## Z:\Town Plan NEW\2017 new town plan\vision\vision statement.jpgFROM VISION TO ACTION

Through the planning process, 11 specific visions for the future emerged. The primary vision being: Ensure **transparent and inclusive decision-making**, with a representative and open government, civil discourse, and an active and informed community. The Town of Richmond considers this to be the top priority, and the plan shall be implemented with this vision at the forefront. The 10 remaining visions are listed below in alphabetical order.

**In order to fulfill our vision, we will:**

* Promote **affordability and a reasonable cost of living**, so that people with a mix of ages, backgrounds, and income levels can afford housing, food, goods, and services in Richmond
* Be a healthy and accessible **community for all ages**, where youth are nurtured and included; teens have opportunities and support; adults can live and raise families; and seniors can comfortably live and actively contribute
* Foster **economic opportunity** by supporting local businesses, developing good jobs, nurturing a diverse local economy, and promoting renewable energy
* Enhance our **history and traditions**, celebrating our agricultural heritage, treasured community events, and unique historic sites and architecture
* Support safe, sustainable, and convenient **mobility and transportation options**, so that people can bike, walk, ride, and drive in Richmond and beyond
* Wisely steward our **natural and working lands**, ensuring the beauty and health of our landscapes, waterways, open spaces, wildlife, and agricultural resources
* Nurture a **safe and resilient community** with strong volunteerism, public services, caring and self-reliant neighbors, and a proactive approach to preparing for challenges
* Foster and enhance our **small-town character**, including our quiet pace and rural way of life, friendly and involved community, and scenic beauty
* Support a wide range of **social, cultural and recreational offerings**, including open space and recreation facilities, arts and cultural activities, and community gathering places
* Have a **vibrant and appealing downtown**, with attractive streets and buildings, convenient services, and diverse businesses, where people can connect and meet their daily needs

## Transparent + Inclusive Decision-Making

*Richmond’s Vision is to ensure* ***transparent and inclusive decision-making****, with a representative and open government, civil discourse, and an active and informed community.*

Vermont has a strong and valued history of local control and participatory democracy. Richmond was granted township status in 1794, and has the distinction of being the first town chartered by the newly formed State of Vermont. From the first Town Meeting in March 1795, Richmond has continued the long tradition of civic involvement and local democracy.

Like most Vermont towns, Richmond is governed by a Selectboard and other municipal boards and commissions. Selectboard members are voted in at Town Meeting, and its members make most decisions about town operations, spending, and policies. Members of most other boards are appointed by the Selectboard and serve in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the quasi-judicial development review board. Additional public officers are voted or appointed, and town staff members are hired by the Selectboard. All residents over the age of 18 are eligible to serve.

A Municipal Planning Grant allowed Richmond to experiment with a variety of non-traditional engagement techniques during the Our Town, Our Future process, and showed that the most successful activities allowed people to engage in a variety of ways and locations. People are more likely to engage in fun and informal settings, in places they already frequent, and when they have options including online input. People also receive information in new ways, so true inclusion hinges on sharing announcements and information on new channels (such as social media) and increasing education about local democracy and opportunities to engage.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Increase civic participation in government, community meetings and organizations | * Increase awareness and coordination of opportunities to serve on town boards and commissions and in officer positions and other local volunteer positions * Increase public engagement opportunities outside of traditional meetings and hearings * Create a guide or online resource educating people about local government and ways to get involved |
| Build a culture of civil, thoughtful and balanced planning and decision-making | * Train board members and volunteer leaders in facilitation and principles of civil discourse * Adopt civility and respect policies * Strengthen collaboration and communication between municipal boards and committees and local organizations * Create policies that ensure fair and unbiased application of regulations and bylaws * Experiment with deliberative dialogue in community meetings and hearings * Identify ways to improve public education and deliberation on important community decisions * Create opportunities for communication and collaboration with neighboring towns |
| Strengthen online and offline communication channels | * Increase regional media coverage of meetings, initiatives, community resources and decisions * Expand use of Front Porch Forum, MMCTV and other informal communications channels by creating a public awareness campaign |
| Ensure that local government is accessible, trustworthy and representative | * Develop municipal email addresses and post contact information for all staff, board and committee members * Educate all boards on Open Meeting Laws and ensure compliance * Proactively work to recruit people from underrepresented groups to serve on boards and commissions |

