TECHNICAL PLANS

**VISION CONNECTION**

* **History & Traditions:** Historic sites and traditions contribute to the identity and evolution of a community.
* **Vibrant Downtown**: Maintaining historic characteristics contributes to visual attraction and tourism.
* **Small Town Character:** Preserving historic aesthetics, styles, and landmarks contribute to the overall rural Vermont character of places unspoiled by time.
* **Social, Cultural, + Recreational Opportunities:** Historic sites serve as social and sometimes recreational gathering places and provide education and tourism opportunities.

**HISTORIC RESOURCES**

It is hard to imagine Richmond without its historic architecture. From the Round Church to the downtown business area to bridges and farms, Richmond’s historic sites and structures contribute to its distinctive small-town character. These places have retained their vitality because their owners have maintained and adapted them to serve evolving needs without obscuring their ties to the past. Upholding Richmond’s character as a vibrant small town that is both forward-looking and grounded in tradition will depend in part on preserving the integrity of these historic structures as the town continues to evolve.

Richmond’s historic resources also include the documents, photographs and artifacts that tell the story of its past. The Town preserves and assures accessibility of public records such as land transactions, birth, death and marriage records, and accounts of Town business. The non-profit Richmond Historical Society also collects and preserves Richmond-related historic documents, photographs and other artifacts, as well as maintains the Round Church on behalf of the Town. Additional historic grounding comes from traditions and events that celebrate continuity with the past. The Town provides space for events that have become popular local traditions, such as the 4th of July festivities and the Richmond Farmer’s Market. History programs sponsored by the Richmond Historical Society, Richmond Community Senior Center and the Richmond Free Library, among others, also take place in Town facilities.

**Sites and Structures**

More than 100 sites in Richmond are listed in the Vermont Register of Historic Places. Most of these were identified in a Historic Sites and Structures Survey conducted in 1976 by the state’s Division for Historic Preservation. The survey designated North (West) Main Street and Bridge Street as historic districts, with 28 and 34 sites, respectively, meeting its historic significance criteria. It also identified 50 historically important sites outside the two districts.

Eight of these state-recognized historic places also appear in the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places. These include the Round Church (which has been designated a National Historic Landmark as well), the Jonesville Academy building, the Winooski River Bridge (Checkered House Bridge), the Martin Bates farmstead (Birdseye Building and Anand properties), the Richmond Underwear Factory (Goodwin-Baker Building), the M.S. Whitcomb farm (Venture Farm/Monitor Barn farm), Gray Rocks (Andrews Farm), and the Richmond Congregational Church.

State and/or nationally recognized historic sites for which the Town of Richmond is directly responsible include the Round Church, the Town Center and Library buildings and the Bridge Street Bridge. The Town also maintains two historic cemeteries dating back to the early 1800s: the Village Cemetery on Bridge Street and the Hill (Fays Corner) Cemetery accessed from Cemetery Road.

A site’s historic significance derives from its distinctive architectural features and from elements that bear witness to its traditional importance in the community. The Vermont Register of Historic Places describes the features deemed historically significant in each listed property.[[1]](#footnote-1) Maintenance, restoration and reuse of historic properties in Richmond should include stewardship of these distinctive features to retain as much as possible the site’s historic integrity. To help owners understand their properties’ historic significance, a list of all of Richmond’s State and National Register sites should be included on the Town website. Links to organizations that can help owners of historic properties plan and fund appropriate preservation projects would also be valuable additions.

Re-securing Richmond’s Designated Village Center status would provide important resources for protecting the historic integrity of Richmond Village. Designated Village Center benefits include tax credits for eligible preservation projects and priority consideration for state grants aimed at village revitalization.

Public awareness is critical to preserving Richmond’s historic sites and other assets. Building placards, informational brochures and an expanded Richmond history section of the Town website would help residents and visitors better appreciate the heritage of the town’s developed landscape as well as the people and events that shaped it.

