

Narrative for Conditional Use Application

The Creamery

November 6, 2025

This application seeks Conditional Use approval to convert approximately 5,245 square feet of existing unoccupied commercial space in Building #1 of the Creamery Development into nine residential dwelling units. The building is already connected to municipal water and sewer and benefits from its location within Richmond's village core, with direct access to sidewalks and supporting public infrastructure. The project directly supports the Town's housing goals by introducing a mix of energy-efficient, small-scale rental units within a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood.

Rationale for Conversion

Despite sustained marketing efforts, all 6,000 square feet of commercial space in this building has remained vacant for over a year. The post-pandemic shift in work patterns, combined with broader trends such as the growth of e-commerce and reduced foot traffic, has diminished demand for traditional commercial real estate across Vermont. In Richmond, this has led to persistent underutilization of commercial properties. Converting a portion of this space to housing is therefore both necessary and practical, filling a pressing community need rather than perpetuating untenable vacancies.

This approach also represents a cost-effective housing strategy in today's highly constrained development environment. New construction faces unprecedented financial pressures due to labor shortages, inflation, supply-chain instability, and permitting delays. Many projects are no longer financially feasible despite strong demand. By repurposing existing space, we can avoid the prohibitive costs of ground-up development, accelerate delivery of new housing units, and preserve affordability. That said, costs remain a key constraint, and maintaining a lean approach is essential to ensuring long-term financial viability and affordable rents.

Relationship to the Creamery PUD

This proposal is a small amendment to an existing building and site as approved in 2016 and opened in 2020. This as built site plan is labeled "C-100 – "Project Site Plan". However, the Creamery is a multi-stage Planned Unit Development and was approved in July 2023 and that plan includes three additional buildings, associated infrastructure, and amenities such as sidewalks and green space. We have included that master site plan (in appendix "Master Site Plan") for awareness and understanding of the long-term goals and plan. But elements of that plan do not exist now and are reliant on future phases.

Please note that for the past six years, progress on these future phases has been restrictive by zoning regulations—barriers that are only this summer have been revised. While we remain committed to advancing additional development, current market volatility and high costs may continue to affect phasing. Accordingly, certain site elements such as paving, landscaping, and shared infrastructure must remain flexible and phased to balance long-term build-out with near-term housing delivery.

Multi-Family Housing Regulations

It is important to note that Richmond's current Multi-Family Housing Regulations went into effect after both construction of Building #1 and approval of the PUD. Although we had reservations about their adoption in 2023—given their relative restrictiveness compared to State guidance and most Vermont communities—we have made good-faith efforts to align this conversion with their intent, within the constraints of existing infrastructure and prior approvals. However, these regulations add complexity

and cost to housing production in Richmond, and we encourage the community to consider reforms that better align with pro-housing goals.

Proposed Building & Site Changes

The following changes are proposed:

Conversion of Vacant Commercial Space

- Repurposing 5,245 sq. ft. into 9 rental units (studios and one-bedrooms of varying size). (See A-101)
- No changes to the 2nd or 3rd floors.
- One new window well on the cemetery-facing side of the building to provide daylight for a lower-level unit. This change will not be visible from Bridge Street. (See A-202)
- The remaining Bridge Street commercial unit will be enhanced with improved visibility, a private bathroom, and a small kitchenette. At 27% of the building area, this exceeds the 20% minimum commercial requirement. (See A-101, A-201, C-100, A-401)

Minor Exterior & Site Plan Improvements

- Patio stairs and sidewalk connection to Bridge Street, including removal of 2–3 plantings and addition of handrails. (See C-100, A-401)
- Bike Barn – a semi-transportable, lockable exterior storage facility designed in a “barn” style with red siding to match the building. Includes:
 - Storage for all tenant bicycles plus 9 individual secure lockers (+50 sq. ft. each).
 - Downcast lighting on at least three sides, compliant with Dark Sky standards. (See C-100, A-401)
 - This movable structure will be located on gravel / stay mat on the east side of the solar panels. Please note: we have included on the Master Site Plan for reference but the ‘loading area’ that it is located on does not exist currently and only would be installed in correlation with future stages of the development. Once those stages of development are fully planned, the final location and specs of the bike barn will be revised.
- Outdoor living space – existing resident amenities (tables, chairs, vegetation) will be enhanced for ADA compliance, in line with multi-family regulations. Additional outdoor amenities are planned for later PUD phases. (See C-100)
- EV-Charging Stations – We will be installing two EV Charging Stations. These were originally planned and agreed to be implemented with Building #2 construction but we will be able to install during this project.