## Affordability + a Reasonable Cost of Living

##### *Our vision is to promote affordability and a reasonable cost of living, so that people from a mix of ages, backgrounds and income levels can afford housing, food, goods and services in Richmond.*

Affordability is a factor of the **cost of living** (paying for housing, food, transportation,   
clothing, healthcare), and the **income or resources** available to pay for it.

Across the nation, critical shifts are happening in both of these areas. Since 1979, wage growth has stagnated for Americans overall, while the cost of living is rapidly increasing. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center study, more than half of Americans said their family income is falling behind cost of living. That’s true in Vermont too, where high energy, housing and food costs make the cost of living 16% higher than the national average.

Richmond has little control over some costs like health insurance premiums or gas prices, or even the regional housing market. We can provide options that help people **reduce consumption and spending**, we can **control municipal costs**, and we can provide **affordable goods and services** that meet people’s needs.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Diverse, affordable housing options for all ages and income levels | * Increase amount of affordable housing * Explore new housing types and models, especially for seniors and young adults |
| Affordable transportation options | * Focus new growth near public transit or walkable village centers |
| Lower utility and public service rates | * Increase the Town water and sewer customer base, to spread out costs * Help homeowners reduce other housing expenses, such as flood insurance and energy costs |
| Affordable goods and services available in town | * Support and recruit affordable businesses that cater to residents and meet every day needs |
| Manageable municipal tax rates and town spending | * Responsibly manage the town budget and local spending * Continue and expand the capital budget, to reduce long-term expenses * Increase community involvement in town budget decisions |
| Social services and resources to assist people in need | * Host a summit of service providers to identify gaps and improve collaboration * Improve awareness and publicity of existing services * Improve volunteer coordination to assist people in need |

## Community for All Ages

*We will be a healthy and accessible* ***community for all ages****, where youth are nurtured and included; teens have opportunities and support; young adults can live and raise families; and seniors can comfortably live and actively contribute.*

Many communities specifically plan improvements “for 7-year-olds and 70-year olds.” When we create a community that works for our youngest residents and oldest residents, it is typically a strong and supportive community for all the ages in between.

Creating a community for all ages requires far more than strong schools and senior centers. It means thoughtful investments and policies in a wide range of areas – from safe streets and alternative transportation modes to affordable housing and employment opportunities, strong education systems to vibrant social offerings. Many elements like school funding and healthcare costs are beyond Richmond’s control, but Richmond can ensure that plans and investments throughout the community work to support all ages.

It also means specifically targeting programs or policies that do support critical age groups and address demographic trends. Like much of rural America, Vermont is facing shifting demographics. Richmond and other rural areas are aging rapidly, while many younger residents are leaving small towns for urban environments.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Affordable, attractive housing options for all ages | * Increase diversity of housing, specifically for seniors and young adults (such as senior housing, cooperatives, tiny houses, and rental units) |
| Quality nutrition, health care and active lifestyles for all | * Increase farm to school and farm to plate programs that help residents access healthy local food * Develop gleaning programs to share surplus farm produce with residents in need |
| Vibrant social opportunities for all ages | * Maintain and diversify community gathering spaces * Improve and enhance recreation areas and facilities |
| High quality, affordable childcare and early childhood education | * Recruit and support registered daycare and early childhood education providers * Increase awareness of existing childcare and early education programs and resources |
| Strong schools and educational opportunities | * Strengthen community connections with Richmond’s public schools * Continue support for local schools and school budgets * Improve access to adult education, enrichment and job training programs |
| Support for seniors to remain independent | * Increase services that support seniors at home, such as Meals on Wheels and visiting nurses * Increase the amount of senior housing available in walkable village centers * Create a community center or gathering space to support and connect seniors |
| Opportunities for youth and seniors to meaningfully contribute to the community | * Increase opportunities to involve youth in town leadership and government * Connect school community service programs with community organizations needing volunteers |
| Accessible public facilities and public spaces | * Ensure that public facilities, streets and sidewalks meet ADA requirements * Create adequate handicapped accessible parking and access points in village centers and community facilities * Ensure that buildings and public spaces have accessible and family-friendly restrooms |

