

FY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Historic Cities

New Opportunities



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New Opportunities



Virginia First Cities is a coalition of the state’s oldest and most historic cities that advocates for increased support and better policies from the state while sharing best practices among members.



On the cover: This imagined cityscape includes one distinctive building from each of the 18 VFC member cities. A legend can be found on the inside back cover.

Report from the Chair

Dear Members and Friends,

The theme of this year’s work — **Historic Cities/New Opportunities** — captures both the proud legacy of Virginia First Cities and the promise of what lies ahead. As a coalition, we remain steadfast in our mission to ensure that the voices and priorities of our historic cities are elevated and acted upon.

Over the past year, we advanced several priorities. Chief among them was the **Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund**, designed to support affordable housing and site-ready economic development projects that strengthen communities across the commonwealth. While we were disappointed that this initiative was not funded in the governor’s budget, its importance remains clear, and we will continue pressing for this critical investment.

At the same time, we celebrated progress in securing increased **state CDFI funding**, a win that will help expand access to capital for both housing and entrepreneurs. And the **At-Risk Add-On** — after 12 years of VFC advocacy — became a mandatory funding requirement of the Virginia Standards of Quality.

I am confident that we are on the right path. With strong board leadership, dedicated staff, and clear priorities, VFC is well-positioned to make even greater gains in the years ahead. Our strength comes from our unity and our shared belief that Virginia’s historic cities deserve both recognition and robust investment.

I want to extend heartfelt thanks to my predecessor, **Lisa Lucas-Burke**, for her dedicated leadership. Her commitment and love for VFC have been palpable, and she will be deeply missed.

On behalf of the board, thank you for your commitment to this coalition. Together, we will continue turning new opportunities into lasting outcomes for our cities.

With appreciation,

Tina L. Vick
Chairperson, Virginia First Cities
Councilmember, City of Newport News

Executive Committee



CHAIR:
Hon. Tina Vick
Councilmember
City of Newport News



VICE CHAIR:
Hon. Dany Fleming
Vice Mayor
City of Harrisonburg



TREASURER:
Mr. Ken Larking
City Manager
City of Danville



SECRETARY:
Mr. Andrew Trivette
City Manager
City of Williamsburg



AT-LARGE MEMBER:
Hon. Jimmy Gray
Mayor
City of Hampton



AT-LARGE MEMBER:
Mr. Dan Hoffman
City Manager
City of Winchester



AT-LARGE MEMBER:
Hon. Mamie Johnson
Councilmember
City of Norfolk

Community Wealth Building Funding Validated

► In April 2022, Andrea felt the need for change. The single mom of five kids sat down and made a to-do list. She wanted stable income, to go back to school and to lose weight. She found a job at Chick-fil-A. It was an accomplishment, but Andrea knew it was just a first step.

For a decade, Virginia First Cities has fought for additional resources to help break the cycle of poverty.

The lobbying efforts paid off when the state budget earmarked \$9 million in state general funds for FY 2026 that will continue the Community Employment Training Program, which connects those hovering around the poverty line with long-term employment

“It is gratifying to see lawmakers recognize a program that has generated measurable results,” said Virginia First Cities Executive Director Kelly Harris-Braxton.

The grants will go to local governments and their community partners that provide wraparound services—such as behavioral counseling, legal aid, housing access, day care and transportation—that support those who are seeking to better their lives.

► Andrea lost 147 pounds, which she considered essential to her health and to keep up with her children. She began meeting regularly with a career coach at Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA). Her coach noted that Andrea “always showed up.”

Since 2016, Virginia’s community colleges have rethought workforce development. The most obvious pivot was to align more closely with the role of providing a reliable talent pipeline to local employers.

A more subtle change was to expand the talent pool by seeking to tap the potential of unemployed or underemployed, many of whom have been on public assistance.

Brightpoint and Reynolds community colleges formed CCWA as a regional partnership—and began to think differently. They offered training and credential programs that fell outside the traditional academic calendar, and they worked with community organizations and nonprofits, like the Richmond Office of Community Wealth Building, that provide wraparound support services seven days a week.

“We began to think in terms of behavioral counseling, housing stability, legal aid and child care,” said Elizabeth Creamer, CCWA’s vice president for workforce development and credential attainment.

► In November 2022, Andrea enrolled in a Fast Forward Clinical Medical Assistant (CMA) training program. When she received her CMA credential four months later, she sat in the parking lot and cried.