Section 3.9 – Jolina Court District

The project meets the intent and specific standards of the JC District:

- Purpose (3.9): This adaptive reuse increases housing density, affordability, and supports the village center's vitality.
- Allowed use (3.9.2.n): “Residential Dwelling Units as part of a Mixed Use Planned Unit Development” are conditionally allowed.
- Density (3.9.3): The additional density of 9 units is allowable.
- Design & setbacks (3.9.5): The structure remains unchanged and complies with all dimensional requirements.
- Parking (3.9.6.a): Based on change of use, we must provide 27 total parking spaces. This phase of the develop already provides 69 total spaces. This is a surplus 42 spaces.

	Use	# of Floors	Apt Units	Commercial SQF	Commercial Parking Spots #	Residential Parking Spots #	Total Required Parking#
CURRENT USE – B#1	Mixed Use	4	14	5,245	18	14	32
PURPOSED USE – B#1	Mixed Use	4	23	760	4	23	27
Total Available On Site							50
						SURPLUS PARKING	23

- Traffic (3.9.6.d): The 2023 Traffic Study by Wall Consultant Group found that the full occupancy of Building #1 and #2 with total of “45 residential units and 12,000 square feet of commercial would generate an estimated 42 external vehicle trip ends in the AM peak hour, and 46 external vehicle trip ends PM peak hour”. Therefore, the revised use of this individual building (23 residential units and 760 square feet of commercial) would be below the 2023 traffic estimates and would not generate the +70 PM vehicle trips that would require a traffic impact study.
- Sidewalks (3.9.6.f)– To improve access to the commercial unit on Bridge Street, we are purposing adding both a small extension sidewalk to existing sidewalk on Bridge Street and cross walk and stairs to access the patio direct from the Bridge Street crosswalk and existing sidewalks. Also – as will be outlined in the Outdoor Living Standards – we will be improving the access to the green space to be ADA compliant.
- Compatibility (3.9.6.g): The only change to the façade of the building would be an additional window well to provide a light well to a new residential unit. This façade and window will not be visible from the road or any public areas.
- Fire Protection (3.9.6.h): The building is fully sprinklered and all plans will be reviewed and achieved Vermont Fire Safety code.
- Environmental Concerns (3.9.6.i): – This site has had extensive surveying and permitting by state officials and we have achieved all levels of environmental concerns for the as built. We have a current active, approved Act 250 permit. Also, the 2023 PUD (which is not being implemented at this stage) also was reviewed and conditional approval was provided in 2023 from ANR. This stage of construction will have no environmental impact.
- Additional possible conditions (3.9.6.j)- The required level of paving as outlined in our permit from 2016 has been achieved. Please note we are aware and manage the minor potholes on our private parking area. These are created because only one level of paving surface was required due to future construction phases. Final paving is not required until after the completion of Building #2.

Section 5.5 – Site Plan Review

Although Site Plan Review is not separate under Conditional Use Review (per §5.6.3), all applicable criteria are addressed:

- Traffic & Parking (5.5.3.a): Parking requirements have been achieved and comply with §6.1.
- Landscaping & Screening (5.5.3.b): Landscaping and screening have been achieved.
- Building Design (5.5.3.b): Besides the addition on one window well – that will match the existing form and function, no changes to the exterior building design are being purposed.
- Utilities & Lighting (5.5.3.a, 4.10): All exterior lighting will be Dark Sky compliant and shielded from abutting residential uses.

Section 5.6 – Conditional Use Review

Per §5.6.1, this project will not result in any undue adverse impact on:

- Community facilities: Municipal water and sewer connections already exist and are adequate for the proposed use. Solid waste and emergency access will be addressed via site plan standards.
- Character of the area: The JC District encourages dense residential and mixed-use development. This conversion supports that goal and fits the pattern of surrounding uses.
- Traffic: Traffic generated will be limited to that typical of small residential dwellings. Based on ITE Trip Generation estimates, the project is expected to generate under 10 PM peak hour trip ends, well below the 70-trip threshold triggering a traffic study.
- Bylaws in effect: This use is explicitly listed as a Conditional Use in the JC District per §3.9.2(n).
- Renewable energy use: The building utilizes solar arrays and achieved the highest standard of energy efficiency design during construction.

