

Renewing Richmond's Conservation Reserve Fund



- **Established by voters 2005**
- **Last Renewed by voters 2021 (Yes – 927; No – 358)**

A 17-year successful track record at protecting water and air quality, biodiversity, working farms and forests, outdoor recreation, historic resources and education.

- **Enables the Town to move quickly to capture prime, time-sensitive funding opportunities.**
- **Brings in major support from outside funding sources (State, Federal, foundations)**

The Question on Town Meeting Day

Article 4. Shall the Town of Richmond vote to approve funding the Conservation Reserve Fund by adding one cent to the municipal tax rate in the 2022-2023 fiscal year? (To be voted by Australian ballot)

Information Sheet

<http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/>

RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

What is the Conservation Reserve Fund?

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Since 2005 voters have supported the Fund with a penny on the tax rate (\$10 per \$100,000 of property valuation per year). The Fund is voted upon annually. Last year the vote was 927-358 in favor of renewal. Voting this year is on or before March 1.

How has the CRF been used?

As shown on the reverse, the Fund has supported numerous important conservation projects ranging from Town forests to protecting recreational treasures, working farms and historic preservation.

Why was the Fund created?

In a growing town like ours, conservation opportunities can arise at any time – and just as rapidly disappear, often forever. This can make it hard to plan for or quickly find the significant amounts of money needed today to conserve important and vulnerable resources. Richmond's Fund continues to enable the Conservation Commission, Selectboard and the public to carefully review and still quickly act on key conservation opportunities.

The Fund has also greatly reduced our Town's costs of conservation. Many state, federal and private conservation funders require communities to share in project costs to show that voters support conservation. Voter-financed funds such as ours provide the needed proof, qualifying projects for very significant additional funding. So far, over \$4 million dollar Richmond taxpayers have invested in conservation has generated \$4.18 in funding from other sources – over \$1.5 million in all.

How are funding decisions made?

Proposals are made to the Conservation Commission. The Selectboard makes the final decisions after considering the Conservation Commission's recommendations. Both bodies deliberate in public sessions. Voters must approve using the Fund for any land acquisitions by the Town over \$20,000.

What does the Fund cost taxpayers?

By adding one cent to the municipal tax rate (1.3%), renewing the Fund would cost taxpayers \$10 for every \$100,000 of a property's assessment. That would generate an estimated \$48,128 for important conservation projects across town.

Does conserving land raise or lower property taxes overall?

An expert on Vermont tax policy, Deborah Brighton, has researched this and shown how conserving land helps keep property taxes in check. She says, "Open space tends to require few public services. More people tend to require more public services, resulting in higher taxes."

Furthermore, nearly all conserved land in Richmond, being privately held, continues generating tax revenues. (The exceptions are the Andrews Community Forest and the Stage Road Community Forest, as they are Town-owned.) To qualify for public funds, landowners usually must guarantee public access to conserved land as warranted for hiking, hunting, fishing, ski/tog and other activities (one exception being land used for agriculture or livestock grazing).

What kinds of new projects does the Conservation Commission foresee?

Applications include saving Gillett Pond by helping fund a new dam. Other projects may be proposed at any time, as was the case with the Andrews Community Forest.

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Complete project list on reverse. More information:

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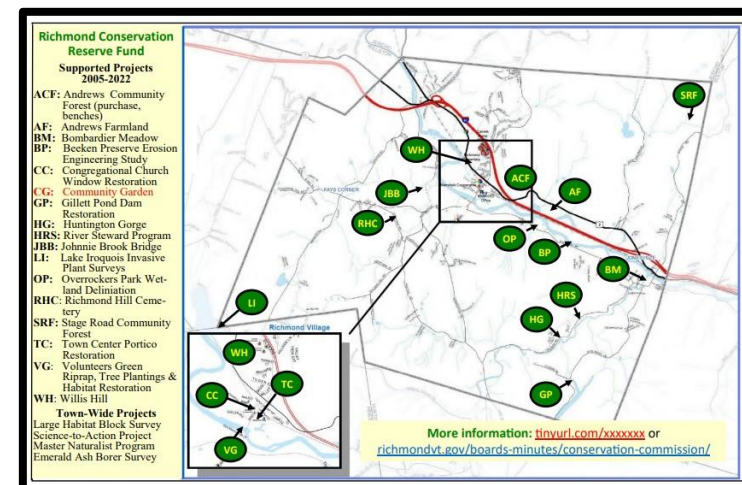
Please Vote on or before March 1. Polls open 7am-7pm at Camels Hump Middle School. Early voting ballots available from Town Clerk.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

