**Utilities + Facilities**

The town owns various properties, including the town center, library, and several departments. The town center and library, as historic sites, require additional maintenance and funding to preserve their character while updating them. Several town facilities have been audited for energy efficiency. Richmond residents value reliable, essential infrastructure, without unneeded extras. And though maintenance has been carried out, the town is currently facing significant investment in the near term to ensure the continued operation of several town owned and operating facilities, utilities and systems.

**Facilities**

The Richmond **Town Center** houses the town government, police department, post office and related departments. At this time, the building is badly in need of significant repairs and upgrades. Defective, unhealthy and inefficient heating and cooling systems need to be replaced; energy-efficient windows which would replace old, drafty ones should be installed; and lower level flooding solutions that would meet current regulations need to be developed. At the same time, the historic appearance of the building must be maintained. A dedicated committee worked for several years with an architect with the conclusion being to renovate the building in a single effort. This was to be financed through a multi-million dollar bond, which was voted down due to the high cost at town meeting day in 2025. As of this writing, a new committee is working on a proposal for spreading out the cost to retain usability of the building.

The **Richmond Free Library** building, whose basic structure dates to 1879, began as the Universalist Church, In 1991 this building began to house the library, and In 2003, the building was further renovated with private and grant funding. The three-floor library now hosts a large collection of materials for loan, and makes available the Community Room and Mezzanine Lounge, which are key spaces for local groups and individuals to gather, work, and learn. With 30,000 annual visits in fiscal year 2025, Richmond residents make great use of their library's facility and services. Close cooperation with the Community Senior Center has also increased activities and client visits. It is essential that the building be assessed, maintained and enhanced on a regular basis to ensure safety and access and provide the multitude of services to a growing community. Citizens of Richmond have voiced a desire to strengthen and enhance recreational, community, and cultural facilities in the Town. The Library is an integral part in meeting those demands.

Richmond Free Library and its budget are overseen by the publicly elected Library Board of Trustees, who work with the Select Board to make repairs and improvements to the building. Heating and cooling rely on a combination of heat pumps and gas boilers. Federal grants were used to update the HVAC in 2021 and funded exterior siding and steeple repairs in 2024. The original slate roof is in need of repair or replacement, and should be addressed within the next 10 years. Regular assessment and maintenance of the building are vital for safety, accessibility, provision of services services, and to keep this historic structure available for decades to come.

The landmark **Round Church and park**, maintained jointly by the town and the Richmond Historical Society, is reserved for special occasions and attracts many visitors. A complete description can be found in the Historic Resources Section of this Plan

Public Safety - Police, Fire and Rescue

Richmond offers several public safety facilities and services to its residents

* Municipal police
* A volunteer fire department
* Richmond Rescue; a contracted local ambulance / private rescue service.

**Public Safety – Police, Fire and Rescue**

The **Police Station,** housed within the Town Center, was ultimately deemed to be adequate for our current needs, after several other options had been considered. Unlike many communities in eastern Chittenden County, which depend on the State Police for law enforcement, Richmond maintains its own **town police force.** The community has experienced considerable changes both in public support for the police (mostly due to cost) and in officer retention. As of 2025, Richmond employs one commissioned Police Sergeant - a reduction from the staffing level of a Chief and five patrol officers in 2018. To ensure continued coverage, Richmond has worked previously with the town of Hinesburg, sharing police resources between the two municipalities, with the idea of merging services in a Union Municipal District. As of 2025, the current strategy is to continue to build our own department, while actively exploring other options. Our officers are members of the regional New England Police Benevolent Association Union.

The **Richmond Fire Station** houses Richmond’s volunteer fire squad consisting of a Chief, Assistant Chief, three Captains, one Lieutenant - about 14 active members total. The members receive a small per-call stipend. Despite the difficulty of attracting new members, the department successfully handles various emergencies - from motor vehicle accidents on interstate 89 and local roads, to medical assists and fires. They have automatic and reciprocal mutual aid with Bolton Fire Department, and work within a broader mutual aid network coordinated by Shelburne.

The 1970s era fire station is showing its age but remains functional with needed repairs / upgrades. the fleet is maintained and sufficient, and includes: a 2016 pumper tanker, a 2018 pumper tanker, a 2024 utility truck, and a heavy rescue vehicle that is scheduled to be replaced in December 2025. The town water tank ensures reliable pressure and volume for firefighting.

The Richmond Fire Department is not immune to the challenges facing volunteer departments across the country. (funding, membership, attendance, increasing regulations, etc.) But they continue to perform well and hope to improve their service to the community in the coming years in cooperation with other town entities. Richmond values its dedicated volunteer team.

**Richmond Rescue**, situated on Railroad Street, is a private emergency medical and rescue organization that provides services under contract to Richmond and other regional municipalities. Funding for the organization is generated through subscriptions, donations, service fees, and municipal contracts. Dispatch operations are managed by the Shelburne service, which also handles fire dispatching, while certain 911 calls are routed through the state police. The service is considering to expand their facility to handle the increased demand for their services.

**Roads and Highway**

The **Highway Department building** is currently adequate for their needs. The highway department vehicles include a roadside mower, four dump trucks, an excavator, a grader, a front-end loader, two trailers, a small tractor, a snow blower and 3 pickup trucks. Highway vehicles are replaced relatively often compared to other town vehicles and are maintained regularly due to their high level of wear and tear. The Highway Department also maintains other town vehicles including Water Resources vehicles and police cruisers. ( See additional information about the Highway Department in the Transportation Section)

**Recreational Facilities**

The town has a **Community Forest** managed by a committee for recreation and conservation. **Volunteers Green** is the main area for markets, sports, and public events. There is also the **Browns Court ballfield area** which has recently had pickleball courts installed. Maintaining infrastructure to support growing recreational use of Richmond’s natural resources is increasingly difficult in the face of climate change.

