

September 3, 2024

Keith and the Planning Commission –

As you requested, we have reviewed the current Jolina Court zoning amendment proposal and are disappointed that, after 1 year of discussions, you have not chosen the simple solution to address the housing crisis in Richmond and Vermont: *to remove commercial burden and match the neighboring Village Downtown residential density.*

A few points of consideration:

- ‘Vermont Housing Needs Assessment’ states that Vermont needs 36,000 homes in the next 5 years to combat the housing crisis. Enclosed in the VDHCD report from June. Please read the Executive Summary. Vermonters need Richmond’s help.
- Soaring increases in cost of construction. Vermont is facing the most exceptional construction market of all time. This is well reported. Yet, in your recent discussions and based on the current approach, these market realities are ignored. The discussion and subsequent policy assume that historic pro forma of Building #1 (eg cost vs rent) can be achieved for future buildings. This is inaccurate and will lead to unproductive policy.
- According to Town’s Housing Study, the Creamery was the top priority to provide additional density in Richmond. Yet, the proposal maintains the original 2015 density at 45 total units. This residential density is 46% less than the Village Downtown despite Jolina Court being an infill project with 5 acres for parking, green space, infrastructure, connected to town water & sewer, and walkable to downtown.
- In June, the SB / PC held a joint, public session to discuss zoning changes in Jolina Court. There was consensus: remove barriers and increase density. Yet, the current proposal is stagnating density at the decade old level (2015).
- A density bonus model is inherently more complicated and currently lacks meaningful incentives. With no change to underlining density, this approach will restrict our ability to provide housing to various demographics (eg. workforce, *lower case* affordable, and at market). Like the commercial space requirements of 2019, this approach will be barriers to housing.

After nearly a year of discussion, wouldn’t the simplest approach be the best approach? Remove the commercial burden and match the Village Downtown residential density. Then, maybe we can help alleviate the housing crisis in Vermont.

Regards,

Josi and Brendan