**Records and Artifacts**

Historic photos, records, artifacts and stories provide context for understanding Richmond’s historic settings and the people who have inhabited them. Continued Town stewardship of these resources entails continued preservation of public records. It also includes working with the Richmond Historical Society and others interested in Richmond history to save, interpret and share materials that deepen an understanding of Richmond’s past. As the Town and RHS collections continue to grow, more storage space will be needed. A long-term goal should be to work with the RHS to secure safe, climate-controlled storage space to meet future needs. Another long-term goal should be to collect digital images of fragile historic artifacts and records and make these images available online. Yet another goal should be to have all gravestones in the Town’s two historic cemeteries digitally inventoried as well as cleaned and repaired.

**Traditions**

Traditional public gatherings offer generations of residents a common ground of shared experience which strengthens their connection to the community. History programs also strengthen community ties by broadening public understanding of the events, people and traditions that have made Richmond what it is today. The Town should continue to embrace these activities by providing facilities and helping with publicity and volunteer recruitment.

Richmond’s most well-known structure – the Round Church – illustrates how stewardship of historic resources can enrich the town. The church’s more than 200-year history is deeply woven into the life of the community. For 160 years, it served as Richmond’s Town Meeting hall, site of many difficult decisions regarding how to keep the community safe and strong. As a place of marriages, christenings and funerals, the Round Church has touched the lives of thousands of families, leaving indelible memories. Over the years, thousands more have collected memories of church services, concerts, the annual Carol Sing, the sledding hill, etc. Others have come as tourists, seeking out a historic landmark and finding an attractive town.

Like the Round Church, Richmond’s historic places, artifacts, traditions and stories are reminders and beacons: they bear witness to the past, provide links between generations, and weave into the memories of those who engage with them. By protecting and celebrating these resources, the Town helps residents and visitors alike to know and care more about Richmond.

**GOALS & ACTIONS**

**GOAL 1:​ Protect, maintain and celebrate Richmond’s buildings of historic significance**

 **ACTIONS:**

1. Protect and preserve the Round Church by continuing to provide liability and property insurance as well as routine grounds maintenance
2. Work with the Richmond Historical Society to plan funding and implementation of major renovations as needed to preserve historical integrity and enhance the property
3. Protect, preserve and continue to fully utilize the Town Center and Library buildings.
4. Encourage the preservation and utilization of privately owned buildings of historic significance within the town
5. Reapply for the State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development’s Village Center Designation
6. Revise the Town website to include a list of Richmond’s state- and nationally recognized historic sites as well as links to historic preservation resources that could help owners to manage these properties so as to preserve their integrity
7. Ensure that town regulations allow for historic interpretive signage and historic markers.
8. Work with the Richmond Historical Society to develop a walking and/or driving tour of the Town’s historic sites

**GOAL 2:​ Preserve and protect Richmond’s archaeological sites and cemeteries**

 **ACTIONS:**

1. Oversee regular maintenance of the grounds, public access routes and grave markers at the Town’s two historic cemeteries: the Village Cemetery on Bridge Street and the Hill (or Fay’s Corner) Cemetery accessed from Cemetery Road.
2. Work with Cemetery Trustees and the Richmond Historical Society to establish a trained corps of volunteers to do grave marker maintenance not requiring professional intervention
3. Create and preserve digital files of all Town cemetery listings, including images of gravesite markers as well as burial records
4. When archaeological sites or artifacts are discovered during Town or State projects requiring an archaeological resource review, work with the Richmond Historical Society to document the material and assess preservation options

**GOAL 3:​ Preserve, share and celebrate Richmond’s historic cultural assets including records, photographs, artifacts and oral histories**

 **ACTIONS:**

1. Continue to publicize and provide space for Richmond history programs and displays sponsored by the Richmond Historical Society and Richmond Community Senior Center, among others, and continue to support and advertise public events that have become local cultural traditions
2. Revise the Richmond History page of the Town website to include historic photos as well as links to other Richmond history online resources. Links could include the Richmond Historical Society website, information for Richmond history researchers or owners of historic artifacts and/or properties, and lists and/or photo galleries of the town’s historic sites
3. Develop a plan to digitally preserve fragile public records, such as land records and birth, marriage and death records dating back to the late 18th and 19th centuries
4. Work with Richmond Historical Society to find secure, climate-controlled storage locations for historic cultural assets not stored in the Town Vault
1. These listings may be found through the State of Vermont Agency on Commerce and Community Development Online Resources Center: https://orc.vermont.gov/Resource/Show-Resource-Table.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)