

September 28, 2020

Jacob Hemmerick
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

Dear Jacob,

I want to provide full support to the Town of Richmond application for a Municipal Planning Grant (to assess the existing housing supply and at market and low-income housing needs of Richmond.

As the developer of the Creamery, we understand the expectational need for housing in the community and have direct experience how the lack of information, conflicting and unrealistic goals and zoning restrictions has created barriers blocking additional housing for Richmond and for Vermont.

The Creamery development, a 6-acre property in the downtown Richmond, could provide significant residential (and commercial) opportunity. We have four mixed-use buildings planned that could host over +80 housing units and plentiful commercial space. Our intention is to provide a range of housing unit sizes (studios to 3 bedrooms) to serve different demographics. We are open to both at market and low-income housing options. The development represents an unprecedented opportunity to close the housing gap, drive vibrancy and economic development for Richmond and Vermont.

However, in the past 5 years, we have been challenged to deliver on these goals. Restrictive zoning, burdensome processes, high permit fees and lack of support from leadership has thwarted our progress. In 2019, we had hoped for improvement to historically restrictive zoning but, despite collaboratively working with the Town Planning Commission, most of the barriers remain and the process took 18 months and was costly. Today, an arbitrary, historical cap of 45 housing units remains and any future development is dependent on commercial requirement. Our first building launched with 14 units in March 2020 that are now full and we have an extensive waiting list. With the pandemic and subsequent massive impact to commercial real-estate, we are now unable to proceed with any development or construction. Sadly, without further changes to zoning, the Creamery will be a missed opportunity to increase the housing supply in Richmond and Vermont.

Our hope is the housing study will provide fact-based information to make substantive zoning amendments, support leaders to implement changes, reduce costs of zoning & construction planning, reduce the time and logistics for development and, ultimately, provide necessary financial opportunity and motivations for developers.

Please let me know if you would like to talk further or need additional information.

Best,

Josi Kytle
Partner, Buttermilk LLC
Owner, Creamery