

Town of Richmond
Future Land Use Visioning
Workshop Report
October 21, 2015

Marcia Buker Elementary School, High Street
Richmond, Maine

Draft Report prepared by Good Group Decisions



Good Group Decisions

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This report is organized by topic, not necessarily the order in which things were discussed.

About the Meeting

Objective

The Town of Richmond Comprehensive Plan Committee is working on a vision for future land use and therefore they convened a workshop to solicit input from the public on several questions:

- Where do we want stores and businesses?
- Where do we want residential development?
- How do we want to preserve our farms, rural areas, and natural resources?
- What would a future land use map look like?

To ensure a fair, efficient, and productive process, the meeting was professionally facilitated and documented by Craig Freshley and Trace Salter of Good Group Decisions.

Planned Agenda

Craig Freshley explained the planned agenda for the evening's meeting (see Appendix) and emphasized the following points:

- We want to understand the reasoning behind—and the benefits of—a Comprehensive Plan.
- We will share what we've learned in prior meetings.
- The majority of the meeting will be preserved for a discussion of key issues.
 - Craig also noted that the group would have some fun with base maps on the projector.
 - The group's thoughts about the vision for future land use will be reflected on the map.
 - These drawings would not represent any decisions.
- Everyone would have a chance to make closing comments before the meeting was adjourned.

Attendance

The audience at the meeting was comprised of nine members of the general public as well as seven members from the Town of Richmond's Comprehensive Plan Committee.

Town of Richmond Comprehensive Plan Committee

- Michail Grizkewitsch
- O'Neil Laplante
- Patti Lawton
- Tom Nugent
- Carol Minnehan
- Linda Smith
- Peter Warner

Town of Richmond

- Victoria Boundy, Director of Community & Business Development, Town of Richmond

Facilitators from Good Group Decisions

- Craig Freshley
- Trace Salter

Ground Rules

Craig reviewed the ground rules for the meeting:

- All views heard
 - We want to hear from everybody.
 - Let Craig call on people.
 - He will try to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
 - Written comments are also welcome
 - Feel free to write on the map or write comments down and hand them in.
 - Okay to disagree.
 - We don't have to have consensus.
 - We want to hear differences of opinion.
- Staff and Committee Members are here to listen and clarify
- Civility and respect
 - Listening to each other without interruption enables us to better understand one another.
- Themes and conclusions now and later
 - A written report of the meeting will be prepared.
- Neutral facilitation
 - We are here to gather your input from a neutral perspective.

Welcome

Peter Warner started the workshop by thanking everyone for coming. With regard to the Comprehensive Plan, Peter noted that the Town of Richmond:

- Is in the process of gathering as much input as possible from the public on the Comprehensive Plan
- Has been working on the plan for the past three years
- Welcomes anyone to join the Comprehensive Plan Committee
- Intends to learn what constituencies in town think about future land use in Richmond.

Craig welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation for their participation in the discussion. He explained that Good Group Decisions is based in Brunswick and helps a

wide variety of groups across Maine (and beyond) to make good decisions. Craig clarified that he is not an expert in land use; his only goal for the meeting was to manage a good process.

Why We Are Doing Comprehensive Planning

O'Neil Laplante began with a brief presentation and then the group discussed why and how the Town of Richmond is creating a Comprehensive Plan.

Key Points

- Preserving what we love about Richmond
 - There have many changes since 1993
 - We don't tend to notice them as they happen but over time the changes can be pretty dramatic
 - We want to have an idea of how things are going to occur before they occur
 - Like with Family Dollar moving in
- Balance of good economic development and quality of life
 - We can have both
 - We don't have to sell out
- Provide development predictability and consistency
 - Predictability and consistency helps developers
- Protect residences from incompatible development
 - As a resident you wouldn't want certain things on either side of you
- We want to avoid confrontational situation where someone is resisting zoning
 - We are trying to provide a way to explain the need for change and how changes fit into the larger goals for the Town
- Required by law
 - Towns need to set a long term vision
- We get a leg-up on applying for Community Development Block Grants, State revolving Loan Funds and others
 - Without a Comp Plan we are less competitive for such programs
- The process is very useful, perhaps even more useful than the plan itself
- The plan is supposed to be the guide for future land use ordinances

Discussion

- Question: Is a plan out of date as soon as it's developed? Is it just going to sit on a shelf?
 - Reply:
 - Yes, in some ways, though the process is more important than the product and has benefits that never expire.