## Economic Opportunity

*We will foster* ***economic opportunity*** *by supporting local businesses, developing good jobs, nurturing a diverse local economy, and promoting renewable energy.*

Economic opportunity is shifting across the nation, as traditional models of local employment are impacted by rapid changes in technology and telecommunications, changing demographics, globalization and outsourcing. Creating economic opportunity involves strengthening and diversifying business and employment opportunities in Richmond, as well as access to jobs and resources beyond town borders.

As manufacturing and economic centers are increasingly centered in urban areas (such as Burlington), Vermont’s small towns must support and shift their economies to different types of businesses and jobs. The market for local foods and locally made, handcrafted products is increasing, which supports traditional agricultural operations as well as new farms and food processors.

Employees are also increasingly telecommuting and working remotely, working out of homes and shared office spaces, combining multiple part-time or contract jobs as part of the “gig economy,” and developing experimental small side businesses. Richmond can support these flexible and shifting new economic models by ensuring that town policies and zoning regulations allow for flexible uses and rapid permitting, by helping to highlight and market local entrepreneurs and small businesses, and by developing incentives that encourage people to experiment with new business ideas — particularly when they enhance or support other community values.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Quality jobs and employment opportunities | * Support for entrepreneurs and independent workers * Infrastructure to support telecommuters and remote employees |
| Job and workforce training | * Job training programs offering in-demand skills for young adults * Diverse mentoring and on-the-job training opportunities * Service learning and project-based school programs to connect students with local employers |
| Strong agriculture and forest economy | * Local food processing facility or shared food incubator space * Farm stays and farm tours * Local food purchasing or incentive programs, such as prescription CSAs * Indoor or winter farmer’s markets to expand year-round market |
| Recreation and tourism opportunities | * Restoration and maintenance of historic buildings and interpretive sites * Tour packages or special events supporting multiple Richmond businesses and assets (such as bike/B&B/beer-tasting weekend) |
| Vibrant downtown and village centers | * Incentives for businesses that meet critical needs or redevelop downtown facilities |
| Business-friendly climate and policies | * Streamlined and flexible permitting and regulations for new businesses, temporary markets, pop-up shops, mixed-use and other new business models * Strong local business association and resources for local businesses * Priority for local businesses in municipal purchasing * Local branding to market and support Richmond businesses and region |
| Support and infrastructure for entrepreneurs and small businesses | * Improvements in telecommunications and broadband accessibility * Innovative work spaces, incubators and facilities to support experimental businesses * Local financing or community loans for start-up or growing businesses * Economic gardening program to support and nurture small local businesses * Resilient infrastructure and power systems that minimize interruptions |

## History + Traditions

*We will enhance our* ***history and traditions****, celebrating our agricultural heritage, treasured community events, and unique historic sites and architecture.*

Richmond is indeed rich — in history and community traditions, all of which contribute to our community identity and sense of place. A wide array of historic sites and buildings have been carefully protected and restored — particularly agricultural sites and historic buildings from the past 200 years. Historic barns and iconic structures like the Round Church help preserve stories and lessons from the past, but they are also critical components of Richmond’s small town character and physical beauty. Other aspects of history, such as pre-colonial Native American settlements or significant land use changes, are not as visible or as well known. As buildings age and memories fade away, Richmond must proactively work to protect, restore and capture our treasured elements of history and to shine a light on lesser known sites and events.

