

**Town of Richmond**  
**Planning Commission Meeting**  
AGENDA

Wednesday, October 6th, 2021, 7:00 PM  
Richmond Town Offices, Third Floor Meeting Room  
203 Bridge St., Richmond, VT 05477

This meeting is also accessible via Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88419874605>

Meeting ID: 884 1987 4605

Join by phone: (929) 205-6099

For additional information and accommodations to improve the accessibility of this meeting, please contact Ravi Venkataraman at 802-434-2430 or at [rvenkataraman@richmondvt.gov](mailto:rvenkataraman@richmondvt.gov).

1. Welcome, sign in and troubleshooting
2. Public Comment for non-agenda items
3. Adjustments to the Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
  - September 15, 2021
5. Discussion on Zoning For Affordable Housing project
6. Discussion on Wetlands
7. Finalization of Coordinating Working Group
8. Discussion on October 20th Meeting Agenda
9. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

## Table of Contents

### 4. Approval of Minutes

- Page 3: September 15, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

### 5. Discussion on Zoning For Affordable Housing project

- Page 7: PlaceSense Scope of Work and Proposed Schedule for Zoning for Affordable Housing Study
- Page 13: Richmond Resident Housing Survey Report
- Page 32: Non-resident Housing Survey Report
- Page 42: Technical Review Draft Memo

### 6. Discussion on Wetlands

- Page 55: Draft Regulations for Wetlands

Richmond Planning Commission  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR September 15th, 2021

Members Present:	Lisa Miller, Dan Mullen, Chris Cole, Virginia Clarke, Mark Fausel, Chris Granda, Alison Anand,
Members Absent:	Jake Kornfeld, Joy Reap,
Others Present:	Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Lauck Parke, Allen Knowles, Rod West, MMCTV

**1. Welcome and troubleshooting**

Virginia Clarke called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

**2. Public Comment for non-agenda items**

None

**3. Adjustments to the Agenda**

Clarke suggested shifting to the "modern way" of accepting the agenda and minutes--approval of the agenda and minutes by consensus, rather than by voting. No adjustments were made to the agenda.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Mark Fausel said that he would like the second page of the minutes to be revised on reflect his views that he would not be in support of a legal trail, and instead would be in support of a trail. Clarke noted a number of typos: "Klesch" instead of "Kleisch", "Moultroup" instead of "Moultrop", "motion" instead of "moment".

Ravi Venkataraman asked for clarification on the "modern way" Clarke referred to. Clarke explained that the minutes are automatically accepted after discussions. Cole explained the difference between consent agendas and action items, and said that since the commission does not have a consent agenda, the minutes should be accepted by vote. Clarke said that the minutes do not technically need to be approved by motion, and therefore if there are no corrections, then the minutes currently in the record or as suggested to be changed are accepted automatically. Clarke added that this was how other committees accepted minutes and amended minutes into the record.

**5. Discussion on Powered Vehicle Service, Powered Machinery Service, and Vehicle Fueling Stations uses**

Clarke presented the current zoning map around Exit 11. Clarke suggested rezoning the Mobil station to a commercial district--similar to existing districts surrounding Exit 11--and combining the commercial

districts around Exit 11.

Clarke introduced the discussion on Vehicle Fueling Stations, directing attention to the number of fueling islands and canopy size, and reviewed the recommended revisions in the meeting materials. Clarke noted that the proposed canopy size limit and limit on the number of fueling islands are based on her investigation of gas stations in Williston and Jericho. She said that none of the fueling stations she saw had six fueling stations, that only one of the gas stations she saw had five pumping islands, and that most fueling stations had either two or four islands.

Fausel asked to see a photo of the gas station with five pumping islands. Clarke presented the photos of all the gas stations she visited, starting with the current Mobil station in Richmond. She noted that the canopy of the Mobil station in Richmond currently is 1890 square feet. Granda asked if regulating both the number of pumping islands and the size of the canopy was necessary since one element determines the other. Cole said that the town would want a canopy over the pumping islands because it reduces point-source pollution from stormwater runoff, and that there is a federal regulation requirement for gas station canopies. Clarke asked based on Cole's comment if a requirement for a canopy is necessary. Cole said he was unsure if the town should require the canopy, but that the town would want a canopy over the fueling islands. Chris Granda said that it was highly likely the proposed gas station would have a canopy regardless based on state regulations.

Clarke presented the photo of the gas station with five pumping islands, and noted that this gas station was much larger in size and scale than the other gas stations along Route 2. Lisa Miller said that she would be in favor of requiring a canopy.

Granda said that he liked the structure of the present iteration of the draft regulations for vehicle fueling stations, that he would be in favor of moving this iteration forward, that the regulation on canopies is redundant since it is likely that a new or renovated gas station will have a canopy, and that the regulation does not need to have a limit on the size of the canopy. Clarke said that the regulation on canopies allows for flexibility with configuration. Fausel asked the commission about allowing only up to four pumping islands. Clarke cited the traffic study the Mobil station engineers provided, identified discrepancies, and concluded that it wasn't strong enough to persuade her that six fueling stations are needed. Cole said that in his experience he has never had to wait for fueling at the Mobil gas station, that demand is lower due to the pandemic and its effects, and that he would be in favor of allowing the number of fueling stations the site currently has. Granda concurred, and noted the proposed EV charging stations and the overall long-term shift in the market to EVs.

Fausel asked about state and local sign regulations. Cole overviewed state sign regulations on state highways, and anti-billboard laws. Venkataraman said that the applicant would have to adhere to the state and local regulations, that the most restrictive requirement applies, and that all free-standing signs in town are limited to 10 feet in height.

Clarke overviewed the revisions to the powered vehicle service and machinery service definition, and asked the commission if there are areas in town members would want to permit powered vehicle service uses and not machinery service, or vice versa. Clarke said that this definition differs from cottage industry and home occupation allowances. Clarke noted the overlap in where the members

could envision these uses to be located, and in what the members want for requirements for powered vehicle and powered machinery service uses. Fausel asked for clarification on the vehicle sales allowances as accessory uses. Clarke explained the difference between vehicle sales as accessory and primary uses. Dan Mullen identified syntactical oddities in the proposed definitions. Miller explained her understanding of the differing aesthetics of the powered vehicle service and powered machinery service, and suggested that the powered vehicle service uses should be in the Industrial/Commercial District and that the powered machinery service uses should be closer to the village. Clarke asked for clarification on which districts Miller would place powered machinery service uses and powered vehicle service uses. Miller said she would recommend allowing powered machinery service uses in the Commercial, and Village Commercial Districts, and would not place powered vehicle service uses in the Village Commercial District. Clarke said that the commission should allow powered vehicle service uses in the Village Commercial District because of Mann and Machine. Miller said that River Road would be an ideal location for powered vehicle service uses. Miller suggested creating size classifications for powered vehicle service to allow for such uses closer to the village. Granda said that there is a vehicle repair use in Jonesville. Clarke said that the commission will have to address Jonesville eventually. Fausel said that he can envision vehicle repair uses in the village and the Gateway, that he likes vehicle repair uses in the village because he likes to be able to walk to nearby businesses while his car is being serviced. Clarke asked Fausel about combining the definitions. Fausel said that he can see the use of separate definitions along Jericho Road and West Main Street, but that he can see the overlap in both uses that one definition would suffice. Clarke asked about allowing a single definition vehicle/powered machinery service in the Residential/Commercial District. Fausel said he wouldn't place the vehicle/powered machinery service use in the Residential/Commercial District because of the residential character of the district. Clarke clarified that such uses could be permitted as home occupations or cottage industries.

Clarke asked commission members for their thoughts on a combined definition. Granda said he had no issue with a combined definition for the uses. Mullen said the combined definition as presented with comments is fine.

## **6. Discussion on Nonconforming Uses and Structures**

Clarke overviewed the topic, and explained what nonconforming structures are and the current regulations. Clarke explained the proposed allowances for nonconforming structures within buffers and its potential impacts. Cole asked if the Mobil station redevelopment would meet the criteria listed in the proposed regulations. Clarke said that it would since the proposed plan would increase flood storage potential and improve water quality. Miller asked for clarification on if the proposed regulations would create undue consequences and on how nonconforming the Mobil gas station site is. Clarke noted the location of the septic tank on-site. Clarke asked Mullen for a legal perspective. Mullen said the language as-is would work well.

Fausel asked if the language has been reviewed by the Conservation Commission. Clarke and Venkataraman said that the proposed language will be sent to the Conservation Commission.

Venkataraman overviewed the suggested revisions for nonconforming uses regulations. Clarke explained the proposed revisions to definitions.

## 7. Discussion on October 6th Meeting Agenda

Clarke provided an update to the Zoning for Affordable Housing project, noting that consultant Brandy Saxton has finished her technical review and that she will provide an update at an upcoming meeting.

Clarke noted the Gateway sewer expansion project, that water will not be provided, and that the commission should talk about the Gateway District in the near future. Granda asked for more clarification on how the commission will approach discussions about the Gateway, and for additional information about the feasibility of allowing particular uses based on rates. Clarke said that the rates were discussed at the last Water/Sewer Commission meeting, that the rates for existing customers will go down, and that someone from the Water/Sewer Commission could attend a future meeting to discuss rates. Granda said he would appreciate an explanation of the numbers from a member of the Water/Sewer Commission. Venkataraman suggested that Granda reach out to Bard Hill since Hill said at a previous Planning Commission meeting that he had spreadsheets detailing the rates, and said that from his understanding the rates would go down as more connections improve the function of the wastewater plant.

Clarke said that the commission will have to discuss wetlands, and whether the Planning and Conservation Commissions will want a town-wide wetlands inventory.

Clarke said that discussion on the coordinating subcommittee--which will coordinate among the various town boards/committees--is needed, and that another person from the Planning Commission is needed for the subcommittee.

## 8. Other Business, Correspondence, and Adjournment

Clarke noted the final draft of the Williams Hill Road letter in the meeting packet. Fausel said the letter was great and suggested that commission members attend the hearing.

Clarke asked the public for final comments. Rod West let the committee know that the Selectboard and Water/Sewer Commission have differing perspectives and approaches to the town planning process, that the Water/Sewer Commission's scope is not wide enough, and that the Planning Commission should look towards allowing more housing at a wider vantage point.

Clarke told the commission that it should look into the location of the existing commercial districts and the functions of the uses in these locations.

Motion by Granda, seconded by Cole to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner

# SCOPE OF WORK AND PROPOSED SCHEDULE

## TASKS

APRIL

— **Project Administration.** The consultant will work with the Richmond Town Planner to complete project contracting and confirm the project schedule.

— **Housing Committee Meeting.** The consultant will meet virtually with the Richmond Housing Committee for a kick-off meeting (HC Meeting #1). This meeting will provide an opportunity for Housing Committee members to share their goals for the project and perspectives on housing issues more generally in Richmond with the consultant.

It is my understanding from the RFP that the Housing Committee has been working to compile demographic and housing data to be shared with the consultant. Key findings from that data will be discussed during the kick-off meeting.

In advance of the meeting, the consultant will provide the Housing Committee with draft questions for a Community Housing Survey. The survey will gauge residents' (1) level of support for additional housing in Richmond, (2) attitude toward and perceptions of affordable housing, and (3) concerns about creation of housing both in their neighborhood and in the town more broadly. The Housing Committee will be able to use the survey results to inform its future approach and strategy and to guide future public education efforts. Survey questions and distribution methods will be discussed during the meeting.

MAY

— **Community Survey.** The consultant will finalize the survey questions for an online survey to be hosted on Survey Monkey. The town will be responsible for advertising the availability of the online survey and encouraging resident participation through regularly used channels such as the town website, listserve/email groups, social media, etc. Based on experience with online surveys in recent years, the consultant recommends leaving the survey up for 4-6 weeks with weekly messaging reminding people they can participate and explaining why their input is being sought. With this approach, online surveys have been significantly out-performing mail-based surveys in Vermont communities.

The consultant recommends the Housing Committee pay particular attention to communicating with renters in Richmond as their perspective will be valuable and renters as a group typically have lower response rates to this type of community survey than homeowners. If there are other groups in Richmond that the Housing Committee is concerned will not participate in an online survey, the consultant can also provide a print version of the survey. It would be the town's responsibility to distribute and collect paper surveys and to enter the results into Survey Monkey manually.

**Deliverables:** Online Community Survey on Survey Monkey with paper version provided upon request

— **Housing Committee Meeting.** The consultant will meet virtually with the Richmond Housing Committee (HC Meeting #2). The purpose of this meeting will be for the Housing Committee to finalize and approve public distribution of the survey. It will also provide an opportunity for the Housing Committee to develop invitation lists for interviews and focus groups, and review the proposed discussion questions.

## TASKS

JUNE

— **Interviews.** The consultant will conduct phone interviews with up to six developers, builders and landlords in Richmond to hear their perspective on housing issues in the community with a particular focus on the extent to which the town’s regulations and development review processes are affecting creation of housing units generally and affordable housing in particular. The consultant will provide the Housing Committee with a summary of each interview.

The consultant will prepare a list of interview questions to be distributed to interviewees in advance. The consultant will work with the Richmond Town Planner to contact potential interviewees, schedule phone interviews and distribute the questions. The RFP requested that the scope of work include reaching out to local developers. I am also recommending including landlords with multi-unit properties.

**Deliverables:** Written summaries of each interview

— **Focus Groups.** The consultant will facilitate up to three focus groups via Zoom. The consultant will provide the Housing Committee with notes from each focus group meeting.

The consultant will work with the Housing Committee to select groups to speak with that would broaden the perspective on the community’s housing situation and identify potential participants. Based on experience, my recommendation is to plan for groups of 5-9 people. Potential topics/groups include seniors and other residents with specialized housing needs, parents with young children (hopefully capturing some renters in that group), homeowners who have created an accessory dwelling, mobile home park residents, etc.

**Deliverables:** Written notes from each focus group meeting

— **Infrastructure Assessment.** This task is not included in the RFP, but it would be a valuable step prior to drafting zoning changes that will likely include recommendations for increased densities in some areas of town. Water and sewer infrastructure is essential for creation of higher-density and affordable housing.

The consultant recommends that the Richmond Town Planner and the Housing Committee collect the information necessary to: (1) estimate the available capacity of the water and wastewater systems serving Richmond’s village center, including any constraints imposed by the Lake Champlain TMDL or other state regulations that could trigger upgrades to fully use permitted capacity; and (2) accurately map the area served (based on hook-up addresses) if this information is not currently available and (3) assess the geographic constraints on extending those systems beyond the area currently served (terrain requiring pump stations or additional storage tanks, highway or river crossings, etc.).

JULY

— **Community Survey.** The consultant will compile and analyze the survey results. As appropriate, survey responses will be broken down by demographic groups and geographic areas. The consultant will provide the Housing Committee with a written report presenting the survey results and highlighting key findings.

**Deliverables:** Survey results report



## TASKS

AUGUST

**Community Meeting 1.** The consultant will work with the Richmond Town Planner and the Housing Committee to organize and facilitate a Zoom-based community meeting. The meeting agenda would include summarizing the findings of the Housing Committee’s demographic/housing analysis, information learned through the interviews and focus groups, and the results of community survey. The meeting would also provide an opportunity for Richmond residents to share their concerns and preferences related to housing and the town’s regulations/permitting and development review processes.

The town will be responsible for advertising the meeting through regularly used channels such as the town website, listserve/email groups, social media, etc. The consultant and Town Planner will coordinate “hosting” the online meeting to ensure orderly participation. The consultant will provide the Housing Committee with a written summary of public comments and questions following the meeting.

**Deliverables:** Written meeting notes

**Zoning Review.** The consultant will prepare a technical memo reviewing Richmond’s adopted Zoning Regulations against the housing goals of the Town Plan, statutory requirements and limitations (including Act 174 provisions that became effective last October), state recommendations as presented in Zoning for Great Neighborhoods, eligibility requirements for the state’s Neighborhood Development Area program, housing needs as documented by the prior work of the Richmond Housing Committee, and information collected through the public engagement process to-date (survey, interviews, focus groups, community meeting).

The technical memo will identify approaches to improve the effectiveness of the Zoning Regulations to further the community’s objectives related to housing supply and affordability.

**Deliverables:** Technical memo

SEPTEMBER

**Housing Committee Meeting.** The consultant will meet virtually with the Richmond Housing Committee (HC Meeting #3). At this meeting, the consultant will present the technical memo reviewing Richmond’s adopted Zoning Regulations. The Housing Committee will agree upon a zoning reform framework, selecting elements and approaches described in the technical memo for further development as proposed zoning amendments.

**Draft Zoning Amendments.** The consultant will prepare the proposed zoning amendments as outlined in the zoning reform framework. The first draft will be annotated to provide context for the proposed changes and facilitate Housing Committee discussion. The first draft of the amendments will be distributed to the Housing Committee for review and discussion.

**Deliverables:** Draft zoning amendments for Housing Committee review and comment

## TASKS

OCTOBER

— **Housing Committee Meeting.** The consultant will meet virtually with the Richmond Housing Committee (HC Meeting #4) to review and discuss the draft zoning amendments. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to organize and prepare for the second community meeting.

— **Revise Zoning Amendments.** The consultant will revise the draft zoning amendments based on feedback from Housing Committee members. Once revised, the draft zoning amendments will be provided to the Richmond Town Planner for public distribution in advance of the second community meeting.

**Deliverables:** Draft zoning amendments for public review and comment

NOVEMBER

— **Community Meeting 2.** The consultant will work with the Richmond Town Planner and the Housing Committee to organize and facilitate a Zoom-based community meeting. The meeting agenda would include presenting the findings of the zoning review and the draft zoning amendments prepared in response. The town will be responsible for advertising the meeting through regularly used channels such as the town website, listserve/email groups, social media, etc.

The consultant and Richmond Town Planner will jointly facilitate discussion of the proposed zoning amendments, taking comments and answering questions from attendees. The consultant will provide the Housing Committee with a written summary of public comments and questions following the meeting.

**Deliverables:** Written meeting notes

— **Recommended Changes.** The consultant will prepare a memo for the Housing Committee outlining any recommended changes to the proposed zoning amendments and discussion points for the next meeting based on public input from the second community meeting.

**Deliverables:** Memo outlining recommended changes

DECEMBER

— **Housing Committee Meeting.** The consultant will meet virtually with the Richmond Housing Committee (HC Meeting #5) to review and discuss final changes to the draft zoning amendments. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to organize and prepare for the Planning Commission and Selectboard presentations.

— **Final Report.** The consultant will prepare a final report incorporating the information collected through community outreach (survey, interviews, focus groups, meetings), the technical memo, the zoning reform framework and the final recommended zoning amendments. The consultant will provide the Richmond Town Planner with a PDF of the final report for distribution to the Housing Committee, Planning Commission and Selectboard, as well as for posting on the town website.

**Deliverables:** Final Zoning for Affordable Housing Report in PDF format

## TASKS

JANUARY

— **Planning Commission Presentation.** The consultant will present the final report of the Zoning for Affordable Housing project with a focus on the recommended zoning amendments. The consultant will facilitate a discussion between the Planning Commission, Housing Committee and town residents in attendance regarding the report’s findings and recommendations.