- The product itself, the Comprehensive Plan, does improve our candidacy for grants.
 - The process allows us to set our community up for consensus.
 - The plan is a guideline for land use ordinance and will hopefully reflect the majority of the town's points of view.
 - Feedback from the public will guide us to make good decisions about proposed changes.. The more people we hear from now, the better a plan it will be.
- Question: Did the 1991 plan have any impact? How was it valuable to the town?
 - Reply:
 - The 1991 Plan was largely implemented and there was lots of input.
 - We're trying to catch as many people as possible to make sure it's a good and useful plan.

Emerging Issues From Previous Visioning Sessions and Maps

Patti Lawton began with a brief presentation and then the group talked about the issues that had surfaced from prior discussions of future land use.

Key Points

- We had five previous vision sessions starting in November 2012.
 - We went out into the public as best we could and collected input.
 - We asked:
 - What places would you like to preserve?
 - What areas should be developed?
 - Bike and pedestrian improvements?
 - What businesses would you like to see in town?
 - Where would you like residential growth?
 - What is your vision for the Town?
 - In many sessions we received similar answers.
- We don't have an agenda so we are looking for new input.
- Key questions for tonight:
 - Where to encourage residential development?
 - Where to encourage commercial development?
 - Where to preserve farmland and other natural resources?

Discussion

Craig encouraged everyone to look at the maps of the Town of Richmond that were displayed on the walls of the room where the meeting was held. People took ten minutes to walk around and identify natural resources and where residential and commercial development had already occurred and where it could be further developed or protected. For further viewing, all maps are available online and larger versions of the maps are always at Town Hall.

There were several comments made to explain the Current Land Use Map on display:

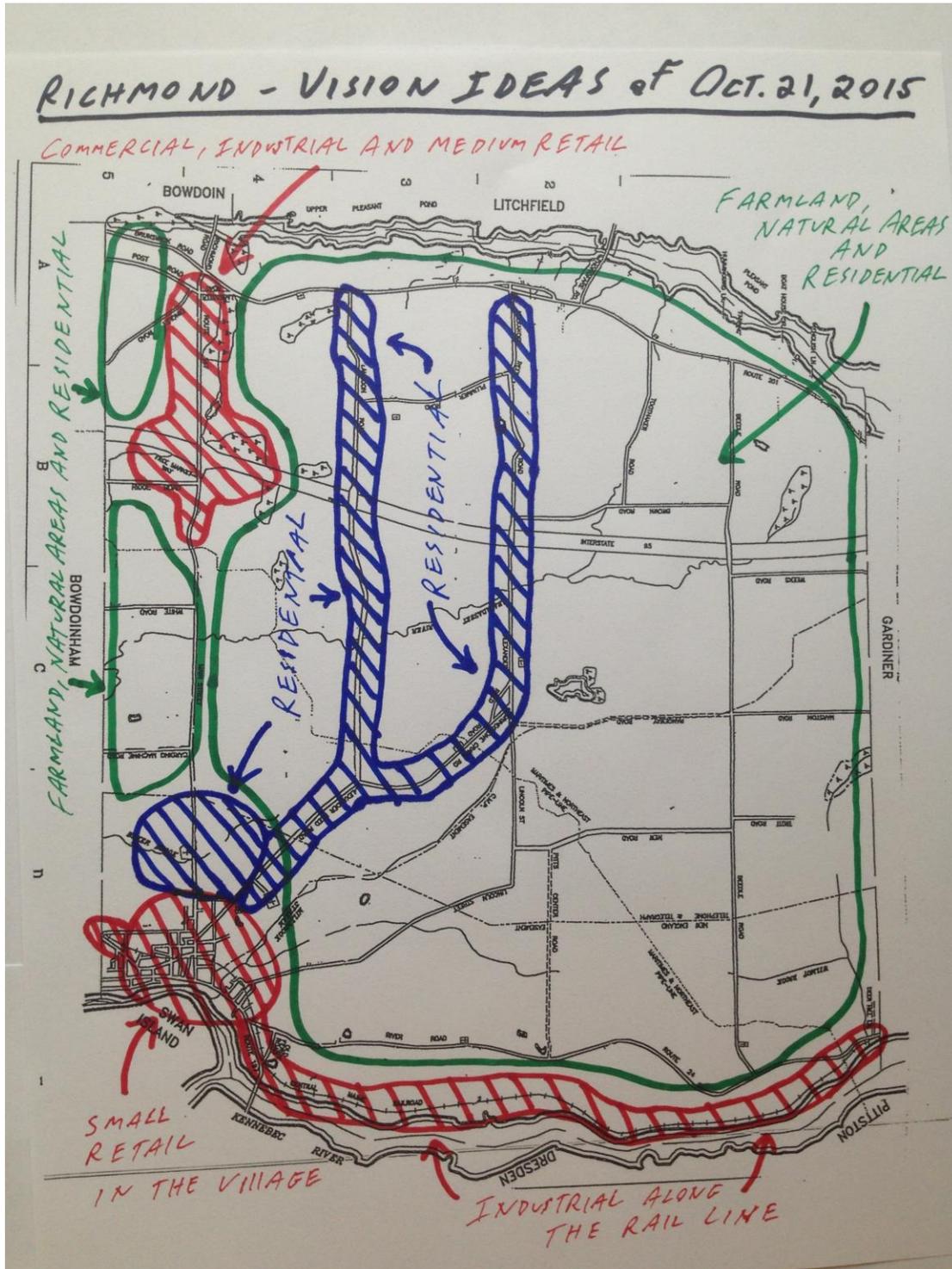
- When considering future land use, keep in mind the water/sewer infrastructure and how it could impact or hinder development.
- The current Land Use Map is not a zoning map (although it's close).
- The vast majority of current land use is agricultural.
- The village developed along the river, as is evident from looking at the Land Use Map.
- Residential areas were noted in yellow whereas commercial and industrial areas are shaded brown.