In December 2024, the Virginia Department of Social Services found that 43.9% of more than 13,500 participants found employment. Forty percent found full-time work with benefits.

“We’re moving the needle—this is why we do what we do,” said Laura Bateman, VFC legislative director.

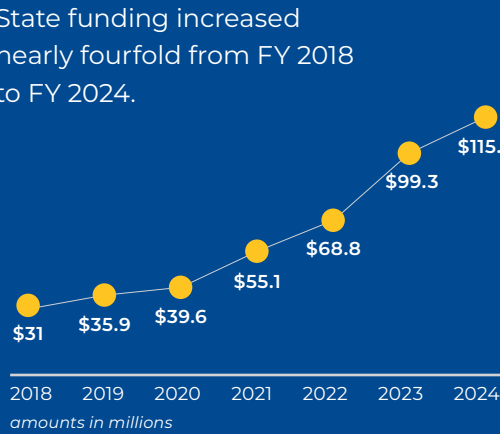
► In July 2023, Andrea was hired by VCU Health. She later took a better-paying job as a CMA for a medical practice. She has moved her children into a four-bedroom home and bought a car. She continues to earn medical certifications.

State Formula Programs Advocated by VFC (FY 2025)

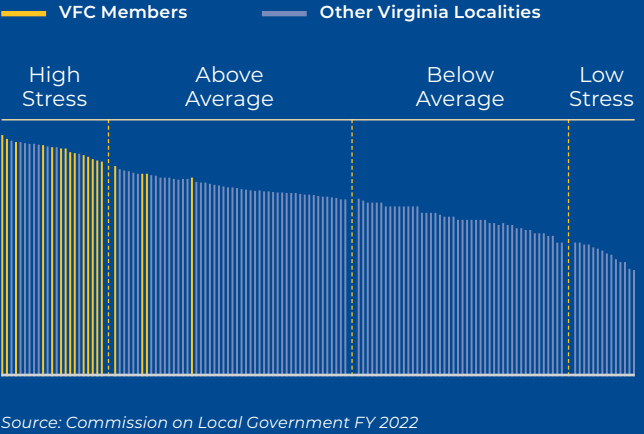
	Street Maintenance	Aid to Police (HB 599)	At-Risk Student Add-On*	Va Preschool Initiative
Charlottesville	\$5,628,737	\$2,681,084	\$1,540,383	\$1,073,902
Danville	\$14,848,845	\$3,363,441	\$14,082,574	\$1,627,321
Emporia	\$1,585,722	\$273,976	\$2,128,319	\$251,971
Hampton	\$22,702,664	\$8,689,930	\$27,187,434	\$4,426,812
Harrisonburg	\$6,876,202	\$1,743,418	\$7,516,983	\$1,328,734
Hopewell	\$5,423,076	\$1,687,779	\$8,845,266	\$1,166,974
Lexington	\$1,077,444	\$254,806	\$196,734	\$0
Lynchburg	\$16,522,816	\$3,904,124	\$10,389,389	\$1,893,601
Martinsville	\$4,616,076	\$1,121,047	\$4,287,446	\$769,501
Newport News	\$23,598,681	\$11,645,421	\$38,865,328	\$5,843,340
Norfolk	\$33,853,611	\$14,886,281	\$39,990,683	\$8,054,848
Petersburg	\$8,032,786	\$2,693,831	\$10,181,771	\$2,243,419
Portsmouth	\$17,060,680	\$7,708,455	\$24,835,475	\$3,362,108
Richmond City	\$37,457,834	\$18,508,308	\$27,285,652	\$3,088,834
Roanoke City	\$20,769,285	\$7,112,658	\$24,217,529	\$3,622,524
Staunton	\$5,661,278	\$1,143,758	\$3,036,019	\$559,174
Williamsburg	\$2,594,074	\$497,293	\$247,233	\$107,156
Winchester	\$4,463,157	\$1,082,742	\$4,513,757	\$865,721
Total VFC	\$232,772,968	\$88,998,352	\$249,347,975	\$40,285,940
Total State	\$524,183,002	\$229,650,081	\$838,897,442	\$152,482,084
VFC % of State	44.41%	38.80%	29.70%	26.40%

*VFC successfully advocated to fold enhanced at-risk student funding into the state Standards of Quality formula. In addition to at-risk funding, this line item also includes funding for prevention, intervention and remediation.