Deliverables: Presentation

— **Selectboard Presentation.** The consultant will present the final report of the Zoning for Affordable Housing project with a focus on the recommended zoning amendments. The consultant will facilitate a discussion between the Selectboard, Housing Committee and town residents in attendance regarding the report’s findings and recommendations.

Deliverables: Presentation

## PROJECT BUDGET

TASKS	HOURS	FEE
Project Administration	12	\$1,200
Housing Committee Meetings	20	\$2,000
Zoning Review	32	\$3,200
Technical Memo	16	\$1,600
Zoning Amendments	48	\$4,800
Final Report	8	\$800
Community Survey	40	\$4,000
Interviews	12	\$1,200
Focus Groups	12	\$1,200
Community Meetings	8	\$800
Presentations	8	\$800
Consultant Fee:	<i>216 hours @ \$100/hr</i>	\$21,600
Direct Expenses:		\$400
<b>Total Project Cost:</b>		<b>\$22,000</b>

# 1. Richmond Resident Housing Survey 2021

---

## Survey Goal

The goal of the housing survey was to collect information on Richmond’s demographics, housing stock, housing needs, housing issues and livability – a task set by the Richmond Housing Committee for 2021. The survey results will also provide a foundation for future community education efforts as they provides a snapshot of Richmond residents’ current views and perspectives on housing issues generally and affordable housing in particular.

## Survey Method

The housing survey was conducted using an online platform (Survey Monkey). The survey was opened from May 17 to June 28. Residents were invited to participate through weekly messages on Richmond’s Front Porch Forum, which reaches a high percentage of households via email. Information about the survey was also disseminated through a variety of community organizations, social media platforms and websites. A printed version of the survey was made available, but no paper surveys were completed and returned within the survey period.

## Survey Respondents

A total of 339 Richmond residents responded to the housing survey, a number adequate to provide a statistically significant sample with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. However, responses to several of the questions suggest that survey respondents were likely not a fully representative sample of Richmond residents. Significantly more women than men responded to the survey. Young adults were under-represented. One- and two-person households were under-represented.

---

## Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

### GENDER

60%	Female	28%	Male	12%	NR
-----	--------	-----	------	-----	----

### AGE

13%	NR	21%	35-44	19%	55-64
13%	Under 35	17%	45-54	18%	65+

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD

10%	1 person	17%	3 people	9%	5+ people
35%	2 people	18%	4 people	11%	NR

### RACE/ETHNICITY

17%	NR	1%	Hispanic or Latinx
80%	White	<1%	Black or African American
2%	Other	<1%	American Indian or Alaskan Native

### ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

1%	<\$15,000	23%	\$100,000-\$149,999
3%	\$15,000-\$29,999	8%	\$150,000-\$199,999
8%	\$30,000-\$49,999	4%	\$200,000-\$249,999
12%	\$50,000-\$74,999	4%	\$250,000+
14%	\$75,000-\$99,999	24%	NR

---

Survey results were cross-tabulated and analyzed based on the following demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents:

- » **Homeowners** accounted for 290 of the 339 respondents (86%). This is higher than the estimated percentage of homeowner households in Richmond from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (80%) suggesting that homeowners may be over-represented in the housing survey.
- » **Renters** accounted for 46 of the 339 respondents (14%). This is lower than the estimated percentage of renter households in Richmond from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (20%) suggesting that renters may be under-represented in the housing survey.
- » **In village.** 116 of the 339 respondents (34%) indicated they lived in Richmond village.
- » **Outside village.** 223 of the 339 respondents (66%) indicated they did not live in Richmond village.
- » **Under age 35.** Young adults accounted for 45 of the 339 respondents (15% of those who provided age information). This is less than the estimated percentage of young adults living in Richmond from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (26%) suggesting they may be under-represented in the survey.
- » **Age 35-54.** Middle-age adults accounted for 128 of the 339 respondents (43% of those who provided age information). This is slightly higher than the estimated percentage of middle-age adults living in Richmond from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (38%).
- » **Age 55 or older.** Older adults accounted for 123 of the 339 respondents (42% of those who provided age information). This is slightly higher than the estimated percentage of older adults living in Richmond from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (36%).
- » **Current address <5 yrs.** 95 out of the 339 respondents (28%) had moved to their current home recently.
- » **Current address 5-20 yrs.** 126 out of the 339 respondents (37%) had lived in their current home for 5 to 20 years.
- » **Current address >20 yrs.** 118 out of the 339 respondents (35%) had lived in their current home for more than 20 years.

- » **HH Income <\$50,000.** Residents living in a household earning less than \$50,000 a year accounted for 38 of the 339 respondents (15% of those who provided income information). This is similar to the estimated percent of households in that income bracket from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (17%).
- » **HH Income \$50-150,000.** Residents living in a household earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000 a year accounted for 166 of the 339 respondents (65% of those who provided income information). This is slightly higher than the estimated percent of households in that income bracket from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (59%).
- » **HH Income >\$150,000.** Residents living in a household earning more than \$150,000 a year accounted for 52 of the 339 respondents (20% of those who provided income information). This is slightly lower than the estimated percent of households in that income bracket from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 American Community Survey (24%).

## Housing and Community Characteristics

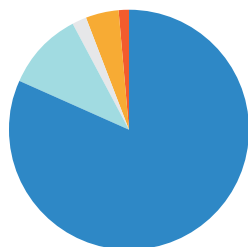
Most survey respondents (77%) lived in a single-family home and the majority of those homes (59%) were on 2 acres or less. This reflects both the historically dense settlement pattern in the village and the low-density suburban pattern of development in many areas of town outside the village.

Half of survey respondents who rented lived in a building with 2-4 units. Survey results suggest that relatively few single-family homes in Richmond are renter occupied (9% renters responding indicated they lived in a single-family home). Survey results also suggest that accessory dwelling units (ADUs) represent a very small percentage of Richmond’s rental stock. Only three renters reported living in an ADU and 12 homeowners indicated their property included an ADU. Survey results also suggest that there is relatively little owner-occupied rental housing in Richmond as only 13% of respondents who rented indicated that their landlord lived on the same premises.

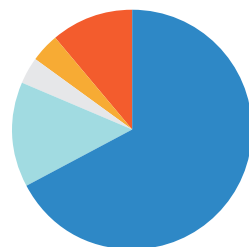
Only four survey respondents reported living in a mobile or manufactured home, whether on its own lot or in a park. Mobile or manufactured homes comprise more than 10% of the town’s housing stock, including about 150 homes within Riverview Commons. This suggests that residents living in mobile or manufactured homes are significantly under-represented in the survey. The Richmond Affordable Housing Committee may want to consider alternative approaches to gather information on the housing issues, needs and preferences of Riverview Commons residents in particular.

### Housing by Structure Type

■ single-family ■ multi-family (2-4) ■ multi-family (5+) ■ townhouse/condo ■ mobile/manufactured



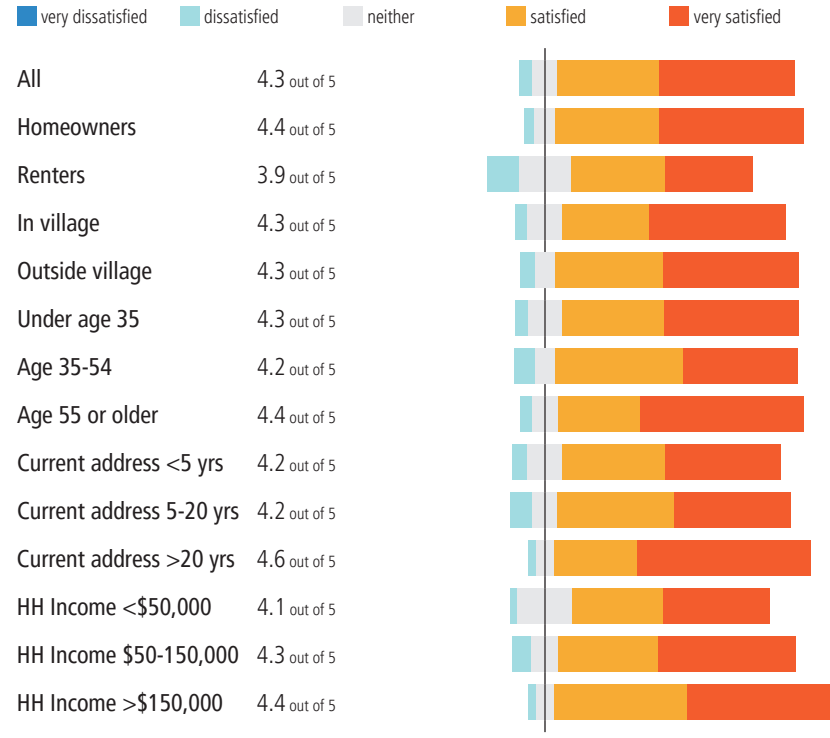
Survey Respondents



American Community Survey Estimates

Overall the residents responding to the survey had a high level of satisfaction with their current home. Respondents who were renting or had an annual household income of less than \$50,000 had a somewhat lower level of satisfaction. Those who had lived at their current address for more than 20 years had a somewhat higher level of satisfaction.

### Level of Satisfaction with Current Home



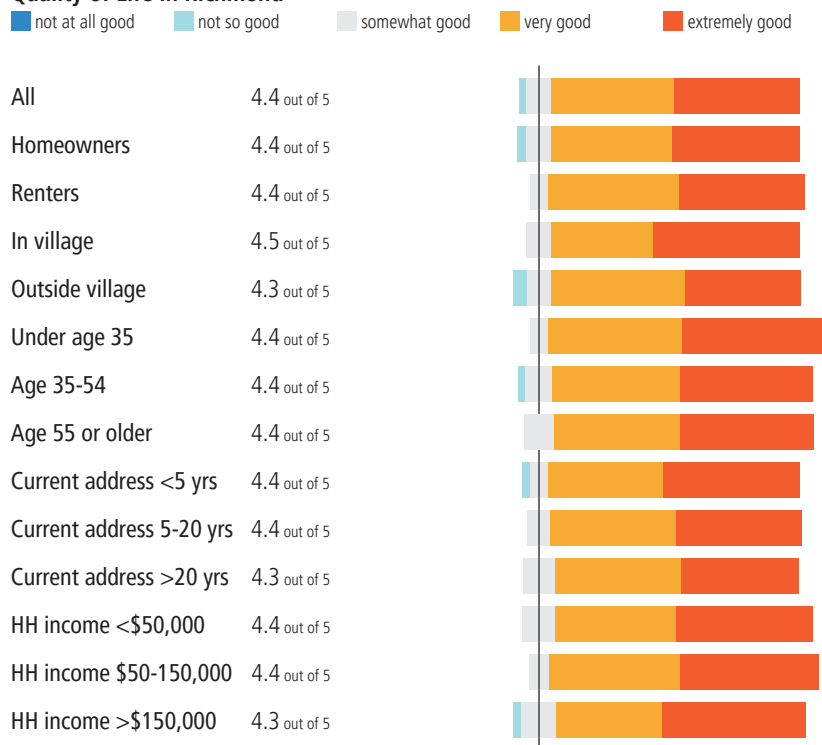
The majority of respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with their home identified the following factors as contributing to their satisfaction:

- » Location (95%)
- » Community (79%)
- » Setting (77%)
- » Size of home (68%)
- » Proximity to recreation (66%)
- » Neighbors (59%)
- » Exterior of home (52%)
- » Interior of home (52%)

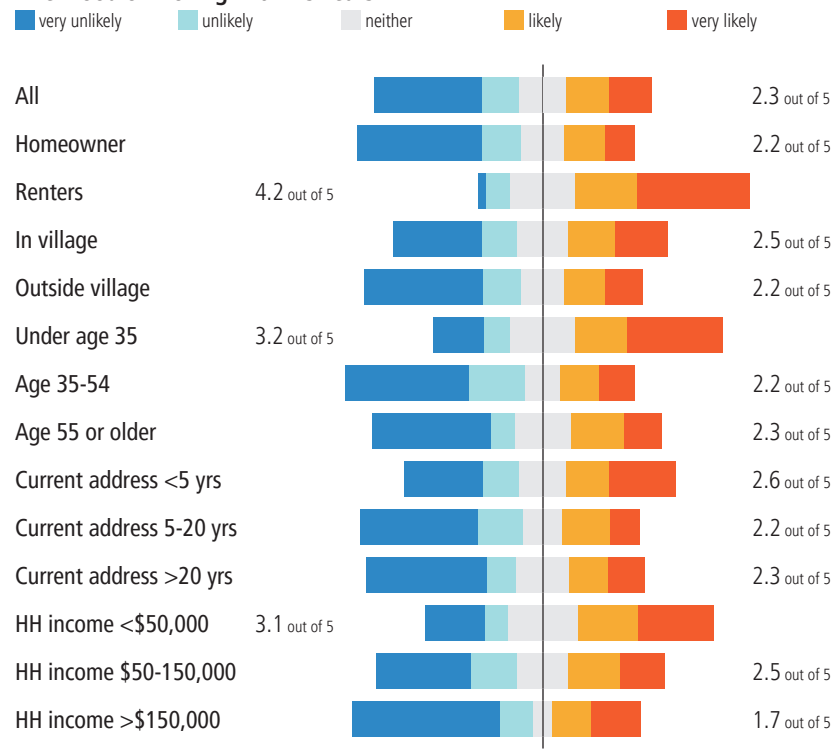
Survey respondents indicated they perceive the quality of life in Richmond to be very high. They also saw Richmond as a community that welcomes new residents and this sentiment was strongest amongst younger residents and those who have moved to town recently. Overall, there was little difference in response to those two questions across the demographic and socio-economic groups analyzed.

When asked what had happened to quality of life while they've been living in Richmond, the majority of survey respondents indicated that it was about the same (54%), many thought it had gotten better (35%) and very few indicated it had gotten worse (6%). Those with the least positive outlook were respondents with an annual household income of less than \$50,000, 11% of whom indicated quality of life in Richmond had gotten worse.

### Quality of Life in Richmond



### Likelihood of Moving within 5 Years



A majority of survey respondents (51%) thought they were unlikely to move from their current home within the next five years. This was not true for respondents renting their home, 61% of whom thought it was likely that they would move. A greater likelihood of moving was evident among young adult and lower income residents, which reflects that more people in those groups are renting. Higher income residents were the least likely to think that they would move from their current home.

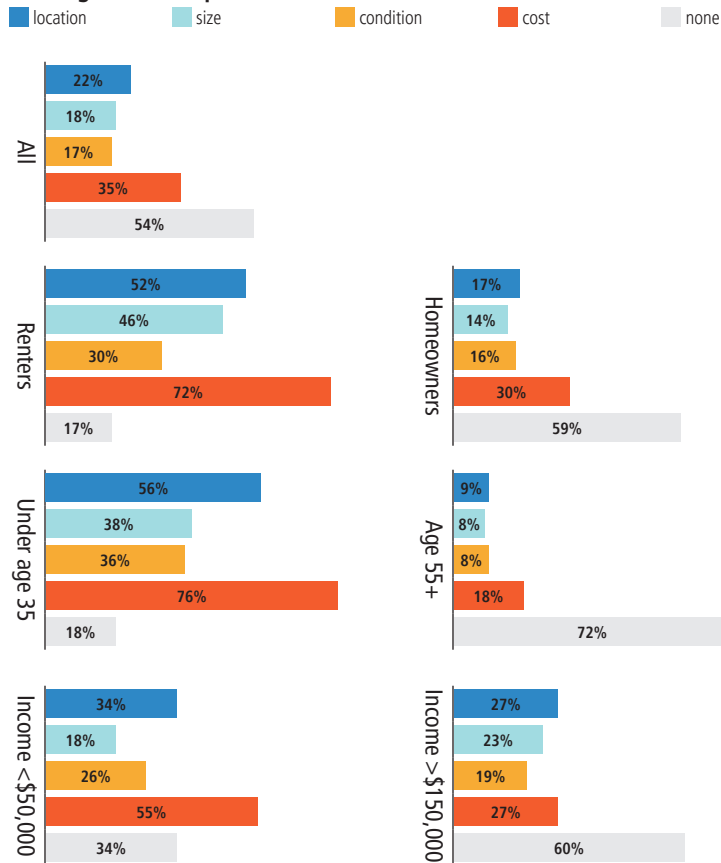
Those respondents who indicated that they were very likely or likely to move were also asked whether housing was a reason to move. The majority (63%) indicated it was. 93% of renters, 80% of village residents and 96% of young adults likely to move said housing was a reason. There was little evidence in the results that a significant percentage of older adults are considering moving from their current home, suggesting most want to 'age in place'.



## Housing Needs and Preferences

The majority of survey respondents (54%) indicated that they had not met any barriers to meeting their housing needs while living in Vermont. However, response to this question was highly variable indicating that residents in different demographic and socio-economic groups have had very different housing experiences. Renters and young adults reported the greatest challenges finding housing. Older adults and those that have lived in their current home for more than 20 years reported the least challenges.

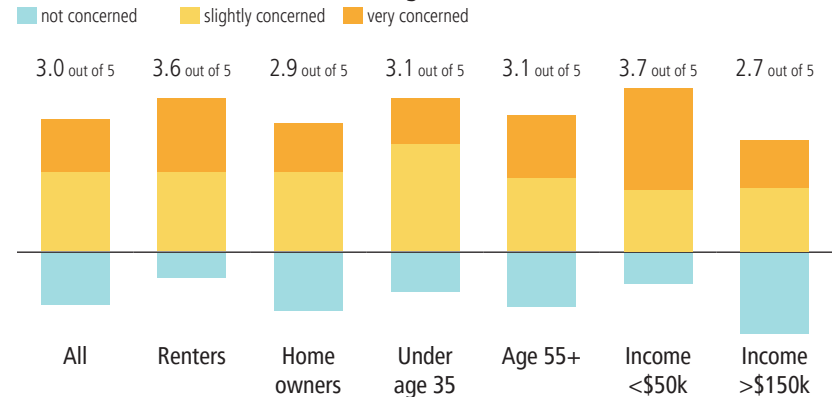
### Housing Barriers Experienced in Vermont



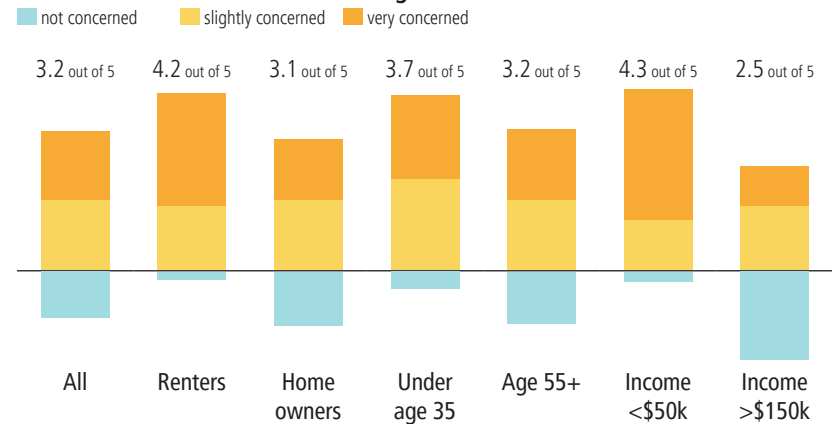
The majority of survey respondents (59%) reported that they personally knew someone who is/was looking for housing in Richmond but has/had not been able to find something that meets their needs and budget.

