

Dear Selectboard,

On behalf of the planning commission, this letter is coming to you from Virginia Clarke and Chris Cole.

At our August 7th meeting the PC discussed some of the issues raised at the SB hearing of August 5th. We re-affirmed our strongly held conviction that the following position that the 50:50 ratio of commercial to residential square footage does not best serve Richmond for several reasons, and we would like to move away from the ratio concept entirely. In practice, it would be difficult to apply to a 3-story building (if it was building by building), in which one floor would have to be ½ commercial and ½ residential. If it were applied to the parcel as a whole, there would be no guarantee that subsequent buildings would correct an initially lopsided ratio.

More importantly, a 50:50 ratio ignores the current vital need for increased housing, and for increased residential density within the walkable downtown. A street level commercial requirement continues to save commercial space for the future, while allowing more flexibility to meet current residential OR commercial needs on the upper levels of each building.

The Planning Commission also believes that the Town of Richmond is not an island unto itself but part of a larger community, of Chittenden County, the State of Vermont, the United States of America and ultimately the world. Rural America today is facing many challenges, from economic dislocation to decreasing population and an aging population. Vermont is not immune from these demographic and economic challenges, in fact the only county in the State that is not in an economic recession is Chittenden County. The other 13 counties are all facing declining K-12 student populations, declining birth rates and declining economic opportunity. Business across Vermont are struggling to find employees, we have the lowest unemployment rate of any State in the country.

An often-cited reason why people aren't moving to Vermont is the lack of affordable housing, especially for young people just starting out in life. The Jolina Court zoning district as well as the Downtown Village zoning district represent our best opportunity in Richmond to build density within our community as well as the type of housing that can attract new residents, employees and employers. It will take leaders within all Vermont communities across our State to collectively recognize our new challenges and respond with solutions that address our underlying issues. We offer this zoning proposal with these challenges in mind and our place within the most prosperous county in the State to assist in solving some of these issues.

The proposal is this *[the numbering of the sections is changed]*:

Section 3.9.4

Residential uses shall be restricted to floors above the street level and shall be approved by the DRB as a Mixed Planned Use Development as described in Section 5.12. The following restrictions shall apply.

(a) Street Level

Each building in the JCZD is required to reserve the street level, which cannot be a basement or walk-out basement level, for non-residential uses. These uses may include commercial, not-for-profit, governmental, or educational uses (see list in section 3.9.2). Uses of the street level may not include residences or non-residential tenant facilities, i.e. storage, services or facilities to be used exclusively by the tenants of the building. *[This arrangement maintains the traditional village downtown commercial pattern and is applicable to buildings with any 1,2, 3or 4 floors]*

(b) Basement or Walk-out Basement Level

The basement or walk-out basement of any building may be used for either non-residential uses or non-residential tenant facilities. It may be used for parking. *[In addition, could consider that areas of a walk-out basement with windows large enough to allow for passage of an average-sized adult human may also be used for residential units]*

(c) Upper Level(s)

Any level above the street level may be used for residential, non-residential or non-residential tenant facilities.
[This provides for downtown residential density, efficient use of infrastructure and a walkable settlement pattern.]

In addition, we feel that the following rewrite *[section numbering has been changed]* would address the other issues raised at your meeting and present the information in an orderly fashion.

Section 3.9.1 Allowable Uses Upon Issuance of a Zoning Permit by the Zoning Administrator

No uses shall be considered allowed uses (i.e. allowed by permit of the Zoning Administrator) in this district. All uses shall be considered conditional (see section 3.9.2)

Section 3.9.2 Allowable Uses upon Issuance of Conditional Use Approval

All uses, for either a mixed-use or a single-use building, will be conditional and require approval by the DRB. No building may contain only residential uses. A list of conditional uses follows *[see list]*. *[The reason for this is that this district will need to have compatible business and residential uses.]*

Section 3.9.3 Residential Density

Each dwelling unit shall require 1/15A or more of developable land on the lot upon which the unit is located. Developable land is defined in section 2.5.2. This equals a residential density of 15U/A.

Section 3.9.4 Special Residential Requirements

[see above- insert language]

Section 3.9.5 Dimensional Requirement for Lots

(a) **Lot Area**

Except as provided under Section 4.6.1, no lot shall be less than 1/4A. The purchase of additional land by the owner of a lot from an adjacent landowner shall be permitted, provided that such a purchase does not create a lot of less than 1/4A.

(b) **Lot Dimensions**

Each lot must contain a point from which a circle with a radius of twenty-five (25) feet can be inscribed within the boundary of the lot.

(c) **Lot Frontage**

All lots must have seventy-five (75) feet of continuous frontage on a public or private road or must have access to a public or private road with approval by the DRB as described in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

(d) **Lot Coverage**

The total ground area covered by all structures, parking areas, walkways, sidewalks, driveways and areas covered by impervious materials shall not exceed eighty (80) percent of the total ground area of the lot.

Section 3.9.5 Dimensional Limitations for Structures

(a) **Height**

The height of any structure shall not exceed thirty-five (35) feet except for one structure on JC0074 which may not exceed thirty-eight (38) feet and exceptions as described in Section 6.6.

In addition, all residential and commercial units shall have access to a window whose lower sill shall not exceed thirty-two (32) feet from the adjacent ground and shall be large enough to allow for passage of an average-sized adult human.

(b) *[same]*

(c) *[same]*

(d) *[same]*

Section 3.9.6

Other Requirements

(a) Utilities

All lots shall be served by the Richmond municipal water and sewer system.

(b) Parking

(i) Residential

The residential parking requirement shall be based upon the number of bedrooms per dwelling unit as described in the following table. The spaces required shall only serve to calculate overall parking supply and shall not be assigned to specific dwellings.

[insert table plus "additional 0.5 spaces/bedroom for > 3 bedrooms."]

(ii) Commercial

Commercial parking shall be required as described in Section 6.1

(c) *[same]*

(d) *[same]*

(e) *[same]*

(f) *[same]*

(g) Sidewalks

Sidewalks shall be required on all sides of each building on which access doors are located, and provide a continuous sidewalk connection with Bridge St., as well as wherever else the DRB deems appropriate. A sidewalk plan must be approved by the DRB, with any proposed changes requiring an amended approval.

(h) Facade

The design and materials for the exterior of all buildings must be approved by the DRB and must be compatible with the character of the neighborhood. Proposed changes to the approved façade will require an amended approval.

(i) Additional Site Standards

The following may also be required by the DRB:

- Greater setbacks or screening requirements along the perimeter of the property
- Adequate pedestrian circulation
- Landscaping, greenspace and trails
- Demonstration of the ability to properly develop, operate and maintain roads, utilities, driveways, parking, sidewalks and other features of the property