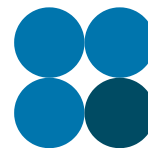




Downtown Crewe Investment & Activation Plan

2025



2025



Phone
434-645-9453

Website
townofcrewe.com
downtowncrewe.com

Executive Summary



The Town of Crewe is undertaking one of the most significant periods of reinvestment in its modern history. With support from federal and state grants, town resources, private partners, and in-kind contributions of labor and materials, Crewe is directing millions of dollars toward projects that will reshape the community for decades to come. This investment reflects a coordinated effort to preserve historic character, strengthen core infrastructure, and create new opportunities for businesses, residents, and visitors.

Downtown revitalization includes applying for a Community Development Block Grant program of \$1.25 million to restore building façades, improve storefronts, and enhance the overall appearance of Crewe's historic commercial district. These physical improvements are paired with new public amenities, including a Food and Microenterprise Hub, upgraded water system, and modern wayfinding signage. Together, these projects will create a welcoming and attractive environment that supports local businesses and draws in new investment.

Crewe is also investing in economic vitality through initiatives that encourage entrepreneurship and small business growth. Projects such as the food truck corral, expanded market spaces, a boutique hotel renovation, and a prospective brewery are designed to generate foot traffic, support local producers, and diversify the business base. These efforts are reinforced by data-driven planning and policy tools, including market assessments, exploration of overlay districts, and targeted incentives that help businesses succeed in Crewe's rural context.

Infrastructure upgrades are advancing in parallel. Water line installation and related utility work will modernize essential systems, reduce service disruptions, and improve reliability for households and businesses. These improvements are coordinated with ADA-compliant access, lighting, and other site upgrades to support both day-to-day operations and future growth.

Every project is structured to maximize resources. Local tax dollars are being matched with state and federal programs, while volunteer hours and in-kind labor add meaningful value. By leveraging grants, town funds, private donations, and the commitment of residents themselves, Crewe is demonstrating how a small town can position itself for long-term economic and community resilience.



Built Environment & Infrastructure

Crewe is reinforcing its physical backbone through a coordinated program of current and planned improvements. The priority is systematic water line replacement to improve reliability, reduce leaks, and support growth. Street work includes ADA sidewalks and curb ramps, new crosswalks on Route 460, streetscape upgrades on Carolina Avenue, LED lighting, wayfinding from U.S. 460 to Main Street, and new gateway signage. Facility projects include community center renovations, added wastewater storage capacity at the pump station, and targeted airport upgrades, with park enhancements, EV charging, public art, and an emergency generator advancing as funded or next-phase items. Each project blends grants, town funds, private partners, and in-kind contributions, delivered in phases to limit disruption.

Water Improvements

Crewe is advancing a systemwide program to replace aging water mains and service connections, with about \$5 million committed and a Preliminary Engineering Report underway. The work will reduce leaks, improve pressure and fire flow, add valves and hydrants, and be coordinated with sidewalk and streetscape projects to limit disruptions. Additionally, the Town is partnering with the state on a separate \$30 million project to upgrade the water treatment plant and replace the 100 year old main line from the plant to town.



Wayfinding Signage

Crewe will design, fabricate, and install two branded wayfinding signs at key decision points where U.S. 460 meets the streets leading to Historic Downtown, guiding travelers one block off the highway to Main Street. Each sign will use Crewe's colors and typography, include clear arrows, distance, and amenity icons, feature reflective materials for 24-hour visibility, and comply with VDOT standards. This first phase will serve as a visible gateway and establish a consistent identity, with future phases to add pedestrian signs and information kiosks.



Strategies and Projects

Built Environment & Infrastructure

No.	Strategy	Status	Funding
1	Implement façade improvements for identified properties	Applied for funding	\$1.25 million
2	Systematically replacing main water lines & delivery system	Funded, PER underway	\$5 million
3	Convert all streetlights to LED	Funded, planning underway	\$27,000
4	Installing crosswalks across Rt 460	Engineering underway	VDOT funds
5	Install ADA accessible ramps at sidewalks	Partially complete	VDOT funds
6	Replace sidewalks leading to downtown historic district	Applied for funding	\$1.8 million
7	Install additional wastewater storage tank at pump station	Applied for funding	\$215,000
8	Upgrade airport facilities to better attract aviation industry	Partially complete	\$250,000
9	Renovate the Community Center for safety and accessibility	Included in federal budget	\$420,000
10	Install wayfinding signage to bring 460 traffic to Main Street	Funded, underway	\$24,000
11	Install new gateway signage	Future project	TBD
12	Install new Railroad Museum sign	Planning underway	\$2,000
13	Enlarge Railroad Museum building for larger model train	Future project	TBD
14	Make aesthetic improvements to Railroad Museum exterior	Future project	TBD
15	Install basketball and pickleball court in park	Applied for funding	\$120,000
16	Install strategically-placed electric car charging stations	Future project	\$100,000
17	Make aesthetic improvements at park (community project)	Planning underway	\$10,000
18	Create public art space at park	Future project	TBD
19	Make streetscape improvements	Future project	TBD
20	Install emergency generator at Community Center	Applied for funding	\$320,000