The majority of survey respondents (69%) reported they were concerned about their current housing costs and slightly more (71%) expressed concern about being able to continue to afford housing in Richmond in the future. Increased concern about housing affordability in the future was evident in all demographic and socio-economic groups analyzed except higher income residents.

### Level of Concern about Current Housing Costs



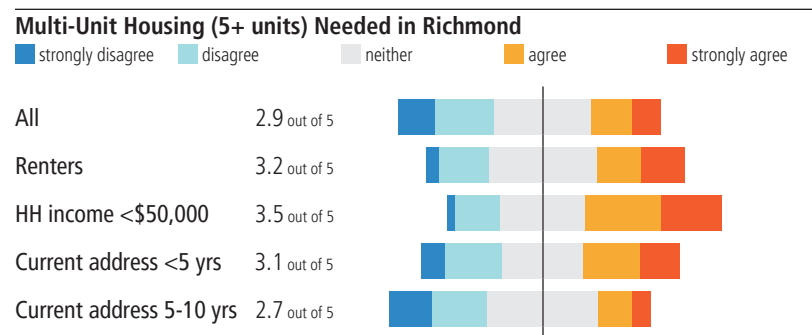
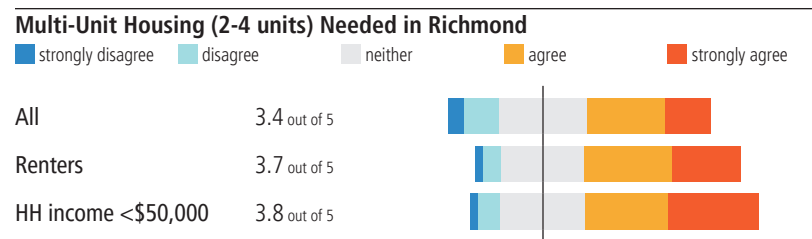
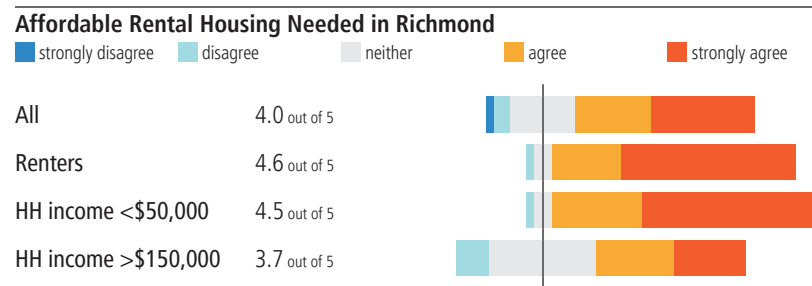
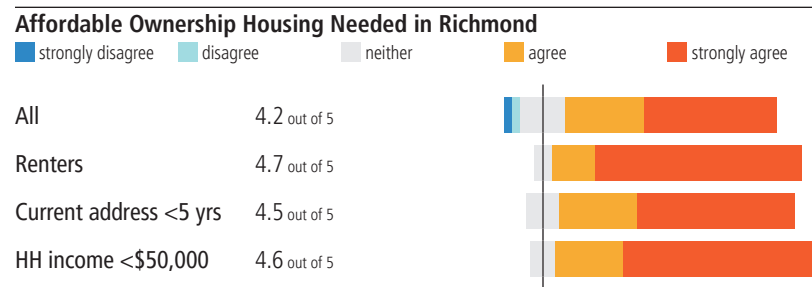
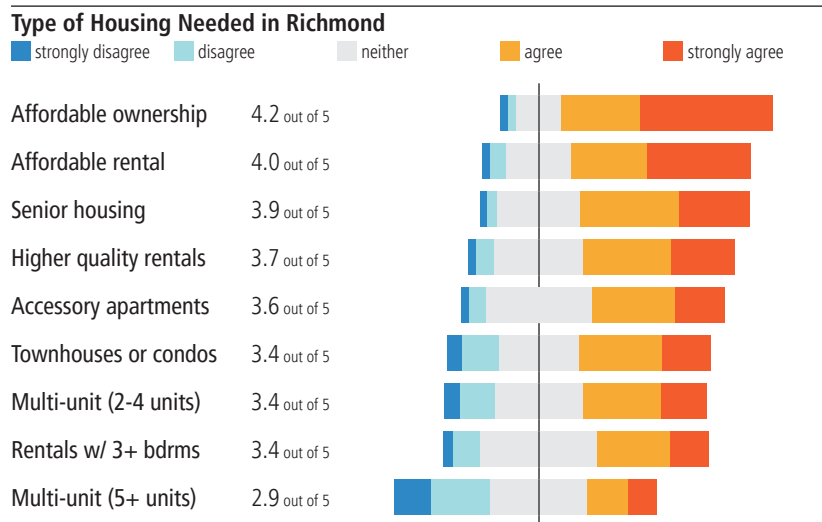
### Level of Concern about Future Housing Costs



A majority of survey respondents agreed that four types of housing were needed in Richmond: ownership housing with a purchase price of less than \$300,000 (74%), housing that can be rented for less than \$1,200/month (63%), senior housing (59%) and higher quality rental housing (53%). There was neither majority agreement or disagreement about the need for the other six housing types listed.

The level of agreement about the need for housing varied across the demographic and socio-economic groups analyzed. Renters, those who had recently moved into their current home and lower income residents were significantly more supportive of all types of housing.

Affordable ownership housing was the top ranked option for all groups except older adults who identified a greater need for senior housing. Multi-unit housing with 5 or more units was the only housing type to have more respondents opposed than in support. Across all the groups, there was greater support for the smaller multi-unit housing than there was for larger multi-unit housing.



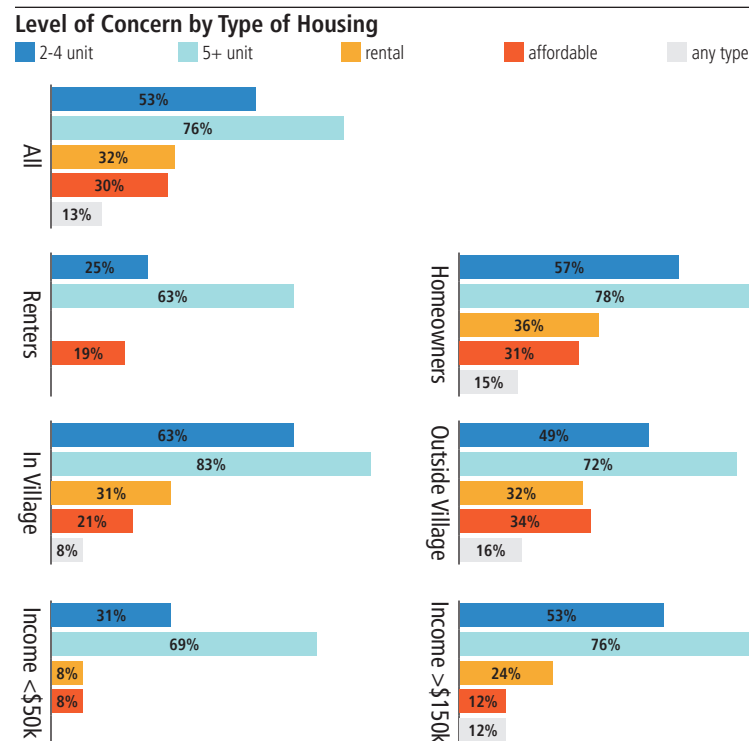
44% of all survey respondents expressed some level of concern about new housing being built near their homes. The level of concern was highest amongst those who had lived in their home for 5 years or more. It was lowest amongst those who had moved into the current home recently, renters and higher income residents.

Those respondents who expressed some level of concern identified the following as potential negative impacts of new housing:

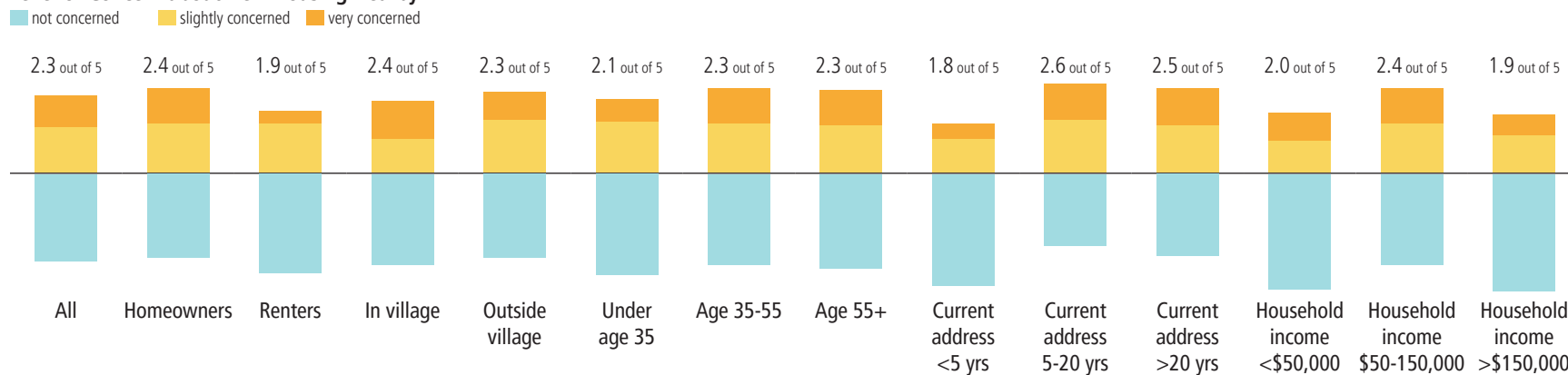
- » Loss of open space (83%)
- » More traffic (76%)
- » More noise, light, etc. (67%)
- » Loss of rural character (66%)
- » Loss of privacy (64%)
- » More environmental impact (56%)

Concerns varied somewhat across the demographic and socio-economic groups analyzed. Increased traffic was a concern for 90% of those who live in the village, as was loss of privacy (75%). Loss of privacy was a greater concern for lower income residents (77%) than it was for higher income residents (53%).

Of the respondents who expressed some level of concern, a majority were concerned about multi-unit housing (53% for 2-4 units and 76% for 5+ units). 30% expressed concern about affordable housing. 13% were concerned about all types of housing.



### Level of Concern about New Housing Nearby

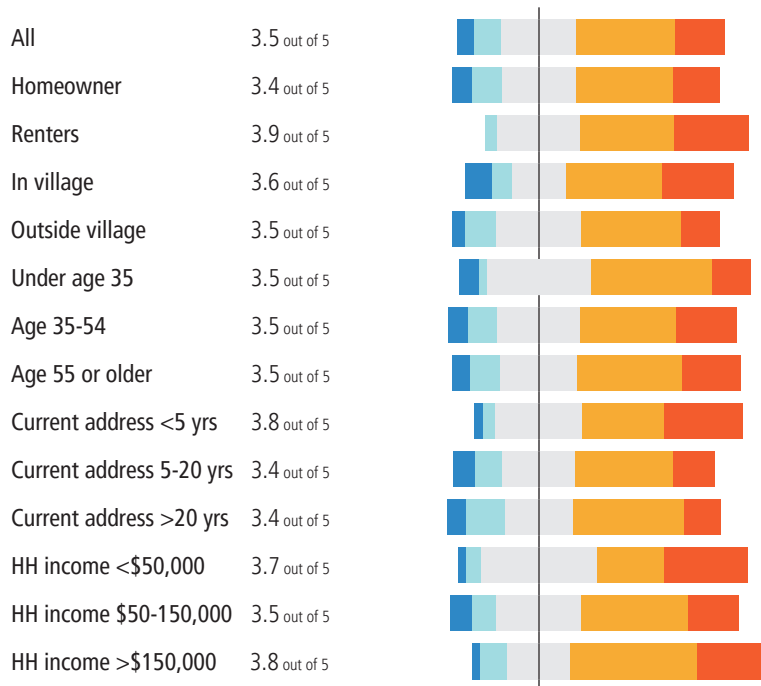


A majority of survey respondents (52%) were in agreement that more housing should be built in the village. The level of agreement varied across the demographic and socio-economic groups analyzed. Renters expressed the strongest support for additional housing in the village.

Those who lived in the village were more supportive of additional housing in the village than those who lived outside the village, but this difference is almost entirely explained by the higher percentage of renters living in the village. Lower income residents were supportive of additional housing – again reflecting a high percentage of renters in the group. Higher income residents were also more supportive of additional housing in the village – two-thirds of those respondents lived outside the village.

**Level of Agreement with Building More Housing in Richmond Village**

Legend: strongly disagree (dark blue), disagree (light blue), neither (grey), agree (orange), strongly agree (red)

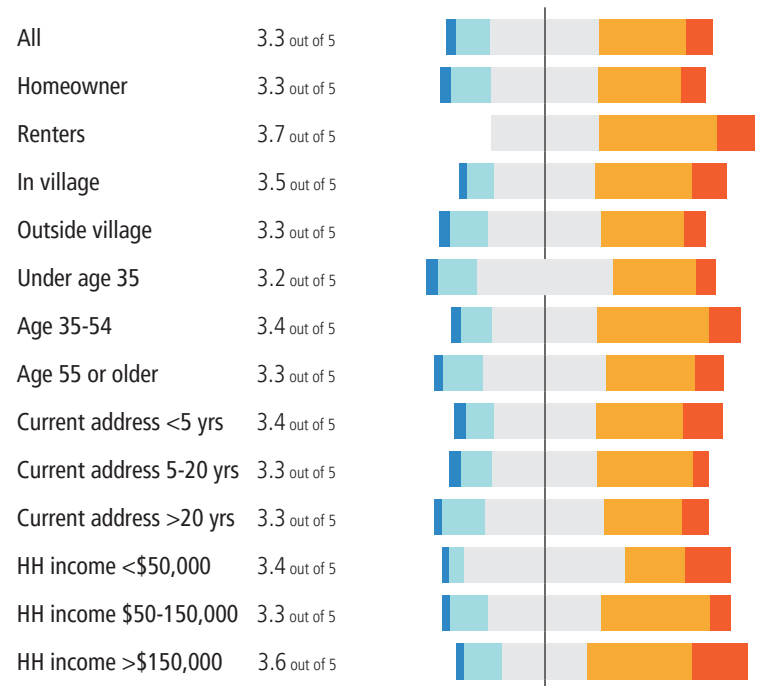


There was neither majority agreement or disagreement that more housing should be built outside the village. Across all the groups analyzed there was less support for additional housing outside the village than in the village.

Renters remain more supportive of additional housing as evidenced across multiple survey questions. Younger residents, a group that includes a significant percentage of renters, were noticeably less supportive of housing outside the village than in the village. There was a significant difference in support for outside the village as compared to in the village among lower income residents. Stronger support for additional housing outside the village was evident in the higher income group although it was less robust than support for housing in the village.

**Level of Agreement with Building More Housing outside Richmond Village**

Legend: strongly disagree (dark blue), disagree (light blue), neither (grey), agree (orange), strongly agree (red)



Survey respondents who agreed that housing should be added to the village selected the following reasons for their position:

- » The village is walkable (92%)
- » The village has water and sewer (76%)
- » The village is supposed to be higher density (63%)
- » Strengthen sense of community in village (57%)
- » Protect rural character outside village (52%)

Those sentiments were generally consistent across the demographic and socio-economic groups analyzed. Village residents responding to this question expressed even stronger support for the reasons listed above. All the younger residents and lower income residents who responded selected walkability. Protecting rural character outside the village was a much more common response among younger residents than it was for any other group.

There was not clear majority support for where in the village additional housing should be built. Eight areas were identified with between 34% and 53% of respondents agreeing that there should be more housing in the village selecting each area. West Main Street, East Main Street, Thompson Road, Cochran Road and Huntington Road were the top areas selected. Baker Street, Millet Street, Tilden Avenue, Bridge Street, Depot Street and Pleasant Street had the weakest support.

Survey respondents who disagreed that housing should be added to the village selected the following reasons for their position:

- » The village is built up densely enough already (85%)
- » Protect the historic character of the village (74%)
- » Don't want more multi-unit buildings in village (70%)
- » Don't want more homes converted to apartments in village (62%)
- » Land around the village is in the floodplain (62%)
- » No more land to build on in the village (58%)

Survey respondents who agreed that housing should be added outside the village selected the following reasons for their position:

- » There is land well-suited for housing outside the village (69%)
- » People want to live in a rural setting (60%)

A majority of renters also cited more privacy as a reason for adding housing outside the village. A majority of people who lived in the village cited a lack of room for more housing in the village as a reason for adding housing outside the village.

Survey respondents who disagreed that housing should be added outside the village selected the following reasons for their position:

- » Protect rural character (94%)
- » Prevent environmental / natural resource impacts (90%)

A majority of higher income residents asked this questions also indicated that new housing would adversely impact neighbors.

## Comments from Respondents

Survey respondents were able to write in other answers or additional comments on several questions. The survey also included two open-ended questions. Those responses are summarized below

**Factors Affecting Satisfaction.** When asked about factors that contributed to their satisfaction with their current home, several survey respondents identified the school system. A number of respondents also discussed location-related factors like proximity to larger communities (Burlington, Williston, Waterbury, etc.) and couples splitting their commutes. Others referenced the combination of rural character and convenient access (89 corridor, proximity to greater Burlington area, etc.). Several spoke about the rural setting of their home – low traffic roads, woods, natural beauty, quiet. Several mentioned outdoor recreation – trails, walking, biking, etc. One respondent identified feeling safe, another spoke about the benefits of living in a quiet, primarily owner-occupied neighborhood, and several others mentioned neighbors. One respondent spoke about finding a place

to rent that was well-maintained and safe for their new baby, and another mentioned the benefit of finding stable, affordable rental housing operated by a non-profit.

Negative factors raised by survey respondents included high housing costs and taxes. One respondent mentioned how dangerous it is to walk or bike on roads in town and the lack of bike/ped facilities, and the lack of transit. Several respondents noted they had purchased a home that was in poor condition and needed a lot of work. One respondent identified zoning setback requirements as a significant constraint on updating their home.

**Housing Barriers.** When asked whether they had encountered barriers to finding housing in Vermont, a number of respondents wrote more detailed comments about housing costs. Some were concerned about costs for the next generation or other family members rather than themselves. Several spoke about how long it took to find housing that met their needs and that they could afford. Other respondents discussed the poor condition of homes available for purchase or rent – for homeowners, the expense (often not anticipated) and time commitment required to make needed repairs and improvements.

