

Strategies to Guide Policy and Projects

Now that we know more about the actions we need to take to preserve and enhance the South End’s characteristics, let’s take a closer look at the strategies we can use to help us achieve these goals. You’ve seen these icons throughout the plan, which represent which theme each of the “Key Strategies” relates to. Here’s where you’ll find those key strategies...and more! In this section, all of the plan’s strategies are grouped by theme, so that we better understand what it will take within a particular system, or by a particular group of people to implement #OurVision for the South End.



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How to Read This Section

For each of the themes that follow, you’ll find a series of recommended strategies. Each of these strategies includes a “first step” to make it happen, and identifies potential stakeholders that might be involved in getting it going.



Recommended Strategy



First steps to make it happen



Stakeholders who should be involved

HOUSING & THE SOUTH END

The plan recognizes that the Enterprise Zone does not have one distinctive character throughout, nor should the policies governing the entire zone be uniform. However, despite economic and demographic changes, the argument against allowing housing within the Enterprise Zone remains. Despite the bright lines depicted on the zoning map, the South End truly functions as a mixed-use neighborhood; it includes a commercial-industrial core flanked by thriving single- and multi-family neighborhoods. And this core has clearly distinguishable sub-areas, in which businesses feature a range of retail, office and industrial services.

Therefore, an important part of the planBTV South End process was to evaluate whether a single-use industrial zone is still relevant to the City’s needs and the evolving character of the South End. The Planning process sought to answer questions about whether there are uses that are not permitted in the Enterprise Zone today that could be introduced in some locations.

Chief among these uses is housing. Housing is not currently permitted in the Enterprise Zone. The case for and against housing within the core of the South End has been debated back and forth, and our community is passionate about this topic. It is increasingly difficult to make the case that all housing should be excluded from the Enterprise Zone in light of the regional and city-wide housing shortage, the economic and environmental importance of locating housing close to South End workplaces, and the fundamental shift in the relationship of home and work in the new American city. So planBTV South End set out to answer the question, “Are there locations or situations in which some types of housing might be appropriate in some parts of the Enterprise Zone?”



With the increasing demand for housing city-wide, and the steady appeal of the South End as a place to live and work, the conversation about new housing in this part of the City is an important one. More housing in the South End could bring benefits for all of us, including:

- More housing choices for people at different stages of their life, so “empty nesters,” young workers and couples, and others looking for smaller, apartment-style units with lower monthly costs and maintenance burdens have options without leaving the South End, and to support the mixed-use character of the district.
- More spending power focused on neighborhood businesses, supporting a strong hyper-local economy.
- More trips that can be taken on foot or via bike, so area businesses would need less parking for customers and employees.
- Additional neighborhood density to support increased investment in neighborhood infrastructure, such as sidewalk and bikeway improvements and increased transit service.
- A more resilient economy that keeps workers and business in Burlington and Vermont, because without ample housing at prices workers can afford, Burlington—and the South End economic hub—will face challenges in attracting and retaining businesses.
- New development and redevelopment of underutilized sites, utilizing the revenues of residential development to bring additional amenities and space to the South End that may not otherwise be economically feasible.

However, we heard a lot of opinions about this. The primary concerns from those who do not support housing in this part of the South End include:

- New housing could conflict with industrial and commercial activities. The Enterprise Zone has long been a manufacturing district where housing is prohibited, and the one place left in the city where industrial activities are still allowed by local zoning. These kinds of activities



Community comments from the planBTV South End webtool.

typically come with loud noises, unpleasant odors, and truck traffic. While some of these impacts can be mitigated, housing can be a tough fit and ultimately make it more difficult for businesses to operate.

- Housing might contribute to the already rising rents and property values. However, the South End is already an expensive choice for traditional industrial/manufacturing enterprises, with higher rents than elsewhere in Chittenden County. This reflects the South End's appeal to businesses that combine industrial and consumer-facing operations—e.g., breweries with tap rooms, prototyping facilities with retail shops, commercial kitchens with cafés, studios that incorporate gallery or shop space—and are, therefore, willing to pay higher rents for industrial space. Housing isn't the only culprit squeezing out manufacturing. But adding more higher-paying uses within the Enterprise Zone could further erode the South End's position as a traditional manufacturing/light industrial area—perhaps threatening the businesses that rely on this low-cost space. This is especially true for small entrepreneurs and artists who rely on low-cost space to make ends meet.

Following much debate around the housing question, planBTV South End does not recommend zoning changes to permit housing in the Enterprise District at this time.

