



Looking Back to 2018 & Forward to 2034

**Town Plan 2026 | Draft Presentation to Selectboard and Public
Tuesday, November 4th, 7-9pm | Richmond Free Library | Coffee, Tea, Dessert**

Town Plan Steering Committee 2026

- **Ian Bender (Planning Commission)**
- **Chelsye Brooks (Public)**
- **Virginia Clarke (Planning Commission)**
- **Jason Osterman (Public)**
- **Andrew Powers (Public)**
- **Adam Wood (Selectboard Liaison)**

Planning Commission Members

- Alison Anand
- Ian Bender
- Virginia Clarke
- Rebecca Connell
- Mark Fausel

Other Contributors (many) including

- Historical Society
- Housing Committee
- Conservation Commission



Why do we have a Town Plan?

- Required by state statute to have a Plan approved by the town and the local Regional Planning Commission.
 - In order to have or amend bylaws, Capital Plan and Budget
 - Receive certain state or regional funding grants
 - Must be re-adopted every 8 years (2026)
- Represents the Town's aspirations and planning goals
 - Current conditions
 - Challenges, current and expected
 - Provides a roadmap for future actions by town governing body
 - Used to defend town actions during litigation
- Enhanced Energy Plan must be certified in addition to the rest of the Plan

What is the timeline for adoption of the Town Plan?

- Presentation of draft Plan tonight to Selectboard and public
- Planning Commission Public Hearing on November 19, 2025
- Selectboard Public Hearing in early January, comments from tonight's gathering will be considered. Selectboard to vote to accept.
- Placed on Ballot and warned by January 22, 2026
- Town-wide vote to adopt on March 3, 2026

Body of the Plan (Sections)

1. Community Development
2. Economic Development
3. Education
4. Emergency Resilience
5. Energy and Climate Change
6. Future Land Use
7. Historic Resources
8. Housing
9. Natural Resources
10. Transportation
11. Utilities, Facilities and Public Safety

Community Development

!RICHMOND SPIRIT!

- Evident in good times and bad
- Neighbors helping neighbors
- Halloween, Fourth of July, Farmers Market, Front Porch Forum







Community Development

Sample goals:

- We seek effective and efficient service from Town government – we need to continue to improve the Town webpage, planning and zoning processes, and communication
- We seek to maintain and enhance public health initiatives and promote community social activities
- We aim to support actions designed to enable Richmond residents to access basic needs, affordable goods and services, and housing options

Community Development - Engagement

- Engaging with as many community members as possible in a knowledgeable dialog, and communication amongst town groups, are keys to maintaining our strong community spirit.
- Richmond has residents who interact with town government in diverse ways, and they need to be met by town government wherever they are.
- Continuous, meaningful involvement in solving local issues remains challenging. At the same time, volunteerism is a valued part of our small town character, and we have 19 committees!

Community Development - Recreation

- Outdoor recreation is a fundamental part of the Richmond community.
- Our hills, trails and river provide excellent outdoor recreation, and these assets have fostered a large community of cyclists, runners, bikers, and skiers. An increase in popularity requires a corresponding increase in provision of safety for all community members, and thoughtful planning.



Photo
by
Pennie
Rand



Utilities, Facilities and Public Safety

- **Challenges:**
- Our community infrastructure is increasingly under pressure from costs, ageing and weather, especially our historic buildings and transportation system.
- Our culverts and small bridges will be tested with increasing frequency. Private funding of fixes for private driveways and building fortifications will be tested in an era of decreasing federal help. Ageing buildings need attention. How will we fund these needs?

Utilities, Facilities and Public Safety Actions

- Short, Medium, and Long term planning is needed.
- Scrimping on maintenance and major upgrades has resulted in major costs in the near term for the town center building and the wastewater system. In hindsight, was this the best approach? Studying the cause and effect that resulted in today's situation might be time well spent to inform future decisions.

