

Richmond, Vermont Town Plan 2026

Introduction Handout – Nov. 4



Key Dates

- November 4, 2025 - Presentation of the Plan to the Selectboard and the public at a special Selectboard meeting in the Richmond Free Library Community Room. This hybrid event will feature an overview of the Plan, a Q&A / discussion period, and desserts, with coffee and tea. Comments will be noted by the Steering Committee members.
- November 19, 2025 – Planning Commission Public Hearing in the Town Center Meeting Room from 7 -9 pm (hybrid)
- Month of December 2025 - Refinements to Plan based on public comment will be considered by Steering Committee and Planning Commission, and the Plan will be reviewed by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), which must approve the Plan for it to be legal
- Early January, 2026 – Selectboard Public Hearing (exact date and location TBD) - If Selectboard accepts the Plan, it will be placed on the Town Meeting Day warning for a town-wide vote in March 2026
- March 3, 2026 – we hope to have a vote to approve our new Town Plan 2026!

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INTRODUCTION

“Looking back to 2018, looking forward to 2034”

Town Plan 2026

As is usual with the passage of time, some things change, and some things remain the same. Ten years ago, we undertook an extensive townwide outreach process to understand and characterize the vision and goals of Richmond residents, and most of this work remains as true today as it was then. We have updated this outreach through events, surveys and our more extensive use of the Front Porch Forum online chat tool.

Meanwhile, the world around us has changed. Old problems have taken on new importance. Our infrastructure is older and in need of repair. The scarcity of housing, and the increasingly severe rainfall events as climate change worsens, have reached levels that some term crises. Important new work by the Agency of Natural Resources has identified the necessity of maintaining functional natural ecosystems across the state and has mapped crucial areas in their “Vermont Conservation Design” work. The Vermont legislature has taken a deeper dive into municipal and regional affairs; and the federal government appears to have entered a new phase of radically reduced support and limited funding for programs we have embraced, which may translate into financial hardship for us over the life of this Plan.

For this Plan, we have taken elements from our 2018 Plan and then added in the new statewide goals and visions, adopted into law, which we, as citizens of our beautiful state of Vermont, must now add to our own local goals and visions. As we look back at 2018, we also look forward to what we might achieve by 2034.

Town Vision

For the 2018 Town Plan, Richmond conducted an extensive community engagement process that identified a vision to be "the most livable small town in Vermont," supported by eleven specific priorities around community character, affordability, opportunity, and resilience. During our 2025 outreach, we heard those same values reaffirmed. Residents love Richmond's strong community, small-town character, rural landscape, available services, and accessible location.

But we also heard new urgency around challenges that have intensified: housing availability and affordability, rising costs, climate adaptation and flooding, and balancing conservation with recreation. Our outreach work led us to Richmond's **vision for the 2026 Town Plan:**

We will preserve Richmond's working and natural landscapes, village character, and community spirit while expanding opportunities, improving access and strengthening resilience for all residents.

This means expanding housing choices, supporting local businesses, improving transportation options, enhancing recreation while protecting natural resources, strengthening infrastructure against climate impacts, and maintaining community engagement that helps us tackle hard problems together. This Town Plan takes a forward-thinking approach to emerging opportunities and challenges while honoring and strengthening our close-knit community and rural character.

In order to fulfill this vision, we have developed a series of **goals** and **actions, organized** into eleven **Sections**. Each Section discusses a topic that is required by Vermont's municipal planning statute (24 VSA 4382).

VISION – Local, regional or statewide community desired outcomes

GOAL - A specific aim to reach a desired vision

ACTION - A method of achieving a goal

Each ACTION will be assigned one or more "owners" to carry out the task.

"OWNERS" of ACTIONS – may be elected or appointed officials, committees, community groups, Town staff, or Richmond residents

Purposes of the Town Plan

The purpose of this plan is to guide community members and leaders in carrying out the actions that will help achieve our goals over the next eight years. It is the roadmap that informs our decisions about everything from where new housing can be built to how we protect the Winooski River; from keeping the village vibrant to preparing for the next flood. The Plan charts our way forward, through our challenges, towards our vision.

The Plan is created by the community, for the community. The tools we have are, first and foremost, the energy and ideas of our residents, but in addition we can utilize public investments, incentives, state and regional resources, land use regulations, education, community collaboration, and other implementation strategies.

In addition, by law, an approved Town Plan allows Richmond to apply for grants to support planning activities; participate in state programs that support specific growth areas and economic revitalization such as the Village Center designation program; work with neighboring towns to reduce conflicts; have a greater say in legal actions, and have more success in managing growth while preserving rural character. Without an approved Plan we would not be able to adopt and revise our land use regulations (zoning and subdivision) or develop a Capital Budget and Plan.

This Plan, more so than previous Plans, integrates regional and statewide stakeholders into our planning efforts. Our elected officials in the state legislature have looked ahead as our rural economy evolves; our infrastructure and our population age, and climate change brings unwanted weather events. The statewide vision to preserve our natural heritage and biodiversity for future generations has imposed new standards and now requires our active participation. At the same time, growth and development must have a place within our borders. New challenges abound, and this Plan represents our best effort to address those challenges.