- “ Although I love where I live, it is extremely expensive.
- “ Very high taxes. We worked hard to pay off our mortgage, but our tax bill is over \$2500 a quarter.
- “ If our home wasn't purchased from family there's no way we would have been able to buy a house in the current market!
- “ It took a long time to find an affordable property in Richmond. Options were scarce.
- “ It took us a year and a half of active looking to find our home.
- “ It was very hard to find a place in the village. We had lived in Richmond Town for 30+ years and wanted to move in to the village. We are fortunate to be able to afford the higher costs, but few homes were available and most way over priced for the quality.
- “ Our family looked for a home in the greater Burlington area for 2+ years. Richmond was our first choice location - we ended up finding a great home

in the village, but it was difficult to find a home in a good location, good condition and in our price range.

- “ Finding an affordable home required accepting a home in very poor condition.
- “ We had to buy a home in unsuitable condition because we couldn't afford something in good condition that met our location preferences.
- “ We bought this one even though it was above our budget, but it is straining our finances.
- “ We bought a house that was big enough and within budget but that needed lots of work including over 15,000 dollars worth of foundation work which wasn't picked up on the survey. Generally, the condition of houses in Vermont is bad compared to other areas. New housing is more suitable for young families that may not have the money, time and/or skill to make repairs.
- “ Vermont is a very difficult place to be a renter, especially in the greater Burlington area. Everything is geared toward college students so rent is high and homes are often not maintained well.

Another group of respondents identified a need for single-level housing suitable for older residents. Several expressed concern that they may not be able to remain in their current home and that there were limited options for senior housing in the community.

- “ As a senior, I would like a ranch type condo/townhome with everything on one floor and garages in between so you do not share a wall with others.
- “ As we get older, this house will be more difficult to live in due to lots of stairs and the effort it requires to shovel out when it snows, etc.
- “ We may need to move to simpler housing as we are both over 77 years old. There is little in the way of housing for elderly in Richmond.
- “ I've been looking for a different apartment as the present one is lacking the needed amenities as I age. Bathroom with shower on first floor & bedroom on second. Unit has not been well maintained. Mice infestation, mold, windows don't open & very drafty etc.
- “ Unable to find a newer small (2 bedroom) home with all rooms on same level.
- “ Unable to safely access public transit or get around without a car.

**Reasons for Moving.** Those survey respondents who indicated that they were likely to move in the next five years were asked where they might move to. There were several renters who indicated that they wanted to find other housing in Richmond. There were several other comments related to finding affordable housing in Richmond or the Chittenden County area. Few respondents indicated plans to move out of the state.

For those who indicated housing was one of the reasons they were considering moving, a large number mentioned downsizing, retiring, or finding housing suitable for their needs as they age.

- “ Our current house is five miles out of Richmond village which requires a car to get food, etc. The house is two story with basement so not senior friendly when dealing with general maintenance (mowing, shoveling etc.). Plan to stay in Vermont.
- “ As I stated above, turning 65, living alone with health conditions, and tending to all the household needs is overwhelming.
- “ Lack of first floor bedroom.
- “ Home and road upkeep requirements may exceed capabilities / preference as we age.
- “ Too much upkeep for retirees, in the future.
- “ Home would need some major accommodations for aging in place.
- “ Plan to downsize and retire from work.
- “ Large home for empty nester.
- “ Too big, taxes too high, too expensive to maintain.
- “ I live in a three story building and may downsize as my child is grown and has move out.
- “ Kids almost out of school/house, so it might not make sense to keep a place that is so expensive.
- “ We are on a second floor and are dependent on cars. My husband issues make the stairs challenging and he may have to stop driving at some point. We would like to keep our son in the Richmond school but that may not be possible.
- “ Would like to move to a condo.

Several renters indicated that the place they were currently renting was not going to remain available to rent and they would have to move. Several renters also said they were looking to buy a home.

- “ Cost of rentals, no homes to buy.
- “ Would like to move to small house or condo as non hot cost of a mortgage is equal to or less than monthly rental costs in most scenarios.
- “ Current rental is short term (6 months). Currently trying to buy in Richmond, otherwise find another rental.
- “ Owners are moving, can't afford to buy.
- “ Currently renting and would like to buy. However, there is no way I could afford a home in Richmond at my income level and with the current costs of homes in the Richmond area.
- “ We enjoy where we currently live but would like to be homeowners at some point.
- “ We have rented for 5 years and are looking to own a home. We have been looking in Richmond and surroundings towns for about a year.
- “ Want to purchase our own home.
- “ We really want to purchase a home, but haven't found the right spot yet.
- “ We are renting and trying to put together a down payment for a house. Hopefully with in the next 5 years that will be the case.

A few respondents noted they were looking for a bigger home or more land, or a home in better condition or requiring less work.

- “ Expanding family, will need more space.
- “ Our house is too small for the family.
- “ Not enough space and we don't want to rent indefinitely.
- “ We need more space without increasing what we pay.
- “ We don't have adequate space for a family of 4 with one or two parents working from home at least part time for the foreseeable future.
- “ I do not want to continue to live as part of a condo association. I want privacy.
- “ I need a new home, that isn't a farm house that is smelling and falling apart

- “ My husband and I want to start a family, have land for a garden/chickens, and I want to continue working from home; our 2 bedroom condo does not allow for that growth.
- “ We would be interested in a house/ property with more useable land (for an accessory dwelling, garage, garden etc) and our current home cannot accommodate that. We are also in a busy road which is not great for walking, children, etc.
- “ We would like either more land or more walkability. There is a risk of development next to us also.

A number of respondents also mentioned rising taxes, cost of living and cost of housing in Vermont as a reason to move.

- “ We need to be closer to family and our money will go so much further in Madison, WI. Richmond is wonderful, Vermont is amazing. We would stay if it made sense.
- “ The cost of housing in Vermont is becoming unaffordable due to school and property taxes.
- “ Taxes and water are very expensive, so I am likely to move to a more affordable town.
- “ Property and Social Security Income Taxes
- “ Rent, water bill, utilities are very high and don't match Vermont wages. The community is changing in that a very specific, high income demographic can afford to live and buy here.
- “ How unaffordable it is.
- “ I live in a mobile home park that raises the lot rent every year (minus the covid year) I am a few short years away from retirement and can't afford a mortgage and make too much for section 8 so unless the state puts a cap on lot rents (all home rents for that matter) I will likely have no choice but sell my mobile home and move to a less expensive area.
- “ Would love to stay in Richmond but I plan to buy a home in the next 5 years and am not sure if there would be too many homes available in Richmond that would be in my price range.
- “ 6 family members in a small 2-bedroom. We cannot afford anything larger in Richmond.

**Reasons for Staying.** Those survey respondents who indicated they were unlikely to move during the next five years were asked about their reasons for staying. Most replied that they were happy with their current home and had no reason to leave.

- “ Great place to live. I know all my neighbors and enjoy the low density housing.
- “ I live in the best place in the world. I can't think of another place I would rather be.
- “ I love our house and Richmond. I plan to stay as long as I can.
- “ Amazing neighbors, caring and active community, walking to library, town offices, grocery store, post office, dentist. Living in a village but having enough space between dwellings that we have privacy in our yard when we want it. Not living so packed in that noise from neighbors and restaurants and auto traffic become overwhelming.
- “ In part because of the many years I've lived here. My neighbors are also a big reason for staying – lovely people.
- “ I've grown attached to the place despite itself.
- “ My home is perfect. I love my neighbors and the landscape is beautiful.
- “ I have a decent house on just under three acres and it's nearly paid off. The mortgage is lower than rent for a 1 bedroom apartment. Why would I move?
- “ Retired, no mortgage, happy.
- “ Good well water, private lot, high speed internet, less than 30 minutes to where I work in Winooski.
- “ We have done extensive renovations to make the house exactly what we want.
- “ We love it here and have no plans to go elsewhere unless we need to at some point for elder care.

A number of respondents identified having children in school as a reason for staying and a several mentioned proximity to work. Quite a few respondents noted the difficulty in finding other comparable or better housing in the area.



- “ We love where and what we have and know it will be difficult to replace within the Chittenden County.
- “ I like where I live but I can't afford to move anywhere else.
- “ Could never afford something as nice.
- “ I don't think we will be able to afford anything in this area. I'm not feeling at 60+ like I want to do a lot of work on place we are likely able to afford.
- “ Finding a comfortable home with similar amenities but smaller in scale is proving to be challenging in current market conditions.
- “ We would only move to a (slightly) larger house in Richmond, and there are no homes in Richmond for us to move to. They are either purchased too quickly at a price we can't compete at, or simply don't exist.
- “ School district/kids, and because it's unaffordable in all the other areas we would consider living.
- “ Can't find a slight upgrade on our budget in Richmond.
- “ Lack of a better place.
- “ Good location & size. We won't find another for what we pay now.

**Concerns about New Housing.** Those respondents who indicated they have concerns about new housing being built near their homes had an opportunity to describe their concerns. Many spoke about a loss of the village or rural character that they value.

- “ I don't want the village to be crammed with buildings, that would look awful and it reduces quality of life for the residents (current and new). The village is such a wonderful place to live, for those of us who choose to live in town and on small plots. That doesn't mean we should cram in more housing where it doesn't fit.
- “ I moved here for the rural character. I like the rural character and I don't want that to change.
- “ I would be very concerned to have more accessory dwellings in our already very small neighborhood adding more buildings, more traffic, more noise and less families. I agree that affordable housing is a problem but I really hope we can focus on keeping the character of our small rural village so that we don't lose what makes us such a special community.

- “ My concern would be a large overbearing rise in housing that doesn't align with the character of Richmond. For instance I consider what is being build in Williston and all of the new construction has completely changed the look and feel of Williston (more construction, traffic, less open space, less quaint). I would hate to see that happen in Richmond. I think that additional housing could be built mindfully, tastefully and within reason, with quality over quantity in mind.
- “ We already have more rental units than any other neighborhood. We don't want it more dense here! I have already attended a planning commission meeting saying this and was assured that our neighborhood would be left as is. Now here we are talking about accessory dwellings again. Just stop. Our neighborhood cannot support all of the rentals needed in Richmond!
- “ We moved from our last house on East Main Street (now Perpetual Lane) because of the overcrowding and inconsiderate development on that small property. There are way too many units there for rent and the revolving door of tenants is disconcerting. It was way too loud there, homes too close together with more being built when we left, constant dogs barking, cars coming in and out all night and immutable construction/yard work being done was enough to make us move. We would hate to have this happen again at our new home.

Some expressed concern about loss of undeveloped open space and environment impacts.

- “ We care deeply about conservation and are very concerned about the loss of natural landscapes and habitat.
- “ The animals deserve their home, too. It's very distressing to see woodlands cleared for a home.
- “ Richmond is already a recreational hub. With more housing more pressure is likely on our natural resources.

A number of respondents mentioned increased traffic.

- “ Traffic speeds and noise are my top concerns.
- “ Traffic is already terrible through town.

A few respondents also spoke about a lack of planning or poor oversight of development.

“ I feel that the town is growing, but without a good plan for infrastructure such as road and pedestrian/shared use upgrades. The village feels crowded now - the park, river trail, loss of access to river outside of the village due to parking bans have all increased the parking in the village. It feels tight, lots of cars, no extra room for walking or biking on the roads.

“ Poor oversight over new developments. No community design efforts.

**Housing in the Village.** Respondents were asked whether they agreed that new housing should be built in Richmond Village. Those who agreed had an opportunity to elaborate on their reasons.

Some respondents spoke about the benefits of critical mass – for local business, to fund infrastructure and services, or to create a sense of community.

“ We have the opportunity to create a village community. It’s a good location, but hasn’t quite reached critical mass.

“ Core services in the village are made less expensive by higher population density. Also having higher density in the village is more supportive of the businesses that choose to be in our town.

“ With enough people in the village, we may be able to get better access to public transportation.

“ Lower taxes and water sewer rates.

Others identified environmental and sustainability benefits of concentrating development in the village and limiting development in the rural areas of town.

“ The open spaces are what drew me to Richmond (and back to VT for that matter). I would like to see higher density in town so that we can preserve our open and working landscapes.

“ It reduces carbon emissions when people can walk to services and don’t have to drive as much.

“ I would like to emphasize “preserve rural character outside of village.” We have a wonderful town. People will move here. Our choice is whether they will live on sprawling developments that used to be forest or if they’ll live in relatively dense housing in/near the village.

There were only a few written responses to the question about where new housing should be built in the village. Jolina Court was mentioned by several respondents. Other locations identified included the Farr farm field, near the stone corral on Huntington Road, the lower portion of Jericho Road, out past the school on Mountain View. A couple of respondents suggested replacing homes and buildings that are in poor condition with new higher-density housing.

Those respondents who disagreed that new housing should be built in Richmond Village referenced increased traffic as their primary concern. Several also mentioned loss of greenspace and privacy.

“ To keep the quality of living for those who live in the village there needs to be a balance of green space and housing. The trade off of living in the middle of the village where residents get the most traffic, noise and public events compared to any other part of Richmond is that there is now green spaces and trees between dwellings and buildings to afford some privacy and to absorb the increased noise and lighting . Were there to be built “accessory buildings” , condos, and houses renovated into 4 apartments green space and trees would need to be sacrificed for these. Yards would be replaced with buildings or used for off street parking. I don’t have a problem with garages with an apartment upstairs or houses being renovated into duplexes. When a house is renovated to include 4 apartments then you are talking about needing more parking for tenants as well as increasing noise.

**Housing outside the Village.** Respondents were also asked whether they agreed housing should be built outside the village. Those who agreed and offered further comments about why generally spoke about the type of housing they thought would be appropriate. There was a range of ideas expressed.

“ I’m suggesting concentrated development. Definitely not 5-acre or 10-acre zoning.

“ Opportunities to own family dwellings outside of the village is important.

“ New housing should be built outside the village only if it is multi family.

“ I would love to see some intentional communities with townhouses, apartments, cottages condensed into an area and then shared common use land preserved for community use, similar to what they have in Charlotte.

There was a range of written responses suggesting specific locations where new housing should be built outside the village. A number of respondents mentioned the Jonesville area. Rather than identify specific locations, a number of respondents spoke about the type of land or location that would be suitable for housing.

- “ Any forest or pasture land that is not being used by the owner. If they are not farming it or logging it and just trying to preserve rural character, then I think it should be considered for housing. Rural character is nice, but it can be an excuse to exclude people and keep housing less affordable.
- “ Any areas already developed with ready access to highways and services.
- “ Areas outside the flood plain.
- “ Areas where land has already been cleared (eg, replacing single family lots with multi family lots). The goal is to prevent deforestation.
- “ More room for this growth just beyond the present village area.

Those respondents who disagreed that new housing should be built outside the village referenced increased environmental protection and preservation of rural character as their primary concerns.

- “ I think some should be built, but I think 1 acre zoning is too environmentally impactful and ruins rural character.
- “ It is not ecologically sound to parcel cut woodlands and put roads through areas where animals dwell and migrate. Enough already!
- “ More housing equals more people and more traffic especially in recreational areas. It's already hard to find parking for recreational areas due to non-Richmonders frequenting these areas more and more.

Others simply expressed concerns about additional growth generally.

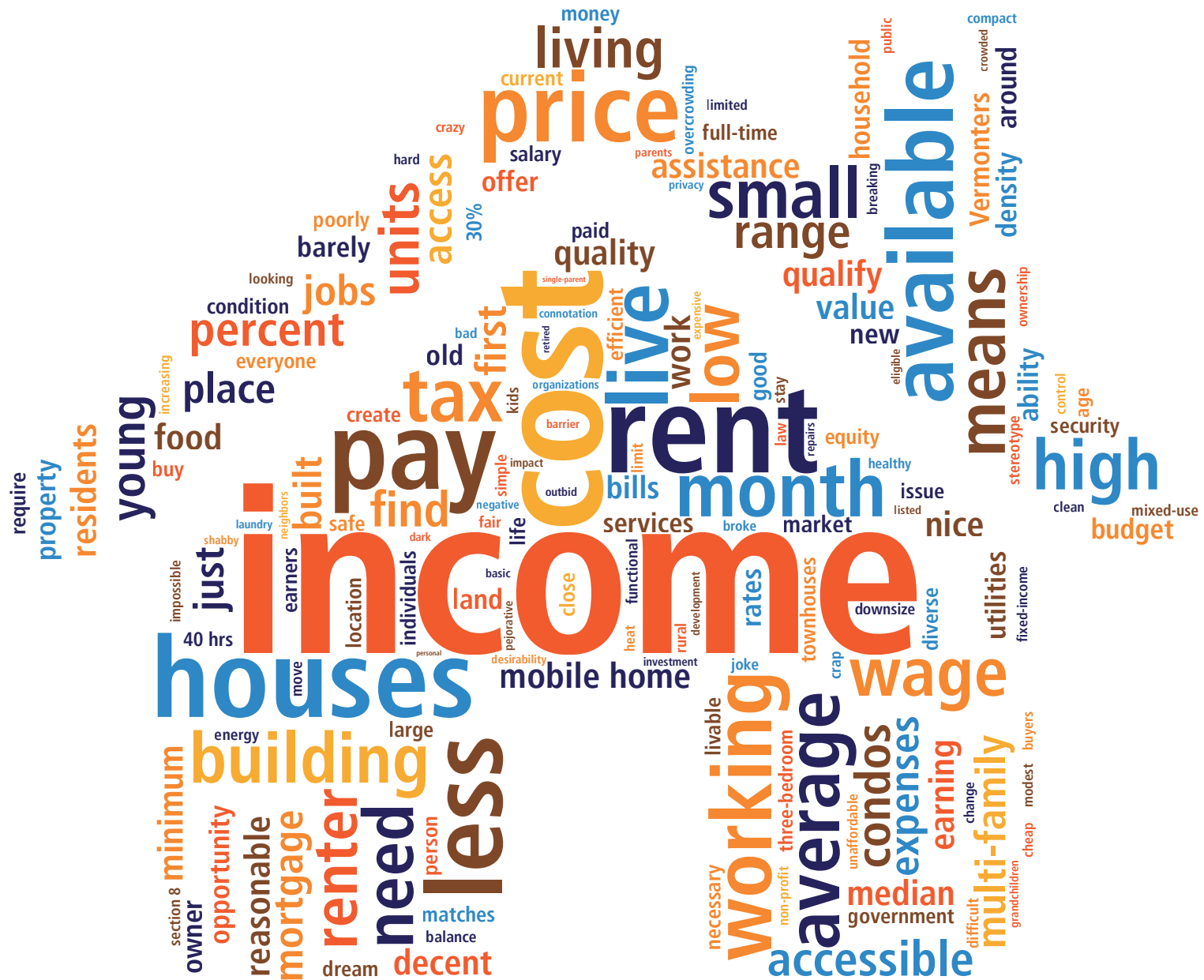
- “ I moved here because Richmond was not built up, like what happened to Hinesburg, Williston and South Burlington. Housing developments will change the nature and small community of Richmond. Furthermore, from my experience, the housing developments in those towns has not made anything more affordable, only stressed the current resources and drove the prices of everything up. We just need some more affordable (like under \$900) apartments or rentals.