Cross-cutting Issues: Will require work Public Health (COM DEV) and Public Safety (U, F, & PS)

- Rethinking the Police Department
- Recreational infrastructure and road safety
- The opioid crisis
- The lack of available and affordable housing
- Capital budgeting in a time of uncertain federal support
- Effects of climate change



Emergency Resilience

- ***Our Big Challenge:*** *Increased frequency of flooding and fluvial erosion*

What's changed since 2018

- Four major floods (2019-2024): \$100K → \$2M in damages
- New climate threats: wildfire, drought, poor air quality, warming winters
- Pandemic required sustained adaptation across all systems





Emergency Resilience - Progress

Progress since 2018

ER 2.1: Utilize the Richmond Stormwater Master Plan to maintain, upgrade, or implement stormwater systems and water conveyance systems such as ditches, culverts, and municipal water/wastewater systems to withstand at least 1% storms (100 year storms)

Our wins:

- ~30 culverts replaced/upsized
- All ditches improved to 12-24" deep (above 8-12" standard)
- Major upgrades: Hillview culvert 8' → 10', Besaw and Bates 4' → 5'

Emergency Resilience - 2026 Plans

ER 2.1 Establish a Community Resilience Hub by designating and hardening a community facility (Town Center, Library, or other suitable locations) with backup power, secure water access, and redundant communications to serve as cooling centers during extreme heat events and warming/charging centers during prolonged winter power outages.

ER 2.2 Consider establishing a volunteer Town Emergency Coordinator position to coordinate volunteer networks, emergency communications, and work with the town's Emergency Operations Staff during disasters

Transportation

- A **challenge**: Balancing the need to bolster resiliency of existing infrastructure with aspirational transportation related goals. A funding challenge.
- Actions from 2018 accomplished some “Complete Streets” improvements such as new crosswalks, pedestrian signage, fog lines, speed bumps and studies.





Transportation – 2018 to 2026

- A change from 2018 to 2026: Financial support from the Federal Gov't for disaster relief infrastructure repair may be reduced or lacking
- Focus for 2026: Identify and prioritize infrastructure most likely to be damaged in the next flooding or fluvial erosion event, and mitigate.

Photo by
Pennie Rand



Historic Resources

- Continue Town stewardship of historic records, artifacts, and photos. This will entail safe, climate-controlled storage space and digitized inventories.
- Continue to value Richmond's historic places, such as the Round Church, artifacts, traditions and stories. These are reminders and beacons: they bear witness to the past, provide links between generations, and weave into the memories of those who engage with them. By protecting and celebrating these resources, the Town helps residents and visitors alike to know and care more about Richmond.

Historic Resources – Sample of Goals

- Plan funding and implementation of major renovations as needed to preserve historical integrity and enhance Round Church and property
- Protect, preserve and continue to fully utilize the Town Center and Library buildings.
- Encourage the preservation and utilization of privately owned buildings of historic significance within the town
- Preserve and protect Richmond's archaeological sites and cemeteries
- Support and advertise public events that have become local cultural traditions.



Housing

- Since our 2018 Town Plan, we have recognized that diverse housing options are essential for community sustainability, workforce development, vibrancy, and minimizing personal stressors
- Creating more diverse and affordable housing is a complex challenge that cannot be solved through municipal action alone.
- Beginning in 2023, Richmond's Planning Commission and Selectboard have taken significant steps to enable the development of more diverse, affordable housing .



Housing – Zoning Approaches

- **The Richmond Zoning Regulations now allow:**
- Accessory dwellings and small multi-family units in areas zoned for single-family homes within the municipal water and sewer service.
- Reduced lot size, higher residential density limits, and parking minimums for dwelling units to lower development costs.
- A program offering regulatory incentives for affordable housing development.

Housing – New Legislation

- **Act 47, the Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act (2023)**) aims to increase housing development and address the affordability crisis. To address affordability, the HOME Act established several new programs focused on rental assistance and homeowner affordability for middle-income households
- **Act 181 (2024)** builds on this by requiring that new housing be “compact development” and follow “smart growth” principles. This means that nearly all residential growth should take place in existing village centers, downtowns, and the immediate surrounding areas designated as “planned growth areas” or “village areas.”