State assistance and designation programs can assist with costly maintenance and tax credits for historic buildings, and local land use regulations or incentives can further safeguard these resources. Private organizations like the Richmond Historical Society play a critical role in funding and caring for public sites, while many community members contribute time and resources to support private buildings and historic assets. Finding opportunities to showcase and share Richmond’s history — through stories or events, building tours or museum exhibits — can help current generations learn from the past and develop a historic preservation ethic.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Growth and continuation of community celebrations and events | * Publicize major events to attract more (and new) participants * Create an easy approval process for events in public spaces * Help community organizations collaborate and coordinate efforts |
| Preservation of historic buildings and architecture | * Help more property owners take advantage of funding and resources for historic preservation * Support local organizations like the Richmond Historical Society * Ensure land use regulations support historic preservation and reuse * Inventory historic sites and buildings and evaluate their condition * Formally protect Richmond’s most critical historic sites and landmarks |
| Strong public awareness and support of historic resources and Richmond history | * Create historic signage and interpretive displays at important sites * Share historic photos and stories with the community * Ensure that land use regulations allow or historic museums and interpretive signs |
| Preservation of oral history and historic records or artifacts | * Gather more historic photos, assets and memories from the community |
| Protection of agricultural character and support for working lands | * Celebrate and raise the profile of Richmond’s farmers and agricultural history |

## Mobility + Transportation Options

*We will support safe, sustainable, and convenient* ***mobility and transportation options****, so that people can bike, walk, ride and drive in Richmond and beyond.*

Transportation is a challenge in most rural communities, and Richmond is no exception. Richmond is naturally an auto-oriented community, given its relatively low and dispersed population. But providing adequate transportation and mobility options means far more than maintaining roads for cars – especially given changing demographics, economic pressures, and a need to reduce our use of fossil fuels.

Richmond residents can access several alternative transportation modes, but all require a car or other transportation options to reach the stops. The most popular is the commuter bus, which offers convenient access to Burlington, Waterbury and Montpelier from the Richmond Park N Ride. Passenger rail and long distance bus services are available in Waterbury and Essex Junction. Two local non-profits fill critical gaps by offering rides or specialized transportation to elders, those with disabilities, or others in need of rides.

Most residents in Richmond do rely on personal cars, and maintenance of Richmond’s 85 miles of roadway is critically important for linking residents to services, jobs, shopping and the community at large. Residents would like to see improved parking options and reduced congestion at critical sites, as well as slower and calmer traffic in residential and Village areas. While improving roads for users, Richmond also needs to manage road maintenance costs and adopt practices that reduce pollution and stormwater runoff, and that protect roads and culverts from increased flooding and storm damage.

Several studies and plans already address many of these needs, from regional transportation plans to local studies of village parking and bike/pedestrian feasibility. Most emphasize “Complete Streets” – streets built to accommodate all users, while making it safer and more convenient to get around. Our strategies must align with these plans and with guidance and regulations from the Vermont Agency of Transportation on road standards and maintenance.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Build “Complete Streets” that are safe and accessible for all users | * Develop a Complete Streets policy for road repair and building projects * Identify and implement high priority sidewalks or crosswalk safety improvements * Plan and budget to integrate Complete Streets improvements into upcoming road maintenance projects (such as Route 2 re-paving) * Study the feasibility of bicycle lanes or shared use paths on high priority roads * Pilot test potential improvements using pop-up or longer-term demonstrations |
| Encourage “active transportation” including biking and walking | * Partner with the Richmond schools to promote Safe Routes to Schools programs * Install bike racks at critical locations such as the Village center, schools, Park N Ride, and or shopping areas * Explore a public education campaign to promote walking and biking in Richmond * Explore wayfinding signage that encourages walking to key destinations |
| Improve traffic safety and road conditions on town roads | * Identify key locations in need of traffic calming and experiment with calming measures |
| Reduce traffic congestion and alleviate parking problems | * Evaluate the efficiency of school transportation systems and increase bus ridership * Promote the benefits of flexible work schedules and telecommuting * Study downtown parking and evaluate the need for more or improved parking |
| Implement stormwater management and hazard mitigation steps to reduce runoff and protect road condition | * Identify and upgrade undersized culverts to prevent washouts * Adopt best management practices for managing runoff during road construction * Work to site new roads away from rivers and streams, and reroute or stabilize roads that are susceptible to flooding * Train road crews in best practices for resilient road maintenance |
| Increase access to, and use of, mass transit options | * Increase education and publicity of existing mass transit routes and schedules |
| Support sustainable transportation options and methods | * Explore ways to coordinate and increase carpooling or ride sharing * Install electric vehicle chargers in central locations * Determine opportunities for cycling * Determine placement of a second potential park and ride |

