

One of Burlington’s most unique and defining assets is the Church Street area. Essentially acting as the “living room” of the City, Church Street is a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented corridor. Lined with mixed-use, commercial and office uses, the area serves as a strong nucleus for the City.

1. Top Block

The “top block” of Church Street between Cherry and Pearl streets has struggled to achieve the vitality of the lower blocks for many years now. Businesses have come and gone. The re-design of the public space and fountain could greatly improve vitality, traffic flow and could increase programming flexibility. Play features for children, additional seating, new water features, more greenery would help revitalize this block. The key is to make the space flexible enough to accommodate a variety of activities and events while inviting ongoing public use and enjoyment. Another design solution that could help bring life to the top block is the definition of the forecourt of the Unitarian Church to both “cap” off the terminus of Church Street while making it spatially contiguous with the rest of Church Street to the South. Ultimately, it would be up to the Church to explore possibilities and potential development of their property.

2. Celebrate local agriculture

Given Church Street’s significant customer draw, there is a unique opportunity to showcase urban agriculture and the way the local food system integrates within the City. Seasonal agricultural installations (container gardens, interpretive guides, street vendors, etc.) could be located in central areas along Church Street, showcasing products native to the region and local producers. These installations are an opportunity to celebrate the City’s agricultural heritage and economy, tell our story about how we integrate the food system throughout our daily lives, and market the city as a destination in the farm to plate movement.

3. It’s all about the experience

The proper design of public spaces such as Church Street can lead to an improvement in the quality of the experience; making the space more attractive, safer and more welcoming. Having places for people to congregate, for kids to play, and for everyone to feel safe and comfortable is essential to the success of any public space. One of the favorite activities on Church Street is people-watching— people you know and people you don’t. More public seating along Church Street are needed to give shoppers a place to rest, listen to a street musician, or just take-in the flow of humanity. This is especially important for seniors – a rapidly growing segment of our population - and families with kids.

4. City Hall Park Alley

Due to its pivotal location between Church Street and City Hall Park, and as an amenity that can draw people towards the waterfront, the City Hall Park Alley should be programmed and re-designed to provide a strong connection between the activities on Church Street with the green open space afforded in the park. As discussed in the Making Connections section, the alley between City Hall and the BCA Center could be the pivotal part of a longer alley walk that could bring pedestrians down to the waterfront, and back up to Church Street. Public art, lighting, and activity can transform this into an attractive and inviting connection.

5. AWNINGS AND CIVIC ART

Church Street is a collection of diverse and interesting buildings that host a wide range of retail, food, and beverage establishments. Yet their individuality is obscured and homogenized by a number of intermittent glass / metal awnings. While these awnings provide much-appreciated shelter, they should be replaced in favor of, deep, retractable or suspended rigid awnings that accentuate the character of the individual building and draw visitors into the businesses. Civic art and urban furniture (street lamps, trash cans, recycling containers, benches, wayfinding signage, etc.) can be used to highlight Burlington’s rich artist and craftsman culture and support local arts by commissioning local businesses to create the pieces.