**Affordable Housing.** Respondents were asked what they think of when they hear the term affordable housing and 221 answered. Many of the responses referenced a relationship between housing costs and income.

- “ Ability to pay mortgage or rent with current income.
- “ Housing that doesn't make you broke.
- “ Housing that is in balance with one's income.
- “ Having available housing that is affordable to the various income levels of community members and workers in local businesses.
- “ Decent housing at a price the average income earner can afford. Less than 1/3 of a person's monthly income should be spent on paying for affordable housing.
- “ Everyone can find housing that is: 1) Not more than 1/2 take home income 2) able to save for a down payment on a house 3) people aren't worried about how they will pay their rent when minor unexpected financial situations occur.
- “ Housing that doesn't require both parents to work two jobs to afford.
- “ Housing that a one-income family can afford on that one income.
- “ Housing that allows you to pay other bills each month (not having to decide which bills get paid) while still being able to comfortably afford food and other necessities.
- “ Housing that is affordable (rent or mortgage) for people working one job at \$15/hour. Housing that costs less than half an average monthly income for low wage workers, but is clean, well maintained, with functional heat, plumbing, etc.
- “ Having money to actually live other parts of my life rather than rent being my largest expense.

Some definitions focused more narrowly on housing for low-income households or subsidized housing.

- “ Subsidized like section 8.
- “ For people on social security, or with incomes at or below the poverty limit.
- “ Housing that can be afforded by someone earning minimum wage.



What do you think of when you hear the term affordable housing?

- “Housing that a single person or single parent that works in the food service industry can afford to live in.
- “Low income rental units and state assistance with first time home purchases. Unfortunately, there seems to be limited investment in building affordable single-family residences.

Others included housing for moderate-income households.

- “Housing that could be owned or rented with an income of \$50,000.
- “Housing that is affordable to people with a median household income or below.
- “I think it means a house that regular working people who save a bit and manage their money relatively well can afford: teachers, nurses, police officers, etc.
- “I think of the term being applied to lower income families. There is in my opinion, a problem for middle and upper-middle class families where housing is not affordable.
- “In purchasing an affordable home, I think of having to move an hour or more away from Richmond. As a middle class Vermonter, I have recently been concerned about home ownership in Chittenden County.
- “Less than \$350,000 single-family home in good condition.
- “Housing that people making less than 100,000 a year can afford.

Some respondents had negative connotations with the term.

- “Poorly built apartments designed to look decent but then turn out to be crap once you move in and there is no soundproofing and all the trim falls off.
- “I think of unattractive condos that are built out of cheap materials and need constant attention. I would love affordable housing to mean something built well, that is attractive, and the size/building style allows it to be cost effective.
- “Small houses with not much land, close to busy streets.
- “Originally nice, then not well maintained homes.
- “Problems with vandalism, burglaries, more problems in our schools.
- “Trailer park and lessening of my own home’s value because of it.
- “Reducing the quality of the town.

- “Overcrowding and loud apartments.
- “Old tall building with dark halls and small apartment type multi-housing.

Some of the definitions referenced particular forms of housing.

- “High density apartment buildings.
- “Multifamily homes or apartments.
- “Duplex unit, mobile home, subsidized housing.
- “Density and compact.
- “Condos and smaller single family homes.
- “Condos or apartments partially subsidized by government.
- “Mixed-use buildings, tiny homes, Champlain Housing Trust units.
- “Rental housing or shared real estate like condos.
- “Row houses, town houses.
- “Small apartment.
- “Smaller acreage and multi family configuration.
- “Subsidized apartments, trailer parks, habitat for humanity houses.
- “In Richmond affordable housing means a mobile home, land with no home/ utilities on it, or a home that’s pretty much needing to be knocked down and rebuilt.

Some respondents spoke the ability of current residents to continue to afford their home or of the next generation to buy a home.

- “Affordable for people of modest or limited means; older people can afford to stay in their homes as they age and have fixed incomes.
- “How much my taxes are going to add to the monthly cost of living here.
- “High property taxes impact affordability.
- “Being retired and paying \$200 a week for taxes we are near the edge of affordability.
- “Housing based on my income including social security! Any that I’ve seen are not reality based for my income.
- “Young people trying to buy their first home.

- “ I’d like our grandchildren to be able to live here someday if they wish, but who knows if they can. It’s too bad most young families can’t afford a home unless they both are earners.
- “ I’m 27 years old and it’s next to impossible. I’m not even low income, but I still don’t qualify. We as a state need to focus more on trying to help Vermonters live a happy healthy life, and that comes with being able to afford a house, that’s not \$400-600,000. Sorry, but adults my age can’t qualify for that. So for now, I’m living with my mom.
- “ I think the term affordable housing is a joke. How many lower income workers (retail, service industry, beginning teachers, police, etc.) can afford a \$300,000 home? Basic houses (no frills) are not being built these days where young couples can raise kids in neighborhoods with other families.

**General Comments.** At the conclusion of the survey, respondents had an opportunity to provide general comments. The responses illustrated the diversity of opinions about housing issues in Richmond.

- “ 30 years ago people were worried that more housing would trigger a new school and thus public debt. Today is a new era and schools have surplus capacity. Ignore any argument that more housing negatively impacts the schools.
- “ More consideration must be taken in considering long-term costs of providing municipal services to the rest of the residents who do not benefit from those services. The cost of living in this town is prohibitive as it is and adding more compact, multi-unit rental housing is going to drive the costs up for owners. Eventually single-family owners will move out due to costs and it will become a town of renters, losing its rural character/charm.
- “ I’m concerned that additional state and federal spending in designated downtowns only serves to line the existing, white landowners pockets with tax payer money at the expense of new Vermonters. The benefits go to the landed gentry and the rest get to pay rent as conservation policies reduce the available buildable land while driving up its cost. Be sure your solution is not a greater long term problem.
- “ I think Richmond should consider the tenuous balance between rented and owned properties in the Village. I think the Planning Commission and Richmond should be focused on affordable home ownership which is the real challenge for the public. The town should also realize that the Village is already fairly densely populated. If density is to increase in the

Village, it should only be through reduced lot size where the development is predictable and will meet certain standards.

- “ Town government has held onto a view that new Village housing must be balanced with new commercial space. But there is a housing shortage while commercial space goes unrented. Let the market decide and lower costs/ time of residential housing approvals. More people living in the Village will naturally drive commercial growth.
- “ I think we need to build more housing and affordable housing in the town of Richmond. We need more public transportation and more density in the village area. As our home becomes too much for us I would love to see senior affordable housing in a location in Richmond that would be walkable and with public transportation available.
- “ Accessory apartments should be easier to build and boundary setbacks should be decreased to 5 feet from the rear and sides with 20 feet in the front.
- “ I am in favor of accessory dwellings that fit in aesthetically with what is already here. I feel strongly that infill should not be situated in front of some of the older, historic homes but should be place beside or behind them.
- “ I don’t support visible infill of apartments in the village in order to keep the historic look of the village.
- “ I’m not in favor of too much development. Fix up some of the houses in town. Add some duplexes. No big structures to ruin the charm of the historic town. Build some multi family housing outside of town.
- “ Many people like the neighborhoods in the village, and these are small lots, on quiet streets. Rather than fitting more housing into the village, I would like to see housing development outside of the village that replicates some of those features -- small lots (and smaller houses, more affordable), lots of trees along the streets, simple but visually pleasing design of housing. Our house is a 1890’s railroad home (supposedly built for families of railroad worker). Many people love this kind of home, and yet no one builds this sort of home anymore.
- “ Housing in the village is fine Don’t want Richmond to turn into suburbia with housing developments. No more developments!
- “ I believe the town’s density is enough. We moved here 35 yrs ago looking for an active community life and space.

- “ If people want more housing they should move to Williston, Essex Junction or South Burlington.
- “ Property taxes are ridiculously high - when we had a mortgage, our monthly property taxes were more than our monthly mortgage payment. This is inexcusable, especially since we are not on town septic, town water, have our own driveway and have never had any children in the school system. Residents who do not have children in the school system should receive a tax deduction on their property taxes.
- “ These decisions being made about zoning will impact our neighborhoods for many years to come. The survey is good. Keep seeking input and then listen to what the people who already live here have to say.

## 2. Non-Resident Housing Survey 2021

---

### Survey Goal

An effort was made to collect information from people who were or are considering moving to Richmond to supplement the findings of the housing survey for town residents. The goal was to understand the housing needs and preferences of those people looking for homes in Richmond – of particular interest were those people who had not been able to find housing in the community that fit their needs. The survey results will help shape the Housing Committee’s policy recommendations.

### Survey Method

The housing survey was conducted using an online platform (Survey Monkey). The survey was opened from May 17 to June 28. Multiple methods were used to contact people who had looked for housing in Richmond such as through local realtors, employers and housing organizations. The survey was also announced through the Front Porch Forums for Richmond and other Chittenden County communities.

### Survey Respondents

A total of 160 people responded to the housing survey, most of whom (81%) were living in Chittenden County. The table to the right provides a demographic profile of survey respondents.

### Why Richmond?

Survey respondents were asked why they were interested in moving to Richmond. The overwhelming response (74%) was the character of the natural environment. Access to recreational opportunities was also a frequent response (58%). A majority of respondents (52%) also stated that Richmond was one of many communities in the area they were considering. The town’s housing stock was clearly not a factor. Less than 10% of respondents indicated that the availability, quality or cost of housing in Richmond were among the reasons they wanted to live in town.

---

### Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

#### GENDER

63%	Female	16%	Male
4%	Other	18%	NR

#### AGE

19%	NR	29%	35-44	8%	55-64
24%	Under 35	12%	45-54	8%	65+

#### NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD

16%	1 person	13%	3 people	4%	5+ people
34%	2 people	16%	4 people	17%	NR

#### RACE/ETHNICITY

21%	NR	2%	Hispanic or Latinx
74%	White	1%	Black or African American
2%	Other	1%	Asian or Asian American

#### ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

3%	<\$15,000	13%	\$100,000-\$149,999
6%	\$15,000-\$29,999	11%	\$150,000-\$199,999
12%	\$30,000-\$49,999	4%	\$200,000-\$249,999
9%	\$50,000-\$74,999	2%	\$250,000+
17%	\$75,000-\$99,999	23%	NR

---



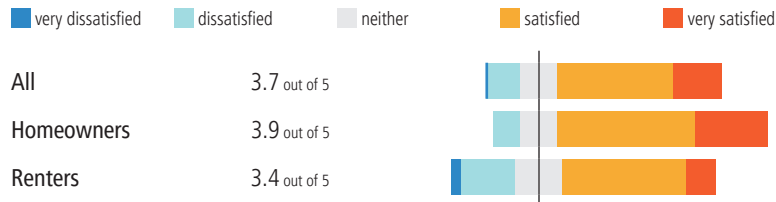
## Current Housing Characteristics

Eighty-three (52%) survey respondents owned their home. Of that group, 61% were living in a single-family home on less than 2 acres of land, 17% owned a single-family home on a larger lot and 10% had a townhouse or condo. A majority (63%) were spending less than \$2,100 per month on housing and only 10% were spending \$2,800 or more. Most of these respondents (73%) were satisfied with their current housing situation.

Fifty-eight (36%) survey respondents were renting their home. Of that group, 31% lived in a building with 2-4 units, 28% lived in a building with 5 or more units and 14% lived in an accessory apartment. Less than 10% were renting a single-family home. A majority (78%) were spending less than \$2,000 per month on housing and 22% were spending less than \$1,000. A slight majority (53%) of respondents were satisfied with their current housing situation.

Similar to the survey of town residents, homeowners had a higher level of satisfaction with their current housing situation than renters. This difference remained even amongst a group largely composed of people looking for a different housing situation.

### Level of Satisfaction with Current Home



## Housing Being Sought

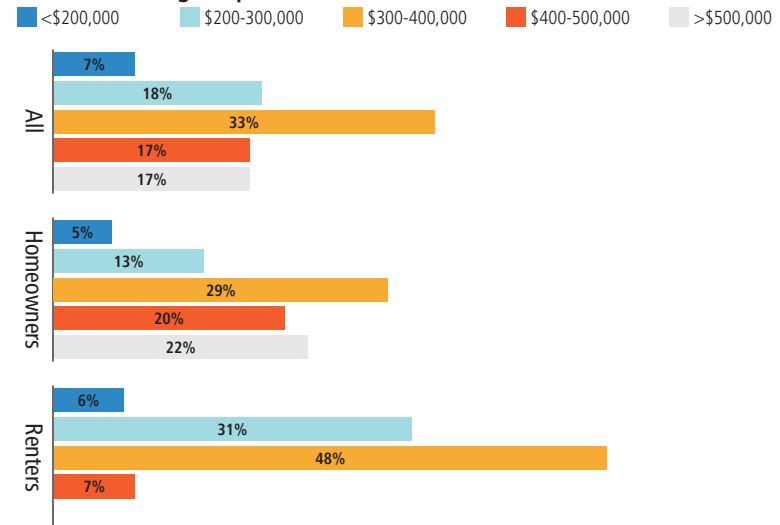
The majority of respondents (71%) were looking for a home to purchase and 21% were looking for a home to rent. Of those respondents currently renting, 50% were looking for a home to purchase and 50% were looking for another rental.

The majority of respondents (57%) were looking for housing anywhere in Richmond and 34% were looking in the village. The percentage looking in or in the village varied from 29% of respondents looking to purchase a home to 68% of respondents looking to rent a home.

The majority of those looking to buy (70%) were looking for a three-bedroom home, 42% would have considered a two-bedroom home and 27% wanted a four-bedroom home. Only 3% expressed interest in a 5 or more bedroom home. Most renters were looking for a one-bedroom (59%) or two-bedroom (68%) home. 24% indicated they would like a three-bedroom.

Respondents looking to purchase a home expressed a greater interest in a single-family home on 2 acres or more (70%) than in a single-family home on less than 2 acres (60%). 17% indicated they would purchase a townhouse or condo. Those respondents who were renting were more flexible about the type of home they would consider buying (38% indicated they would purchase a townhouse or condo and 10% indicated they would purchase a mobile home on its own lot).

### Maximum Willing to Spend to Purchase a Home in Richmond



Respondents looking to rent a home in Richmond indicated they would consider:

- » Apartment in a building with 2-4 units (65%)
- » Accessory apartment (53%)
- » Single-family home on 2 acres or less (50%)
- » Apartment in a building with 5+ units (44%)
- » Apartment in a mixed-use building (44%)
- » Townhouse or condo (38%)
- » Single-family home on more than 2 acres (38%)
- » Mobile or manufactured home on its own lot (15%)
- » Mobile or manufactured home in a park (12%)

The majority of respondents looking for a rental property (62%) selected \$1,000 to \$1,500 as their maximum they were willing to spend a month on housing. 26% indicated their maximum was less than \$1,000.

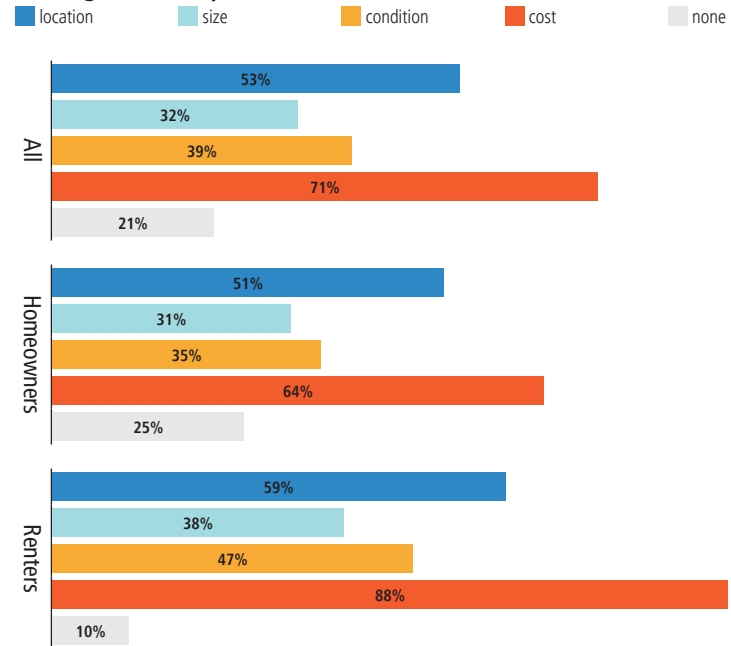
### Housing Barriers

Respondents to the non-resident survey were asked the same series of questions as respondents to the town resident survey about their housing experience and concerns about their ability to afford housing now and in the future.

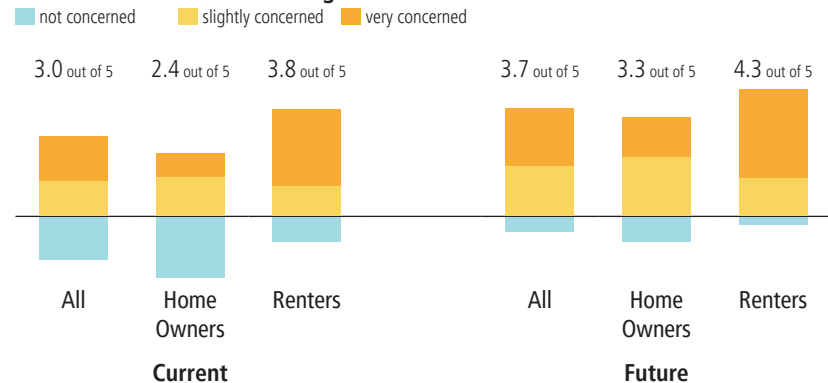
Unlike the response from town residents, the majority of non-resident survey respondents (79%) indicated they had experienced barriers to meeting their housing needs while living in Vermont and 90% of renters indicated they had experienced barriers.

The majority of survey respondents (55%) reported they were concerned about their current housing costs and that figure was 74% for renters. Most respondents (74%) expressed concern about being able to continue to afford housing in the future and that figure was even higher (88%) for respondents who were renting a home.

### Housing Barriers Experienced in Vermont



### Level of Concern about Housing Costs



## Comments from Respondents

Survey respondents were able to write in other answers or additional comments on several questions. The survey also included several open-ended questions. Those responses are summarized below.