Economic Vitality

Crewe is turning coordinated investment into everyday prosperity. Water line replacements, added wastewater capacity, main line upgrade clear risk and unlock private reinvestment. Streetscapes on Carolina Avenue, ADA sidewalks, crosswalks on U.S. 460, LED lighting, and gateway and wayfinding signs, convert pass-through traffic into customers and make downtown a place to linger. A \$1.25 million façade program will lift storefront performance and curb appeal. The Food and Microenterprise Hub, the food truck corral, and the weekly farmers and makers market widen the ladder for local entrepreneurs, expand retail choices, and keep more dollars circulating in town. Events, targeted recruitment, and tools like market analysis and potential overlay districts align business growth with demand. Braided funding from grants, town funds, private capital, and in-kind labor stretches every dollar and accelerates visible change.

Crewe Food and Microenterprise Hub

The Crewe Food and Microenterprise Hub will convert an underutilized downtown property into a publicly owned retail anchor and incubator with a regional grocer, a food truck corral, and a weekly farmers and makers market. The project creates a new anchor business in the historic commercial district, improves food access, creates low-cost vending opportunities, and adds steady activity downtown, supported by multiple sources of funding.



Center for Rural Health Equity

The Town of Crewe has applied for funding to convert one of the original buildings at the former Piedmont Sanatorium--the historic tuberculosis facility for Virginia's Black population--into a Center for Rural Health Equity, dedicated to rural health research, education, policy, and workforce development. With regional and statewide partners, this adaptive reuse would preserve a landmark while providing a new source of regional economic activity.

Strategies and Projects

Economic Vitality			
No.	Strategy	Status	Funding
1	Crewe Food and Microenterprise Hub	Applied for funding	\$650,000
2	Establish an Economic Development Authority	Underway	N/A
3	Create a revolving loan fund for businesses	Applied for funding	\$100,000
4	Establish a Main Street organization	Underway	N/A
5	Hire staff to work with downtown businesses	Underway	\$40,000
6	Provide support for and promote businesses	Underway	N/A
7	Establish mechanisms for downtown org sustainability	Underway	N/A
8	Create a downtown revitalization plan	Complete	\$65,000
9	Participate in BOOMS pilot program	Underway	\$2,500
10	Create Center for Rural Health Equity	Applied for funding	\$2.8 million



DOWNTOWN
Crewe
All aboard!



Rendering of the Center for Rural Health Equity (above); Robert Russa Moton, a civil rights leader, educator, and early supporter of the Piedmont Sanatorium (right).

Policy & Planning

Crewe's revitalization is guided by data, clear planning, and community involvement at every stage. A downtown market study and zip code survey identified trade areas, retail leakage, and business opportunities that now inform storefront uses, recruitment, and event programming. Residents and business owners have shaped priorities through surveys, public meetings, and design workshops, ensuring that local voices guide decisions. Policy tools such as potential overlay districts, enterprise zones, and a local historic district are under review to balance preservation with growth. Projects are delivered through phased timelines and grant milestones, with local partners, volunteers, and civic groups engaged as active contributors from planning to implementation.

Branding

Crewe's new branding strategy, a component of the revitalization plan, unites history, identity, and investment under a single story. By emphasizing the town's railroad heritage, small-town authenticity, and revitalization projects, the brand communicates both pride of place and future potential. Consistent visuals and messaging across signage, marketing, and events build recognition, while reinforcing Crewe as a community rooted in tradition and positioned for growth.



Historic Commercial District

Crewe's historic downtown has been recognized at both the state and federal level through its listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. These designations help protect the character of the district while opening the door to tax credits and grant programs that make rehabilitation more affordable. Building on this foundation, the Town is planning a local overlay district to provide consistent design standards and access to additional incentives. Together, these tools reinforce preservation, strengthen eligibility for funding, and guide private reinvestment so that every improvement contributes to both economic vitality and community pride.