Per §5.6.2: Specific Standards

- No excessive noise, vibration, odor, heat, or glare will be produced.
- All residential activity will be contained within the existing building footprint.
- Outdoor storage – the bike barn – is purposed to provide additional storage requirements (as required in Multi-family Housing Regulations) for new residential units and a general bike storage for all residents.
- A state Wastewater and Potable Water Supply Permit is not required due to existing municipal hookups.
- The overall scale of development is appropriate for the JC District.

Section 5.12.2 General Conditions

- **g.** The commercial unit on Bridge Street equates to 27% of total usable space in the floor. This achieves the approved condition that requires at least 20% of the first (ground) floor nearest to Bridge Street shall be restricted to commercial use.

		% of Total
Building Footprint SF	4,590	
Common Space SF	980	
Total GF Space (Usable - less stairways, hallways, elevators etc)	3,610	
Residential	2,850	79%
Commercial	760	27%

Section 6.13 – Multi-Family Housing Development Standards

This project will comply with §6.13, including:

- 6.13.1 Applicability and Purpose – We achieve all these standards.
- 6.13.2 Front Doors– All doors achieve this standard with a roof overhang, a step or other architectural features that indicate the entrance.
- 6.13.3 Fire Escapes and Entry Stairs– The building existing building has passed the State Fire Marshall in 2020 and will be inspected by the State Fire Marshall and receive approval prior to construction and before occupancy.

- 6.13.5 Driveways & Parking Area– There are no changes to the driveway or parking are. All dimensions are previously approved.
- 6.13.6 Light Trespass – The only changes to the exterior lights will be the 6 downcast lights for the bike barn. *Light details in A-401.*
- 6.13.7 – Privacy – There is no changes that would impact the privacy to any neighbors.
- 6.13.8 - Outdoor Living Space – Our property provides nearly 2 acres of green space that is more than 20%. Additionally, we have already provided outdoor living space including tables and chairs that is mowed and managed. We will improve the access to this outdoor living space is an ADA Compliant Path to achieve this standard. The dimension of the space is 1,500 square feet and no side is less than 20 feet.
- 6.13.9 - Landscaping –Beside the replacement of hydrangeas for the stairs on the front patio, no changes are being implemented.
- 6.13.10 - Laundry – This standard is already achieved with common units.
- 6.13.11 - Bulk Storage – This standard will be achieved by the construction of the earlier details Bike Barn. (Please note we already provide extensive interior storage but due to the highly restrictive regulations, none of these existing storage units would achieve the high burden standards.)
- 6.13.12 – Mechanicals and Utilities – Achieved and no change.
- 6.13.13 – Waste Storage – Achieved and no change.
- 6.13.14 – EV Charging Parking Spaces – We will be installing two EV Charging Stations. These were originally planned and agreed to be implemented with Building #2 construction but we will be able to install during this project.

Timeline:

- **Permit Approval** – Oct / November
- **Construction Timeline** – 6-8 months
- **Occupancy** – May/June 2026

Adjoining Property Owners

1. JC 0013 Rob Hintze
2. NX 0048 Central Vermont Properties (Railroad)
3. JC 0200 Jericho Settlers
4. BR 0253 Dwire
5. BR 0203 Town of Richmond
6. BR 0201 Richmond Free Library
7. BR 0151 Town of Richmond Cemetery
8. RR 0056 Daniel and Lola Noyes (Richmond Market)

Conclusion

This project complies with the conditional use, site plan, and multifamily development standards of the Richmond Zoning Regulations. It represents a modest, low-impact intensification of residential use within the Jolina Court District and contributes to Richmond's goals of expanding housing diversity and affordability in a compact, village-center setting.

Attachments Included:

- Creamery-DRB-Pgs 1-7-100425-3042
 - 3D.1 – Isometric View and Overview

- A-101 – Floorplan GF and Lower Level
 - A-102 – 2nd Floor and 3rd Floor (Existing)
 - A-201 Front and Left Elevations
 - A-202 Right and Rear Elevations
 - C-100 – “Project Site Plan” – This is the as-built site plan with purposed amendments
 - A-401 – Storage Barn and Stair Details
- Creamery-DRB-PUD Site-100425-3042
- Traffic Study from 2023

Property Ownership:

Buttermilk LLC

5430 Waterbury Stowe Rd

Waterbury Center, Vermont 05677