At-Risk Add-On



Comparative Fiscal Stress of Virginia Localities



An Overview of the 2025 General Assembly Session

The 2025 legislative session saw continued progress on core issues that define VFC’s advocacy mission.

We were particularly encouraged by steps forward regarding blight and derelict structures, ratcheting up the standard deduction, increasing the refundability of the Earned Income Tax Credit, the end of the support cap and inclusion of At-Risk Add-On funding in the K-12 education SOQ. There were setbacks. The governor vetoed funding for the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund, housing programs and school construction. We understand these are long-term efforts; VFC is already preparing for the next General Assembly session.

As you know, many of the challenges faced by Virginia’s historic cities have been decades in the making and cannot be solved in a single legislative session. VFC celebrates each hard-won step to ease the fiscal stress of our cities. Thank you to our VFC members and partners for communications and advocacy with your local General Assembly delegation. Together, we are a more powerful force for change.

Laura Bateman, VFC Legislative Director

2025 Legislative Scorecard

Housing & Economic Gardening

Victories

- Allowed the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to consider smaller Business Ready sites.
- Appropriated \$2.7 million (FY 2025) for the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Fund and provided a revolving fund component.
- Ushered the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund appropriation and legislative language change through the Virginia Housing Commission as “Commission-endorsed” legislation.
- Passed legislation to incent the owners of residential and commercial derelict buildings to remediate and clean up.

Setbacks

- Governor vetoed \$1.5 million for the City of Charlottesville to repurpose an existing building into an urgently needed emergency shelter.
- Governor vetoed \$13 million for localities that establish a local housing trust fund by December 31, 2025. Included in this line item was \$1 million to the City of Emporia to support an affordable housing project.
- Governor vetoed \$2.5 million for the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund along with certain administrative changes that would have made the program more accessible for housing and other redevelopment projects.

Ongoing Work

- Increase funding for the Virginia Main Street Program and remove the 2% cap on administrative expenses.
- Lower the threshold for local match for programs like the Brownfields Redevelopment Program in localities with higher levels of fiscal stress.
- Increase the annual registration fee and civil penalties for vacant building registration.
- Preserve local land use authority for ADUs, STRs and housing access.
- Ensure Enterprise Zone Real Property Investment Grant program is properly funded to avoid grant proration and preserve the usefulness for fiscally stressed cities.

Pre-K–12 Education

Victories

- Added the At-Risk Add-On to base Standards of Quality funding.
- Removal of the support cap that had been in place since 2009.
- \$134.4 million to fund a \$1,000 bonus for teachers without a local match requirement.

Defeats

- Governor vetoed statewide authority for local referendums to increase sales tax by 1% to provide critically needed funds for school construction.

Health & Human Services

Victories

- Preserved \$7.3 million (FY 2025) from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and \$9 million (FY 2026) from general funds (GF) for community employment and training. Local match requirement is now more flexible for high fiscal stress localities.

- MARCUS Alert Program funding of \$6 million in FY 2026 to create 10 additional local mental health crisis co-response teams.
- \$4.2 million (FY 2026) for Special Conservators of the Peace at private hospitals to maintain custody of an individual under an emergency custody or temporary detention order.

Public Safety

Ongoing Work

- State Aid to Localities with Police Departments (HB599) funding according to statute and prioritizing gun violence prevention.
- Seeking direct and sustainable funding solutions for city fire and EMS.

Infrastructure

Ongoing Work

- Street maintenance funding that recognizes the increased demands in cities from on-street parking, bike lanes, transit lanes and pedestrian safety measures.
- Maintain adequate support for transit funding.
- Ensure locally collected fines from photo-camera violations stay at the local level.
- Support expanding traffic safety programs and technologies on city-owned rights-of-way.

Tax Policy

Victories

- Increased the standard deduction for tax years 2025 and 2026 to \$8,750 for single filers and \$17,500 for joint filers, a \$250 and \$500 increase, respectively.
- Increased the refundability of the earned income tax credit from 15% to 20% of the federal earned income tax credit.