## natural + Working Lands

*Richmond’s Vision is to wisely steward our* ***natural and working lands****, ensuring the beauty and health of our landscapes, waterways, open spaces, wildlife and agricultural resources.*

Beginning with the region’s first Native American inhabitants – and continuing after Richmond’s colonial settlement - Richmond residents have benefited and relied upon our natural and working lands. Around the time of Richmond’s founding, agriculture dominated the Town’s economy and character, with many settlers producing wool and grain, milk and lumber. In the mid-1800s, Richmond’s hills were primarily cleared and converted to pasture and the landscape would have looked starkly different. Today the pattern is reversed and Richmond’s land is heavily forested – but natural and working lands are no less important to our identity.

Richmond’s natural lands and ecosystems are diverse and important to the community in many ways. Large tracts of forest help to moderate the climate, absorb stormwater and prevent erosion, host unique plant communities, and provide critical habitat and corridors for Richmond’s plentiful wildlife. Water resources including rivers, lakes and streams serve as critical habitat for many species, and a majority of Richmond residents rely on aquifers and other groundwater for drinking water. Floodplains, riparian areas and wetlands provide other critical benefits: these unique areas absorb large amounts of stormwater and prevent flooding, filter runoff and groundwater, stabilize river banks and provide particularly rich habitats for wildlife. Resident and visitors treasure all of these resources for their scenic beauty and recreation opportunities as well, and many residents identify them as critical components of Richmond’s character.

Agriculture and working forests are still common throughout Richmond, though farms throughout Vermont struggle to survive and many look different today than 100 years ago. Richmond residents identified agriculture as an essential component of our Small Town Character – both scenic agricultural landscapes and viable working lands enterprises. While large, traditional farms are fading away statewide, a growing regional appetite for local foods and value-added products is giving new life to small farms and producers.

All of these natural assets are vital to Richmond’s culture, economy and future, but most face significant threats. Some are protected by local or statewide regulations such as development restrictions, while several critical parcels have been permanently conserved in Richmond. In order to ensure their health now and for future generations, Richmond must focus on identifying our most critical natural areas and resources and finding ways to prevent forest fragmentation, improve water quality, encourage land stewardship, support our working lands, and increase opportunities for people to enjoy and connect with the land.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Protect and restore surface water bodies and groundwater | * Update mapping and inventories to identify all critical water resources * Update and maintain regulations to uniformly protect river and stream buffers and floodplains from development * Partner with state and local organizations to restore and re-vegetate river and stream banks * Increase public awareness of water resources, water quality, and sustainable land management techniques * Prohibit development on steep slopes (over 25% grade) and require best management practices on slopes over 15% grade * Implement best management practices to reduce runoff from road maintenance and construction * Implement stormwater management or green infrastructure projects to address major sources of runoff and pollution * Develop a policy for integrating green infrastructure and stormwater management into municipal building and construction projects * Explore new zoning regulations to protect river corridors from development, based on geomorphology studies and state guidance * Identify and work to conserve important water bodies, wetlands or access points through easements or purchase |
| Protect and restore forests, wildlife and critical habitat | * Direct development to existing village areas and limit development in critical habitat blocks * Amend zoning and develop incentives to encourage cluster subdivisions and conservation developments * Complete and maintain thorough inventories of unique natural areas and habitats in Richmond * Educate property owners about best management practices for forest land management * Adopt natural and wildlife-friendly landscaping practices on municipal properties |
| Enhance access to, and stewardship of, open spaces | * Complete an Open Space and Recreation Plan to identify and prioritize improvements and opportunities for green space protection * Maintain existing municipal open spaces and trail/water access points, and improve and expand Richmond’s current trail system and access points in partnership with local organizations * Improve public awareness of existing trails and open space, activities and events and increase volunteerism for trail maintenance, Green Up Day, and other stewardship programs |
| Protect and enhance working lands and soils | * Support the viability of working farms and forests by allowing for non-traditional farm enterprises and mixed uses * Encourage the growth of the local food economy by supporting farmers’ markets, food processing facilities and regional food hubs * Incentivize the development of community-scale renewable energy that is consistent with working farms and forests * Explore ways to assist or compensate working farms and forests for ecosystem services such as flood protection |
| Protect and enhance important vistas and scenic landscapes | * Inventory and prioritize scenic vistas, landscapes, and town gateways that are critical to Richmond’s character |