	Project	Project Leader	Description	CRF \$	Other \$ Generated
2009	Bombardier Meadow	Rich. Land Trust	10-acre hayfield on Cochran Rd., with wooded banks on the Huntington and Wasooki River	\$51,500	\$77,000 (VHCB)
	Large Habitat Block Study	Rich. Cons. Commission	Mapped large blocks of uplands wildlife habitat and connectivity among them	\$2,400	-
2010	Town Center Portico Renovation	Town of Rich.	Roof and other structural repairs	\$35,265	\$65,035
	Richmond Hill Cemetery	Town of Rich.	10-foot deeded path to historic cemetery	\$2,500	-
2012	Andrews Farmland	Vt. Land Trust	187 acres of prime agricultural soils along the Wasooki River	\$10,000	\$197,500
2013	Science-to-Action Project	Rich. Planning and Conservation Commissions	Identify public conservation priorities, and inventory/confirm key habitat locations to improve planning & zoning processes	\$3,195	\$88,525 (includes in-land service donations)
	Window restoration at Congregational Church	Rich. Cong. Church	Protect 100-year-old-stained glass windows	\$6,564	\$12,423
2014	Willis Hill	Rich. Land Trust	20 acres on Rt. 2 at west of village, backing up to elementary and middle schools	\$64,000	\$122,500
2018	Andrews Community Forest	Vermont Land Trust	428 acres of rich wildlife habitat and educational resources, within one of Vermont's key forest blocks	\$75,000	\$735,000
	Huntington Gorge	Rich. Land Trust, Vermont River Commission	3.7 acres, dramatic 40-foot rocky gorge, popular swimming holes, site of early 20 th -cent. hydroelectric station	\$10,000	\$55,000
2019	Johanne Brook Bridge	Rich. Trails Committee	Repair of a key link for hikers and bikers using the Cross Vt. Trail	\$1,000	\$400
	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	Lake Iroquois Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,000	-
2019	Richmond Master Naturalist Program	UVM Extension	Support citizen-scientist training to inventory and monitor health of important habitat and other resources	\$4,000	-
	Volunteers Green Run Race	Town of Rich.	Protect sand shell, fields from bank erosion	\$20,000	\$117,200
2020	Andrews Forest Trails	Town of Rich.	Improve trail system, protect sensitive habitat	\$3,000	\$1,500
	Huntington Gorge River Steward	Rich. Land Trust, Vt. River Conservancy	Fund part-time steward to educate Gorge visitors on safety, geology and site history	\$1,500	\$5,000
2020	Volunteers Green Tree Planting	Town of Rich.	Mitigate beaver damage to riverbank trees	\$200	-
	Stage Rd. Town Forest	Rich. Land Trust	Conserve rich forest within the Chitt. County Uplands Conservation Project	\$3,500	-
2021	Johanne Brook Bridge	Town of Rich.	Repair flood-damage on Cross Vt. Trail	\$8,400	-
	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Rich.	Phase 1 of project to manage impending ash tree losses	\$20,000	\$15,000
2021	Andrews Forest Trails and Benches	Earle Sossis	Build benches using timber logged on-site; expand trails below power lines	\$500	-
	Volunteers Green Habitat Restoration	Town of Rich.	Widen weed buffer between river and fields	\$15,000	\$35,000
2021	Vol. Green Tree Plantings	Town of Rich.	Establish gardens on donated land	-	\$500
	Community Garden	Town of Rich.	Delinate wetlands for state permit	\$2,000	-
2021	Quackenbush Permittance	Town of Rich.	Assess erosion threat to Cochran Rd. and costs for improving parking facilities	\$2,500	-
	Becken Engineering Survey	Rich. Land Trust	Assess erosion threat to Cochran Rd. and costs for improving parking facilities	\$2,500	-
2021	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey (2021)	L.I. Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,200	\$3,200
				\$359,392	\$1,507,538

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Please Vote on or before March 2.

