

## Village R/C Zoning District — Memo from the PC Chair 10/10/22

Here is a little background that might be helpful in thinking about the material we'll be talking about at our hearing on the 19<sup>th</sup>:

### What is the Village Residential/Commercial (R/C) Zoning District?

This district replaces the current R/C District, with minor expansions in several directions outwards from the village center, as we can see on the map. It is a **mixed-use** area, meaning that it includes both commercial and residential uses, thus providing opportunities along Richmond's main roads for both businesses and dwellings. The district functions as a transitional zone between the core downtown (Bridge St Upper Block "Village Downtown Zoning District") and the residential neighborhoods. All the lots are served by municipal water and sewer service.

### Why are we looking to amend the regulations for this district?

Goals for the amendments to this district include:

- Making the permitting process somewhat easier for the building of small multifamily dwellings, in an effort to contribute our share to ease the county-wide **housing crisis**
- Allowing, as a "permitted use" **multiple use** buildings, which allow for buildings to house both business uses and dwelling units, which is a traditional Vermont building style
- Encouraging a "walkable" town, with a somewhat increased density of residents who can walk to services thus reducing car usage (a **climate change** goal). More village residents will also utilize our wastewater treatment facility more fully, reducing the cost for all customers.
- Supporting the increased density ("**gentle infill**") with standards that will help ensure compatibility between uses and allow for a more streamlined review process. These more explicit standards will replace the less defined "character of the neighborhood" standards, and will be easier to administer by the Zoning Administrator and the DRB.

### What are some of the changes that we are proposing?

- Some uses have been moved from "Conditional" (DRB review) to "Permitted" (Zoning Administrator review) for a more straightforward, thus quicker and less expensive, approval process
- Minimum lot size is reduced slightly (from 1/3 A to 1/4 A), and lot coverage is increased to allow more land to be used for structures
- We have separated retail businesses and grocery stores into 2 categories: large and small ("village-scale"). These will be allowed if they are "village-scale" which is defined as equal to or less than 5,000 square feet. This change serves to protect our village atmosphere and discourage chain or big box stores from locating here.
- Buildings with 3-4 dwelling units will be a "permitted" use. This change is to encourage the building of small-scale multifamily housing, as this seems the best way to increase the amount of housing in our village center without making big changes to the way Richmond looks or operates. These buildings could be either condos or apartments.
- We are proposing a set of "Multifamily Housing Development Standards" to make sure that the new multifamily buildings are good neighbors and nice places to live. These standards are included in the Gateway packet of materials, but they apply to both the Gateway R/C and the Village R/C districts. We have approved **both of these mixed-use districts** for public hearing at this time as they have many commonalities, and there is considerable overlap of supporting materials.
- Buildings with 5+ dwelling units, which previously have been allowed through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, have been moved into the "conditional" Use category, making them somewhat easier to permit.

- All the changes we are proposing can be seen by comparing the amended district with the current district in the “mark-up” version included in these materials.