The Water Infrastructure Map was explained as:

- A little outdated; there have been some minor changes to the Town's water infrastructure.
- Not inclusive of sewer lines; they closely align with the water.
 - Some of the other arteries contain the sewer now, such as Lincoln Street.

Composite Vision Ideas

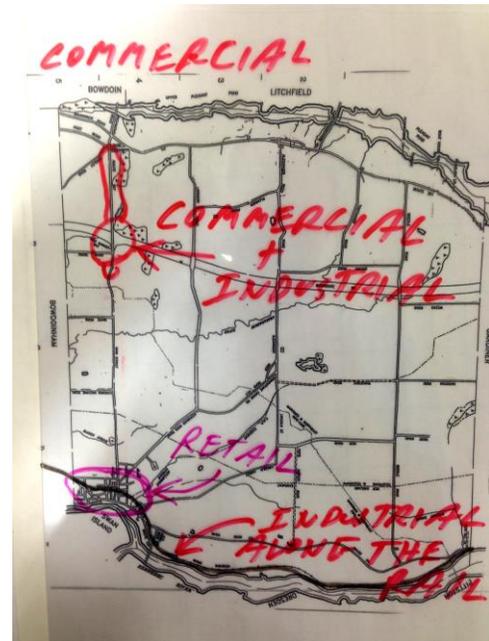
Craig made this map after the workshop as a composite of the three maps that Craig made IN the workshop.



Commercial and Industrial Development

Key Points

- Large retail
 - Nowhere
- Medium retail (perhaps under 50,000 square feet)
 - Near the interstate and 197
- Small retail
 - By the interstate and 197
 - In the downtown village area
- Commercial and Industrial
 - Along the rail lines
 - In vacant, historic buildings
 - By the interstate and 197
- Traffic calming in the downtown
- 197 Corridor
 - Mixed use/hodgepodge
 - With buffers and/or with controls



Discussion

Craig asked the group to consider where might be the places that would be most appropriate for commercial and industrial development. He also reminded everyone that it was perfectly acceptable to decide that there is not a need to have the town grow any further. There is no assumption that we have to produce a larger commercial zone. We can leave it the way it is.

