



TOWN OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning and Zoning

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To: Town of Richmond Selectboard

From: Virginia Clarke, Town of Richmond Planning Commission Chair

Date: August 4, 2025

Subject: Memo to Selectboard for final public hearing on Jolina Court District and associated amendments

Following almost two years of discussion and public hearings by both the Planning Commission and Selectboard, documents have been prepared to finalize revisions to the Jolina Court Zoning District (3.9) and the PUD Section (5.12), and to add two new sections to the Richmond Zoning Regulations (RZR): "Residential Density Bonus Program," (6.15) and "Affordable Housing Development" (6.16). These documents were prepared by the PC in response to the SB motion of 6/2/25, and incorporate the changes approved by the SB at that meeting.

The most significant revisions to Section 3.9 include an increase in the allowed "Maximum Base Residential Density" to 24 dwelling units per developable acre of the parcel. This equals a maximum of 72 residential units for the whole project, including Building 1 (existing), Building 2 (proposed) and any future buildings. A second change allows the developer to build an additional 18 dwelling units, for a total of 90, if they adhere to the standards of the newly proposed Section 6.15, the "Residential Density Bonus Program." This is an optional program that "trades" a greater number of developable units for some "affordable" and "accessible/adaptable" units for special needs populations. Buttermilk (the developer of the Creamery project) may or may not elect to sign on to this program, but the program will also be available for use in other districts in the future if it is approved today. Other smaller changes were made to align this zoning district with the new state statutes known as Acts 47 and 181.

A significant revision to Section 5.12 was made to allow for most of the ground floor of Building 1 to be used for dwelling units, all except for the 20% of the floor nearest to Bridge St, which must remain in commercial use. The original zoning for the Jolina Court District envisaged a traditional village downtown, with all ground floor spaces in commercial use, with residences on the second and third floors. As the demand for commercial space declined, and the housing crisis in Vermont steadily worsened, this policy came to seem counterproductive, and the compromise was made to retain only the most commercially desirable portion of the Creamery (i.e. that directly fronting onto

Bridge St) as commercial-only. As the Creamery was permitted as a “Planned Unit Development” (PUD) this change was incorporated into the PUD Section.

Two new sections are proposed for the RZR. Both may apply to other districts besides the Jolina Court District in the future. Section 6.15, as mentioned above, allows for a project to exceed the Maximum Base Residential Density of a zoning district by providing “affordable” and/or “accessible/adaptable” housing. Thus far, Jolina Court is the only district that is eligible for this program, but the PC is working to allow this program in other districts; the SB will have to approve those changes as they occur. We are hoping that, over time, this will encourage developers to provide some needed housing types. Section 6.16 is a requirement of Act 47, so must be incorporated into our zoning by state law. This Section provides another “carrot” to encourage the development of “affordable” housing. It allows for “Affordable Housing Developments” (defined in the section) to exceed the maximum residential density by 40% and to exceed the height limitation of the district by one floor. If and when we have a developer who elects to adhere to the statutory requirements of 6.16, we will have to adapt to the increased density and building height.

Please see the documents themselves for complete details of the amendments. The PC is hopeful that the Selectboard’s approval of these amendments will allow Buttermilk to proceed to seek financing for their Building 2 and will make it worth their while to build some needed housing on Jolina Court.

Virginia Clarke
Chair, Richmond Planning Commission