**Must Haves.** Survey respondents were asked what were their “must haves” when looking for housing in Richmond.

There were 75 responses from respondents looking to buy a home in Richmond. Many responses mentioned yard space and privacy from neighbors:

- “ 3+ acres, wooded lot, near town, but not directly in town.
- “ 3 bedroom 2 bath, private yard space, basement, open living space.
- “ A backyard or close to a park.
- “ A decent amount of land on a fairly open lot.
- “ A little land, somewhat close to interstate.
- “ Access to nature, natural beauty on property.
- “ Acreage and sound home, preferably with outbuildings and a small country neighborhood.
- “ Affordability within my budget, at least one bathroom, at least two bedrooms, a sense of privacy.
- “ Affordable, somewhere for a home gym and wood shop (basement or garage), not super close to other houses, in very good shape. Area for a garden semi rural and 2-3 bed 2 plus baths. In good shape.
- “ At least 2 acres of land, and a lot of distance from the nearest neighbor. 1.5 baths+, 3+ bedrooms.
- “ Charming build and neighboring builds, privacy between neighbors, preferably built within the last 30 years. Open concept with 3+ bed, 2+ bath and area for an office due to increase in working remote.
- “ Enough space and land
- “ Flat enough ground for garden, two car garage, fairly new, 5+ acres, own sewer and well, good, reliable internet, ability to get local TV stations via antenna.
- “ Garage. Isolated.
- “ Good kitchen and acreage.
- “ Historic home with recent window upgrades, ability to use wood heat, land, privacy.
- “ Home: good-size kitchen, at least 2-3 bedrooms, many windows. Property: not on a busy road, a yard for a garden, trees, back desk/space for a BBQ grill.
- “ House with character, land and houses not on top of each other.
- “ Land for gardening, privacy, good kitchen, well-insulated.
- “ More than 1 acre, no neighbors on top of us.
- “ Natural beauty.
- “ Natural gas, cable or fiber internet, proximity to outdoor space (either on-property or public nearby), gardening space, access to recreation.
- “ Nature, good parking, washer/dryer, internet and cell signal.
- “ Nature, more than 2 acres, not too close to neighbors.
- “ Nature, not “too” close to neighbors, broadband internet, 3 or 4 season room.
- “ Nice land, 3 bed 2 bath with attached 2 car garage. We did not want a fixer upper either.
- “ Not on a main road, basement and garage or in the flood zone.
- “ Not too close to the road, neighbors, access to nature close by, a garage or shed, yard for a garden.
- “ On relatively flat land, can see wildlife in my yard, on a paved road, nearby neighbors.
- “ Outdoor garden space.
- “ Price and privacy.
- “ Price. Off of busy main roads. Land.
- “ Privacy.
- “ Privacy, nearby walking/hiking trails, land surrounding.
- “ Property. Would like 10 acres +

- “Quaint neighborhood characteristics, private or semi-private property, farmhouse or older-type home.
- “Quality construction, woodland, open land for house and gardens. Kitchen for serious cooks. Master bath. Attached garage or space to add one.
- “Quiet neighborhood, access to nature, large enough property for a small farm.
- “Rural feel.
- “Rural, wooded lot, not too close to neighbors, with at least 3 acres. Good condition house not on a major road.
- “Safe, space for gardens, at least 2 bedrooms, outdoor areas to walk and play.
- “Single-family home on the smaller side (1500 square feet or less), within or very near a wooded area.
- “Some land, a garage, privacy.
- “Some private space.
- “The house should be distant from the road. Privacy and quiet. Some garden space.
- “Yard space for gardening, distance from neighbors, set away from the road.
- “Yard, mud room, garage and at least 2 bathrooms.

A smaller number of respondents were looking for housing in a walkable, neighborhood setting:

- “Drivable roads, close community .
- “Easy biking distance to the trails. Easy walking distance to shops and restaurants and parks.
- “Either walkable access to the town or proximity to nature.
- “Friendly neighbors, proximity to grocery store, deli, restaurant.
- “Looking for neighbors within sight-with kids!
- “Natural gas and sidewalks
- “Sidewalks and neighborhood feeling.
- “Walkability to the village.

- “Walkable to town and amenities and market.
- “Wooded or mix of open and wooded, near neighbors but private, others in close enough proximity to bump into them when walking doing yard work but not on top of each other.

A number of respondents listed a garage as a must have feature in a home:

- “1 acre of land, 3 bedroom, 2 bath, attached garage, budget of \$375K.
- “1/2 acre or more 2 bedrooms Potential for a garage Storage of some kind.
- “2-3 bedroom home, well constructed, 1-4 acres, 2 car garage, good neighborhood, accessible within reason to I-89.
- “Attached garage, central cooling, legal firearms and shooting.
- “Garage. Air conditioning.
- “Must have garage.

Several respondents mentioned affordability or age/condition of the home:

- “Affordability (we are first time home buyers). We are finding that our price range doesn't allow for much else in the way of “must haves” in central Vermont.
- “Must was affordability. When I was buying in 2018 I wanted something under \$300,000 and didn't find house that I liked in that range in Richmond. Ended up buying in Essex Junction.
- “Quiet, safe, sunny, away from F-35 flyovers, affordable, under \$400
- “Built after 1990, with high quality materials.
- “New build condo with central air or heat pump, mature trees.
- “Newer home, do not want to fix it up.
- “Quiet, relatively move in condition.

A few respondents were looking for low maintenance or single-level homes:

- “I'm 63, so easy to care for home.
- “Main living on a single floor. Double pane windows and well insulated. A garage. One and a half baths or two baths. Low maintenance.
- “Trees, internet access, ability to have a dog and or a cat, one level living.

There were 29 responses from respondents looking to rent a home in Richmond. Many responses included a list of desired characteristics/amenities or spoke about condition/maintenance. Parking, storage, laundry and outdoor space were all mentioned.

- “ Accessibility both structurally and financially. I'd prefer to live in senior/disabled housing with less than 25 apartments. Where I live now has 100 units and we have a recurring problem with bedbugs and roaches when a new tenant moves in. I would love to have a little private balcony or deck area so I could go sit outside in private. I would like to live in a quiet, safe area within village area.
- “ A full size kitchen and nice bathroom.
- “ At least 10'x 10' of dry storage space, entire building mold free, natural light in all rooms including and especially bathrooms, fan in bathroom, multiple closets, parking, space for outdoor fire, ability to build gardens, ability to practice archery, no credit check required, 9'-10' ht. ceilings for my loft bed frame, space to conduct woodworking (preferably heated and dry), space to grow plants indoors (floor that can get wet, electrical requirements, water faucet for hose, filters, pumps, etc.)
- “ At least 2 bedrooms, 1 and 1.5 bathrooms, dishwasher, laundry or laundry hookups, close to I-89 and park and ride, well insulated, good WiFi, kid friendly, quiet neighbors
- “ Laundry on site, outdoor space, privacy from neighbors, close to stores/resources, on a paved and plowed road
- “ Safe location, assigned parking prefer garage or parking garage, newer or renovated property
- “ Thoughtfully designed building and space, and w/d availability.
- “ Parking, some storage, clean, building/property has not been neglected, preferably pet friendly.
- “ Proximity to work in (west of Richmond Village) as much as possible. Under \$1200/mo. parking spot. Trustworthy landlord with good record of maintenance and tenant relations. Laundry on-site. At least a little of a backyard / calm outdoor space.

A number of respondents mentioned allowing tenants to have pets.

- “ 2+ bedrooms, storage, dog friendly.

“ Allows cats, porch or deck.

“ Dog friendly.

“ Non-smoking, pet friendly.

“ Pet friendly.

“ Pets allowed, Section 8, raised garden bed allowed, not in a building (ptsd-noise), access to nature close by (some place to sit outside, eg porch).

Similar to those looking for a home to purchase, yard space, quiet and privacy was important to many respondents looking for a home to rent:

“ A yard and plenty of space

“ Access to trails, not in an apartment complex that was just built by the railroad. Prefer small abode on land, etc. Prefer neighborhood.

“ Looking for a quiet sleepy area with space to garden

“ Quiet, surrounded by nature, close access to community resources, snow removal.

Many responses mentioned affordability:

“ A place that would take Vermont state housing authority.

“ Affordability (none meets this criteria now).

“ Affordable rent, housing in decent condition & clean, some outdoor space is a plus.

“ Affordable with a full kitchen, allows pets. Close enough to downtown to bike. Affordable. Actually affordable.

“ Affordable, pet-friendly.

“ Quiet area, affordable.

“ Walkability, affordability.

A number of respondents wanted to be located in a walkable, village area:

“ Must be able to walk to shops.

“ Village living, walkable to stores, post office, churches, library, schools and nature.

“ Walkable to stores and possible work places for at least one member of couple (allow 1 car living). Affordable rent. Outdoor space, good kitchen.

**Deal Breakers.** Survey respondents were also asked what were their “deal breakers” when looking for housing in Richmond.

Of the 73 respondents looking to buy a home in Richmond who answered this question, a many mentioned cost:

- “ A fixer upper. Too expensive.
- “ Cost.
- “ Didn’t find anything for sale in my price range.
- “ Never any real estate for sale. Or nothing, almost literally, in price range or unattractive or poor repair for \$400+.
- “ Nothing under \$400K
- “ Overpriced. Located near highway. No private land/yard.
- “ Price.
- “ Price. Knowing the housing market is wild right now, but hoping things don’t remain prohibitively expensive. And we love the village, but not looking to live right in it.
- “ Prices too high, proximity to a farm with smell of manure, close proximity to neighbors, only one bathroom.
- “ Property taxes.
- “ Size and price.
- “ Taxes.
- “ The taxes in Richmond were higher than other areas and it didn’t seem like you got much infrastructure for higher taxes.
- “ Too expensive.
- “ Too much money, too in need of repairs, not appealing to us.
- “ Too small, too expensive, not in good condition.
- “ Ugly or being too pricey
- “ Unaffordability within my budget

A number of respondents identified lack of privacy/yard space or proximity to high-traffic roads:

- “ Being near the main road or a highway is a NO. No privacy or garden space is a NO. (Though the garden can be rooftop or small backyard.)
- “ Cheap construction. Would not buy directly on heavily traveled road.
- “ Dense clustering.
- “ Distance from neighbors, some privacy.
- “ Lack of privacy.
- “ Living in a populated area.
- “ Nature, not “too” close to neighbors, broadband internet.
- “ No private space
- “ Not large enough lot sizes.
- “ Not likely to flood, not adjacent to another building or business.
- “ Not right in town
- “ On a busy road, high price.
- “ Overbuilt neighborhoods, lack of trees and green spaces.
- “ Propane heat and main road (too much high speed traffic).
- “ Proximity to neighbors. Less than 1/2 acre. Some dirt roads.
- “ Proximity to road is a deal breaker, if it’s too close to major street we would shy away due to noise and kid safety. We would avoid flood zones.
- “ Quaint neighborhood characteristics, private or semi-private part of the property.
- “ Too close of neighbors, less than 5 acres, homes priced more than they are worth, poorly kept roads.
- “ Too close to roadway, too close to neighbors (but willing to be within eyesight).
- “ Too close to the highway.
- “ Very close proximity to neighbors.

Other respondents spoke of poor quality construction, lack of internet/cell service or the need for improvements to the home, and some identified types of housing they would not consider:

- “ Cheap construction/poor quality or very dated. Highway noise.
- “ Condos.
- “ Fixer uppers, no yard, not well taken care of.
- “ I’d never live in a mobile home, or somewhere really far out in the woods.
- “ Inefficient utilities, DSL internet, strict HOAs.
- “ Needed a lot of work, good floor plan, open kitchen.
- “ No garage.
- “ Poor condition, in the village/close neighbors, exposed lot.
- “ Poor quality housing stock Too close to busy roads
- “ The condition of the home has to be at least decent, not too many repairs needed, has to be in a safe location relative to the roads, and must have at least 3 bedrooms.

A few respondents raised concern about nearby properties and neighbors, noise, flooding or other potentially negative aspects of particular properties or locations:

- “ Flood zone
- “ Grumpy old people
- “ Inability to find suitable land.
- “ Lack of multi-use paths/bike and sidewalks
- “ Lead paint, mold, neighbors with lots of cars parked on their lawn, thin blue line signs.
- “ Major renovation work, poor looking neighborhood, noisy neighbors, BLM flags everywhere, cancel culture.
- “ No mobile homes, no trashy old houses with dead pickup trucks in the yard.
- “ Noise level.
- “ On a dirt road, on a hill, far from town services.
- “ Quality of school district, 2 bathrooms, yard space.

- “ The proximity to electric transmission lines was a significant deterrent, as were the property taxes relative to the services provided for them. We wound up buying in Shelburne, and the taxes were about ~\$4,000 less per year with more services.
- “ Too close to river, house too dark, not enough land, cost.
- “ Too far out on a country road on our own with few neighbors.
- “ Traffic adjacent home, noise, nighttime light pollution, drug dealers/crime,
- “ Ugly neighbor and HOA neighborhood
- “ We are on hold because we weren’t in love with the high school and feel that CVU is a better option for our family. We will likely stay in Shelburne while kids are in school (they are elementary and middle school currently).

Of the 23 respondents looking to rent a home in Richmond who answered this question, a many mentioned affordability and availability:

- “ Affordability.
- “ Cost.
- “ Cost of rent, place that is dirty or in disrepair.
- “ Lack of availability.
- “ My share of the rent would be 375 a month or less with utilities included.
- “ Nothing was available.
- “ Rent above \$1300 that does not include any utilities, neglected building and/or property by landlord, no washer/dryer hookups
- “ They are all too expensive for me to afford.
- “ Too expensive, the creamery was so expensive and tiny.
- “ Too expensive.

A few identified landlords or lack of property maintenance:

- “ Landlords with discriminatory and unreasonable expectations for applicants. Poor road conditions and/or not well maintained in winter.
- “ Poorly maintained, unclean or no availability for a washer/dryer.
- “ Slumlord/bad maintenance.
- “ Unkept property to rent , shabby apt. Too far away from amenities.

Other respondents spoke about not wanting to live in a large apartment building, needing to find a place that allowed pets, and other characteristics of rental properties they had looked at:

- “Bad smelling roommates (cheap cologne), mold, no dishwasher, not enough closets, no storage, vinyl flooring, any laminate flooring, bathroom without window, windows that don't open or have screens.
- “College kids, too far from I-89, not well insulated, no dishwasher, no laundry or laundry hookup, no backyard.
- “I could not live in area where there is a lot of noise, drug activity or crime.
- “Large complex or mixed use complex. Prefer more natural setting.
- “No apartment complexes homes preferred.
- “Noisy and congested.
- “Non pet friendly.
- “Not pet friendly, which was all of the rentals I found in or just outside of Richmond.
- “Right on highway, in a building, no yard space, no pets, bedroom on first floor.

**Affordable Housing.** Respondents were asked what they think of when they hear the term affordable housing and 97 answered. The range of responses was very similar to that of Richmond residents.

- “I just need to be able to live comfortably.
- “Able to purchase with a mortgage payment less than my current rent+utils (1600 avg) and low down payment (\$20,000 at this time). Student loans are making saving for a down payment very challenging.
- “Cheaply made poor design and construction using plywood. Slap in the face prison planet philanthropy - refuge camp - intolerable conditions - people who are addicted to cigarettes, drinking and opioids - domestic violence - wage slavery - suicide - crime - depression - sickness - sadness - riding the bus - cold and mold.
- “Fair price for quality accommodations. A place that a working person/family can afford without working multiple jobs.
- “Hopefully apartments or condos people on Social Security can afford.

- “I think it's a joke! I am single and to find a nice place that's "affordable" in Chittenden county is extremely difficult. Prices are too high and selection too limited.
- “I think of poor quality housing and (in Vermont) and housing that is either only accessible to those with very low incomes (and not really affordable for them) or an unrealistic view of what "affordable" is for anyone earning an income above the poverty line.
- “In years past the term "affordable housing" was associated with low income individuals and minimal, cookie cutter housing built in an "out of the way" location. However, I think that has changed with newer developers. To me now it means thoughtfully designed apartment with modern amenities for people of all income levels.
- “It does not truly exist.
- “Less than 800/month before utilities. Availability of studio or 1 bd apartments. Not kitchenettes.
- “Limited options for people, almost impossible to find in VT. When I lived in Richmond in the 1990s, the cost was reasonable, now the same space is 3 times the cost which is outrageous.
- “Low income and only for those with assistance. I want there to also be housing that is affordable for someone like me, making \$45,000
- “Municipal bans on apartments, minimum parking requirement, FAR restrictions, and minimum lot sizes.
- “NIMBY
- “Paying at least 1200 dollars or more for rent in Chittenden County which is ridiculous to pay.
- “People living pay check to pay check, bunch of kids, parties, drugs....not someplace I want to live.
- “Rental properties with poor landlords, and sometimes not great tenants.
- “Section 8 or subsidized housing that there's a long wait list for.
- “Serving a variety of incomes, walkable and not car-dependent.
- “Sub-par construction, multi-family, lacking privacy.
- “That it will be too small to meet my needs and will be run by an overbearing invasive housing authority. That it will only have 2 bedrooms when I need 3.



That the housing authority doesn't give a bleep about residents (I've lived in housing run by BHA and Cathedral Square for over 20 years). Not enough wheelchair accessible units.

“That we need more supply to meet demand, and that older generations need to understand that property values going up for them means younger generations will have a harder time housing themselves and starting families.

# 1. Technical Review Memo

## Introduction

The purpose of the technical review conducted during the summer of 2021 was to assess the housing-related provisions of Richmond’s land use regulations (zoning and subdivision) for:

- » Conformance with state and federal law;
- » Effectiveness at implementing town housing goals and policies; and
- » Eligibility for state designation as a Neighborhood Development Area (a program that offers regulatory relief and other benefits for priority housing projects as defined in statute).

The Richmond Planning Commission had prepared a first draft of proposed zoning amendments for the village area. They requested that (1) those drafts be reviewed rather than the adopted zoning districts and (2) the review focus primarily on the village. For the purposes of this project, the village is considered to be generally the municipal water and sewer service area.

## Zoning District Amendments

The Richmond Planning Commission is considering creating three new zoning districts (Village Residential North, Village Residential South and Round Church) and significantly expanding the existing Residential/Commercial district. All land within the village north of the river that is currently zoned High Density Residential would be re-zoned into one of the new or expanded districts. Some land within the village south of the river that is currently zoned Agricultural/Residential would be re-zoned into one of the new or expanded districts. The table to the right summarizes the proposed changes to dimensional and use standards from the adopted to proposed zoning districts.

The draft zoning districts and standards proposed for the village area have serious flaws as detailed in the technical review matrix that follows. They should not be brought forward for further public consideration and adoption until further revised. While the dimensional standards of the adopted zoning effectively prevent multi-unit housing on most lots in the HDR district,

the proposed zoning outright prohibits it in the new village residential zoning districts. Any zoning changes proposed for the village should not be more restrictive of housing than the currently adopted zoning. There is no justification for not allowing three- or four-unit residences in village areas that are served by municipal water and sewer. Doing so would open the town up to a legal challenge under federal and state fair housing laws.

