TECHNICAL PLANS

**VISION CONNECTION**

* **Affordability**: Being able to afford the community you live in is a major and integral part of choosing to stay or leave
* **Safe + Resilient Community:** Safety assurance is a major factor in community sustainability and spirit
* **Community For All Ages:** Inclusivity of all ages makes for a closer-knit community with greater social resources
* **History and Traditions:** These are what make a community unique. Traditions can bring new people in and help to keep them as well
* **Mobility and Transportation:** Mobility of residents allows for social interaction and the ability to access their basic needs
* **Small-Town Character:** Quiet, rural, friendly communities are a strong desire for many people when it comes to choosing a place to live
* **Social, Cultural + Recreational Offerings:** Free time opportunities are important not only for the enjoyment of residents but can also draw in visitors
* **Transparent + Inclusive Decision-Making:** Government plays a large role in residents lives both actively and passively. They must uphold their charge of acting for the good of the public

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

A strong sense of community is a quintessential characteristic of many Vermont towns, and Richmond is no exception. The Richmond community was heavily involved in the creation of this plan which reflects a strength and the special value of this particular Technical Plan. The 11 visions that the community created for Richmond’s future are all based on what constitutes a thriving society and what sets Richmond apart from the rest.

A most basic component of community development is that a community be able to access its most basic needs: food, water, energy, emergency and medical services, shelter, mobility, and supplies. While most residents can meet these needs locally, vulnerable populations such as the elderly or low-income residents face greater risks. Vulnerable populations are more likely to face food insecurity, require advanced medical care, and live in housing in vulnerable locations such as floodplain. Richmond does have a few notable gaps in services, such as a pharmacy. Other needs Richmond residents would like to be able to access are childcare, education, employment, and recreational opportunities.

Another basic component of a community is its government. Richmond has a strong desire for a transparent and inclusive government. Vermont statutes require that all government officers are accountable to the public, and the Open Meeting Law requires that municipal boards and committees publicly announce all meetings and agendas, conduct business in open meetings, and post minutes afterward. The changing culture and demographics in Richmond (and Vermont overall) mean that fewer residents are attending public meetings and engaging through these traditional channels, which is a challenge Richmond must overcome.

These same trends are driving the decline in town government volunteerism overall. Today, the Town struggles to recruit volunteers for a variety of positions on boards and commissions. Other local volunteer-based organizations are not necessarily in the same struggle as the town, and do have thriving memberships. Many Richmond residents expressed a need for increased volunteer recruitment and coordination, including better communication, to meet ongoing volunteer needs and volunteer needs during emergencies. Strong volunteerism and civic engagement are common aspects of small town life, and small town character is an aspect of Richmond that is highly valued.

The most visible defining aspects of Richmond’s small town character are its landscapes and architecture. Scenic views and pastoral landscapes are important to the community, along with the authentic working farms and treasured historic buildings like the Round Church. Community members also value Richmond’s small size and scale. Land development can greatly affect community development. A small rural community like Richmond with the desire to stay small and rural must strike a balance between economic prosperity of the town and residents while preserving the town’s character.

Strong traditions and local culture also contribute to a treasured small town community feel. Existing social, cultural and recreational offerings in Richmond include a wide range of options, from long-standing events and traditions, to public spaces and gathering places that support informal activities, to open-access recreation facilities, trails and parks. Richmond’s beloved community traditions include general themes like Richmond’s working landscape and agricultural economy; shared Vermont traditions such as Town Meeting Day and strong local democracy; and standalone events like the 4th of July parade, Friday Night Food Affair, and Holiday Market. Some of these events have lasted for generations, while others (like the three-year-old Floatapalooza) are just starting and growing now. More than ten different groups, including several Town Committees and departments, currently coordinate core activities and facilities and publicize them in a variety of ways. Richmond does not have a staff position responsible for coordinating activities, and there are no central communication channels where events and activities are listed.

Richmond’s prime location in Chittenden County offers residents convenient access to a wide array of cultural activities in Burlington, Montpelier and beyond, but residents value the offerings right in town. Many participants in the planning process expressed a desire for more programs and facilities within Richmond. While they value the many activities already available, residents – and particularly youth – have expressed a strong desire for additional facilities including a community pool, tennis courts, more basketball courts, safer bike routes, a permanent building for a community/senior center. The physical and financial feasibility, as well as predicted level of use, of such facilities is still to be determined. Many Richmond residents have voiced a desire for more public transportation options and better access or parking for important destinations like the Village or schools. While there are many hiking trails throughout town and sidewalks within the Village, there are few sidewalks and no designated bike or shared use lanes for people walking along important routes.

Richmond must also address the needs of an aging population — not only helping older adults to age in place, but finding ways to celebrate and benefit from their talents and helping them to retain vital roles in the community. Richmond community members also expressed a desire to retain and attract more young adults. That means ensuring that they can afford to live in Richmond and can find viable employment, but also providing some of the vibrancy and amenities that are drawing many younger people to cities. The town cannot directly guarantee employment or affordable housing rates, but they can support education and business growth that helps employment, as well as programs that support affordable housing. Looking to the future, Richmond must also focus on providing supports to its youngest residents. Across the nation and throughout Vermont, leaders are recognizing the strategic importance of improving early childhood education and services. Investing in young children at this critical stage can improve outcomes and reduce the need for later support and services. Richmond’s afterschool programs, library programs, the Our Community Cares Camp, childcare centers, and Radiate Art programs are exceptionally valuable to children and their families.