State Discretionary Programs Advocated by VFC

	Employment TANF Grant (FY 2024/25)	Brownfields Restoration (FY 2012–2025)	Enterprise Zone Program Grants (Grant Year 2022)	IRF/Port Revitalization (FY 2025)	Historic Rehab Tax Credit Expenditures (FY 2025)	Year-Round School Funding (FY 2024/25 carryover)
Charlottesville	\$106,630	\$112,290	\$0	\$0	\$7,792,256	\$0
Danville	\$597,118	\$2,300,000	\$447,581	\$200,000	\$89,362,915	\$0
Emporia	\$0	\$105,670	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Hampton	\$230,850	\$21,615	\$701,357	\$0	\$0	\$1,897,568
Harrisonburg	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,010,769	\$0
Hopewell	\$0	\$175,215	\$0	\$0	\$3,245,904	\$1,600,000
Lexington	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$342,527	\$0
Lynchburg	\$280,498	\$357,426	\$1,194,767	\$0	\$4,090,691	\$0
Martinsville	\$271,204	\$1,360,646	\$200,000	\$01	\$3,920,761	\$0
Newport News	\$896,803	\$550,000	\$1,702,427	\$800,000	\$16,684,903	\$1,500,000
Norfolk	\$741,998	\$800,000	\$312,255	\$800,000	\$24,950,942	\$0
Petersburg	\$547,482	\$412,500	\$400,000	\$0	\$14,345,215	\$0
Portsmouth	\$122,269	\$50,000	\$134,933	\$800,000	\$13,302,533	\$0
Richmond City	\$2,282,866	\$700,000	\$1,413,501	\$0	\$55,064,121	\$50,000
Roanoke City	\$0	\$290,000	\$690,332	\$0	\$16,647,332	\$957,102
Staunton	\$0	\$581,200	\$300,000	\$0	\$8,739,284	\$0
Williamsburg	\$159,303	\$520,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Winchester	\$284,041	\$49,900	\$225,040	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total VFC	\$6,521,062	\$8,386,462	\$7,822,193	\$2,600,000	\$264,500,153	\$6,004,670
Total State	\$8,504,615	\$22,380,556	\$13,688,643	\$5,799,000	\$264,500,153	\$7,753,423
VFC % of State	76.70%	37.5%	57.10%	44.80%	63.8%	77.45%

“Virginia First Cities recognizes the importance of coalition building when it comes to getting programs funded. Their collaboration and leadership was key when it came to Virginia’s Main Street Program funding in the 2025 General Assembly.”

— Sen. Todd Pillion (R-Abingdon)

“Virginia First Cities can always be counted on to look out for Virginia’s historic older cities. Their public policy work and willingness to help incubate programs that solve problems always helps to inform our legislative work.”

— Sen. Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth)

A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Members and Friends of VFC,

This year has been one of meaningful progress, growth and impact. With the addition of our newest member, the City of Emporia, we have expanded our reach across the commonwealth. Guided by our mission to advocate for policies that bring opportunity to Virginia’s historic cities, we have worked diligently to advance our priorities before the Virginia General Assembly.

We continue to broaden programs and strengthen partnerships that reach more citizens and families than ever before. Every initiative has been centered on creating opportunities, building resilience, and ensuring that our efforts deliver measurable value to the communities we serve. Our staff and board collaborate to address the policy areas of greatest importance to our members. Our lean structure allows us to remain nimble and responsive.

As we enter our 27th year, VFC retains a strong financial position, with revenue and expenses balanced. We continue to exercise fiscal prudence while valuing the contributions that keep our coalition thriving.

Looking ahead, our strategic priorities include addressing housing and economic development, advancing community wealth building and workforce development, and reducing gun violence, which—while declining—remains a pressing concern. Despite uncertainty in both federal and state funding, our collective strength as a coalition ensures that VFC will continue to seek new opportunities for historic cities to lead the Commonwealth.

With gratitude,

Kelly Harris-Braxton
Executive Director

L-R: Kelly Harris-Braxton, executive director;
Laura Bateman, legislative director; Jamie Crawford,
policy coordinator and program manager

“Despite uncertainty in both federal and state funding, our collective strength as a coalition ensures that VFC will continue to seek new opportunities for historic cities to lead the commonwealth.”