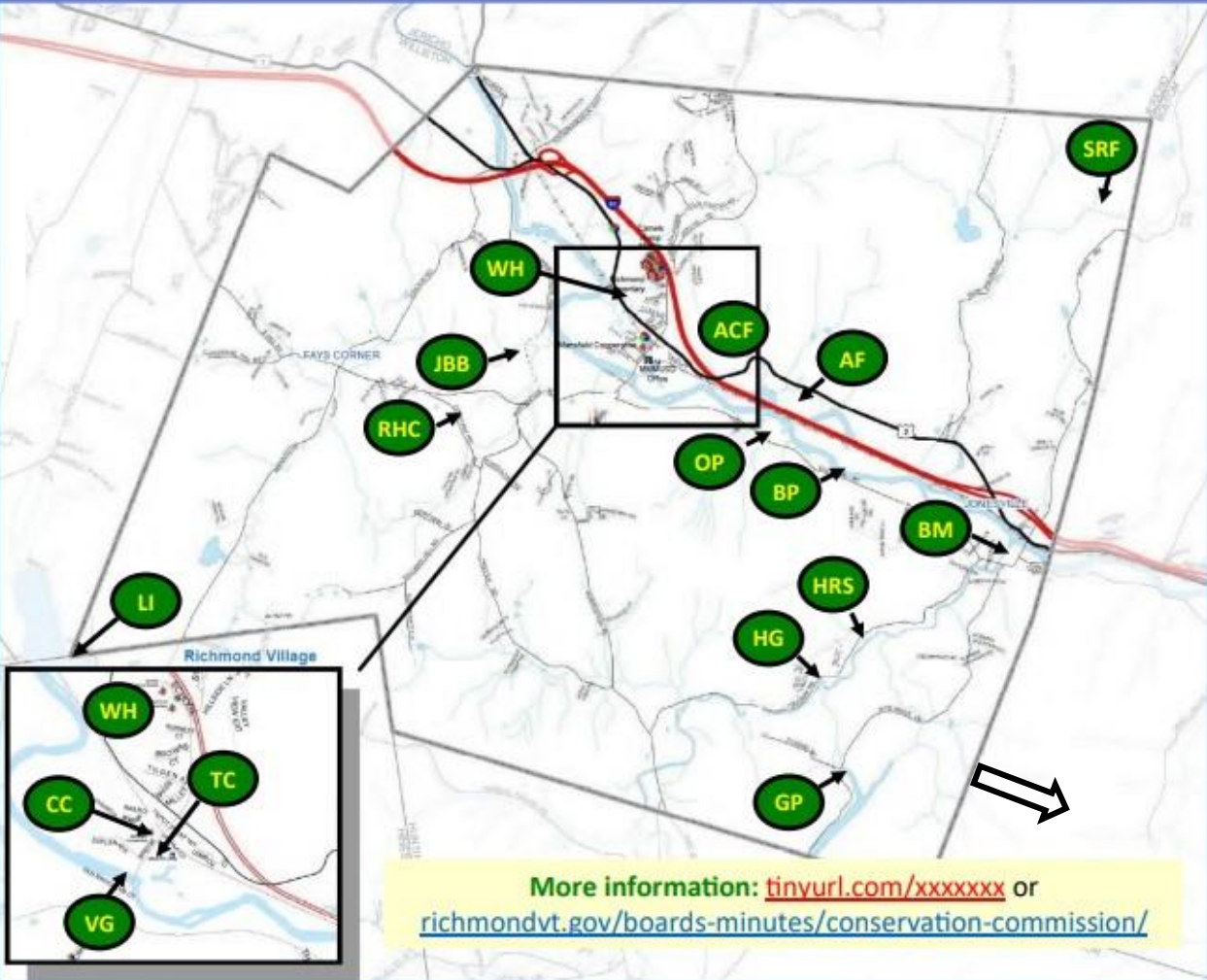


CRF Funded Projects

Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund
Supported Projects 2005-2022

