

FAQ

Richmond Town Center Renovation

Preparing for the Next 100 Years

An Amazing Asset

Throughout its 116-year history, the Richmond Town Center building has served as a focal point for our community and is a key component of our “walkable downtown.”

The Town Center & Library Building Committee’s Work

The Selectboard formed the Town Center & Library Building Committee in 2019 to propose solutions to the deteriorating Town Center Building & site. The Committee solicited community input, worked intensively with architects; site planners; engineers; local/state/federal zoning regulators and others to gather recommendations, evaluate multiple options, finalize a preliminary renovation plan and develop a realistic cost for the project.

Recommendation

The committee believes that renovating the existing Town Center building to make it safer, more functional, and achieve the lowest possible energy usage is the right direction for the town.

What is the proposed renovation plan?

- This renovation plan creates an essentially “new” building inside the existing, structurally-sound, envelope.
- HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems will be brought up to code and meet energy-efficiency standards. It includes adding missing ventilation and cooling and upgrading air-quality to current standards.
- Existing windows will be replaced with new energy-efficient windows that will also restore the historic appearance of the building.
- Fossil-fuel based heating system will be replaced with electric and solar panels added to help reduce building operating costs
- Interior work spaces will be reconfigured for more efficiency. Office and meeting spaces will be upgraded to meet current and future technology needs.
- Fire alarm system will be brought up to code and a sprinkler system added

Why is it needed now?

We believe that the building has reached a point where deteriorating windows, electrical, HVAC and plumbing systems are impacting the safety and working conditions of our town staff and tenants. In addition, increasing energy costs, the effects of climate change, and addressing flood resilience make this renovation necessary. Construction costs show no signs of easing and borrowing costs are rising rapidly.

How much will it cost?

The current estimated cost of the proposed renovation is \$10.2 million. Over a 30-year bond period, this would represent roughly a \$100 increase in taxes for each \$100,000 of property value and the amount would decrease over time.

The Committee recognizes that this is a significant investment for taxpayers and does not make this recommendation lightly. We have been, and will continue to, explore all potential state and federal grant programs to try and reduce the burden on taxpayers.

Why not build new?

The Committee explored building a new Town Center building--either on the existing site (which would require demolition of current structure due to zoning regulations) or at a new, as yet unidentified site—in great detail. Engineers who examined the existing building found that the basic structure, including the existing roof, remains sound. Demolishing or selling a structurally-sound building that can be renovated to meet all of the town’s current and future needs is not the best use of taxpayer dollars and building new would cost significantly more than renovating the existing structure. More information is available on this cost comparison.

How will it address energy efficiency?

The replacement of a fossil-fuel based heating system with energy-efficient heat pump technology and upgrading the old, single-pane windows with modern double-pane windows as well as adding insulation to walls, window channels and Post Office roof will significantly improve the energy efficiency of the building. We propose adding solar panels to part of the historic building and to a structurally-improved post office roof. We estimate that this will pay for about 2/3 of the building’s electricity needs.

How does the renovation address future flooding events?

The renovation will address future flooding events by moving the building mechanicals and current tenant out of the basement, which can continue to be used for storage of non-critical materials. After consultation with federal, state and local zoning regulations and staff, installing pressure drains in the basement and allowing some flooding to occur is the best way to make this building resilient to future flood events.

Will the historic look of the building change?

The renovation plan restores the look of the windows to the original full-height mullioned windows, opens the staircase from 1st to 2nd floor and will restore some of the tin ceilings.

How is the Richmond Police Department accommodated?

The Police Department will have updated office space and a locker room on the 2nd floor of the building. Should the policing needs of the Town reduce in the future, this space can be reconfigured for town or tenant use. The option of adding a separate entrance, sally port and offender processing facilities would have required an addition or additional separate building and would have added significant cost to the project and was rejected.

What will change on the Post Office addition?

This 1953 addition has several structural and energy issues that we recommend addressing including deteriorating cement block, insufficient roof supports and insulation and filling in the uninsulated pipe trench. The plan makes some minor changes to the interior configuration but keeps the existing windows, PO Boxes and back work areas.

How will town services be accommodated during construction?

Both Town & Post Office services will be affected by construction. Selectboard meetings will move to the Library Community Room. Construction may be phased to allow some services to remain in the building and the remote and hybrid methods to deliver town services and meetings that were used during COVID may also be used.

The Postmistress is aware that Post Office services will be affected but feels that this can be accommodated. Tenants are aware that their access to the building will be affected.

Will all of the current tenants stay in the building?

The renovation can accommodate the needs of the US Postal Service, Mount Mansfield Community Television, Richmond Historical Society and the Community Senior Center but would not include space for Radiate Art. Organizations that are using the building for non-critical storage can continue to do so in the basement space.

Does this pay for any work on the Library?

This does not include any work on the Library building but does include improved handicap access to the Library and moves the handicap parking spaces to a safer location. In addition, it adds a green space with a covered pavilion that the Library can use for outdoor activities.

How does the new Site Plan improve the campus?

The site plan improves the flow of traffic in the parking lot and maintains the same number of parking spaces. It provides a safer walking flow between Town Center, Post Office and Library and relocates handicap parking for the Library and Town Center to eliminate safety issues. Finally, it creates a more welcoming street-scape and adds some green space including a covered pavilion to host outdoor activities.

Where can I find more information?

For information, site plans and design documents, go to <https://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-meetings/town-center-and-library-buildings-committee>

Who can I speak with about this project?

If you have questions or concerns, you can contact any member of the committee:

Jeff Forward, Chair
Josh Arneson
Laurie Dana
Amy Wardwell
Dave Healy
Jake Marin

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