Housing – Sample of Goals

- Aspire to add 404 new homes to our housing stock by 2050.
- Promote discussion of the Richmond Housing Committee's ***Strategic Housing Plan***, and continue to support the mission and goals of the Housing Committee
- Investigate all aspects of infrastructure improvements that might support additional growth in housing
- Consider additional zoning changes in “compact growth” areas, such as additional building height.

Economic Development

Our Big Challenge: Understanding what the town and community can do to most effectively support economic development

What's changed since 2018

- Work-from-home increased local spending opportunities
- Richmond became recreational destination (skiing, biking, river)
- Online shopping continues eroding brick-and-mortar retail
- Housing, housing, housing



Economic Development - Progress and Plans

Progress since 2018

ED 3.1: Renewed the Village Center designation

Provides access to state financial incentives such as tax credits, grants and technical assistance.

ED 1.5: Support the Richmond Farmers' Market and other local agricultural business enterprises

- Market grew significantly in vendors and community support

2026 Plans

ED 1.1: Encourage formation of an independent volunteer group to conduct regular business visits, gather feedback, and serve as liaison between businesses and town government



Education

Most Important Takeaway

- Education in Richmond is a core community value and a key part of planning for future growth.
- The Town must work closely with MMUUSD to prepare for enrollment changes, state reforms, and housing-driven growth.

Education - Challenges

- Navigating the statewide Education Transformation Act (Act 73, 2025) – shifting to regional governance and per-pupil funding.
- Managing transportation inefficiencies and long bus routes across a large district area.
- Ensuring facilities and outdoor spaces remain safe and resilient, particularly with stormwater and flood impacts.

Education – Actions Achieved from 2018

- Continued full-day preschool and kindergarten; expanded Act 166 early learning partnerships.
- Ongoing collaboration with MMUUSD to share facilities for civic and recreation use.
- Stormwater infrastructure work at RES, CHMS, and MMU completed in 2025.

Education - New in 2026

- New laws: Education Transformation Act of 2025 (Act 73) and Act 181 housing growth projections.
- Stronger focus on early childhood education and community partnerships for social and emotional support.
- A new superintendent for the MMUUSD

Education – Focus for 2026

- **Key 2026 Actions to Focus On**
- Collaborate with MMUUSD to plan for future enrollment increases linked to new housing.
- Support tree planting and noise buffers between schools and I-89 for student safety and wellness.
- Explore electric and smaller school buses to improve sustainability and reduce congestion.
- Understand and stay engaged with Act 73.



Energy and Climate Change

- The science is clear: the burning of fossil fuels is warming the atmosphere and causing climate disruption – for us, flooding and drought.
- We are dealing with the **effects** of climate change, but we also need to do our share of dealing with the **cause** of climate change.
- With our current technology, this means electrifying our energy supply and deriving the electricity from renewable sources.
- This is (no kidding) **difficult**.
- **The Energy Section of our Plan, as well as the Data and Additional Information Appendix, provides a set of metrics and guidelines.**

Energy and Climate Change

Why do we want an “**Enhanced** Energy Plan”?

- Gives the town a stronger local voice (substantial difference) in any renewable energy project decisions made under the state energy permitting process through the Public Utility Commission or PUC.
- Enables the town to take advantage of existing resources and incentives from Efficiency Vermont including programs that save homeowners money through home energy audits and upgrades.
- Provides taxpayer savings by promoting energy efficiency in municipal buildings and vehicles.

What are the goals of an energy plan?

- Promotes efficient technology for the conservation of energy and eventual electrification of all our energy systems.
- Promotes policies that keep energy money within the state, benefiting our economy.
- Promotes the improvement of air quality.
- Helps us play our part in reducing greenhouse gases emissions and controlling climate change.