Strategies and Projects

Policy & Planning

No.	Strategy	Status	Funding
1	Create a downtown revitalization plan	Complete	\$65,000
2	Establish state and federal historic designations	Complete	N/A
3	Create historic district overlay	Underway	N/A
4	Allow for mixed use in commercial districts	Complete	N/A
5	Establish and enforce stronger blight abatement ordinances	Underway	N/A
6	Council to establish strategic goals annually	Complete/Underway	N/A
7	Require vacant property registration	Underway	N/A
8	Update tourism plan	Future project	N/A
9	Create strategic plan for Railroad Museum	Future project	N/A
10	Aid in creation of county strategic plan for ED	Underway	N/A
11	Modernize zoning ordinances	Underway	N/A
12	Create branding strategy	Complete	N/A
13	Conduct market studies and analyses for downtown	Complete/Underway	TBD

Brand Statement

We are Crewe, Virginia

Established in 1888 as a strategic hub for the Norfolk and Western Railway, Crewe is a quintessential railroad town. The town was named after Crewe, England, a prominent railroad junction, and became a vital center for the maintenance and operation of steam locomotives. For generations, Crewe has been defined by the grit and determination of its working-class spirit, forged by the hands of railroad engineers, linemen, and the communities they built. Today, Crewe remains a proud hub for Norfolk Southern and serves as a key stop along the historic Highway 460 corridor from Norfolk to Roanoke.

Our small-town charm, blue-collar roots, and neighborly spirit reflect the best of rural Americana, reminiscent of the warmth and authenticity seen in a Rockwell painting. From our family-run grocer to the century-old pharmacy, the restored boutique hotel, and the unique shops lining our downtown streets, Crewe is the hometown where memories are made and families thrive.

We take care of each other in Crewe, and welcome newcomers with open arms. We are all family here, and are a community defined by a hardworking spirit and a progressive outlook. Today, Crewe looks ahead with the same resilience and innovation that powered its past. With a commitment to a prosperous future, we are creating a vibrant hub where local businesses thrive, families gather, and visitors experience the charm of our small-town heritage. Crewe is and will always be the backbone of America.

We are Crewe, Virginia...



Crewe
VIRGINIA
Next stop, home!

Civic Engagement & Events

Crewe strengthens its community identity through events that bring residents and visitors together in the heart of town. Annual traditions like the Chicken Festival, the 100-Mile Yard Sale, and the AirFest showcase local culture and hospitality while drawing regional attention. Movies on Main and seasonal celebrations add regular opportunities for families to gather downtown. These events generate foot traffic for local businesses and create shared experiences that build trust, strengthen relationships, and expand volunteer networks. In doing so, they create social capital that reinforces civic pride and supports long-term community resilience.

Artificial Intelligence

Crewe is using AI tools in planning and advertising to stretch limited staff capacity and improve efficiency. Market data, design concepts, and grant materials are streamlined with AI support, allowing the Town to prepare professional-grade documents quickly. Social media content, event promotion, and branding materials are also enhanced with AI-driven graphics and messaging, helping Crewe reach wider audiences without adding staff. By adopting these tools, the Town is able to compete with larger localities, keep residents informed, and attract investment while conserving valuable human resources.



CREWE AIRFEST

Soaring into Summer with Fun & Fireworks

JULY 1 4PM - 10PM



FOOD TRUCKS • FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES • MUSIC

FREE & OPEN

TOWN OF CREWE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

IN 2024 CREWE WAS AWARDED OVER \$3 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDING

Project	Amount
Water Line Replacement	\$2,141,320
Airport Layout Plan	\$118,800
Terminal Renovation	\$16,060
Community Center	\$360,000
Police Department	\$379,166

Biggest Story of 2024: Crewe and State Reach Preliminary Agreement to Modernize Water System

The Town of Crewe, in partnership with relevant state agencies, have agreed upon a plan to address the community's long-standing water system challenges. The plan will ensure safe, reliable, and affordable water for all customers, both in the short and long term, and aligns with the state's goals of providing continued and equitable access to water for state facilities within the Town.

Key components of the plan include design and capital investment for critical infrastructure improvements. These include the construction of a new water treatment plant, replacement of the 100-year-old water main connecting the water treatment plant to the town, reservoir intake and yield improvements, and system-wide upgrades to increase efficiency, such as replacing outdated water meters with modern remote-read meters.

In exchange for these investments, the water rate for state facilities, which consume a significant portion of the water produced, will be adjusted to reflect its proportional share of operational and maintenance costs. Non-state customers, including residents, businesses, and schools, will also pay their proportional share of these costs and it is anticipated that there will be an increase in both water and sewer rates. These rate adjustments will be phased in over time to allow residents to prepare for and adjust to the increases.

