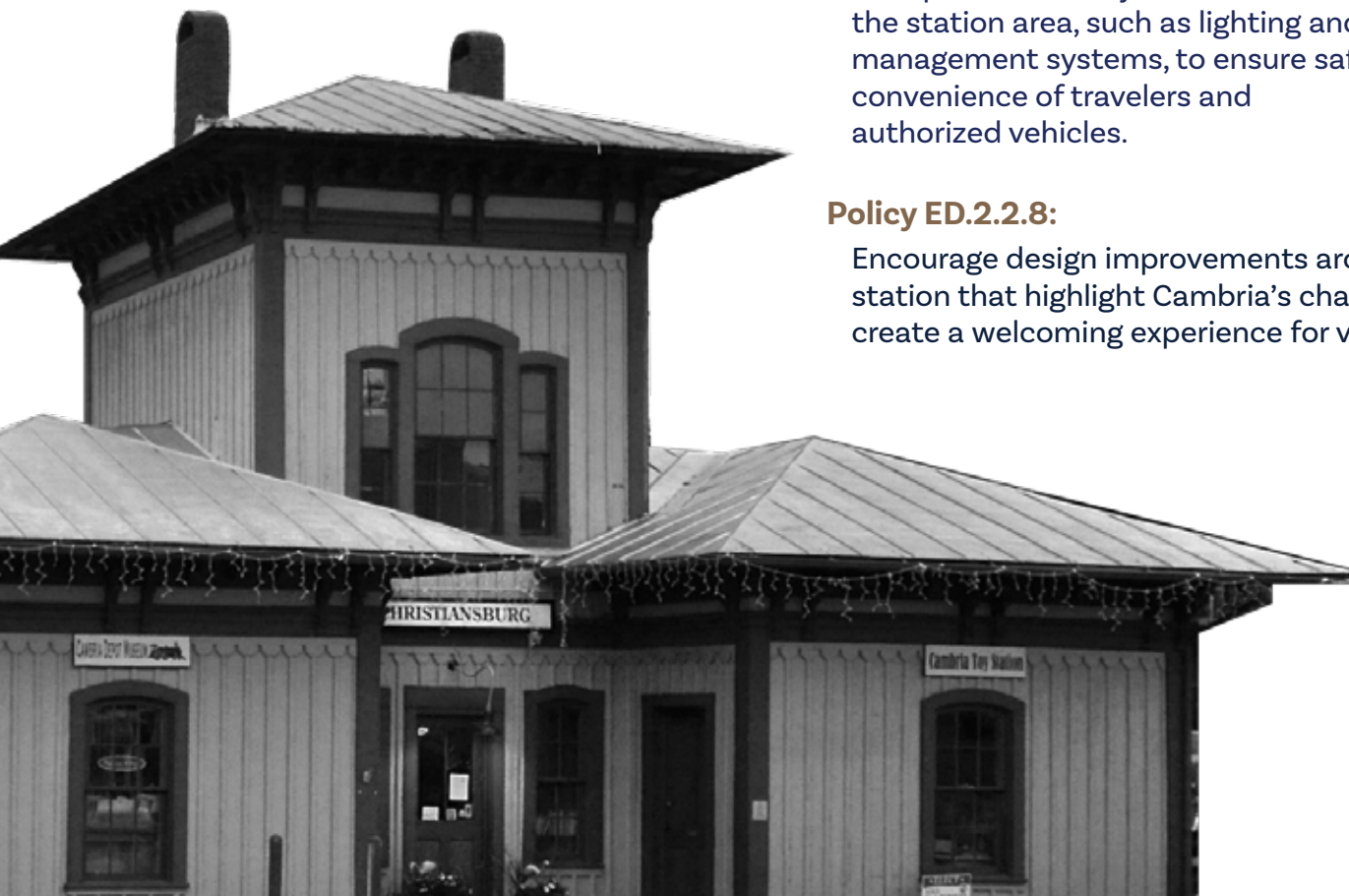
Support the continued development of pedestrian facilities connecting existing streets, such as linking Lester Drive to Roanoke Street, Depot Park, and the Amtrak station for improved accessibility.

Policy ED.2.2.7:

Incorporate security measures in and around the station area, such as lighting and visitor management systems, to ensure safety and convenience of travelers and authorized vehicles.

Policy ED.2.2.8:

Encourage design improvements around the station that highlight Cambria's character and create a welcoming experience for visitors.



Goal ED.3: *Promote economic development through tourism, recreation and collaborative efforts among government, private and nonprofit planning efforts.*

Objective ED.3.1:

Enhance economic growth by leveraging recreation and tourism, while fostering intentional partnerships to strengthen community well-being and economic resilience.

Policy ED.3.1.1:

Coordinate with private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations to support initiatives that boost local economic growth.

Policy ED.3.1.2:

Seek opportunities to foster partnerships between the public and private sectors to improve the business climate.

Policy ED.3.1.3:

Establish strong partnerships with local and regional tourism industry representatives and collaborate on joint marketing efforts.

Policy ED.3.1.4:

Develop and implement marketing campaigns that highlight the town's recreational amenities, such as parks, trails, and events. Emphasize the town's proximity to popular destinations and unique attractions to attract visitors to extend their stay.

Policy ED.3.1.5:

Strengthen the town's identity to foster a sense of belonging, instill pride among residents and cultivate an economically thriving community.

Policy ED.3.1.6:

Promote and support local festivals and community events that attract visitors, and celebrate local culture.

Policy ED.3.1.7:

Highlight and improve infrastructure along the National Bike Route and regional trail systems to encourage cycling tourism and outdoor recreation.

Policy ED.3.1.8:

Position Christiansburg as an attractive destination for aging residents by promoting accessible amenities, recreation opportunities, and age-friendly infrastructure.

Policy ED.3.1.9:

Ensure historical signage meets state and federal preservation requirements while contributing to cultural tourism and wayfinding.

Policy ED.3.1.10:

Support the beautification of commercial properties, enhance the town's visual appeal, and encourage private investment in maintaining attractive, welcoming storefronts.

