

# A Four Season Waterfront

## a complex blend of year-round activity

Our waterfront is our crown jewel and perhaps our single most important community asset. It's a place for major community events and quiet contemplation, for physical pursuits both recreational and competitive, for a sail or a paddle, and the best place for enjoying a sunset in all of New England. The Burlington Waterfront has the potential to be a year-round activity center that attracts both city residents and visitors. There are already generous parks and access to the water for public use and enjoyment during the warmer months, and the possibility of attractions such as an ice skating facility or an indoor venue for craft shows, boat building or entertainment when the weather is less than ideal. In addition to boating opportunities for visitors and residents, there is access to a bike path with connections leading into the islands and even Canada, and a pedestrian promenade that should extend the entire length of the inner harbor.

The Waterfront Revitalization Plan (WRP) completed in 1998 and the Harbor Management Plan (HMP) completed in 2000 laid the foundation for many ideas contained in this plan, including the delineation of the users zones illustrated in the map to the right. A principal objective found in both plans and restated in this plan is to significantly expand the number of boat slips and improve marine services. Another is that the waterfront needs to be physically linked to the active downtown area. To successfully link these two distinct parts of the city, improvements must be made to enhance the streetscape and urbanism along the connecting street corridors between Church Street and the waterfront, as well as routes over the embankment. When developing this space, it is important to retain and expand upon the character found in the most loved parts of the City such as Church Street and lower Battery Street. New linkages, shared parking structures, and innovative public transportation solutions will help maintain a healthy balance of transportation modes. Minimizing the role of the automobile around the waterfront will create a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists, and a continuous ribbon.

The waterfront is well known and celebrated as a world-class place during the summer months. However it has yet to achieve the critical mass of mixed uses to extend this vitality into the winter. More retail, hospitality, entertainment, office and even residential uses are needed to make the waterfront an active and vibrant place the whole year round.

### A PLACE FOR ALL TO ENJOY

Burlington's waterfront has been touted as a great public space where everyone is welcome and invited to celebrate our city. Yet some current facilities, activities and amenities seem to cater more directly to a certain segment of our population. Efforts to provide children play areas, low cost food options such as street vendors, and/or winter activities would greatly enhance the opportunities for all residents and tourists to visit and enjoy this special place.

### WATER USE EXPANSION

There is currently an eight year waiting list for a boat slip at the marina, and nearly every summer evening many transient boaters are turned away due to a lack of available dockage. Expanding the marina operations with additional slips and services to support boating will increase community access to the lake, the number of visitors to the City and create more energy at the waterfront. The City has a goal of adding as many as 300 more slips, either as shown in the illustration or along the shoreline principally south of Perkins Pier and the necessary marine services to support them,. These additional slips could generate substantial revenue, as much as another \$1 million annually, depending on slip sizes and residency status of seasonal boaters. And this is without including the potential spending of the added transient boaters in our downtown and community as a whole. The use of non-motorized crafts is also enjoyed by many along the shores of the lake. The Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center already provides wonderful opportunities for kids and adults alike to enjoy the lake in variety of non-motorized

crafts. The provision of additional boat storage and launching points to the north and south of the harbor would increase access.

### KEEP IT CLEAN BOATERS

Just as Burlington works hard to be a leader in all things “Green” and sustainable landward, it should also do so waterside. The stormwater measures already underway and proposed in the Green Machine will work to minimize impacts on water quality from contaminants flowing from the land into the water. The city should take additional steps to ensure that the water is not being polluted by boaters and support services associated with boating. To do this Burlington should undertake the measures necessary to secure the status of a Vermont Clean Marina. There are currently four others in the state.

### FERRY LAND

The Lake Champlain Ferry Co has been in operation since 1826 and is one of the nation’s oldest ferry services. It is important that the ferry landing continues to serve as the western gateway to the City. The experience of entering Burlington from the water should be choreographed to ensure that the experience of waterside visitors is spectacular and memorable. This plan contemplates moving the ferry terminal and LCT’s operations further south to Perkins Pier. This would free up valuable space in core of the waterfront for dynamic mixed-use and year round waterfront redevelopment that will provide a critical mass. Locating the terminal just south will still provide access to the street network without negatively impacting traffic flow on the waterfront, and could also provide trailer parking for transient boaters and space for LCT’s operations..

### OUR COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM

Waterfront Park has been wildly successful as a place to host important cultural, civic, and athletic events that bring tens of thousands of people to Burlington’s waterfront each year. These events celebrate our community and lakefront, expose new people to the City, and generate millions of dollars for the local economy. The continued evolution of Burlington’s waterfront into a mixed-use area that is active year-round will require a careful balancing of competing demands. Waterfront businesses and residents need to embrace the important community role played by the park and its many events, while waterfront event planners and organizers need to be sensitive to the impacts that event noise, lighting, and traffic congestion has on their neighbors. There are a number of measures that can be taken along the way to help.

- Ensure noise levels stay in compliance with City ordinances and permits;
- Direct sound away from residences;
- Require soundproofing for new development;
- Construct the proposed buildings at the north end of the waterfront park which will serve as a sound wall and define the park space;
- Construct the parking garage in the slope below Battery Street with a ground floor tall enough to allow the large trucks used during events to park inside where they will not disturb anyone or cause problems with circulation in the area. To minimize traffic on Lake Street, access should primarily come from Battery Street.
- Re-design Depot St to facilitate one-way egress during major events yet become a more inviting thoroughfare for pedestrians and cyclists.

### TOOL:

Consider requiring/mandating sound attenuation building techniques for any new housing development on the waterfront.

### MAP:

Show water and maritime operations differently. Water blue, maritime operations another color. Show the Urban Reserve to the north as “Reserve for future planning” and make it a different color (or striped).