

# plan **BTV**

Downtown & Waterfront

**TAPPING  
BURLINGTON'S  
CREATIVE  
ECONOMY**

**PLUS  
CHICKENS  
ON CHURCH?**



**LIMITED EDITION**

**THE  
GREEN  
MACHINE**

Burlington's New Groundbreaking Waterfront  
Stormwater Treatment Concept

**PARK IT  
BURLINGTON!**

**TIMELESS  
PRINCIPLES**

**CREATING  
"MUNICIPAL  
ADVANTAGE"**



PlanBTV is a collaboration of the people of Burlington, the City of Burlington, and Town Planning & Urban Design Collaborative LLC. More at: [www.http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/planBTV/](http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/planBTV/)

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Downtown & Waterfront

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DISCUSSION DRAFT 7/12/12

# Letters from your Planning Staff



Welcome to planBTV: A Master Plan for Burlington's Downtown and Waterfront!

This effort - undertaken with the help of hundreds of citizens - ranks among the most ambitious planning projects ever undertaken by the City. While many other efforts involving the downtown or waterfront have taken place over the years, none have been as comprehensive in scope and strategic in design. We've worked very hard to weave together many of the great ideas from past work into a clear and comprehensive vision for our future.

The City of Burlington is recognized nationally as a leader in the sustainable development movement, and is a regular among the never-ending list of top ten places for (you fill-in the blank). Yet Burlington struggles to address complex urban challenges in a small, under-resourced New England community with big ideas and even bigger ideals. We struggle with how to really become the community we say we want to be?

This plan is about choices - choices for where people can live, can work, can move about, and can enjoy all of the many gifts Burlington can offer. This plan places an emphasis on ways to promote and improve mixed uses and quality urban design, affordable and workforce housing, transportation and parking management, and the quality and capacity of public infrastructure.

This Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan is really about economic vitality and competitiveness. Whether we look at the affordability and availability of housing, environmental quality, social equity, energy efficiency, transportation choices, urban design or public infrastructure investments, the underlying purpose and objective is to nurture and strengthen our economic base. It is the lack of a stable and healthy economy that is truly the greatest barrier to achieving our vision of a sustainable community.

The City of Burlington welcomes the opportunities and responsibilities associated with serving as the core of a regional growth center; however, we need to be able to fulfill this responsibility in a way that preserves Burlington's widely celebrated character and sense of place. We feel this plan for the heart of our community does just that, and welcome your involvement in ensuring its fulfillment and success.

David E. White, AICP  
Director of Planning & Zoning



Dear Burlingtonians,

As known community planner Ed McMahon once said: “Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how.” From the time of its inception, the PlanBTV – Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan project was based on that understanding, acknowledging the notion that Burlington is a very desirable community to live and work in. It is a place where quality of life is synonymous with a healthy lifestyle, vibrant neighborhoods and accessibility to an array of wonderful cultural events. That desirability will continue to attract many to our great city.

Be proactive!  
PlanBTV gives Burlingtonians an opportunity to proactively prepare for that inevitable growth, ensuring that the character of our city core will evolve while remaining familiar and comfortable. You have all understood the need to make your voices heard as several hundred residents, business owners and elected officials came together for this significant collaborative effort; defining a vision for Burlington’s Downtown & Waterfront.

Only the beginning!  
PlanBTV is only the first step to making our city center better, more vibrant for residents and more economically viable, where workers, shoppers, and visitors abound. Putting into action what we have all agreed upon in this plan is now the task at hand. Only with a concerted effort by all will the vision of this plan ever become reality.

PlanBTV represents a social contract bringing citizens together around common goals for their future. It is an invitation to all of us to succeed in building Burlington’s future together. I invite you to adopt it and make it your own.

Sandrine Thibault, AICP  
Comprehensive Planner



## Burlington, What is your Municipal Advantage?

Post housing market bust, we are operating within a bold new economy, where resources are a limited commodity, and municipalities must find smarter ways to compete for population, businesses, cultural amenities, and investment dollars. Cities like Burlington have a natural advantage, endowed with a traditional urban core that is desirable to residents and visitors on the grounds of historic appeal and convenience. There is also a significant direct economic benefit inherent in downtowns. Designed with a high ratio of building square footage per land area, compact urban centers provide significant value with proportionally less cost and stress on municipal services (see the article on **Urban is Back**, page 39).

While some plans include an economic development section, we see the economy as inextricably linked to everything else, and as such don't give it a separate section. PlanBTV reflects a comprehensive economic development strategy with a clear set of financial incentives and policy recommendations to drive public and private sector investment.

PlanBTV also builds on Burlington's position as a leader in all things green and sustainable. Included in the plan are strategies to increase opportunities for walking and biking, living downtown, bringing agriculture from the Intervale into the city center, and a mighty **Green Machine** (see page 80) to help with water quality and natural filtration. This plan is about creating more choice, and giving people the ability to lead the life they want.

PlanBTV follows on the footsteps of numerous planning efforts (see **A Legacy of Planning**, page 14) that have contained valuable ideas, many of which we have tried to incorporate here, and present in a way that is easily digestible to the citizens of Burlington.

One of Burlington's greatest municipal advantages is a population of residents who care deeply about the place they have chosen to live, driving in roots, and becoming active participants in the community. Throughout the planBTV process, our team of planners has been awed by the turnout and quality of ideas thrown into the ring. Now, the real test of public commitment will begin, as city staff and policy makers look to the community to not only support, but to help implement the many transformative ideas contained within these pages (see **How to Love the Plan**, page 7).

**Brian Wright**  
Principal,  
Town Planning & Urban Design  
Collaborative



# HOW TO LOVE THE PLAN

a citizens guide

## 1. Support the plan even if you don't like all of the ideas.

This plan is the culmination of an extensive and transparent community planning process that reflects many differing points of view. If you don't love certain parts of the plan, consider the big picture and whether the plan as a whole takes Burlington in the right direction. It is possible that not all of your ideas were included in this document because, a) there was disagreement on the topic and the decision was made to go with the consensus of the community, b) the idea was tested out and deemed to be unfeasible at this time, or c) there was simply not enough room to include ALL the good ideas. If you feel strongly that we got something wrong or accidentally omitted an idea, speak up. This is not the end of this process and this truly is a living document! We hope that everyone can find something to get excited about and be a champion for the plan!

## 2. Be a part of the action team.

Although we all wish our tax dollars bought us unlimited city services, the reality is there is more work than staff to do it, especially in a City like Burlington, where ideas and energy abound. And all of these great ideas take time, money, and capacity. For this plan to become a reality, a large number of people must decide they care enough to get involved and help execute the plan. Communities that work together, and work smartly, succeed.

## 3. Understand the element of time.

At first glance, the plan can seem ambitious, daunting, even a little frightening. It is important to understand that not everything in the plan will happen at once, or even at all. Included are some big ideas that, if implemented, would bring about transformative change, taking years or even decades to come to fruition. Other ideas are smaller and could happen right away. This process has tried to plant seeds and to see what grows under the right conditions and careful tending.

**WARNING: THIS PLAN SHOULD NOT BE FILED**

PLANBTV IS USING A MAGAZINE FORMAT INTENTIONALLY, TO MAKE THIS DOCUMENT AS ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC, STAKEHOLDERS, POLICY-MAKERS AND CITY STAFF. THIS PLAN BUILDS ON YEARS OF HARD WORK AND IS INTENDED TO BE ACTIVELY USED.

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