

November 10, 2023

Timeline of Richmond Creamery

- The old Creamery was built in 1880 and, at one point in its history, employed up to 200 people.
- 1999 – After decades of decline and financial instability, the Creamery closed in July. The building infrastructure included over 40,000 sq feet and 3+ stories of buildings that became derelict and required brownfield remediation to be redeveloped.
- 2012 - Brendan O'Reilly (from the future Buttermilk) reviews property for potential redevelopment. Zoning restrictions and costs of clean up made project unviable.
- May 2014 – Interim Zoning executed to attract redeveloper for Creamery. Tax stabilization also was pass to support redevelopment.
- Jan 2015 – Brendan O'Reilly company (Peak Properties) goes under P&S with Caswell Development for purchase Creamery. Sale is contingent on costs of clean up (estimated at \$225K) and viability of redevelopment.
- Jan - Sept 2015 – Peak Properties evaluates the environmental requirements, clean up costs, redevelopment opportunities based on Town Zoning and market conditions.
- August 2015 – Peak Properties discusses redevelopment requirements to proceed with purchase with Richmond Selectboard. Vital changes are required to complete purchase of increased residential density overall, encourage smaller unit sizes, and allow parking allocation in escrow to allow for redevelopment viability. Many SB meetings, Interim Zoning and Public Hearings were held to agree to changes.
- Sept 2015 – Interim Zoning is amended to reflect residential density to reflect 15 per developable acre (previously was 5 per acre) for a total of 45 units and a 60:40 split on commercial to residential was approved.
- Oct 2015 – Full costs of clean up were identified at +\$600K and were unacceptable to proceed without additional grant funding. A entity, Buttermilk LLC, with owners Brendan O'Reilly and Josi Kytle, proceed with application of additional grants to fund clean-up in partnership with the Town of Richmond.
- Oct 2015 – Buttermilk enters into new P&S with Caswell for purchase of property with caveats being on obtainment of grants and environmental assessment requirements by March 15, 2016.
- Nov 2015 – Jan 2016 – Buttermilk LLC with partnership of Town of Richmond applies for \$550,000 CDBG grant.
- Feb 2016 – Buttermilk with Town of Richmond are awarded grant. This is a significant accomplishment and reflected one of the larger grants Vermont had been awarded. Part of the grant requirement needed additional environmental assessments that would require extension of P&S by 6 weeks until May 1st 2016. Extension to Caswell is requested with no response.
- March 16, 2016 – Richmond Senior Center (RSC), despite being partners of Town and Buttermilk, purchases the property without environmental assessments and with the aim to steal the CDBG grants (which was not possible). RSC purchased property without permission or agreement from any parties and was not fully liable for clean up without grants or liability protections.
- March – May 2016 – Town, State, Buttermilk, and Richmond Senior Center negotiate path forward.
- May 2016 – Buttermilk and RSC enter P&S for acquisition in Sept 2016 once required assessments are achieved.
- May 2016 – Interim Zoning extended for 1 year.
- Sept 2016 – Buttermilk purchases property from Richmond Senior Center and incur \$50K of additional costs due to RSC appropriation.
- Oct 2016 – Clean up activity commences.

- Dec 2016 – For clean requirements for site plan, soil remediation as part of clean up permit and grant requirements, initial site redevelopment plans are presented for Building #1 with some level of plans for future phases / buildings. Due to conditions of the CDBG grant, we were not able to plan or include more than Building #1 and initial infrastructure on the site plan for approval.
- Dec 2016 – Permit for Building #1 provided.
- Dec – May 2017 – Demolition and clean up of site continues.
- May 2017 – Additional contaminates and costs of projects increase by over \$250K that require additional grant applications.
- May 2017 – Interim Zoning Expires. A further extension of IZ is not possible. Select Board minutes reflect intention for new Town Plan and Zoning to adopt IZ regulations.
- June 2017 – Increase of grant funding of \$100K provided. Clean up continues.
- Sept 2017 – In partnership with Buttermilk, Richmond Business Association / Western Slopes Business Ass. (RABA) purchases property to access additional grant funding for \$1.
- Nov 2017 – Town Plan expires and new plan is not approved due to environmental clause. Please note that this is nothing to do with Jolina Court / Creamery site.
- Oct 2017 - March 2018 – Clean up continues.
- Feb 2018 – Anchor tenant for Building #2 approached Buttermilk.
 - Series of discussions with Town, solicitors, developers, future tenants to identify the best approach to gain approval of building in light that both IZ had expired and the Town Plan has not been adopted. A collaborative approach to achieve the intention of the development is agreed.
- March 2018 – Upon successful completion of another clean up phase, property returns to Buttermilk ownership from RABA holding for \$1.
- April 2018 – DRB meeting to review Building #2.
- May 2018 – Building #2 approved without up-to-date zoning.
- May 2018 – Final Clean Up activities are completed.
- June 4, 2018 – Buttermilk submits final grant requisition and starts corrective action reporting. No construction can happen until 'Certificate of Completion' is issued by the state and EPA.
- August 2018 – Grant Close Out and Certification of Completion of clean up is received.
- August 2018 – Buttermilk closes on financing for redevelopment of Building #1 (Note prior financing was just for clean-up project and leveraged other Buttermilk assets.). Construction of Building #1 can proceed. However, based on financing terms and bank requirements, Buttermilk adjust Building #1 usage and apartment allocation to achieve cash flow. The updated usage includes 14 residential units including several smaller units that will be 'affordable' and 2 floors of commercial. All adjustments were within approved Interim Zoning and building approval.
- Oct 2018 – Loss of two anchor commercial tenants (one in building #1 and building #2) require Buttermilk to pause Building #2.
- November 2018 – Town Plan is adopted.
- Nov - Dec 2018 – Buttermilk restarts construction based on new usage.
- Dec 3, 2018 – Buttermilk updates Town of Richmond including meeting new Town Manager and Planning Manager. Dwelling numbers are at 14 including Affordable Units.
- January 2019 – Selectboard challenges residential allocation from 7 to 14 residential units despite it being an allowable use (e.g. within 45 units and still achieved commercial & residential split). Requires several meetings to explain.
- Jan, 24 2019 – Building Permit application submitted. State Act 250 and Wastewater submitted as an administration amendment (We have received confirmation that the revised permit should be completed by end of Feb as an administrative amendment.).
- Feb 2019 – March 2020 – Planning Commission works to update Richmond Zoning this includes Jolina Court as Interim Zoning had expired. Residential density is a key focus across all districts. Buttermilk requests significant increase of residential density, removal of 60:40 commercial / residential split and reduction of parking burden. Exploration of options range from 56 to 90 residential units including density bonuses for affordable.

