TECHNICAL PLANS

**VISION CONNECTION**

* **Affordability:** A strong economy can drive up demand and displacement, but can also increase income and earning potential.
* **Community for All Ages:** All ages benefit from increased access to goods and services, and economic development particularly benefits young people who would like to find work locally.
* **Economic Opportunity**: New job opportunities, mobility options, and choice in the marketplace.
* **Mobility:** Transportation and mobility are critical for supporting economic development, which can in turn increase demand for new transportation options.
* **Small Town Character:** Without clear direction, economic development can undermine character; well-planned development can reinforce it.

### Economic Development

Richmond is a unique community in that it serves as a bedroom community for the surrounding urban areas, but it also has historically hosted a thriving local and farm economy. Richmond remains an economic and service center for surrounding rural areas. Community members value the businesses and services in town, but they also value the absence of generic and unplanned economic growth. People expressed strong desires for more, *targeted,* economic growth during the Our Town, Our Future process. Specifically, community members are interested in attracting new businesses that meet daily needs and cater to locals; that provide high-quality and sustainable jobs; that provide new opportunities for recreation, culture, and social connections; and that support Richmond’s natural resources and working lands. Those interests echo economic growth trends and goals across the state, which focus on high-tech jobs and the creative sector, the farm and food economy, outdoor recreation, and entrepreneurship.

As in the past, the economic hub of Richmond is in the village. It serves as the downtown, but also as the unofficial downtown for the surrounding rural towns of Bolton and Huntington. The town’s largest employers are located within the village; they include the school system (Camel’s Hump Middle School, Richmond Elementary School and the school district offices), Harrington’s of Vermont, Richmond Market and the Town Center. Limited industrial space is located in the northeast corner of Richmond, and commercial growth is centered primarily in the downtown area and along Route 2. While traditional dairies and larger-scale farms are declining in Vermont, working lands are an increasingly important economic sector. Richmond is home to several large farms and an increasing number of small producers and value-added agricultural businesses. The Farm-to-Table movement has spurred interest in local purchasing; the farmer’s market, CSA’s, Farm to School programs, and consumer interest are driving resurgence in land-based businesses that also play a critical role in protecting Richmond’s natural lands and rural character. Recreation, conservation, and tourism also have deep historical roots in Richmond, while contributing greatly to modern economic development. Organizations such as Cochran’s Ski Area, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and the Round Church attract many people to Richmond for recreation or jobs, while providing services to locals and protecting treasured local institutions.

Overall, there are approximately 375 acres designated primarily for commercial and/or industrial uses in Richmond, much of which is already built out or constrained by the special flood hazard area. These areas are the Industrial, Commercial, Village Commercial, and Gateway Commercial Zoning Districts. The relatively small amount of developable land means that the development of new, large-scale facilities and industries is unlikely. Given the commercial landscape and available sites, we believe that most economic growth is likely to fall into three categories: 1) retail or service sector businesses; 2) small-scale or cottage industries; and 3) food, farm, and recreation enterprises. These sectors align strongly with community values and state priorities, and represent important areas to target growth and support. Several practical considerations strongly influence current economic development and the potential for further growth. Richmond’s current business zoning and permitting processes, access to high-speed internet, cell phone coverage, and access to water and wastewater infrastructure. The potential water and sewer line extension would open up possibilities for new businesses along Route 2, and encouraging economic development along the line will help reduce costs for all users. Three-phase power is also important for commercial and industrial operations, which is currently available along Route 2, in the village, and along Cochran and Huntington Roads. An increase in internet speeds and wider coverage of cellphone service would not only benefit residents, but would greatly benefit industry and home-based business or employment. Economic growth also depends on having an adequate workforce, which in turn relies on many services and community resources. High housing costs and the lack of housing designed specifically for workers may hamper businesses trying to attract employees, while a lack of specific job training programs may limit people’s ability to secure high-quality jobs.

#### **GOALS & ACTIONS**

**GOAL 1: ​Support and Encourage strong and diverse local businesses and a local economy**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Create clear guidelines and information resources for permit applicants, clarifying requirements and steps for permitting and approval.
2. Streamline the business permitting process and reduce permitting costs for small local businesses or entrepreneurs
3. Create a permit to support pop-up and experimental businesses such as special events, temporary markets, food trucks and pop-up stores.
4. Create economic development incentives for development that meets “smart growth” standards and preserves Richmond’s history and character
5. Support the Richmond Farmers’ Market and other local agricultural business enterprises
6. Create, maintain and distribute a list of state and regional resources and incentives for local businesses, such as Local First programs or state designation and cost-sharing programs; including an inventory of available properties, facilities and spaces for commercial, industrial or cottage business use.
7. Use local businesses for municipal purchases of goods and services whenever feasible.
8. Adjust land use regulations to allow for and encourage new industrial/commercial and mixed use development in proximity to three-phase power, high-speed internet and municipal water and sewer. Explore the creation of zones or districts to attract and support businesses in specific sectors such as a cultural district or green development zone.

**GOAL 2:​ Direct growth and investment to Richmond’s downtown and village centers**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Study the potential for expanding Richmond’s village center, the benefits of the Designated Downtown program, and renew the Village Center Designation
2. Develop a Downtown Master Plan that will direct growth to the village area and address streetscape improvements identified in existing plans
3. Pursue strategies to attract and focus commercial activity in Jonesville
4. Maintain and upgrade zoning regulations and development review policies to ensure that concentrated growth occurs is designated growth centers, thus bringing residents and businesses in close proximity

**GOAL 3:​ Publicize and promote Richmond’s special features such as the Round Church and Cochran’s Ski Area, as well as our many recreational, lodging and dining opportunities that might attract visitors**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Maintain maps and up-to-date information on the town website
2. Support our local Western Slopes Business Association in its goals and efforts
3. Support economic development of local character areas through zoning regulations and districting

**GOAL 4:​ Support the growth of a skilled and adequate workforce.**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Support mentoring, internships or community-based learning opportunities when possible
2. Support efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in Richmond
3. Support childcare businesses, however possible, to support Richmond’s workforce

(see also Housing, Future Land Use, Education, Utilities & Facilities, Transportation)