## Safe + Resilient Community

*Richmond’s Vision is to nurture a* ***safe and resilient community*** *with strong volunteerism, and public services, caring and self-reliant neighbors, and a proactive approach to preparing for challenges*.

Community resilience is the ability of a community to prepare for, withstand, and respond to adverse situations. Richmond has faced a variety of challenges in the past, from natural disasters and fires to economic downturns and the opioid epidemic. We can’t prevent future events from happening, but we can build a safe and resilient community that is prepared for these and other stressors. Doing so will also improve ongoing quality of life and many community values.

Building a resilient community involves numerous factors: Basic Needs and Services; Environment and Natural Systems; Physical Infrastructure; and Community Connections and Capacity. State, regional and local Hazard Mitigation and Emergency Management plans identify the most common risks and provide detailed plans for reducing long-term risks and preparing for or responding to emergencies. Richmond’s All-Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies fluvial erosion, flooding and severe winter storms as the most critical natural hazards facing Richmond. Day to day, the greatest safety threats in Richmond are increased drug activity and impaired driving.

Richmond provides adequate daily services and public safety services, but most would be taxed in a major disaster. Vulnerable populations including the elderly and those with disabilities are most at risk, with limited access to Richmond’s one emergency shelter and no pharmacy in town. Richmond has a strong police force, fire department and rescue service, with both paid staff and volunteers and mutual aid agreements with other towns. The capital budget does cover police and fire equipment needs, but facilities are inadequate and Richmond has been exploring a new public safety building.

Richmond’s infrastructure faces significant threats including floodplain development, roads with undersized culverts, and lack of fire protection in the Village. Richmond participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and has strong flood hazard development regulations, but the State and municipalities increasingly understand the importance of preventing fluvial erosion, and Richmond is actively studying river dynamics and erosion prevention measures.

Strong social capital, community connections and volunteerism are one of the most important ways to build resilience overall.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Foster volunteerism and social capital | * Increase support for new and existing that build community connections including neighborhood or block events * Increase opportunities for respectful civic discourse * Identify and maintain a list of skilled volunteers * Host an annual volunteer day or summit * Recruit and support a local CROs team to coordinate resilience projects and collaboration |
| Support preparedness, self-sufficiency and basic needs | * Support the development of community gardens and food processing facilities * Recruit a Vermont-based pharmacy to operate in town * Encourage residents and family members to maintain updated emergency plans and kits |
| Prepare for and mitigate natural and man-made hazards and other emerging threats | * Maintain and implement emergency response, preparedness and hazard mitigation plans * Equip critical facilities with backup power * Educate property owners about hazards, mitigation actions, and preparedness steps * Maintain participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and explore the costs and benefits of participating in the Community Rating System * Educate community members about emergency plans, shelters and other resources * Explore the creation of additional emergency shelters accessible to other parts of town * Encourage businesses and critical facilities to maintain emergency plans and continuity of operations plans |
| Provide strong public services and public safety infrastructure | * Increase the safety and resilience of dangerous roads, intersections, bridges and other infrastructure * Upgrade roads and facilities to withstand increasing precipitation and flood events * Develop a new public safety building that provides adequate facilities for police and fire departments * Maintain mutual aid agreements with neighboring towns |
| Proactively reduce ongoing public safety threats | * Support a community task-force to identify strategies for addressing drug use |