ACF: Andrews Community Forest (purchase, benches)
AF: Andrews Farmland
BM: Bombardier Meadow
BP: Beeken Preserve Erosion Engineering Study
CC: Congregational Church Window Restoration
CG: Community Garden
GP: Gillett Pond Dam Restoration
HG: Huntington Gorge
HRS: River Steward Program
JBB: Johnnie Brook Bridge
LI: Lake Iroquois Invasive Plant Surveys
OP: Overrockers Park Wetland Delineation
RHC: Richmond Hill Cemetery
SRF: Stage Road Community Forest
TC: Town Center Portico Restoration
VG: Volunteers Green Riprap, Tree Plantings & Habitat Restoration
WH: Willis Hill

Town-Wide Projects
Large Habitat Block Survey
Science-to-Action Project
Master Naturalist Program
Emerald Ash Borer Survey



The map shows the Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund area with various project locations marked by green circles and arrows. The locations are: WH (Willis Hill), ACF (Andrews Community Forest), AF (Andrews Farmland), SRF (Stage Road Community Forest), JBB (Johnnie Brook Bridge), RHC (Richmond Hill Cemetery), OP (Overrockers Park Wetland Delineation), BP (Beeken Preserve Erosion Engineering Study), BM (Bombardier Meadow), HRS (River Steward Program), HG (Huntington Gorge), LI (Lake Iroquois Invasive Plant Surveys), CC (Congregational Church Window Restoration), TC (Town Center Portico Restoration), and VG (Volunteers Green Riprap, Tree Plantings & Habitat Restoration). A red line indicates a major road or boundary. A black box highlights the Richmond Village area, which is shown in a larger inset map at the bottom left. A yellow box at the bottom right contains contact information.

More information: tinyurl.com/xxxxxxx or richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/

Recent Projects

- Emerald Ash Borer Control
- Andrews Forest Trails
- Volunteers green Plantings
- Community Garden
- Overrockers Permitting
- Beeken Engineering Survey
- Lake Iroquois Plant Survey

- For 2022: Gillett Pond Dam



Gillett Pond Dam
Repair

The CRF Advances Town Plan Priorities

- **“Protect priority natural areas in order to maintain the health and function of those areas and their ecosystem services.”**
- **“Preserve healthy and resilient working lands, agricultural soils.”**
- **“Maintain Richmond’s rural character and scenic beauty.”**
- **“Utilize best management practices for Richmond-owned, publicly accessible natural and recreational areas.”**
- **“Utilize the conservation reserve fund to protect important natural resources and public access to them where appropriate”**

<http://www.richmondvt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Conservation-Reserve-Fund-Policy-2005.pdf>

Funding

- **Financed by 1 cent on the tax rate.**
- **FY 2023 yield: \$48,128.**
- **Taxpayer cost \$10 for every \$100,000 of assessed value.**

400% Return on Taxpayer Funding

To date:

- CRF grants: \$ 359,392
- Matching grants won: \$1,502,533
- Total value of projects: \$1,861,925