- 2019 - Buttermilk permit for #2 remained effective but required over 14,000 ft of commercial space. Without anchor tenants and little to no interest, no development could proceed.
- May 30, 2019 – Selectboard refuses to allow Buttermilk to utilize Tax Stabilization despite it being approved in March 2015 as an incentive and was a motivator for our purchase of the brownfield.
- October 2019 – Governor Scott attends an official ribbon cutting ceremony of the Creamery as it was a monumental project of success for Brownfield redevelopment in Vermont and New England.
- March 1, 2020 – Building #1 is completed and certificate of occupancy is provided. At point of opening, 60% of commercial space is under contract. 14 residential units (a range of units from studios at \$895 to 2 beds at \$1,995 per month) are filled within 1 month.
- March 14, 2020 – The pandemic starts. Buttermilk operates at a loss for nearly 18 months. No commercial tenants are interested. Residential turnover is 0%.
- April 2020 – After over 16 months of discussion and dozens of meetings with PC and SB, Jolina Court Zoning is implemented. 45 Unit Residential remains but commercial burden reduced to require ‘street front’ commercial on all buildings. Throughout, Buttermilk fought for additional housing including affordable and lowering of commercial requirements. SB refused both the PC and Buttermilk’s recommendations.
- April 2020– One of the two commercial tenants on building #1 breaks lease leaving Buttermilk with over \$35K of build out costs. Only remaining commercial tenant – Richmond Co-Working Space – is unable to pay rent for 11 months.
- 2020-2021 - Due to pandemic loan forgiveness program, Buttermilk is able to operate at a loss for 18 months and defer financing payments.
- Sept 2020 - Richmond applies for grant for survey. Buttermilk submits letter of support saying that ‘without further changes to zoning, the Creamery will be a missed opportunity to increase the housing supply in Richmond and Vermont.’
- Nov 2020 – As Building Permit was set to expire in April 2021 and no construction was foreseeable due to lack of commercial interest and pandemic, Buttermilk upon recommendation of Town Planner starts PUD process for future buildings based on current zoning. That permitting time took 3 years and over \$125K. Amendments for increased residential were hoped and highlighted in permit application.
- In Feb 2021 – One local commercial business needs additional space and takes over non-paying commercial tenant space (Richmond Co-Working Space). Buttermilk loses over +\$20K in back rent.
- 2020-2023 – (In fact since 2016, Buttermilk was marketing space.) Buttermilk works with commercial real estate agents and marketing efforts for the Creamery 45,000 of commercial space. No to little interest is shown. The feedback is consistent – lack of housing, lack of infrastructure or transportation and lower costs of other abundant space throughout Chittenden County.
- 2021 – Housing Study conducted. Creamery property is a top priority.
- April 2022 – Town Planner requests affordable housing proposal. Buttermilk supplies proposal of increase density to 85-95 units with 17-21% affordable; remove street front commercial on non-public / main street buildings; reduce parking burden.
- June – Oct 2022 – Further discussions with Town Planner / Zoning Admin including discussion with Vermont Finance Housing Association, Downtown Designation, affordability metrics etc. No perceive progress.
- July 2023 – Buttermilk received PUD for full development but we knowingly will not be proceeding with permitting or construction due to market conditions. As per Sept 2020 letter, unless zoning is changed, we would be unable to proceed.
- Sept 2023 – Buttermilk sees recent presentation on Affordable Housing as presented to Selectboard and community wrongly characterizing our interest in affordable housing. Since 2015 we have been fighting for additional housing including affordable.
- November 2023 – Current discussions on housing and proposal.