— Kelly Harris-Braxton



Annual Meeting, May 2025



Eric Scorsone,
Executive Director of the
Weldon Cooper Center for
Public Service



Sarah Abubaker,
City of Richmond
Councilmember



Event host, Micheal Sparks,
CEO, The Underground Kitchen



FY 2026 Executive Committee: (L-R) Dan Hoffman, Winchester City Manager; Mamie Johnson, Norfolk Councilmember; Ken Larking, Danville City Manager (Treasurer); Andrew Trivette Williamsburg City Manager (Secretary); Tina Vick, Newport News Councilmember (Chair); Dany Fleming, Harrisonburg Councilmember (Vice Chair)



L-R: Tina Vick, Newport News City Councilmember; Samuel Sanders, Charlottesville City Manager; Laura Bateman; and Kelly Harris-Braxton

Board of Directors

(Executive Committee in bold)

Hon. Juandiego Wade, Mayor, City of Charlottesville
Mr. Samuel Sanders Jr., City Manager, City of Charlottesville
Hon. Sherman Saunders, Councilmember, City of Danville
Mr. Ken Larking, City Manager, City of Danville
Hon. Yolanda Hines, Councilmember, City of Emporia
Mr. William E. Johnson III, City Manager, City of Emporia
Hon. Jimmy Gray, Mayor, City of Hampton
Ms. Mary Bunting, City Manager, City of Hampton
Mr. Dany Fleming, Councilmember, City of Harrisonburg
Mr. Ande Banks, City Manager, City of Harrisonburg
Hon. Rita Joyner, Vice Mayor, City of Hopewell
Mr. Michael C. Rogers, City Manager, City of Hopewell
Hon. Frank Friedman, Mayor, City of Lexington
Mr. Tom Carroll, City Manager, City of Lexington
Hon. Chris Faraldi, Councilmember, City of Lynchburg
Mr. Wynter Benda, City Manager, City of Lynchburg
Hon. LC Jones, Mayor, City of Martinsville
Ms. Aretha Ferrell-Benavides, City Manager, City of Martinsville

Hon. Tina Vick, Councilmember, City of Newport News
Mr. Alan Archer, City Manager, City of Newport News
Hon. Mamie Johnson, Councilmember, City of Norfolk
Mr. Patrick Roberts, City Manager, City of Norfolk
Hon. W. Howard Myers, Councilmember, City of Petersburg
Mr. March Altman, City Manager, City of Petersburg
Hon. Vernon Tillage, Councilmember, City of Portsmouth
Mr. Steven Carter, City Manager, City of Portsmouth
Hon. Sarah Abubaker, Councilmember, City of Richmond
Ms. Sabrina Joy-Hogg, Senior Deputy Administrative Officer, City of Richmond
Hon. Joseph L. Cobb, Mayor, City of Roanoke
Ms. Valmarie H. Turner, City Manager, City of Roanoke
Hon. Adam Campbell, Councilmember, City of Staunton
Ms. Leslie Beauregard, City Manager, City of Staunton
Hon. Ayanna T. Williams, Councilmember, City of Williamsburg
Mr. Andrew Trivette, City Manager, City of Williamsburg
Hon. Les Veach, Mayor, City of Winchester
Mr. Dan Hoffman, City Manager, City of Winchester

Thank you to those who served on the Executive Committee this year:

Hon. Andreas Addison, Councilmember, City of Richmond
Hon. Lisa Lucas-Burke, Vice Mayor, City of Portsmouth
Hon. Donnie Tuck, Mayor, City of Hampton



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Lexington: Lexington Presbyterian Church | 10 Emporia: Emporia Armory |
| 2 Danville: White Mill | 11 Richmond: Central National Bank |
| 3 Norfolk: TowneBank Building | 12 Winchester: Handley Library |
| 4 Martinsville: Wedding Cake House | 13 Hampton: Hampton City Hall |
| 5 Williamsburg: Governor's Palace | 14 Charlottesville: Dairy Market |
| 6 Roanoke: N&W Building | 15 Newport News: Victory Arch |
| 7 Petersburg: City Market | 16 Lynchburg: Allied Arts Building |
| 8 Harrisonburg: Rockingham Courthouse | 17 Staunton: Marquis Building |
| 9 Hopewell: Beacon Theatre | 18 Portsmouth: Seaboard Coastline Building |

"I was pleased to work with Virginia First Cities to make progress in realizing the promise of the Urban Public-Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund, a state program that was created 25 years ago to spark urban redevelopment, but never funded. We came up just short, but VFC understands that to get things done in the legislature, you have to play the long game."

— **Del. David Bulova (D-Fairfax)**

"Virginia First Cities has been a valuable partner to the Virginia Community Development Financial Institution Coalition. Together we're enabling economic opportunity in under-resourced and marginalized communities."

— **Leah Fremouw**
President & CEO, Bridging Virginia



Virginia First Cities Coalition
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