The plan is anticipated to bring unprecedented capital improvements to the Town's water system. These improvements will enhance water quality, reduce water loss, and increase operational efficiency.

Crewe Mayor Brenda Payne said, "The Town of Crewe extends its gratitude to the Youngkin administration, and particularly Secretary of Finance Cummings, DOS Director Bano Tiewele, and state legislator Sen. Tammy Mutch and Del. Lee Ware for their continued support and advocacy on behalf of the residents of Crewe. We are grateful for this opportunity, and we look forward to continuing to work with our state partners."

Crewe is Open for Business!

2024 saw significant business investment in Crewe, from new businesses to existing businesses expanding. Let's work together to help these and all new and existing Crewe businesses continue their success by supporting them and shopping locally!

CREWE BOUTIQUE INN

BACKROADS BAR & GRILL

GATHER MARKET

From top-left, counterclockwise: Crewe Boutique Inn, a completely renovated hotel; Backroads Bar & Grill, quality food at affordable prices; Taqueria El Milagro, fresh, delicious Mexican cuisine; Yoder's Market, a family-run Menominee shop with baked goods, spices, deli, sandwiches, and more; Gather Market, downtown shop featuring homemade goods, consignment, and fun community activities



Strategies and Projects

Civic Engagement & Events

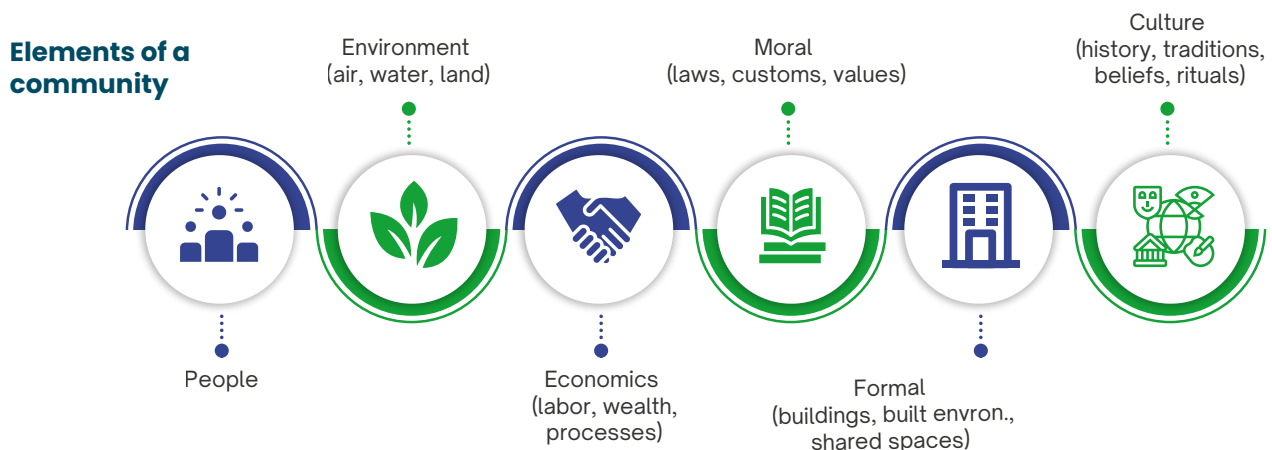
No.	Strategy	Status	Funding
1	Expand Crewe Homecoming Festival (May)	Complete/Underway	\$2,500
2	Establish Crewe Southside 100 Mile Yard Sale hub (July)	Complete/Underway	N/A
3	Host annual Crewe Airfest and Fireworks celebration (July)	Complete/Underway	\$20,000
4	Host National Night Out (August)	Complete/Underway	\$2,500
5	Host monthly taste of Crewe Food Truck Rodeo (Summer)	Complete/Underway	N/A
6	Revive the historic Crewe Chicken Festival (October)	Underway/Planning	\$50,000
7	Host town-wide workday at the park (Fall)	Planning	TBD
8	Host Crewe Christmas Parade (December)	Complete/Underway	\$3,000
9	Host Wild Game and Exotic Meat Chili Cookoff (December)	Planning	TBD
10	Send Annual Report to all residents via EDDM (January)	Complete/Underway	\$1,000
11	Send quarterly newsletter to all residents via EDDM	Complete/Underway	\$2,400
12	Partner with Crewe Cares on monthly Pancake Supper	Complete/Underway	N/A
13	Provide internship opportunities for college/grad students	Complete/Underway	\$18,000
14	Cultivate social capital through multi-org projects	Complete/Underway	TBD
15	Provide free energy audits to residents	Funded/Planning	\$200,000
16	Initiate downtown military banner program	Complete/Underway	\$2,000
17	Seek out public input at every possible opportunity	Complete/Underway	N/A
18	Utilize artificial intelligence to help streamline work	Complete/Underway	N/A
19	Movies on Main	Future project	N/A