At the end of the day, the Enterprise District is about manufacturing and small businesses. Supporting these activities and the affordability of incubator space is the central focus of this plan. Some see new housing as essential to business sustainability, while others see it as a threat.

planBTV South End supports a continued community conversation about appropriate locations and types of housing within the South End neighborhood.

Several of the strategies in the accompanying Arts & Affordability Toolkit suggest creative housing

models and mechanisms for preserving affordability; these strategies could be utilized both within and outside of the Enterprise Zone as the conversation about appropriate housing locations and types continues.

We recognize that opinions on this topic are likely to continue to be divided—and all of these opinions are valid. The benefit of the community conversation had in the *planBTV South End* process is that it added momentum to the development of more nuanced and creative solutions that move away from one-size-fits-all solutions, to respond to the perspectives that come from both sides. Burlington must create the land use policies and zoning tools to manage and control the type and extent of housing development in ways that avoid negative impacts that some community members fear, while capturing the positive economic and environmental benefits of an expanded housing supply for a growing workforce. Conversations like this must continue, as should the evaluation of city-wide needs for housing—including the location, unit types, and price points—and appropriate solutions for neighborhoods like the South End.

Therefore, planBTV South End outlines a strategy that is consistent with the housing goals in the City's Municipal Development Plan, to:

- Develop new and infill housing where the zoning presently permits housing, in order to realize the environmental and economic benefits of a diverse range of housing options.
- Utilize strategies for economic development and mobility to further strengthen the relationship between the residential areas of the South End and the Enterprise Zone, and protect the unique, mixed-use nature of this neighborhood.
- Utilize partnerships and creative ownership models to protect the affordability of housing in the South End—both existing housing stock and new units that could be developed.

Strategies for Housing in the South End

INCREASE SUPPLY AND DIVERSITY OF HOUSING IN THE SOUTH END.

 **Develop housing outside of the Enterprise Zone, where it's currently allowed by zoning.** Consider sites that could be redeveloped, or that may be appropriate for infill housing, such as the school district maintenance facility behind Champlain School; the church site at Pine & Flynn; South Meadows; and commercial parcels on St. Paul, Shelburne and South Champlain Streets. Encourage development in locations which will diversify the housing types in the residential areas of the South End, strengthen the neighborhood's mixed-use character and support increased frequency and investment in transit and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.

 *Initiate conversations with land owners to gauge interest in potential redevelopment and to identify potential barriers. Implement recommendations of the Housing Action Plan.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office*

 **Evaluate the appropriateness of zoning of sites adjacent to the Enterprise Zone.** Explore opportunities for redevelopment or expansion of underutilized sites and buildings that are constrained by low-density zoning designations, such as the Champlain School site and other properties along Pine Street and near the Flynn Avenue intersection. Consider the zoning of properties around the Enterprise District, or the use of overlays for properties within and outside of the Enterprise District, which can help provide a transition and mitigate potential conflicts between the Enterprise Zone and residential neighborhoods.

 *Study the current uses and redevelopment potential of sites adjacent to the Enterprise Zone for potential rezoning to promote higher density residential or mixed uses; consider opportunities for zoning overlays to mitigate impacts of incompatible neighboring uses.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning, Planning Commission*

 **Explore partnership opportunities and housing models which will advance the development of affordable and workforce housing in the South End.** Using the case studies in the Arts & Affordability Toolkit as models, work with property owners, developers and non-profits to identify opportunities for increasing the supply of housing units to all income ranges, but particularly units which could be affordable and desirable for South End employees, artists and area young professionals.

 *Study the present housing supply and demand for the City, determine the appropriate market segments that could be developed in the South End, and identify feasible mechanisms for preservation of affordability for housing in the South End.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning; Community & Economic Development Office; property owners & developers; non-profit housing organizations; SEABA; South End residents*

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION.

 **Continue community discussion regarding housing in the South End.** Continuing this discussion will be important to ensuring that the rules for future development in the South End match community needs. As our community and its neighborhoods continue to evolve, it is necessary to periodically revisit land use and zoning policies to ensure that change is sustainable and occurring in the appropriate locations, including within the Enterprise Zone.