**Volunteers Green,** located in the heart of town, is the main area for the farmers’ market, sports, public events and relaxed socializing. Its playground is the meeting place for all Richmond toddler parents. The location of this park, in the floodway of the Winooski River, has been the subject of much discussion since the damage and expense caused by the flooding events of 2023 and 2024. There is also the **Browns Court ballfield area** which has a softball field and in 2025 recently had 4 pickleball courts installed. **Overockers Park** provides access to the Winooski, and a small green space known as **Round Church Park** allows contemplation of the historic structure and a gathering place for runners and cyclists.

The town owns two **Community Forests** – the 30 acre Stage Rd Forest, and the 428 acre Andrews Community Forest. These are managed for both recreation and conservation. More information on these town forests can be found in the Natural Resources Section.

Maintaining infrastructure to support growing recreational use of Richmond’s natural resources is increasingly difficult in the face of climate change.

**UTILITIES**

Richmond’s Water Resources Department provides water and sewer services to a defined Water and Sewer District, which consists primarily of the central Village area. The District was expanded in 2024 to include the Gateway area, but no lines have been installed. A Board of Commissioners manages the policies and spending decisions of this department. The system is an expensive one to run for a relatively small number of customers, and the Town is studying ways to increase the customer base without raising the costs for Village residents. Despite this, clean water supply and treated wastewater quality remains high.

Richmond's **Municipal Water System** sources water from a well near the Round Church, supplying a 750,000-gallon reservoir for village residents' water usage and town-wide fire protection. Recent capital improvements have modernized infrastructure alongside town road projects with more updates planned. The system is regulated by an ordinance from 1965, and managed by a Board of Commissioners.

The **Wastewater Treatment Facility** on Esplanade is at the end of a major 20-year study and will require significant overhaul and investment soon due to aging equipment. The most recent significant expenditures were in 2005, when the secondary extended air facility underwent an upgrade to full tertiary capacity with septage receiving, filtration and biological and chemical phosphorus removal with dewatering; and in 2009, when the collection system completed an upgrade with manhole replacements, pipe linings, and line consolidations.

A 1972 ordinance, available at the Town Clerk’s office, established the governance of Richmond's **wastewater system** uses, hookups. Management is handled by the Water Resources department with the policies and spending decisions the responsibility of a Board of Commissioners. An additional ordinance was adopted in 1993 which addresses future hookup allocation.

**Stormwater drainage** is not combined with wastewater, but customer drain lines and flood planning need continued attention to lessen impacts on the wastewater system. Increased frequency of flooding will likely require upgrades to this system. Many have already been constructed after the floods of 2023 and 2024. But more work will be needed, and this will represent a cost increase to the town. This system is managed by the Highway Department.

Utilities & Facilities not owned by Richmond

should we mention these? – electricity, natural gas, cell coverage, trash pick-up etc? People moving to Richmond might want to know about these) The town dump facility is owned by Richmond, but operated by a private entity, currently Casella Waste Systems.

**GOALS & ACTIONS**

**GOAL 1: Maintain and enhance municipal facilities and grounds in a cost-effective manner where appropriate and necessary.**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Ensure proper maintenance and public accessibility of Volunteers Green for both residents and visitors.Consider altering the park layout to reduce damage from flooding.

2. Adhere to the objectives outlined in the Town Forest management plans. (see more in Natural Resources)

3. Support the Historical Society’s initiatives to preserve the Round Church and its surrounding parcel.

4. Create alternative plans to maintain the Town Center building and parking areas to meet the operational needs of town officials and staff, reduce fossil fuel consumption, and maintain its historic features.

5. Continue to lease or rent municipal spaces and grounds to businesses and organizations to maximize space utilization and sustain revenue

6. Maintain the Richmond Fire Department and Richmond Highway Department buildings and equipment.

7. Implement building improvement projects for the library to maintain the historical structure's functionality and preserving historic features.

8. Utilize diverse funding sources, including tax revenues, to implement facility maintenance in a fiscally responsible manner

**GOAL 2: Maintain and upgrade municipal utilities and related infrastructure as needed, while managing costs effectively**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Utilize findings from the 20-year water study completed in 2025 to inform wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure maintenance and improvements and guide planning for future environmental and usage changes

2. Maintain water and wastewater infrastructure with a focus on reliability. Continue to discuss the limitations on housing creation that our water and wastewater policies hold us to.

3. Improve stormwater infrastructure through joint projects with the highway department. Upgrade stormwater drainage systems to comply with state regulations and develop plans to address flash flooding issues in vulnerable areas

4. Maintain asset management practices and update them based on changing climate and usage conditions, with an emphasis on cost distribution and planning for equipment replacement. Employ various funding sources, including potential tax resources, to support these.

5. Revise the capital plan to reflect evolving climate and building maintenance requirements, considering residents' concerns about tax levels

6. Review inventory of potential lead pipe supplies and identify opportunities for stormwater connection upgrades at that time.

8. Continue applying impact fees to help offset operational costs

**GOAL 3: Facilitate access to external or private utilities and facilities for residents, including waste removal, electricity, heating, and telecommunication services**

**ACTIONS:**

1. Assess options for collaborating with service providers to enhance internet speed, availability, and cell service coverage within the town

2. Continue participation in Chittenden Solid Waste District initiatives and work with the operators of the town waste facility

3. Coordinate with Vermont Electric Cooperative and Green Mountain Power to maintain reliable electricity access for all residents

(see also Transportation, Community Development, Energy, Emergency Resilience, Historic Resources)