Adherence to Richmond Policies on Inclusion

Richmond has been an inclusionary town since the building of the Round Church in 1812 as a multi-faith community resource. In the language of the deed, we read:

“Each shall peaceably share if requested their equal share of said house.”

In modern times, this Plan and our planning process are subject to Richmond’s Policy on Inclusion, which was passed as a non-binding resolution on March 7, 2017, at Town Meeting. The Policy on Inclusion states: “Be it resolved that we the people of Richmond celebrate diversity and welcome all people no matter their color, the religion they practice, their ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or gender identity.”

The Policy on Inclusion has been enhanced by the town’s policy of Fair and Impartial Policing for the Richmond Police Department, approved by the Richmond Police Chief and Selectboard in 2021. In 2025 the current Selectboard authorized a year-round posting of signage outside the Town Center which states: “Black Lives Matter” and “All are welcome here.”

Plan Responsibilities

- **Planning Commission**

The Richmond Planning Commission is responsible for overseeing the readoption of the Town Plan every eight years.

- **Town Plan Steering Committee**

The Town Plan Steering Committee consists of Richmond residents who have volunteered to participate in this planning process and have given many hours to community outreach and Plan drafting. The Committee's responsibilities are complete with the publication of this plan, and the committee will dissolve.

- **Selectboard**

The Selectboard must officially approve the recommended plan after holding one or more public hearings and subsequently warns the Plan for a townwide vote. The Selectboard is also responsible for adopting town policies and making critical decisions to implement the Plan.

- **Town Staff**

Town staff have provided technical and logistical support and guidance throughout this planning process, including helping to organize and publicize events and opportunities to engage the public. They are also charged with leading many of the implementation steps, and with supporting and following the plan as they carry out their responsibilities.

- **Town Boards + Committees**

Richmond has several official town boards and committees which oversee particular aspects of the community's activities. Each committee provided input into relevant goals or plan sections, and each is responsible for leading or implementing most of the actions related to its area of expertise. A list of these groups can be found in the References and Resources Appendix.

- **Community Members + Other Groups**

The Richmond community was responsible for providing the input that helped shape the vision, actions and priorities, and will be subject to the policies and actions that the plan defines. Many actions cannot happen without resources and energy from local non-profits, businesses, schools or community members, and the involvement of many community members is critical for the success of the plan.

- **Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)**

The CCRPC is responsible for confirming that the municipal plan is consistent with the state planning goals as defined in Vermont statute 24 VSA §4302 and contains all the required elements as specified in 24 VSA §4382. This board also ensures that each

municipality's plan does not conflict with the plans of neighboring towns, the regional ECOS Plan, and the Vermont state planning laws. CCRPC also assists in the preparation and printing of the maps found in the Plan.

- **Vermont State Legislature**

Since the visioning process for Town Plan 2018, numerous important pieces of state legislation have been adopted that significantly impact our 2026 document. These statutes aim to promote statewide goals through the planning and actions of individual towns. A number of them mandate municipal action directly, others do so by way of mandates to the regional planning commissions (In our case, CCRPC). Several set in motion studies by the Agency of Natural Resources that will result in mandates over the next few years. Most of these new laws relate either to the creation of housing, the mitigation of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas pollution, or the conservation of forest land and biodiversity. The goals of these statewide efforts cannot be achieved without the active participation of the towns, and the Vermont legislature has determined that the health and welfare of all residents will be negatively impacted if these goals are not met. A list of these statutes can be found in the References and Resources Appendix.

Plan Structure

- **Introduction**

- **Sections (eleven Required Elements) with Accompanying Map(s)**

Each of the eleven Sections covers a topic that state statutes (24 VSA 4382) require us to consider in a municipal plan. The initial **Narrative** of each Section discusses current conditions and issues for the future. This is followed by **Goals** and the **Actions** that we plan to take to achieve these goals. Finally, a **map or maps** relevant to the topic appear at the end of most sections.

- **Implementation Table**

The action items from all the Sections are gathered in an **Implementation Table**, which sets out a timeframe for, and ownership of, these tasks. This table may be distributed to all town committees to be used as a self-contained guide to municipal goals and actions to be undertaken by various sectors of the community including elected and appointed officials, committees, town staff, interest groups and community members over the lifetime of the Plan.

- **Appendix**

- Data and Additional Information**

- Most Plan Sections have additional graphics, statistics, inventories, references, historical details or other information that is helpful for a deeper understanding of the material found in the Sections. Lists of relevant state statutes, community organizations and town governing bodies, and sources for further information can also be found here; as well as a description of the community outreach process that was carried out during 2025. The location of each topic covered in the Appendix is shown on the “Content” page at the start of this document.

Compatibility

This plan in its entirety has been determined to be compatible with the plans of the surrounding towns including Williston, Jericho, Bolton, Huntington, and Hinesburg. It has also been determined to be compatible with the draft 2026 Chittenden County ECOS Plan.