## Comparison of District Standards

	ADOPTED			PROPOSED			
	R/C	HDR	A/R	R/C	VRN	VRS	RND
Min lot size (acre)	1/3	2/3	1	1/4	1/4	1/2	1/2
Min lot area / dwelling unit	1/3	2/3	n/a	1/8	n/a	n/a	n/a
Min lot frontage (ft)	75	75	100	75	75	75	75
Max lot coverage (%)	40	40	30	40	40	40	40
Min front setback (ft)	20	20	30	5	10	10	10
Max front setback (ft)	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	25	n/a	30
Min side setback (ft)	10	10	20	10	10	10	10
Min rear setback (ft)	15	15	25	10	10	10	10
Max height (ft)	35	35	35	35	35	35	35

	ADOPTED			PROPOSED			
	R/C	HDR	A/R	R/C	VRN	VRS	RND
Accessory dwelling	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Single-unit dwelling	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Two-unit dwelling	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Three-unit dwelling	C	C	X	P	X	X	X
Four-unit dwelling	C	C	X	P	X	X	X
Five or more unit dwelling	X	X	X	C	X	X	X
Retirement community	C	C	C	C	X	C	X

P = Permitted, C = Conditional, X = Prohibited

**PROPOSED VILLAGE ZONING ASSESSMENT**

**Residential Commercial District**

- 1** Residential uses
- 1-4 unit residences would be permitted, which is a recommended best practice. Site plan review would continue to be required for all uses other than 1- and 2-unit residences, which aligns with statute.
- 5+ unit residences would be allowed with conditional use approval. Given the location on arterial highways, it does not seem that a 5-unit residence would result in undue adverse impact on traffic. Nor does it seem likely that a 5-unit residence would place an undue burden on community facilities. That essentially leaves the "character of the area" conditional use criteria. How would converting an existing building into 5 apartments vs. 4 apartments have significantly different impacts on the character of the area that would justify a more rigorous review process? Wouldn't site plan review be adequate to address any concerns related to parking, lighting, buffering, trash storage, etc.? If the scale of new buildings is the concern, consider setting a maximum building footprint (6,000 sf would be similar to the larger buildings in the district now).
- No provision is made for other residential uses: residential care facilities (more than 8 residents), recovery residences, rooming and boarding houses, transitional housing, etc. Some of these types of housing already exist in the proposed district. Given the central location with access to services and transit, consider whether this district is a suitable location for such housing.
- 
- 2** Dimensional standards
- The proposed minimum lot size of 0.25 acres is well below the median lot size in the proposed district currently (0.82 acres). There would only be only two nonconforming lots that are smaller than 0.25 acres. Of the 100 parcels in the district, 77 are larger than 0.5 acres. The 0.25-acre minimum lot size does align with the state's Neighborhood Development Area criteria.
- The proposed maximum residential density of 8 dwelling units per acre is also well above the existing density in the district (median residential density is 1.6 du per acre), potentially creating opportunity for infill housing. Of the 100 parcels in the district, 69 are currently developed with a single residence. All but two of these could potentially be converted to two or more units based solely on the density standard (assuming other standards of the regulations can be met such as parking). While 8 du/ac is more dense than the existing settlement pattern, it may not be dense enough for affordable housing projects (affordable housing developers often cite 12 du/ac as a minimum density that works for their projects).
- The proposed minimum lot frontage of 75 feet is larger than the existing lot frontage for many lots. However, this standard is not going limit infill housing potential as most of the parcels in this district are configured and developed in such a way that further subdivision is unlikely. A minimum of 75 feet of frontage is reasonable given the need for off-street parking, providing ample lot width for building, driveway and side yards. Creation of additional narrow lots could have undesirable traffic impact and parking implications.
- The proposed maximum lot coverage of 40% may limit infill housing potential. 40% is a suitable standard for neighborhood comprised primarily of single-unit homes. Many of the existing parcels in the district are well below 40% coverage. If the goal is allow the conversion of single-unit buildings to multi-unit, the need for additional parking will drive lot coverage up relatively quickly (each parking space = 400 square feet of lot coverage). Neighborhoods with higher amount of multi-unit housing are likely to be closer to 60% lot coverage than 40%. Even a single-family home with a two-car garage and driveway on a 0.25-acre lot could start bumping up against the 40% coverage standard.

The proposed front yard setbacks of 5 feet minimum and 25 feet maximum do not match the existing built form. Beyond the commercial block on Bridge Street, front yards are a traditional characteristic of Richmond's village center. Within this district, there are likely no existing buildings built within 5 feet of the front lot line and very few are closer than 15 feet. On the north side of East Main Street and the east side of Jericho Road, there is a change in elevation and those buildings sit above street level and most are more than 25 feet from the front property line. Most of the buildings on Bridge Street, Jericho Road, Huntington Road and Thompson Road also sit more than 25 feet back.

Unless the intent is to allow new buildings to be built in front of existing buildings on some of the lots with the deepest setbacks (there are some buildings set back 50 feet or more) or to fundamentally alter the built form of the district over time through tear down and replacement, the proposed 5 and 25 foot setbacks are not appropriate for the district. A 5-foot front yard further suffers from not being deep enough to support healthy landscaping, particularly when combined with the impacts of plowing and snow storage. Consider a minimum setback of not less than 10 feet – nearly all buildings in the district would conform with a 10-foot setback.

Given that the district is largely developed (with the exception of the Farr property discussed separately below), the maximum front yard setback standard will have limited effect. A large percentage of existing buildings will not be in conformance with the 25-foot maximum setback standard, requiring clarification in the regulations as to whether additions to such buildings would be allowed in the front if the result would still be that the building would remain nonconforming. A more effective approach would be to simply prohibit parking between the building and the street. This will be adequate to ensure that if there was to be a new building, it would be sited relatively close to the street in order to accommodate parking to the rear. If a maximum setback is to remain, it should be no less than 40 feet to better reflect the existing built form.

Another approach used in a number of communities is to establish front setbacks based on an average of the existing buildings on the street. This allows the regulations to respond to a range of setback conditions that may exist in different neighborhoods within the same zoning district. Often the average is based on the 2 or 3 buildings on either side of the subject property.

There may be some existing lots that would not conform to the proposed 10-foot side and rear setbacks. However, such setbacks are reasonable and ensure that owners have the ability to access all sides of a building for maintenance from within the boundaries of their own property. Access around buildings is also important for emergency response.

About 60 acres of the Farr Farm property is proposed to be included in this district. Given the terrain and pre-existing development pattern, it will likely not be feasible to extend a regular street grid from Farr and Thompson Roads to establish one or more new, connected blocks. Any future street network and blocks will likely be designed in response to the terrain, resulting in an irregular and more curvilinear pattern likely accessible solely from Huntington Road. In all likelihood, development of this property would be proposed as a PUD and the dimensional standards of the zoning district would likely not apply. Consider requiring PUD approval for residential subdivision or development of a parcel with 2 acres or more of developable land (exclude floodplain) in this district and establishing a specific PUD form with clear standards that would result in a traditional neighborhood development. A provision such as that would apply to the Farr property and a handful of parcels on Jericho Road. This would be a more effective tool for achieving the intent of the district on the few sites with meaningful development potential than the basic dimensional standards proposed for the district generally.

**PROPOSED VILLAGE ZONING ASSESSMENT**

<p>3 Compatibility standards</p>	<p>This proposed section does not clearly state what development activities the proposed building form and design standards would apply to. Is it just construction of new principal structures or is it exterior modifications to existing buildings? Is it just multi-unit, mixed-use or non-residential buildings, or is it also single- or two-unit dwellings? The standards as drafted will be problematic if they are intended to be applied by the Zoning Administrator to development solely requiring a zoning permit without site plan review (single- and two-unit dwellings).</p> <p>Some of the standards are basic site plan requirements that should be applying townwide (or at least throughout the village) and should not need to be specified within this district – landscaping, screening, siting of utilities and mechanicals, sidewalks, connection to municipal water and sewer systems. The language is a mix of mandatory (shall) and non-mandatory (should) provisions. The town cannot enforce “should” statements in the regulations and those need to be re-worded if they are intended to be required. The provision for bike lanes is too vague to be regulatory. It seems unlikely that a new street would be built within this district anywhere but on the Farr property and that even if one was built that it would have traffic levels high enough to justify bike lanes.</p>
<p>4 Development Standards and Planned Unit Developments</p>	<p>These two sections are not needed. Development is subject to all applicable provisions of the regulations – it is not necessary to repeat that basic premise throughout the regulations. Typically the PUD section includes an applicability statement that establishes when the PUD provisions may be used.</p>

**Village Residential North District**

<p>5 Residential Uses</p>	<p>The proposed district would allow single- and two-unit dwellings as a permitted use. Multi-unit dwellings and other residential uses would be prohibited. There is no legally justifiable basis for zoning land served by water and sewer solely for single- and two-family homes. Doing so at this point puts the town at risk of a court challenge under federal and state fair housing law and Vermont’s equal treatment of housing provisions.</p> <p>Given that under recently amended statute 3- and 4-unit dwellings can no longer be considered to adversely impact the character of the area, they should be permitted (with site plan review) nearly everywhere that 1- and 2-unit dwellings are. Realistically in areas not served by water and sewer, the feasibility of constructing 3- and 4-unit dwellings may be low but zoning should not be an additional barrier to such residences. The Vermont Legislature, by passage of Act 179 last year, has clearly signaled that municipalities should no longer limit opportunity and/or require more rigorous review for small-scale multi-unit housing. Further, Richmond’s 2018 Town Plan speaks to multi-unit housing being a future use in Richmond Village, Jonesville and the High Density Residential areas.</p> <p>Multi-unit housing can be similar in scale and appearance to single- and two-unit homes. Consider approaches like a maximum building footprint and some basic building form and design standards to ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of multi-unit housing is similar to that of traditional single-unit dwellings. Standards can be enacted to ensure residents of multi-unit buildings are provided with basic amenities such as outdoor space, storage space, laundry, etc. to promote good quality housing.</p> <p>As a point of reference, there are 5 properties within 3 or more dwelling units in the proposed district, which include a 6-unit historic apartment house, a PUD with 13 condominium ownership units, a 16-unit affordable housing development with a mix of duplex and attached rental units, and two converted single-unit properties with 3 units each (one of which remains owner occupied). There are 11 residential properties with two units. There are 81 single-unit properties. Approximately 70% of housing in the district is owner occupied.</p>
---------------------------	--

**PROPOSED VILLAGE ZONING ASSESSMENT**

**6** Dimensional standards

The proposed minimum lot size of 0.25 acres is below the median lot size in the proposed district currently (0.59 acres). There would only be only one nonconforming lot that is smaller than 0.25 acres. Of the 100 parcels in the district, 63 are larger than 0.5 acres. The 0.25-acre minimum lot size does align with the state’s Neighborhood Development Area criteria.

The median residential density in the proposed district is currently 1.95 du/ac. Unlike the proposed Residential Commercial district, there is no maximum residential density in this new zoning district. A lot may be developed with a single- or two-unit dwelling. This effectively creates a maximum density of 8 dwelling units per acre (the same as the proposed Residential Commercial district). However, most lots would need to be subdivided to attain their full development potential since multi-unit housing is not allowed. While 63 lots have enough acreage to be subdivided, a much smaller number have enough road frontage to be readily subdivided and/or the placement of the existing home on the lot effectively prevents maximizing subdivision potential. This assessment of build-out potential does not take into account other constraining factors present in the district such as terrain and floodplain that will further reduce opportunities for infill housing.

The proposed minimum lot frontage of 75 feet is larger than the existing lot frontage for many lots. As noted above, the frontage requirement does limit subdivision potential although the regulations do provide some ability to waive or modify lot frontage for lots served by a shared driveway with a dedicated easement. A minimum of 75 feet of frontage is reasonable given the need for off-street parking, providing ample lot width for house, driveway and side yards. Creation of additional narrow lots could have undesirable traffic impact and parking implications.

The proposed maximum lot coverage of 40% could be a limiting factor for smaller lots in the district. However, the majority of existing lots are large enough that they could accommodate one or two units of housing while staying under 40% lot coverage.

See the discussion of front setbacks in (2). This district proposing a minimum front setback of 10 feet and a maximum of 25 feet. Front setbacks range considerably within this proposed district. Most properties should be conforming with a 10-foot minimum, but there are many existing homes that are more than 25 feet from the front property line. A maximum front setback also seems unnecessary in this district and likely to create administrative difficulties in the future given the number of nonconformities that will exist. There are only a couple of properties that would have the potential for a major subdivision and multiple new homes. A PUD approach as discussed in (2) would likely be more effective at achieving the desired development pattern on those properties than a maximum front setback standard.

The 10-foot side and rear setbacks are reasonable.

**Village Residential South District**

**7** Residential Uses

See (5). The permitted uses in this proposed district are the same as in the Village Residential North (single- and two-unit residences). Retirement or nursing home would be allowed as a conditional use in this district. There is an existing 16-unit senior housing development, Richmond Terrace, in this district. There are no other multi-unit residential properties in the proposed district.

**PROPOSED VILLAGE ZONING ASSESSMENT**

**8** Dimensional standards

The proposed minimum lot size of 0.5 acres is below the median lot size in the proposed district currently (1.57 acres). There would be two nonconforming lots are smaller than 0.5 acres. Of the 33 parcels in the district, 25 are larger than one acre. Despite the existing development pattern, the proposed half-acre minimum lot size is large given the availability of water and sewer in the district. The 0.5 acre lot size would not meet the eligibility requirements for the state’s Neighborhood Development Area program, but it is unlikely land in this district could qualify because of its distance from the designated village center unless the designated village center was extended across the river to the Round Church.

The median residential density in the proposed district is currently 0.72 du/ac. A lot may be developed with a single- or two-unit dwelling. This effectively creates a maximum density of 4 dwelling units per acre. However, most lots would need to be subdivided to attain their full development potential since multi-unit housing is not allowed. While 25 lots have enough acreage to be subdivided, not all have enough road frontage to be readily subdivided. The placement of existing homes and natural constraints like terrain and floodplains will further reduce the likelihood that many of these lots will be subdivided.

Most lots in this district will conform to the proposed minimum lot frontage of 75 feet.

The proposed 40% lot coverage standard is unlikely to constrain residential development on lots that are a half acre or more in size.

A minimum front setback of 10 feet is proposed in this district, with no maximum setback. Most buildings in the proposed district are set back much more than 10 feet. Consider increasing the minimum setback to accommodate more generous front yards (15’ or 20’) given the character of the roadways, lack of sidewalks in much of the district and pattern of existing development.

The 10-foot side and rear setbacks are reasonable.

**Round Church District**

**9** Residential uses

See (5).

**10** Dimensional standards

While the median residential lot size in this proposed new district is one acre currently, the proposed half-acre minimum lot size is large given the availability of water and sewer in the district. There would be five privately-owned lots that could be further subdivided (each is already developed with a dwelling) and each lot could at most be developed with a duplex. Given available road frontage and the location of the existing buildings on those lots, it seems unlikely that this district would accommodate any meaningful increase in housing.

The lots in this district will conform to the proposed minimum lot frontage of 75 feet.

The proposed 40% lot coverage standard is unlikely to constrain residential development on lots that are a half acre or more in size.

A minimum front setback of 10 feet is proposed in this district, with a maximum setback of 30 feet. Almost none of the existing buildings in this district are located within 30 feet of the front property line and so they would be nonconforming under the proposed maximum front setback. The stated intent of the district is to preserve the historic character of the area around the Round Church. The proposed minimum-maximum setback would alter the traditional settlement pattern considerably.

**PROPOSED VILLAGE ZONING ASSESSMENT**

<b>11</b> Compatibility standards	See (3). There is no mechanism in the zoning regulations to address the design elements of standards (windows, building materials, roofs) to single- and two-unit residential development. The ZA does not have the authority to apply design standards to development that simply requires a zoning permit.  The compatibility standards are the primary substantive difference in the language proposed between the Village Residential South and Round Church districts. Given that those standards cannot be implemented as currently drafted, consider eliminating Round Church as a separate district. The conditional uses allowed in the two districts could be combined.
<b>12</b> Development Standards and Planned Unit Developments	See (4).

**NDA PROGRAM REQUIREMENT ASSESSMENT**

**Complete Streets**

<b>13</b> Require that provisions be made for the extension of the street and pedestrian network into existing streets and adjacent, undeveloped land.	Section 600.2 of the subdivision regulations requires continuation of roads with the DRB having the ability to waive or modify the requirement when physically impractical or not in the public interest.
<b>14</b> Existing or planned pedestrian facilities (such as sidewalks/paths) service the proposed NDA. <b>15</b> Require sidewalks or pedestrian facilities for new development, both connecting to buildings on-site and to off-site pedestrian facilities.	The adopted zoning regulations require sidewalks connecting buildings to each other and the public sidewalk on Bridge Street within the Jolina Court zoning district (Section 3.9.6). Section 3.10.5 requires all development to install and maintain a sidewalk on the public road frontage in the Village Downtown district. Section 5.5.3 of the adopted zoning regulations authorizes the DRB to place conditions on site plan approvals related to provisions for pedestrian traffic.  Section 600.14 of the adopted subdivision regulations authorizes the DRB to require sidewalks, bicycle paths and/or recreational paths within a subdivision. It references a town-adopted recreation plan or sidewalk plan (which do not appear to exist) and specifies that the subdivider must construct any amenities within the subdivision shown on such plans. Section 620 of the adopted subdivision regulations authorizes the DRB to require an easement up to 10' wide through a subdivision for pedestrian or bicycle access.  The sidewalk provisions would need to be strengthened within any area proposed for NDA designation to address sidewalk requirements for development that does not require developing a new street (thus triggering the village street design standards in the public works specifications. The language in the VD and JC districts is a good start and could be expanded to address the entire village area. The addition of language that clarifies what type of development projects would trigger sidewalk upgrades or extensions may be beneficial (application that requires site plan review or subdivision vs. one that just requires an administrative zoning permit, any new business, any new dwelling, etc.).