LEVERAGE: \$1 CRF brought in \$4.18

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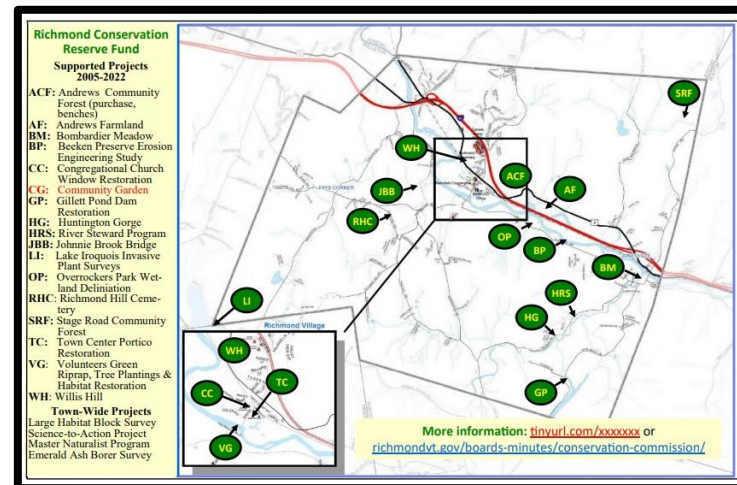
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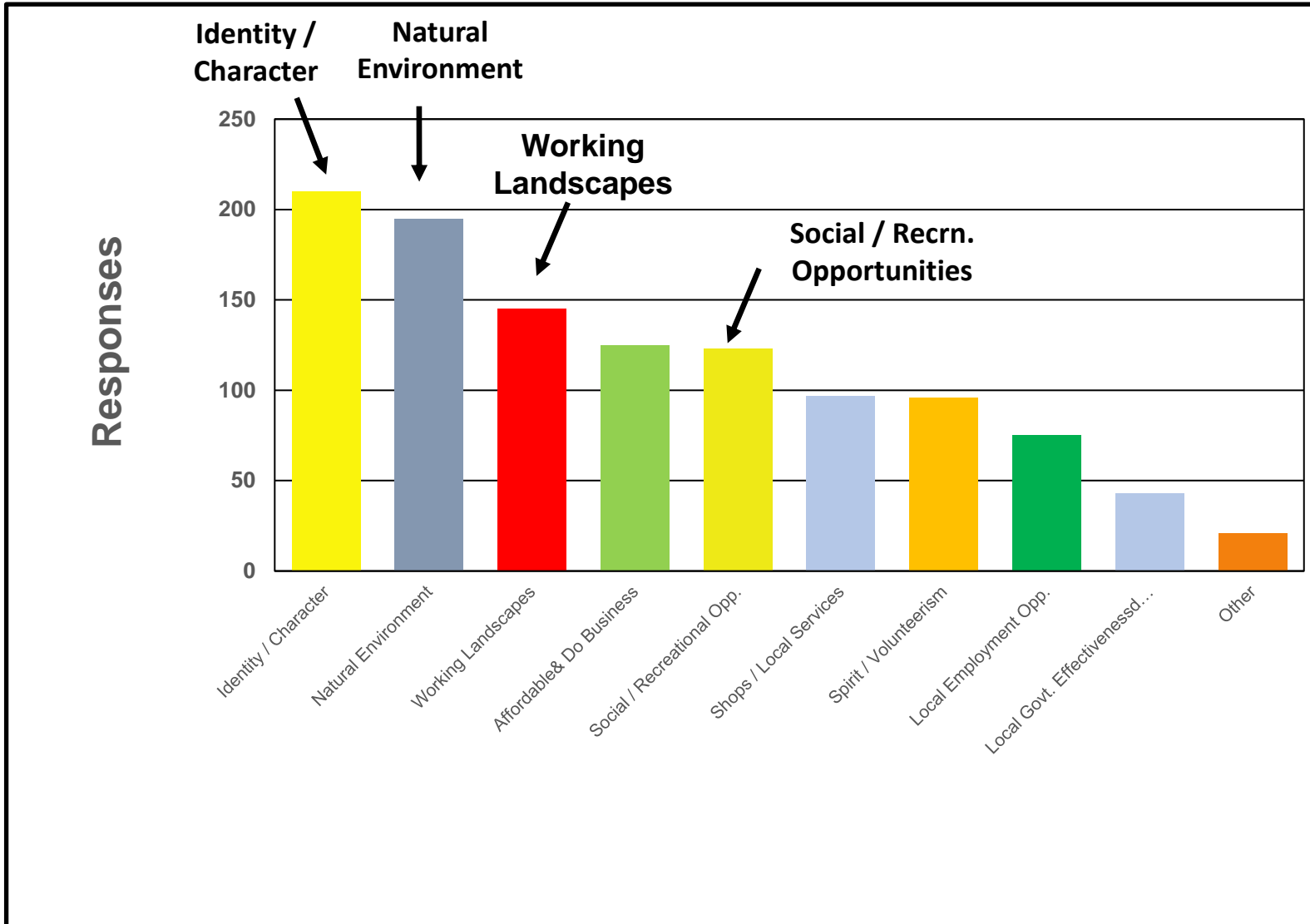
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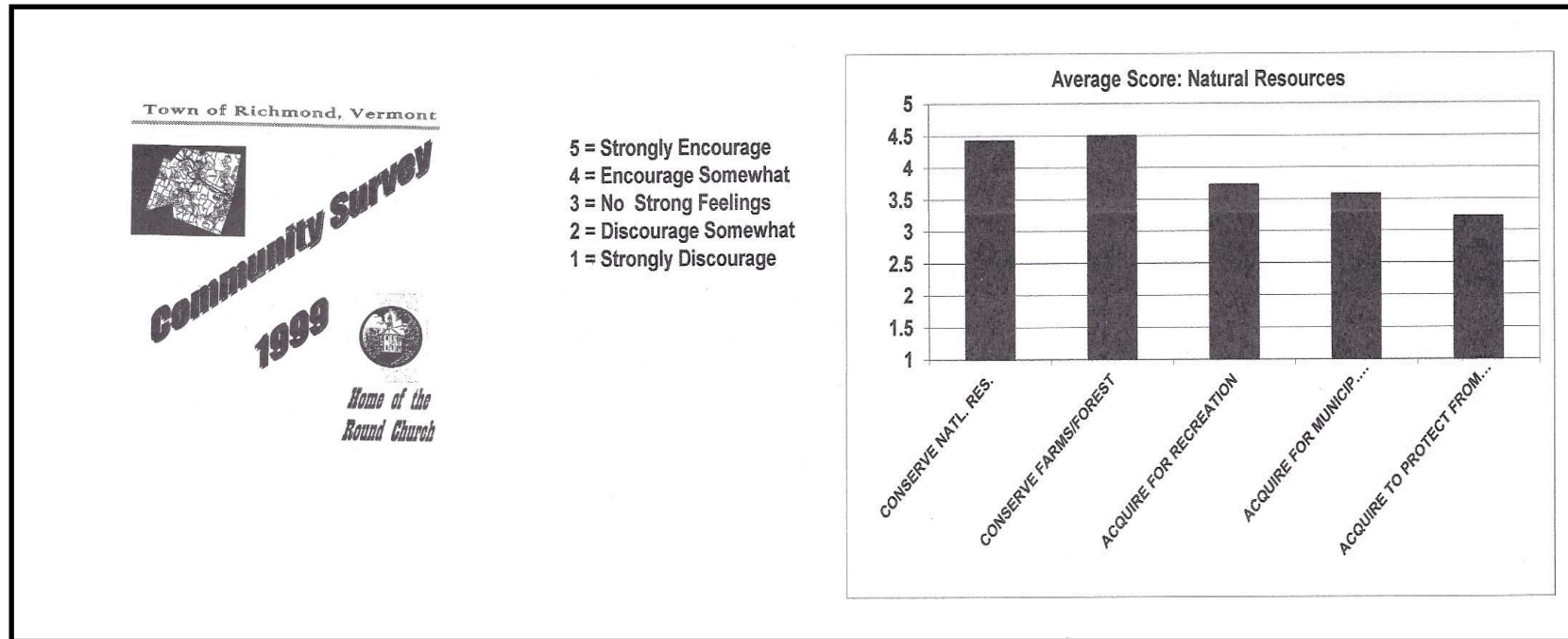
Judy Rosovsky, RCC Chair: rosovsky@rcc.edu

Longstanding Residents' Vision for Richmond's Future



1999 Resident Survey

Scale 1 to 5; 5 = Strongly Encourage



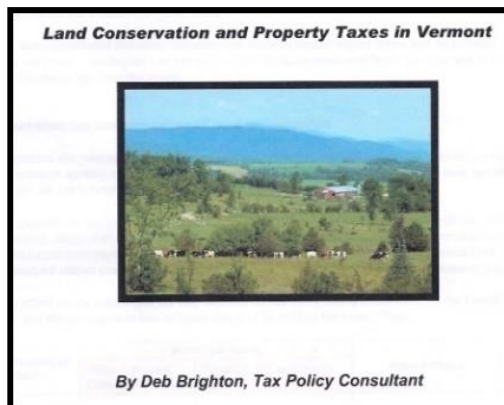
Left to Right:

- Conserve Natural Resources
- Conserve Farms / Forest
- Acquire for recreation
- Acquire for Municipal needs
- Acquire to protect from development

But What About Taxes?

The Evidence:

- **Towns with more conserved acreage have lower property taxes.**
- **Conserved properties demand fewer municipal services.**



Conserve Lands in Richmond

