

To: Richmond Selectboard

From: Richmond Housing Committee, Chair, Mark Hall

Date: May 30, 2025

RE: Tier 1b Opt-in Recommendation

We are writing to express strong support for the designation of **permanent Tier 1B status** under the provisions of the HOME ACT 181. Based on a realistic assessment of current land use and development potential, it is clear that such a designation is not only appropriate but essential for facilitating long-term, sustainable growth within the Village.

At present, **very few—if any—parcels in the Richmond public utility corridors meet existing zoning criteria** such as setbacks, density, and lot coverage, with the notable exception of the Creamery site. This reality significantly limits redevelopment and investment opportunities under the current framework. A Tier 1B permanent designation would directly address these limitations and allow for more strategic planning and revitalization over the course of decades.

The benefits of establishing Tier 1B status are significant and include:

- **Support for future redevelopment** of the Main Street corridor, a key economic and community artery.
- **Increased land use efficiency:** Current land patterns—particularly "spaghetti lots" that stretch along roads—leave valuable interior land underutilized.
- **Opportunities for thoughtful, larger-scale redevelopment** over time as adjacent parcels are acquired and assembled by private and/or public ventures. This path is not possible without Tier 1B status and leaves critical land underutilized.
- Addressing the **age and inefficiency of existing housing stock**, much of which presents health and safety concerns, such as lead paint, asbestos, and poor energy performance.
- **Alignment with a 50-year planning horizon**, creating predictable conditions for long-term private and public investment.
- Acknowledgment that without significant infrastructure expansions (e.g., sewer and water extension through the Gateway), large-scale development remains financially infeasible in both the short term and long term.
- **Incentivizing thoughtful, efficient, and phased growth**, with better alignment of public infrastructure, private investment, and transportation systems.

- Eligibility for future **grants and economic relief** through state programs designed for affordable housing. The lack of Tier 1B status eliminates Richmond from consideration.
- Affordable housing options for low to mid-income residents will not be able to be produced without larger projects and development due to the prohibitive cost and financing terms faced by developers. Opting into Tier 1B likely provides the only path forward for true affordable units to be added to the community

This is a strategic step forward for Richmond—one that recognizes current limitations while unlocking future opportunity. Tier 1B permanent status is a prudent, future-focused tool that enables the kind of smart growth our community needs. Current parcel layouts lacking the open space for Tier 1B applications should not be a primary reason to not opt-in. Our belief is that this approach is short-sighted and will leave Richmond struggling to accommodate larger-scale projects that are able to provide affordable units. Small-scale development is too costly to provide anything that is perpetually affordable, and not acting now will likely leave Richmond unable to provide thoughtful, affordable rentals and homes for the foreseeable future.

We strongly encourage the local government and relevant authorities to move forward with the application and adoption process for this designation. The housing committee views affordable housing as one of the most necessary sectors of housing to address in Richmond.

Sincerely,
Richmond Housing Committee
Mark Hall, Chair