**NDA PROGRAM REQUIREMENT****ASSESSMENT**

<p><b>16</b> Have plans or regulations in place that address the need for bike facilities (such as bike paths and lanes or multi-use paths) where appropriate.</p>	<p>The adopted zoning regulations require provisions for bicycle access and parking within the Jolina Court zoning district (Section 3.9.6). Section 6.1.6.j requires applicants proposing a parking lots with 15 or more vehicular spaces to provide bicycle parking, but the DRB is authorized to waive that provision for businesses they deem will not generate bicycle traffic. Section 6.3 of the adopted zoning requires applicants seeking conditional use or site plan approval to provide an easement to accommodate planned expansions of municipal pedestrian paths and bikeways. Also see Section 600.14 of the adopted subdivision regulations.</p> <p>The adopted zoning and subdivision regulations generally lack adequate standards for addressing bike facilities. While there is authorizing language, there is no guidance for the DRB to determine when to require bike facilities – the result being that bike facilities have been rarely required.</p> <p>Consider adding provisions related to bicycle parking and storage for multi-unit housing. There should be careful consideration of any requirements for on-street bike facilities. New development streets are unlikely to have traffic levels that would justify on-street bike lanes. The provision of both parking and bike lanes could result in excessively wide streets in contravention of the effort to require narrow streets. Consider the benefits of multi-use paths over sidewalks, particularly on the edge of the village. A 10’ paved off-road path can be less expensive to construct than sidewalks, can accommodate 2-way traffic, and can be used by both bicyclists and pedestrians. Ideally, such paths should be separated from the street with a well-landscaped greenbelt to improve safety and enjoyment for users.</p>
<p><b>17</b> Require street trees, lighting and green strips along streets for new developments.</p>	<p>There are no specific requirements for street trees, street lighting and green strips in the adopted zoning regulations. Section 5.5.3 of the adopted zoning regulations authorizes the DRB to place conditions on site plan approvals related to provisions for landscaping including curbside trees. The regulations establish a minimum dollar amount to be spent on landscaping (a percentage of total project cost) but authorizes the DRB to modify that amount based on factors like preservation of existing vegetation or provision of other site improvements. Section 640 of the adopted subdivision regulations authorizes the DRB to require trees or shrubs within a subdivision, but does not specifically require street trees. Richmond has adopted public works specifications that include specific requirements for new village streets. That specification includes a requirement for curbs, historic street lights, sidewalks, storm drainage and bike facilities. The public works specifications authorize the town to require tree planting but street trees are not clearly mandated for new village streets. Language would need to be added to both the zoning and subdivision regulations/public works specifications to require street trees in any area proposed for NDA designation.</p>
<p><b>18</b> Require new streets to be as narrow as possible (such as having specifications for travel lanes that are 11 feet wide or narrower).</p>	<p>Adopted public works specifications establish a 9’ travel lane.</p>
<p><b>19</b> Regulate and minimize (1,000 feet or less) the length of cul-de-sacs or blocks</p>	<p>The public works specifications establish a maximum number of homes that may be served by a dead-end road (50). The adopted zoning and subdivision regulations are silent on the issue of the length of cul-de-sacs or blocks.</p> <p>Language would need to be added to the zoning, subdivision and/or public works specifications to limit the maximum length of a cul-de-sac to 1,000’ or less within any areas to be included in the NDA. A maximum block length standard of 1,000’ or less will also need to be added for those areas.</p>

NDA PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	ASSESSMENT
<p><b>20</b> Require utilities to be placed underground in new developments.</p>	<p>Section 6.12.9 of the adopted zoning requires utilities serving development subject to site plan review to be buried. Section 670 of the adopted subdivision regulations requires utilities within subdivisions to be located underground.</p>
<p><b>21</b> Minimize the required off-street parking spaces. (Requiring two or more off street parking spaces per residential unit is excessive.)</p>	<p>Section 6.1.2 specifies a minimum of two (or more in the case of large multi-unit projects) parking spaces per dwelling unit, except for accessory dwelling units which are required to have one parking space. The parking requirements are reduced in the Village Downtown district so that efficiency and 1-bedroom units can have less than 2 parking spaces. The number of required spaces would have to be reduced to less than two spaces/unit within any area to proposed to be designated as an NDA (an approach similar to what is done in the VD district would meet this requirement).</p>
<p><b>22</b> Allow for on-street parking.</p>	<p>The adopted public works specifications allow for village streets with on-street parking. Section 6.1.6 of the adopted zoning regulations do allow the DRB to waive or modify on-street parking requirements upon the applicant demonstrating that on-street parking is available. However, it is important to remember that on-street parking cannot be realistically substituted for off-street parking serving residential uses because of Richmond’s winter parking ban (no overnight on-street parking).</p> <p>How to address this requirement would need to be carefully considered. DHCD may not accept simply allowing for on-street parking and may want the town to require new streets within any area proposed for NDA designation have parking lanes.</p>
<p><b>Lot &amp; Building Patterns</b></p>	
<p><b>23</b> Allow for a mix of housing opportunities (multi-family, duplex, and single-family, etc.) throughout the NDA.</p>	<p>None of Richmond’s adopted zoning districts in the village center and surrounding area would likely meet this requirement. There is no district in which multi-unit housing is permitted. Three adopted districts only allow housing as part of a PUD (VC, JC and VD). The adopted HDR, RC and G districts only allow 3- or 4-unit residences as a conditional use. The proposed changes to an expanded RC zoning district to allow 1-4 unit residences as a permitted use and 5+ unit residences as a conditional use would likely meet this program requirement. However, the proposed Village Residential districts are more restrictive of housing than the HDR district they would replace in part, making no allowance for multi-unit housing at all.</p>
<p><b>24</b> Allow for small minimum lot sizes, requiring no more than ¼ acre per lot, or sizes similar to the existing small lot sizes in the area if less than ¼ acre.</p>	<p>Only two of Richmond’s adopted zoning districts would meet this requirement – VD (1/8 acre minimum) and JC (1/4 acre minimum). The proposed Residential Commercial and Village Residential North districts would allow for 1/4 acre lots. The proposed Village Residential South and Round Church districts require 1/2 acre lots and would not be eligible for NDA designation. Further, DHCD has been strongly encouraging much smaller lot sizes (closer to 4,000 sf) in downtowns and villages.</p>
<p><b>25</b> Allow for the adaptive re-use of single family residential buildings to multi-family units.</p>	<p>See (23). Conversion of single-unit residences to multi-unit residences is extremely constrained under Richmond’s adopted zoning and would remain so outside the expanded RC district under the proposed zoning. Making reasonable allowance for conversions to 3- or 4-unit residences would be required in any area proposed for NDA designation. This should be done with appropriate standards for the location of parking and site plan review (landscaping, screening, parking, trash storage, etc.) that address neighborhood character and quality of life concerns.</p>

NDA PROGRAM REQUIREMENT	ASSESSMENT
<p><b>26</b> Allow for infill development by minimizing dimensional requirements (whether traditional: lot size, frontage, lot coverage, etc. or form based: building form standards, frontage type standards, etc.).</p>	<p>Front setbacks of 20 feet or more would be considered excessive under NDA program guidelines. DHCD has been strongly encouraging minimum front setbacks not to exceed 10'. However, ample front yards are a traditional characteristic of Richmond's village neighborhoods. Given the traditional pattern and the space needed for snow storage, a minimum front setback of less than 10' would not be appropriate outside the commercial block in the center of the village.</p>
<p><b>27</b> Allow for building heights that enable diverse housing options (at least 3 functional floors).</p>	<p>The adopted and proposed regulations set a maximum height of 35 feet townwide. Most buildings in Richmond's village center are only one or two stories tall. The current height limit is likely tied to the capabilities of emergency response. If the available emergency response equipment and personnel are suitable, it may be beneficial to consider allowing for buildings up to four stories or for buildings that have an under-building parking level within a PUD – that would likely require a 40 to 45 foot building height.</p>
<p><b>28</b> Require traditional neighborhood design by minimizing building setbacks (conforming to existing building lines if appropriate) or establishing maximum setbacks to prevent new development from being disconnected from the street.</p>	<p>The proposed village zoning attempts to do this but has established minimum and maximum setbacks that are out of character for much of the village center and surrounding area. It is also not evident that a maximum building setback would be effective in a setting like Richmond village. For instance, unless carefully crafted, it could effectively prevent infill housing in rear yards – often the most feasible way of adding new homes within a traditional village settlement pattern characterized by lots that are narrow but deep.</p>
<p><b>29</b> Include provisions that ensure vehicles are not the dominant element facing a street, such as garages that are set back from the front wall of houses, multi-car parking or structured parking entrances that are setback or to the side or rear of buildings.</p>	<p>The proposed regulations address this requirement with setback standards for garages and other accessory buildings.</p>
<p><b>30</b> Building design and landscaping requirements for building and landscape design that create spaces for pedestrians, such as buildings and trees lining a sidewalk or a green surrounded by buildings.</p>	<p>The landscaping provisions of the adopted regulations would need to be strengthened with more specific standards. PUD standards could be effectively used to meet this criteria for any significant new development.</p>
<p><b>31</b> Include provisions that encourage primary building facades to be oriented to the street (such as requiring primary entrances face the street).</p>	<p>The proposed regulations attempt to address this requirement. For development requiring site plan, conditional use or PUD approval, the DRB would be able to consider building orientation. However, the zoning permit process for individual one- or two-unit dwellings does not provide the Zoning Administrator with the authority to implement general standards such as those drafted related to building orientation.</p>
<p><b>32</b> Have provisions that minimize curb cuts and reduce their frequency, or other access management provisions that favor pedestrians.</p>	<p>The village street standards and other elements of the public works specifications address this requirement.</p>

**Residential Density**

**33** The municipal bylaws allow minimum net residential densities (densities allowed through the base zoning, not through PUDs or bonuses) within the NDA greater than or equal to four single-family detached dwelling units per acre, exclusive of accessory dwelling units, or no fewer than the average existing density of the surrounding neighborhood, whichever is greater.

Only the VD and JC districts in the adopted zoning meet the 1/4 acre lot size requirement. Under the proposed zoning districts, the R/C and VRN districts would qualify as well. Any area being considered for NDA designation would need to be zoned for quarter acre lots.

DRAFT

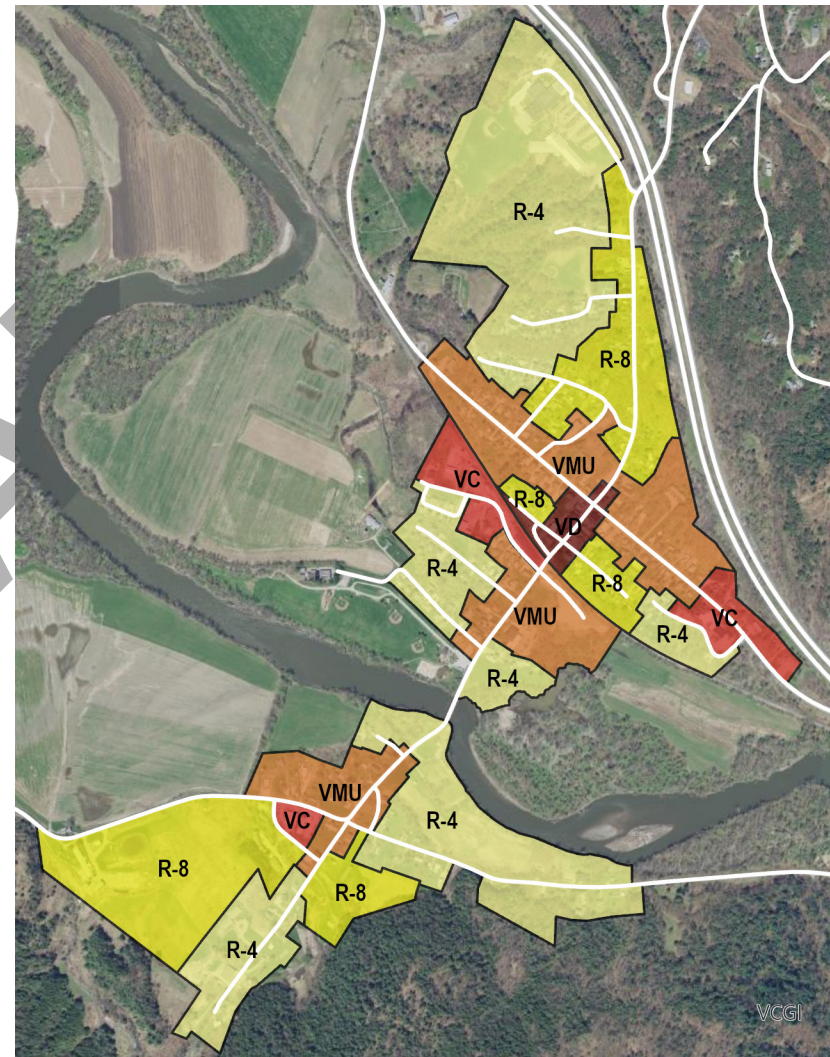
## Alternative Approach

The Planning Commission proposed zoning amendments recognize the need for more than one residential zoning district and a mixed use zoning district within the village area. The alternative approach presented below retains that basic structure but proposes alternative geographic extents, dimensional standards and allowed uses. The alternative approach is based on an analysis and understanding of the village's traditional built form. It seeks to accommodate opportunity for infill housing that is compatible with that traditional built form. The alternative retains the existing Village Downtown and Village Commercial districts and creates three new districts.

The dimensional standards are similar in many ways those proposed by the Planning Commission, but the small differences are important. The alternative approach envisions allowing for single- or two-unit dwellings on any lot, but regulating multi-unit (3+) housing based on a maximum density standard (lot area per unit). A Residential-4 district would allow for up to four units per acre, while the Residential-8 district would allow for up to eight units per acre. The Mixed Use district would allow for up to 12 units per acre and the Village Downtown would continue to allow for up to 24 units per acre. The alternative approach also provides for housing types.

The mixed use and residential districts would allow for single- through four-unit dwellings as a permitted use. Site plan review would be required for three- and four-unit dwellings. This is consistent with state statute and programs, as well as the policies of the Richmond Town Plan.

Although providing more opportunity for small-scale multi-unit housing and an overall higher density of housing, these zoning changes are unlikely to generate a substantial increase in housing on already developed lots. The sales market for single-unit homes in the village is very strong. Unless that changes, the high cost of acquiring and renovating a single-unit residence into a multi-unit residence will likely discourage widespread conversion of owner-occupied single-unit homes to multi-unit, investor-owned rental properties.



	ALTERNATIVE APPROACH				
	VD	VC	MU	R-8	R-4
Min lot size (sq ft)	5,000	15,000	6,000	8,000	10,000
Min lot area / dwelling unit (3+ units)	1,815	3,630	3,630	5,445	10,890
Min lot frontage (ft)	50	75	60	60	75
Max lot coverage (%)	90	75	75	60	45
Min front setback (ft)	0	10	10	15	20
Min side & rear setbacks (ft)	5	10	10	10	10
Max full building stories	3	3	3	3	2
Max building footprint	12,000	24,000	12,000	9,000	6,000

	ALTERNATIVE APPROACH				
	VD	VC	MU	R-8	R-4
1-unit residence	X	X	P	P	P
2-unit residence	X	X	P	P	P
3-unit residence	X	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S
4-unit residence	X	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S
5 or more unit residence	P/S	P/S	P/S	X	X
Accessory dwelling	X	X	P	P	P
Residential care home	X	X	P	P	P
Residential care facility	X	P/S	P/S	C/S	X
Recovery residence	X	C/S	C/S	C/S	X
Transitional housing	X	C/S	C/S	C/S	X
Emergency shelter	X	C/S	C/S	X	X

P = Permitted, C = Conditional, X = Prohibited, S = Site Plan Review Required

Wetlands – includes vernal pools (no Class III) 10-6-21

## 6.9 Wetlands

~~No building, roadway or septic system shall be constructed within 100 feet of a Class I wetland and within 50 feet of a Class II wetland. Classifications of wetlands are established by the State of Vermont.~~

~~In addition, no draining, dredging, filling, or alteration of the water flow shall occur within 50 feet of Class I and Class II wetlands, unless such use has been approved by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Wetlands Section through the issuance of a Conditional Use Determination.~~

### 6.9.1 Applicability.

No land development shall occur within a Class I or II wetland, or wetland buffer, except for the encroachments allowed under Section 6.9.3.

6.9.2 Wetland Buffers. All Class I and II wetlands shall be surrounded by a buffer of the following widths:

- a) 100 feet for a Class I wetland;
- b) 50 feet for a Class II wetland;

### 6.9.3 Allowed Encroachments.

6.9.3.1 Permitted—The following **wetland buffer** encroachments may be allowed upon issuance of a Zoning Permit by the Administrative Officer.

- a) Stormwater management and treatment facilities that meet the accepted state sizing criteria and best management practices set forth in the Vermont Stormwater Management Manuals as most recently amended.
- b) Public paths, trails and sidewalks that cross a wetland buffer for the purpose of public access or recreation if there is no feasible alternative to the crossing.
- c) Public or private roads or driveways that cross a wetland buffer for the purpose of providing safe access to a use if there is no feasible alternative to the crossing.
- d) Utility lines, including telephone, cable, sewer and water that cross a wetland buffer for the purpose of providing or extending service, only if there is no feasible alternative.

6.9.3.2 Conditional – The following **wetland** encroachments may be allowed upon issuance of a Conditional Use Approval by the DRB.

- a) Public paths, trails and sidewalks that cross a wetland for the purpose of public access or recreation if there is no feasible alternative to the crossing.
- b) Public or private roads or driveways that cross a wetland for the purpose of providing safe access to a use if there is no feasible alternative to the crossing.
- c) Utility lines, including telephone, cable, sewer and water that cross a wetland for the purpose of providing or extending service, only if there is no feasible alternative

6.9.3.3 Conditional Use Approval may be granted for the reconstruction, replacement or relocation of nonconforming structures and existing impervious surfaces that encroaches into a **wetland buffer pursuant to** Section 4.7. 8.

#### 6.9.4 Development Review Standards

6.9.4.1 The proposed allowed encroachment must be designed to produce the least possible impact to the wetland or wetland buffer, and any incursions into a wetland shall have no or minimal impact to the functionality of the natural processes of the wetland. The encroachment shall be only to the minimum extent necessary to carry out the purpose of the development.

6.9.4.2 The creation of wetland crossings shall be installed in such a manner as to preserve hydraulic and ecological connectivity of the wetland.

6.9.4.3. The creation of new lawns or areas of pavement, including for parking, within wetlands or wetland buffers is prohibited, except as outlined in Section 6.9.3.3. Supplemental planting with appropriate native vegetation to restore and enhance the function of the wetland within the wetland and wetland buffer is allowed.

6.9.4.4. New on-site septic systems, including septic tanks and leach fields, are prohibited in wetlands and wetland buffers.

6.9.4.5. Storage of hazardous or other materials is prohibited in wetlands and wetland buffers.

6.9.5 Application Requirements -Permit applications for land development on a lot containing a known or suspected wetland, or wetland buffer shall provide the following.

- a) A wetlands delineation and assessment of the wetland prepared by a professional wetlands ecologist in accordance with the Vermont Wetlands Rules put forth by the Agency of Natural Resources. Any wetland that has been assessed as having any one of the functions and values described for wetlands by these rules shall be considered a Class II wetland, whether or not it has been mapped.
- b) A site plan indicating the location of the proposed land development in relation to the wetland.
- c) A Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Project Review Sheet if the wetland is a Class I or II wetland.
- d) An erosion prevention and sediment control plan in accordance with the current Vermont Standards and Specifications for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control.
- e) If applying for a permit for an encroachment, substantive evidence that no other feasible alternative to the proposed encroachment exists.

#### **Amendments to Section 7 (Definitions)**

Wetland – Those areas that are inundated by surface or groundwater with a frequency sufficient to support vegetation or aquatic life that depend on saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Such areas include but are not limited to marshes, swamps, sloughs, potholes, fens, river and lake overflows, mud flats, bogs and ponds, but excluding such areas as grow food or crops in connection with farming activities. Vernal pools shall be considered wetlands. The location of wetlands on a lot may or may not be indicated on the State Wetlands Inventory Maps, and must be confirmed through site investigation by a wetlands ecologist.

Wetland Buffer – The area contiguous to a wetland which serves to protect the values and functions of the wetland.