The group made the following comments about what areas to target for commercial/industrial development purposes:

- Development has already started by Exit 43
- Nobody wants business in their backyard.
- This area in the stretch is close to the highway yet only three miles to downtown
- That “stretch area” between the village and Exit 43 is zoned residential.
- The area by the exit is zoned commercial/industrial.
- Good to have big business down by the exit so we can preserve our beautiful downtown
- Exit 43 is ripe for development as is the one-mile area around the highway.
 - It’s currently zoned commercial and industrial.
- Preserve our beautiful village.
- We don’t have to change a thing. If we can limit development, we don’t have to have a three-mile creep that runs from the village to the highway.
- Make a distinction between commercial and industrial.

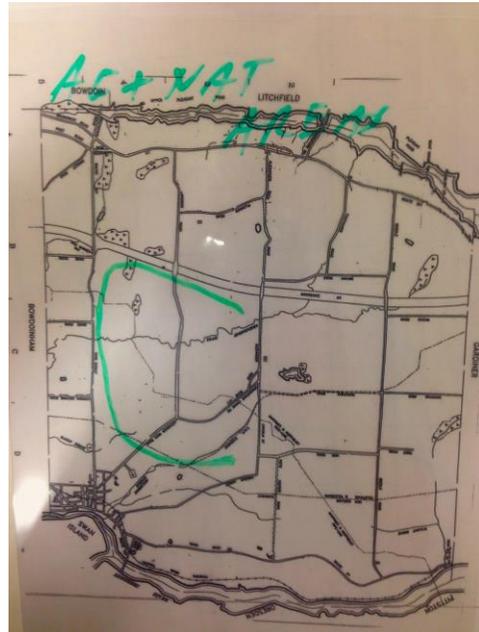
- Segregating commercial and industrial is very important. What you mean by “commercial” complicates the question. Mom and Pop stores are different than big box stores, restaurants or fast food chains.
- A pharmacy and a restaurant would be great.
- Logically 197 is the main artery in the town. As a former member of the planning board, I have seen that 197 is where the requests are coming from. We may not want to stop it but want to proceed carefully. Possibly include buffers.
- 197 is the only natural conduit for commercial, and perhaps industrial, development with easy access to the interstate.
- Industrial can mean manufacturing and shipping and retail.
- Question: Craig posed a further question about where to place a large grocery chain or a big box store. He also asked where such development should be discouraged.
 - Reply:
 - A big box store would probably want to locate near the highways.
 - Although there was also discussion along the lines that if we had a big box store, we would prefer it to be “on the small side.”
 - Small commercial stores would not be restricted to being proximate to the highway.
 - I like that the village has the character it does. I like getting to know the business owners and walking in town. Allowing big box stores would change that. Some people may like that but I don’t. Independent businesses would be great. A pharmacy would be really nice.
 - Let’s encourage retail development in the downtown stores with small retail stores in the village. Keep big box out.
 - The State of Maine has made a large commitment and purchased the rail line and the land is to be preserved, by law, along that surrounding corridor. There are a lot of missed opportunities because the State of Maine is pushing a different agenda by emphasizing the rail line.
 - Like the idea of separating commercial and industrial development.
 - Don’t want the big box stores.
 - Reuse the current industrial buildings. Bring them back into play.
 - Such as Ames Mill and the Shucks building.
 - Encouraging use of our current industrial buildings in the village is what we want.
 - Let’s not encourage new construction.
 - Second that notion.
 - Revamp our current buildings and use what we already have in the village.
 - Let’s look at examples of other regions retrofitting old buildings. The footprint of building is the same but the space is used for a modern purpose. Use what we have to make it work for us.
- As we expand and grow, it’s vitally important to consider traffic calming.
 - Especially important is the rotary near the library and at the bottom of Main Street to calm the traffic in that historic district.
 - The traffic is too busy and too fast on that corridor.