Theoretical Foundations

Elements of a Community

Crewe's revitalization strategy is rooted in a holistic understanding of community. A community is not only defined by its people, but also by its environment, economy, values, built environment, and culture. Each element of Crewe's plan connects directly to one of these components. Infrastructure improvements safeguard air, water, and land. Economic initiatives like the Food and Microenterprise Hub and the façade program strengthen labor, wealth, and business processes. Policy and planning ensure that laws, customs, and shared values shape reinvestment. Streetscape upgrades, parks, and public facilities reinforce the built environment. Civic events and preservation projects honor traditions, history, and cultural identity. Together, these efforts form a comprehensive framework that advances every dimension of what makes Crewe a community.



"Whole Health"

In public health, "whole health" is an approach that views well-being as more than the absence of illness, recognizing that true health comes from the balance of physical, mental, social, spiritual, financial, and environmental factors. It emphasizes the conditions that allow individuals and communities to thrive as a whole system, rather than focusing on one aspect in isolation. Crewe's approach to creating a healthy, revitalized economy reflects a macro-level view of whole health. Physical health is supported through clean water, safe sidewalks, and accessible community spaces. Mental and social health are promoted by events, volunteer opportunities, and active public engagement that build trust and belonging. Spiritual health is nurtured through the preservation of heritage and the celebration of shared traditions. Financial health grows through business incubation, investment incentives, and downtown revitalization. Environmental health is advanced by modernized utilities, sustainable infrastructure, and reinvestment in public spaces.

Social Capital

Crewe's revitalization also builds on the principles of social capital and network theory. Social capital refers to the trust, relationships, and shared norms that allow people to work together for mutual benefit. Events, volunteer projects, and civic engagement activities expand these connections, weaving stronger ties across neighborhoods, organizations, and businesses. Network theory shows that as these connections multiply, the community gains resilience: information flows more easily, collaboration becomes more efficient, and resources are shared more widely. For small localities with limited financial or staff capacity, social capital can supplement or even supplant other resources by mobilizing volunteers, leveraging partnerships, and reducing reliance on formal structures. By investing not only in physical improvements but also in the social fabric, Crewe ensures that its people, institutions, and businesses are better linked and better equipped to support one another in times of growth or challenge.

Sustainability

Crewe is taking deliberate steps to ensure that revitalization efforts are not one-time projects, but the foundation for long-term success. A new Community Development Coordinator has been hired to work directly with downtown businesses and organizations, helping to organize events, strengthen partnerships, and guide local leadership. The goal is to grow the current Exploring Main Street program into a fully recognized Main Street organization. While the group is still in its early stages of formalization, projects are already underway to build cohesion and momentum. As the organization matures, community engagement functions will transition out of Town Hall, and the coordinator will become the first Downtown Crewe Executive Director. Events such as the Chicken Festival and other downtown activities will move under Downtown Crewe, creating a revenue stream to help fund operations. Management of the Crewe Community Center is also expected to fall under the organization, ensuring that it serves as a hub for both programming and financial sustainability.

At the same time, the Town government is strengthening its own operational sustainability. Standard operating procedures are being revised to improve efficiency, including the rollout of online bill pay for residents. Crewe has begun investing reserve funds with an anticipated annual yield of \$200,000, providing a steady source of non-tax revenue. Utility fees are being adjusted to levels that will ensure the water and sewer systems are financially self-sustaining. Policies are being clarified, ordinances and zoning are being updated to reduce red tape, and records are being digitized wherever possible. AI tools are being adopted to streamline tasks such as planning, grant writing, and advertising, while data collection and trend analysis are being built into everyday operations.

Staffing practices are also being updated to secure institutional knowledge and protect against disruption. Cross-training and redundancy are being built into every department, ensuring that no single role becomes a point of failure. Together, these measures create a framework where both Town government and the emerging Downtown Crewe organization are positioned to carry revitalization forward. Financial planning, organizational growth, policy modernization, and technological innovation are all working together to sustain Crewe's progress for the long term.





Contact Information



Phone

434-645-9453



Website

townofcrewe.com

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