## Small Town Character

*Richmond’s Vision is to foster and enhance our small town character, including our quiet pace and rural way of life, friendly and involved community, and scenic beauty.*

Several participants in the Our Town, Our Future process captured this character in saying that Richmond feels like the last slice of “real Vermont” in Chittenden County. Richmond’s location is critical for jobs and access to resources and opportunities, but community members want Richmond to remain an authentic small town.

Richmond residents value traditional Vermont architectural styles including compact downtown blocks with multi-story brick buildings, residential areas featuring clapboard homes, and historic barns and farms; many also appreciate the lack of box stores or “cookie cutter” development in town.

Richmond boasts a traditional Vermont development pattern, with a dense, mixed-use Village Center, compact residential neighborhoods, and surrounding rural landscapes. Residents feel strongly about encouraging business growth that fits with this development pattern and prevents sprawl.

Richmond is unlikely to face rapid growth and sprawl, but strong planning and design guidelines can ensure that future development supports these characteristics and helps to maintain the visual elements of Richmond’s character. It’s harder to plan for social elements like friendliness, but Richmond can support these by maintaining and creating gathering places, supporting volunteerism, and specifically working to engage newcomers, vulnerable populations, and others who may be on the outskirts of the community.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Protect working lands, farms and agricultural heritage | * Identify and protect the most important farms, agricultural landscapes and prime soils * Support the viability of farm and forest enterprises by allowing for new business models and incubator facilities * Encourage new development in village centers or designated growth areas, and encourage protection of rural landscapes * Consider the adoption of a “Right to Farm” ordinance that protects farm activities |
| Protect and enhance Richmond’s scenic and architectural beauty | * Articulate and encourage the specific architectural or scenic elements that define Richmond’s character |
| Build community connections, spirit and involvement | * Hire a recreation director to coordinate and increase town facilities and programs * Create opportunities for local organizations to coordinate and maintain important local traditions and programs * Create or enhance “third places” or gathering places for informal community connections * Continue traditions like Town Meeting, while creating new and different opportunities for engagement and local democracy * Recognize and celebrate volunteers and community success stories |
| Maintain Richmond’s quiet pace and peaceful lifestyle | * Attract and promote businesses that support the quiet pace and Richmond’s community values |
| Support a vibrant downtown where residents can meet daily needs | * Support and allow for a wide variety of small, independent businesses and local employment opportunities |

## Social, Cultural + Recreational Offerings

*Richmond’s vision is to support a wide range of* ***social, cultural and recreational offerings****, including open space and recreation facilities, arts and cultural activities, and community gathering places.*

Venues and spaces for events and gatherings – both indoor and outdoor – are likewise owned, maintained and coordinated by a wide variety of organizations. Municipal parks including Volunteers’ Green offer important spaces for recreation and sports, including fields, a winter ice rink, and cross-country skiing. Residents take advantage of numerous trails are available on both public and private land, several access points to the Winooski River, and many informal sledding hills, biking routes and walking paths. Community members also value many private recreation facilities, such as Cochran’s Ski Area, where many generations of residents have learned to ski.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Provide parks, public spaces and recreation facilities for people of all ages and interests | * Explore adding or enhancing high priority facilities like tennis or swimming * Develop a recreation plan and hire a recreation director to coordinate municipal recreation offerings and facilities * Identify and maintain a list of skilled volunteers * Host an annual volunteer day or summit * Recruit and support a local CROs team to coordinate resilience projects and collaboration |
| Maintain a wide variety of accessible trails and open spaces | * Maintain, improve and expand Richmond’s current trail system, access points and signage * Develop a trails and open space partnership to coordinate with other local organizations * Identify new trail locations, signage and access points * Increase awareness of existing trail locations and responsible use |
| Support arts and cultural programming for all ages | * Support the creation of a multi-purpose community center with facilities for creative programming * Ensure that land use regulations allow for multi-use community centers and arts programming * Develop a creative economy plan that will attract and support creative professionals and organizations |
| Attract diverse and quality restaurants or cafes, gathering places, and recreation businesses | * Provide financial incentives or publicity for small businesses that fill social or recreation gaps |