- If we expand residentially and commercially, keep that in mind.
- Question: Craig put a question to the group. He heard differing opinions about 197 and the interchange and therefore asked everyone to think about what the 197 Corridor should look like in the future. Right now it's mixed use. What did the group envision it would look like in 10 to 20 years?
 - Reply:
 - No change at all. Distinct locations: the village and the exit.
 - Like the hodgepodge it is now.
 - The term "hodgepodge" scares me, especially without limits.
 - I wouldn't want that hodgepodge to be the introduction to Richmond.
 - You need to be able to control it in some way. Some sections could encourage certain types of development. Make sure there's a buffer that protects residential areas.
 - We wouldn't want such an unattractive welcome to Richmond. Nice right now with the views of the farms and small businesses. But if the mix gets to be too much, it could be unappealing.
 - It's natural that 197 is the commercial corridor for Richmond but just control it.
- People are going to come forward and make proposals for new businesses. We have to accept that and anticipate it.
- River Road might be a natural place for new businesses.
- We need the infrastructure to go along with these plans and vision. The water and sewer needs to be continued past the interstate so we preserve the environment.
 - The hurdle is the interstate: it's hard to cross that barrier.
 - Cost is about \$1Million/mile
- Question: What about the 201 end of town?
 - Reply:
 - Very viable. Keeps commercial development out of downtown.
 - From the pipeline west to 138
 - Similar to what's already there
- A lot of the discussion revolves around the downtown area and exit 43.
- A dollar store came in on a large tract of land.
 - Doesn't that concern people that this could be a trend? We ought to be looking at that.
- Nothing in this world can prevent someone from coming in.
- Would like to discourage other retail from coming into that area.
- Want to keep chain stores and box stores out. We don't feel the same about mom-and-pop stores or locally owned small business.
- Concerned about preventing future land development.
- More of that big tract of land should not be eaten up by any store, no matter what kind of store.
- Don't want to upset the balance.

Preserving Farmland and Natural Resources

Key Points

- No more town-owned or state-owned preservation needed
- Encourage that town owned property be used for agriculture
- Some preservation would be good
- More farmland is helpful for farmers
- Residential development supports farms
- Residential development that “carves up” land is not good for farms
- Agriculture economies of scale and commercial activities (such as shared cold storage or farm stands) would be good if allowed right near the farms



Discussion

The group talked about how to preserve and protect farmland and natural resources, with the following comments made:

- We already have a town forest and 1500 state-protected acres; that’s enough.
- My main reason for coming is that we don’t need to be protecting any more property. Town forest could actually go away and be turned into residential property.
- I’m all for preserving and maintaining the farmland but we can’t tell Farmers not to sell off pieces of their land.
- The Town could put language in place that protects agricultural land that prevents development.
- Craig pointed out that there is no need to limit our thinking for the purposes of this discussion. We are discussing our vision “if all things were possible.”
- There are some views of farmland that are very attractive. Might be worth thinking about protecting those views.
- There are ways to encourage farmers to keep that land as agricultural. We don’t need to deprive the farmer a source of income by declaring that land as solely agricultural.
- We want to see our area preserved and we are realizing that we don’t have enough pasture. We have our eye on a lot of fields around the area. We gain access to hay fields as we become more sustainable. Many hay fields have gone away. If they all disappeared, we would be limited and have to move or go beyond the town to gain the resources we need.

- From our perspective, if you really want to encourage farming and agricultural use, it's in everyone's interests to be deliberate about residential development. A farmer may sell a one- or two-acre lot off that strip. Changes may seem minor but it alters the character of the land and the view of the farmland. We have lost large tracts of farmland. It's an eyesore and it bothers me. It's changing the rural character. The further you parcel out, the harder you make it for farmers. If we really value the agricultural aspect of that town, let's keep that in mind. How do we approach development or preservation in a way that supports farmers and attracts residences and business owners?
- As a Committee, we know farmers are out there and some are going under. Lets build an information bank of what farmers are looking for with regard to open farm space.
- Encourage state or town owned property to be used for agricultural purposes
- I hear dreams for storage and barn space; we have enough farms that could go in on commercial activities together.
 - We could create a coop space of a commercial nature for farmers.
- I dream of creating an agricultural commercial space that doesn't yet exist within the current categories we have discussed.
- We shouldn't be allowed to have huge commercial developments eat up the large space in town.
- We can only preserve farmland where there is farmland.