Photo by
Lou Borie



Natural Resources

Most Important Takeaway:

- Richmond's natural systems (forests, wetlands, rivers, soils) are critical infrastructure for flood resilience, public health, and rural character—so we're pairing compact growth with strong conservation.

Natural Resources - Challenges

- Climate impacts (flooding, fluvial erosion, slope failures) increasing faster than legacy drainage can handle.
- Fragmentation pressure in uplands and along connectors unless regulations and incentives are aligned.
- Balancing recreation & conservation at Andrews Community Forest and other town lands.



Natural Resources -2018 Actions Done

- Kept the Conservation Reserve Fund active and, in 2025, helped conserve 11.2 acres of Silver Maple–Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest on the Winooski (flood storage, water quality, rare habitat), purchased trees to plant at Browns Court, and mulched trees at Volunteers Green.
- Continued invasive control efforts (Great Richmond Root-Out & volunteers).

Natural Resources – 2018 to 2026

What's New in 2026 vs. 2018

- Explicit integration of Act 171 (forest blocks/connectors), Act 154 (environmental justice), Act 59 (30x30), 24 V.S.A. §4302(c)(10) (earth resources policy).
- Act 181 housing targets + Town's 2025 Tier 1B opt-in to steer growth into village/growth areas and reduce rural fragmentation.
- Stronger emphasis on river corridors, stormwater bylaws, green stormwater infrastructure/low impact development, and riparian protections post-2023/2024 floods.

Natural Resources – Focus for 2026

- Adopt River Corridor Bylaws and Municipal Stormwater Bylaws that prioritize Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) & Low Impact Development (LID) to cut erosion and flood risk.
- Finalize Andrews Community Forest management & trails plan, while also addressing recreation and trails in land use regs.
- Update land use regs to promote cluster and limit road lengths in highest priority forested areas.



Natural Resources - Maps

- Forest Blocks & Habitat Connectors (CHUs + connectors)
- River Corridors & Flood Hazard Areas
- Wetlands & Surface Waters
- Ridgelines and Steep Slopes
- Conserved Parcels and Lands in Current Use Program

Future Land Use (FLU)

New Designations:

Village Center

Village Area

Transition/Infill

Enterprise

Resource-based
recreation

Hamlet

Rural General

Rural Agriculture

Rural Conservation

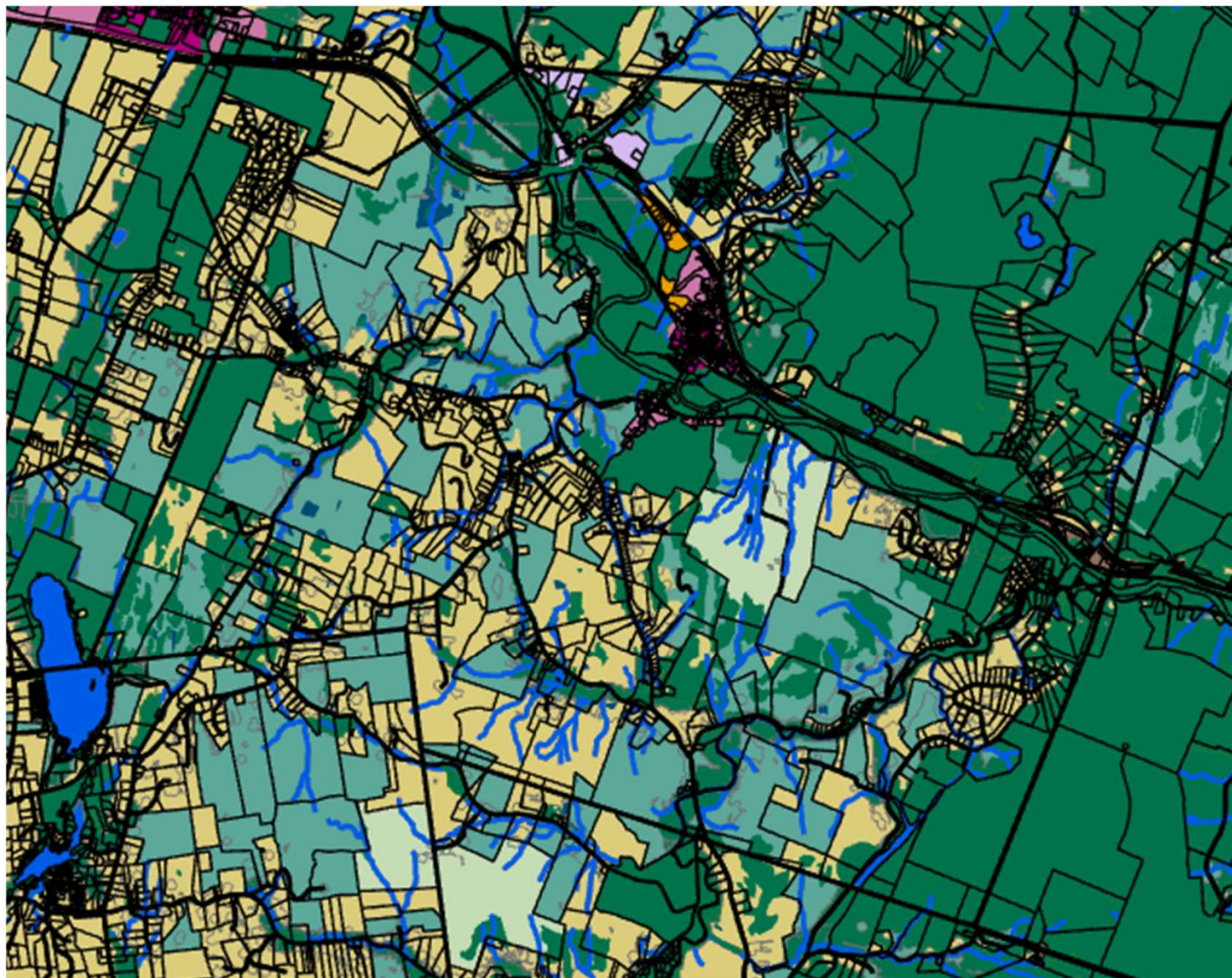
FLU – How did we develop our map?

- We used the new CCRPC map with the new land designations as a base. We are required to align with this map.
- We overlaid the Richmond natural resource “constraints” maps found in our 2018 Town Plan, Richmond’s ***Science to Action*** maps, and the state (ANR) constraint maps. This was enabled by newly developed “Biofinder” mapping software.
- The resulting map shows us where our natural resources of local and statewide significance are, and where development has occurred.

FLU – What are “constraints” and what does this Signify?

- “Constraints” are features of the landscape that make it difficult to develop the land.
- As zoning regulations are developed or revised, they will need to take constraints into consideration. Areas with constraints will then need to be assessed on an individual basis if development is considered, to see exactly how the land will be impacted.
- Our new FLU map shows that Richmond lacks large, flat, easily-developable areas. This we knew. Constraints overlaid in our map include: ridgelines > 900 ‘, slopes> 35%; floodplains; wetlands; and state highest priority forest, connectivity, species and natural community blocks, as well as land that is already conserved.
- There are many other mapped natural features of state and regional importance that we have not included at this time.

- Purple – Village center
- Pink – Village Areas
- Orange – Transitional
- Mauve – Enterprise
- Brown – Hamlet
- Pale blue – Resource-based Recreation
- Tan – Rural General
- Teal – Rural Ag and Forestry
- Green – Rural Conservation



What is in the Plan In addition to the 11 Sections?

- Contents
- Introduction
- Data and Additional Information Appendix (50+pp)
- Maps

Photo by
Pennie Rand

• And
that's
our
Plan!



Photo by Lou Borie

Monitor Barn – A Historic
Building and The VYCC
Educational Headquarters

