Richmond Housing Committee- Strategic Housing Plan

Strategies to encourage subsidized workforce and more affordable housing in Richmond.

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| *Document Instructions:*   * *Choose a desired strategy. (choose more than one, or more than one person can work on any given strategy)* * *Strategy headlines can be adjusted/added to or removed* * *Answer the following questions for each strategy:*    + *Where are we now? (what work is currently in place?)*   + *Where do we want to go? (what does the future look like, end goal)*   + *How do we get there? (What steps, initiatives need to be taken to fulfill each strategy)*   + *How would we measure progress? (how do we know we have arrived?)* |

Outlined are a list of potential strategies that could be implemented to encourage the growth of subsidized housing, workforce housing and more affordable housing in Richmond.

**Partnership Development and Project Advocacy (outcome of over action below)**

* Home Ownership opportunities (Matt)
* Looking for opportunities
* Partnerships, suitable properties
* (new mandate to speak with people)

**Water and Sewer Regulation/Policy revisions (Andrew/Virginia)**

* Need to know what is possible. Where could they be extended to have benefit
  + Gateway corridor
  + Jericho Road to Browns Trace
* Cost to extend; limitations to extensions, ownership of cost
  + Voting rules within the district limit expansion – is this serving the public good
  + Prior expansion was approved into the Gateway district but nowhere due to access to mains
  + Shall Richmond Town review in conjunction with the Water District what the future of the infrastructure will look like, including but not limited to location, anticipated costs, who will be responsible for those costs, etc
* Is there access to federal dollars for water and/or sewer in watershed areas, low water table areas, flood zone reallocations, etc
  + Percentage of failed wells within a defined area may qualify for federal funds
  + What environmental impact do substandard septic/leach systems near watersheds have on local water quality
* Could we utilize a large community system already established
  + Future improvements may require relocation of treatment facility due to constant flood pressure – who will manage this cost and where will the land come from?
* Impact Fees
  + Is there a creative way to increase density for applications by having an impact fee set aside for future water/sewer improvements/expansions?
* Voting process and alleviation of cost to current rate ratepayers
* Other districts and use, expansion and application
  + Is Richmond “open for business”

**State and Federal subsidized housing assistance programs (Mark)**

From a financial perspective, new housing construction to be sold or rented below market rate typically necessitates a combination of the following:

* **Town support** from the Selectboard and relevant governing bodies. (Letters of support for a specific project, organized and smooth approval and permitting process, clear zoning regulations, established master plans outlining targeted growth areas.)
* **Financial assistance or subsidies** to support the below-market rent or sale price and increase the likelihood of lender funding for the project. (Approved designated areas that allow for a reduction in state permitting fees or applications for state/federal grants/subsidies, reduction or elimination of town permitting fees, and direct contributions from an established housing fund.)
* **In-kind support** that could help reduce the costs and incentivize the project. (Utilizing Highway Department capacity to build sidewalks or other infrastructure, leveraging town resources for permitting or legal support, donation of land)

Below-market rate projects are costly (INSERT SOME TYPE OF METRIC HERE), especially with the increase in labor, material, and financing costs, and thus require strong partnerships with the town where the project will be built. The developer does take on a lot of risk and expense upfront with these projects and needs to know that there is a level of support from the Town going into the project.

The Richmond Housing Committee conducted several stakeholder interviews, which revealed several opportunities for improvement that the Housing Committee, Planning Commission, and Selectboard could use to increase the availability of below-market rent housing in Richmond.

The following are our recommendations:

* Empower XYZ to write letters of support for a project when requested. Provide a pre-approved template and clear guidelines to expedite the process. These letters are often required for state or federal funding applications. Typically, the developers request that the letters be included in their application packet.
* Create a housing trust fund to support eligible projects. The housing fund could be used to reduce permitting or infrastructure costs. It is a long-term play that can be funded over time from donations, registration fees, small budget allocations, or other mechanisms to be determined.
* Master Plan for the gateway
* Support the Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) designation. The town of Richmond does currently have village designation, but the NDA will provide increased support for the production of below market rate housing within specific designated areas.
* *Where are we now? (what work is currently in place?)*
  + Town has limited knowledge of existing programs
  + No system in place to evaluate or capitalize on opportunities that might arise
    - (Example of Jolina Ct. We weren’t able to meet the needs of the
* *Where do we want to go? (what does the future look like, end goal)*
  + Take advantage of the following programs:
    - Rental Revolving Loan Fund
      * Provide grant if the developers can make a certain % of a project affordable.
    - Neighborhood Development Area (NDA)
      * Town does have a *village* designation, that does give the village access. To result in this, does need to update zoning regs, and need to have an audit. Can’t do the audit until some of the zoning changes are in place. CCRPC Taylor N. /Josh/Keith working on this.
      * Taylor is coming from the CCRCP to to talk about the NDA designation.
    - Habitat for Humanity
      * Need to partner with the housing authorities
  + Have the ability take advantage of opportunities that arise from developers
    - What is the town willing to put on the table?
      * $ from a housing fund
      * Supply labor from existing town resources, like
      * $.05 fund that goes on, and it has been going on for 15 years or so.
      * Create a structure to contribute this. Create a funds available for a private public. Non-profit, and finds a grant the seeds it for
    - Create a housing fund.
  + Key piece is how to support these developers.
* *How do we get there? (What steps, initiatives need to be taken to fulfill each strategy)*
  + What structurally within our town would need to change?
* *How would we measure progress? (how do we know we have arrived?)*
  + Documented list of available programs

**Development of Community Support and Outreach (Connie)**

- *Where are we now? What work is currently in place?*

* Past experience with the Town Plan suggests that when a proposal is lengthy and complicated, it is difficult to build community support. When we work on our section of the Town Plan, we have to think about how to include/engage community members throughout that process. Some organizations in Richmond have experience with this (Richmond Racial Equity, Three Parks Committee, and others). While these organizations or groups can’t do this work for us, they do have advice on how to proceed.

- *Where do we want to go? What is the goal? How do we get there?*

* Goal: informed and supportive community
* Identify the steps for creating the “Housing” section in the updated Town Plan
* Identify the local (Chittenden County/Vermont) experts who can give us ideas on how to make building houses/housing units easier in Richmond
* Invite these experts to our meetings or to a community forum that others can attend to listen to them. Summarize and publicize these ideas. Suggested experts:
  + Champlain Housing Trust, Cathedral Square, and Evernorth
  + Realtors
  + Builders/developers (John Lynn, architect for Hillview Desig; Buttermilk spokesperson)
  + Bankers (Northfield Savings Bank)
* Select the ideas we think will be most useful: advertise that we are doing this and invite the public. Summarize what we have selected.
* Have a film night, free pizza paid for by the Planning Commission, and discussion of what we think should be included in the Town Plan
  + Film night: “Just Getting By” (90 minutes) or similar, see:
    - <https://kingdomcounty.org/bess-obrien-films/just-getting-by>
  + Spokespeople to get up and start the conversation, e.g. Denise Barnard, Jay Furr and members of our Committee, among others
  + Video record the statements; create a short video of the highlights and post to MMCTV
* Organize neighborhood specific “living room meetings” for people to see the MMCTV video; ask what their questions and concerns are
* Create a FAQ listical to respond to those questions and post to bulletin boards around town and on FPF
* Continually summarize what is happening, what is changing, and where to get more information on various local public media (websites, social media, etc.)

- *Next steps*

* Learn more about the process for updating the Town Plan in 2026
* Create our own process for updating the Housing Section

- *How do we measure progress?*

* The Town approves the Town Plan!

**Zoning Recommendations (Virginia/Matt)**

* Inclusionary Zoning
* Neighborhood Designation for downtown
* Long term plan 2026
* Prohibition on 35’ units can impede development
* Streamlining permitting process
  + Form Based Codes
* Waive town impact fees for Affordable/workforce housing

Future Consideration:

**Create a Richmond Housing Fund**

**Tax abatement programs and policy strategies**

* **o Reduce impact fees for affordable housing**
* Rental Revolving Loan Fund (RRLF) - Setup by state to encourage workforce housing
  + Example would be Buttermilk, who applied, but was not awarded funds. What can be done to support this effort in the future?