A major issue facing the nation, Vermont, and Richmond is the opiate addiction crisis. This crisis is leading to an increase in crime, and a decrease in public health and safety. This deeply affects community spirit and sustainability. Richmond needs to ensure that our policies and services follow the path to ending the crisis and supporting our community members however this crisis may affect them. We can address many needs and build community by creating stronger volunteer networks, collaboration between organizations, and better communication systems. These efforts will need to be a collaborative process between government and residents in order to be successful.

**GOALS + ACTIONS**

**GOAL 1: Ensure that Richmond residents can meet basic needs and access affordable goods and services, including in times of emergency, as well as support or provide further services for residents when possible**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Continue to support currently established local businesses and service providers by creating a municipal purchasing policy that gives preference to local vendors where applicable and reasonable
2. When updating zoning regulations, explore ways to allow for non-traditional housing types, ways to encourage the creation of new business enterprises
3. Ensure that town policies and regulations are inclusive and allow for access to goods and services for all residents
4. Support and allow for affordable food and clothing sources such as the Thrift Shop and Food Shelf
5. Convene an essential goods and services summit with local providers to identify where gaps exist in Richmond and determine a course of action to increase availability
6. Support new and/or unique employment opportunities for Richmond residents through policy and regulation, such as continued or expanded allowance of cottage industry and home occupations
7. Support childcare provider opportunities by maintaining programs such as the Children’s Librarian
8. Continue to utilize and allow public use of municipal buildings and grounds, such as the Community Room and Volunteers Green, for the Richmond Farmer’s Market, Holiday Market, book sale, and other local or affordable buying opportunities
9. Include access to goods, services, and basic needs in the emergency management plan
10. Continue to support Richmond’s schools and other educational opportunities for residents

**GOAL 2: Increase civic infrastructure, community engagement, and communication through transparent government**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Ensure that all town staff, boards, and commissions are following the requirements of Vermont’s Open Meeting Law
2. Hold an annual meeting of town boards, commissions, and staff to increase collaboration and communication
3. Continue to utilize open and transparent communication channels through established platforms such as Front Porch Forum, Times Ink, and MMCTV and publicize accommodations for participation in meetings such as the livestream from MMCTV
4. Maintain a user friendly and regularly updated town website and social media platforms that includes a list of volunteer opportunities; public contact information for all town boards, commissions, and staff; and a link to Western Slopes Business Association website
5. Maintain the town’s inclusivity policy, and explore the creation of a civility policy for the municipal workplace, boards, commissions, and town media presence
6. Continue the fair and equitable application and enforcement of town, state, and federal laws
7. Recognize and reward volunteer service through celebration and promotion

**GOAL 3: Support and create outdoor recreation and public land use opportunities**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Work with landowners that are willing to allow public access to privately accessed natural and open space areas
2. Support the Richmond and Vermont Land Trusts in their endeavors to protect natural resources that will have public access for recreational purposes
3. Encourage collaboration between the trails committee, conservation commission, planning commission, and regional organizations
4. Create and distribute materials that foster responsible use and enjoyment of Richmond’s natural areas, including trail maps, kiosks, improved parking and access, and signage

**GOAL 4: Continue to support and maintain various social and community recreation opportunities**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Support arts and cultural programming and opportunities for residents and visitors
2. Explore the creation of a town community outreach and recreation staff position
3. Identify possible methods of funding further recreation and community engagement opportunities
4. Support public and private recreational businesses or endeavors by ensuring that zoning regulations allow for sustainable recreational uses of public and private lands including, but not limited to, the potential development of community centers, outdoor seating or gathering, performance spaces, etc.
5. Educate the community and visitors of Richmond’s recreational opportunities through the town website and social media
6. Continue to support and allow community use of the library and Community Room
7. Create a management plan for municipal public spaces, facilities, and lands that includes capital improvements and budget as well as opportunities for expanded or new uses
8. Continue to allow for public events such as festivals, parades, and vendor fairs and create a streamlined approval process for such uses

**GOAL 5: Work to maintain and increase public health and safety, and reduce crime**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Continue to support the provision of critical services including, but not limited to, law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services through policy and work to keep these services both affordable and effective
2. Ensure that Richmond’s first responders are trained and sufficiently equipped to deal with a variety of scenarios and threats
3. Support public health programs and resources in and outside of Richmond by ensuring town policies allow for their presence and the development of critical facilities
4. Continue to collaborate with and support efforts and resources that are tackling the opiate crisis, as well as other major issues such as domestic abuse and substance abuse
5. Monitor for safety opportunities such as increased security measures, grants for safety equipment or projects, new crosswalks, and educational trainings or resources

(see also Transportation, Housing, Utilities & Facilities, Natural & Cultural Resources, Future Land Use, Emergency Resilience, Economic Development, Education)