Residential Development

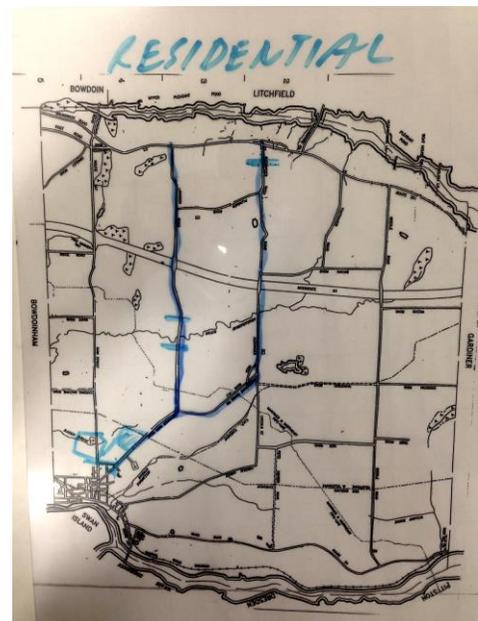
Key Points

- Regulate the pace of agricultural land being divided up for residential use
- Residential development should be concentrated or clustered
- Preserve and beautify in-town homes
- Encourage affordable housing.

Discussion

Craig asked everyone to evaluate where they would like to encourage residential development to make Richmond the best it could be. The group responded by saying:

- You're going to see more developments up along Alexander Reed Road towards 201. There are multiple spots along there.
 - Big companies will want to come in along there because of the water for public sewer access and the water.



- Developments are going in now along that route.
 - Subdivisions are already there.
- A huge piece of property is being sold along that route.
- It is starting to become more residential than agricultural.
- I'd like to see a limit on building permits for new construction on parcels of land that are larger than five acres and are being carved up to build houses and businesses.
 - That's the way to control this.
 - Land can be divided up as much as you'd like; there's always a way to get around limits.
 - But we'll limit the number of new construction for single family homes
 - We can control building permits
- Finding the balance is key. We need to concentrate residential development and support agriculture as much as possible.
- There are some beautiful homes in town and I would love to see those preserved.
- I would love to see young families in town.
- Affordable housing, particularly for the elderly, is critical.

Closing Comments

Craig said how much he enjoyed working with this group and offered everyone the chance to make a closing comment to finish up the meeting:

- As we grow and expand, are we looking at municipal side and what we offer? Are we also looking at use of municipal buildings? Can they be consolidated? Can we create a community center? We should consider that.
 - The Town is thinking about that at the community level.
- There is a corridor that lends itself to residential development:
 - Langdon Road.
 - Alexander Reed Road.
 - Natural corridor that leads to 201.
- The State provides soil maps we could look at. They could an easy tool to rule out places that would not be good places to support agriculture.
- Thank you for holding this workshop.
- The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development has designated national carrier routes. Federal and State designations could help us in our task of looking at future land use.
- The Comprehensive Plan is comprehensive. In it, we talk about education, housing, municipal support. I would encourage everyone to look at what's out there. We'd like your comments on every section. Thanks for coming. It's great to have extra input.
- Thanks to the Board for giving so much of their time.
- We have another input session on Tuesday November 17th at the same time and place.

- That feedback will help us create a draft of a future land use map. We'll keep adding to it. The end goal is to bring this to town meeting in June 2016. The more people we have involved, the more it's a town-wide plan.

Appendix

Planned Agenda

Richmond Future Land Use Workshop Help Us Map a Vision for Richmond's Future!

October 21, 2015, 6:30–8:00 p.m.
Marcia Buker Elementary School, High Street

- 6:30 **Welcome and Opening**
Facilitator Craig Freshley will explain the meeting format and some ground rules to help us have an efficient and productive meeting.
- 6:35 **Why We Are Doing Comprehensive Planning**
Members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee along with the town's Director of Community and Business Development will provide a brief explanation of comprehensive planning, why we are doing it, and how the plan will be used. There will be a chance for questions and clarifications.
- 6:50 **Emerging Issues**
We will remind ourselves of key issues that have been previously identified in our comprehensive plan discussions and affirm the key issues that we need to discuss going forward, such as where to encourage residential development, where to encourage commercial development, and where to preserve farmland and other natural resources?
- 7:00 **Discussion of Key Issues**
One issue at a time we will hear each other's perspectives. As we have the discussion, Craig will try to identify areas of agreement and draw them on a map. This promises to be a fun and engaging way to “see” what we all think, right on a map of our town!
- 7:50 **Closing Comments**
- 8:00 **Adjourn**