## Vibrant + Appealing Downtown

*Richmond’s Vision is to have* ***a vibrant and appealing downtown****, with attractive streets and buildings, convenient services and diverse businesses, where people can connect and meet their daily needs.*

Richmond’s current Village area hasn’t always been the center of town activity. Historically, Jonesville and Fay’s Corner also boasted vibrant commercial districts and community activities; residents in those neighborhoods bought and sold farm products and most goods in their neighborhood centers. With the rise of autos and the completion of Interstate 89 in the 1960s, many Chittenden County towns saw the decline of their village centers and the quick growth of strip plazas and auto-centric development. While Jonesville and Fay’s Corner are no longer vibrant centers, Richmond’s Village area remained intact and Richmond did not experience the same development pressures.

Today, the Village is recognized as the primary “downtown”, the hub of Richmond’s economic and social activity, serving Richmond residents and those in adjoining towns. The Our Town, Our Future process revealed that a vibrant downtown is a core value and element of Richmond’s character, with many residents expressing gratitude for the compact, historic downtown and strong businesses. Today, downtowns are widely appreciated for providing a variety of services in a small, walkable area close to housing; as a hub for social activity and connections; for their aesthetic and historic value; and as economic engines of the community.

Still, there are many actions Richmond can take to ensure that its Village area is protected and enhanced. Richmond received Village Center Designation through the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The incentive program gives Richmond priority consideration for state grants and other resources and makes commercial property owners eligible for tax credits and other advantages. The Town can use policies to further attract businesses downtown, help business owners maintain and improve buildings, and encourage the mixed-use development that will keep downtown vibrant. A changing economy means that new business types and models are springing up, and Richmond can ensure that it’s zoning and policies allow for new economic models and opportunities. Richmond can also support downtown businesses and vibrancy by improving the streetscape. That includes aesthetic improvements like signage, plantings or street trees; amenities like seating and small parks; providing convenient and sufficient parking; and implementing street improvements that calm traffic, increase walkability and pedestrian safety, and ensure accessibility.

Finally, Richmond can look at ways to revitalize past village centers, or to create new centers. Many residents today want to be able to bike and walk to stores and services, and to access a community or social center near their homes. Richmond can also encourage new growth in past village centers like Jonesville of Fay’s Corner, which can build new areas of vibrancy while limited environmental impacts in less developed parts of town.

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| **WHAT RICHMOND WANTED** | **WHAT WE CAN DO** |
| Improve traffic calming, safety and access to downtown and other important locations | * Implement the recommendations of the 2010 Bridge Street Bicycle and Pedestrian Feasibility Study |
| Encourage suitable growth in downtown and village center locations | * Encourage new mixed use development downtown and on existing water and sewer lines * Expand the boundaries of the Village Center designation and/or consider enrollment in the Designated Downtown program * Explore strategies to revitalize other village centers including Jonesville and Fay’s Corner |
| Beautify and maintain an attractive and enjoyable downtown | * Allow for creative uses and adaptive re-use of historic structures in downtown areas * Identify high priority downtown beautification projects and amenities including landscaping, street trees, seating or signage * Develop a coordinated plan for long-term streetscape improvements and traffic safety |
| Attract a variety of high-quality businesses, restaurants and local attractions | * Decrease start-up and operational costs for emerging small businesses |