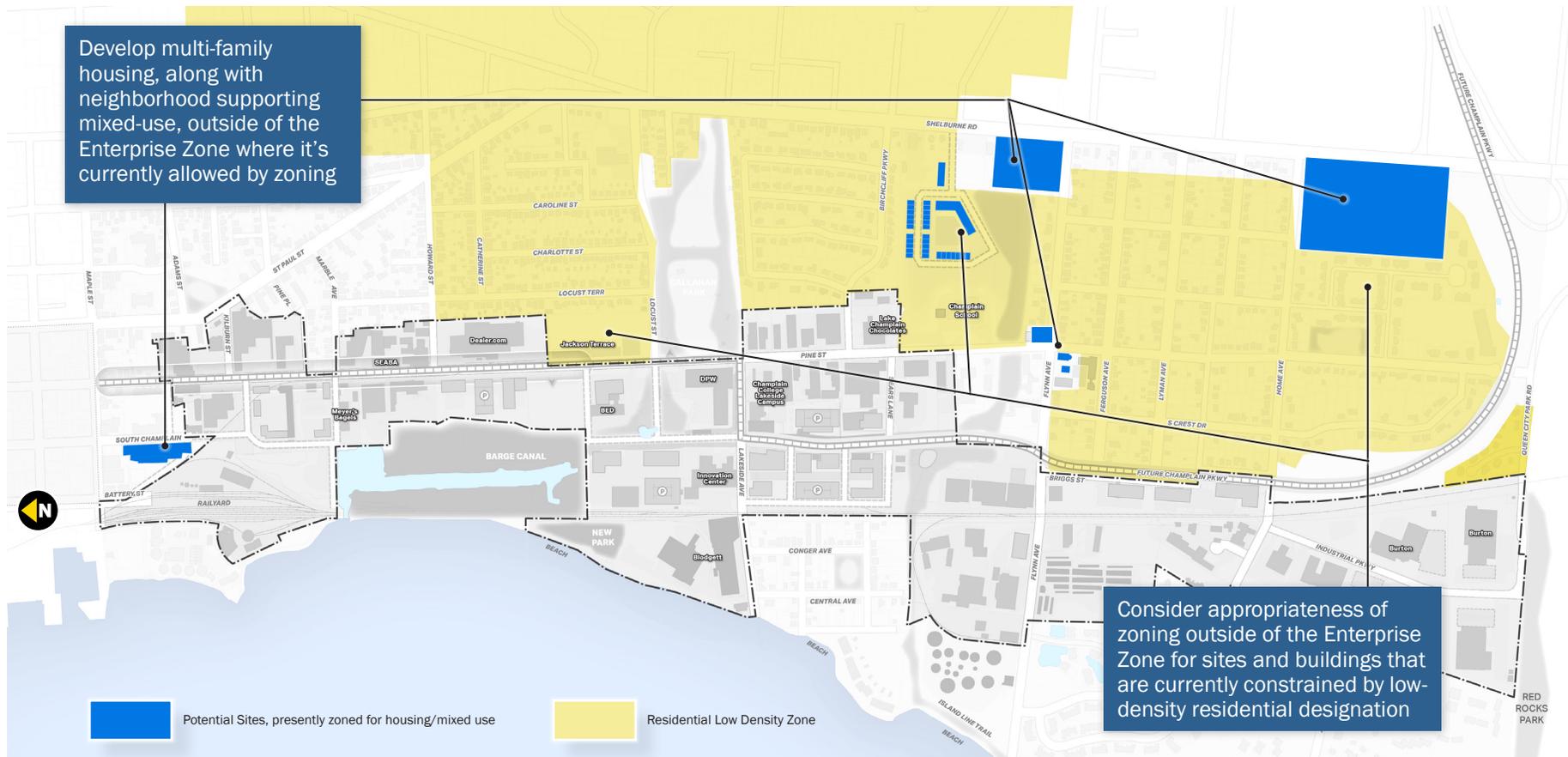
 *Provide forums for continued community discussion and information sharing as part of efforts to update zoning, implement partnerships and facilitate redevelopment.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning; Planning Commission; property owners; SEABA; non-profit housing organizations; South End residents*

 **Monitor the impact that development and policy changes have on the South End and the Enterprise Zone.** As new development and redevelopment takes place within the South End, it will be important to utilize planBTV South End as a benchmark to evaluate change. Increased housing density can have many and varied impacts on the character, infrastructure, economics, environment and sustainability of a neighborhood—both positive and negative. Analysis of these impacts should inform further activities which take place in the South End, and be informed by other city-wide and regional housing strategies.

 *Periodically provide updates on the conditions of the neighborhood to evaluate whether the changes taking place in the South End are achieving the desired outcomes.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning; Community & Economic Development Office*



The creative project by Bren Alvarez and Julie Campoli explored South End sites that could accommodate mixed-use infill development. The Jackson Terrace apartments was one site that was re-envisioned to include inviting community uses on the ground floor, such as studio space, with first floor apartments relocated to a second floor addition. Additionally, the project envisioned a “sixth sister” street, between Jackson Terrace apartments and Locust Terrace that could accommodate infill housing and/or live-work spaces, connecting the Five Sisters neighborhood and the Pine Street Arts District.

