

Office of  
the Mayor  
Burlington,  
Vermont



Miro Weinberger  
Mayor  
Room 34, City Hall  
Burlington, VT 05401  
Tel: (802) 865-7272

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2013  
Contact: Mike Kanarick  
[802.735.7962](tel:802.735.7962)

**Mayor Miro Weinberger Announces**  
**Waterfront and Downtown Public Investment Action Plan**  
**Plan Designed to Create Jobs, Make Burlington More Affordable,**  
**Grow Property Tax Base without Impacting Property Tax Rates**

**Burlington, VT** – Mayor Miro Weinberger today announced the creation of the Waterfront and Downtown Public Investment Action Plan (PIAP), designed to create new jobs, make Burlington more affordable, and grow the property tax base and other municipal revenues without impacting municipal property tax rates.

Weinberger, joined by many community leaders (listed below), made the announcement from the City's Francis J. O'Brien Water Treatment Building, with an expansive and beautiful lake view behind him, stating: "The purpose of the Public Investment Action Plan is to achieve progress towards our collective and long-sought vision of an even more dynamic and vibrant waterfront and downtown. Progress towards this vision has been too slow in recent years – we will change that by building public infrastructure that catalyzes additional investment, grows City revenues, increases public access and enjoyment of the waterfront, and creates housing opportunities for all."

Over the next two years, through a highly-transparent, collaborative, and efficient process that provides significant opportunity for public input, the Administration will identify and begin to implement prudent, public investments in both the Waterfront and Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts. The goal of these investments is to improve the public built environment, including streetscape, parks, and other public spaces, as well as to achieve mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, green, "infill" redevelopment of our downtown and waterfront in a manner that creates a more livable City. The PIAP will allocate at least \$5 million of public investments in the Waterfront TIF District and approximately \$10 million in the Downtown TIF District. These estimates may increase depending on the level of taxable investment catalyzed by the PIAP. (Please see details of the PIAP in both the attached documents: "Waterfront and Downtown Public Investment Action Plan Summary" and "Mayor's Open Letter to the People of Burlington".)

Peter Owens, Director of the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO), added: “The enhancement of our walkable, vibrant, and accessible downtown and waterfront is perhaps the most important economic development activity the public sector can pursue and has been central to CEDO’s mission for the past 30 years. The PIAP process is an exciting opportunity to take tangible, concrete steps to fulfill this long-held promise for the City.”

Weinberger and Owens were joined at the announcement by the following community leaders:

- **Karen Paul, Ward 6 City Councilor and Chair of City Council’s Parks, Arts, and Culture Committee:** “Having served both on the Parks, Arts, and Culture Committee and worked on waterfront issues for a long time, and as a strong advocate and sponsor of the resolution that led to the creation of PlanBTV, I am excited about this action plan leading the way for forward movement on ideas that have been talked about for so long. This plan offers logical and bold next steps that build on the Mayor’s Moran decision last summer. Also, I am happy to see that the Mayor is including an open process that will welcome concepts and new ideas that advance existing plans; our waterfront can only benefit from this new plan for us and for generations to come.”
- **Bryan Aubin, Ward 4 City Councilor and Member of the City Council’s Parks, Arts, and Culture Committee:** “Burlington’s waterfront is the people’s waterfront, the people’s front yard. I appreciate that the Mayor’s new plan offers anyone and everyone the opportunity to propose concepts that will result in waterfront development that is publicly accessible. I strongly support the idea that this plan will operate as an open, public process, a quality of great importance to the New North End.”
- **Kelly Devine, Executive Director of the Burlington Business Association:** “The Burlington waterfront holds so much potential for our community. On behalf of the Burlington business community, I want to thank Mayor Weinberger, CEDO Director Peter Owens, and their team for focusing on how we can make the most of this vital resource. We welcome this plan and its proactive and inclusive strategy. The Burlington Business Association shares the Mayor’s excitement about the investment this plan will stimulate on the waterfront and in the downtown, while creating jobs and growing Burlington’s economy.”
- **Phelan Fretz, Executive Director of the ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center:** “The community’s vision for the ‘people’s waterfront’ decades ago gave life to one of New England’s greatest natural treasures. ECHO and the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain are honored to be part of this vision and look forward to an exciting process to define the next investments.”
- **Kurt Wright, State Representative and former City Council President:** “As a long-time user and supporter of the bike path and our waterfront, as well as a proponent of responsible growth in our downtown, I am excited that this new plan attempts to move the waterfront and downtown forward with a comprehensive approach. I am also pleased that a public process has been identified that will result in a Town Meeting Day vote. The waterfront is one of our crown jewels, and it is vitally important that Burlingtonians decide its future together.”

- **Mark Naud, Member of the Board of Trustees of the Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center:** “The Community Sailing Center is thrilled to participate in Burlington’s Waterfront Public Investment initiative. We look forward to the opportunity to invest with the City to provide significantly enhanced on-the-lake access, education, and recreational opportunities to all members of the community.”
- **Brenda Torpy, CEO of Champlain Housing Trust**
- **Chapin Spencer, Executive Director of Local Motion**
- **Peter Delaney, Executive Director of RunVermont**
- **Frank Cioffi, President of the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation**
- **Doreen Kraft, Executive Director of Burlington City Arts**
- **David E. White, Director of Planning and Zoning**

*Please see attached documents:*

- *Waterfront and Downtown Public Investment Action Plan Summary*
- *Mayor’s Open Letter to the People of Burlington*
- *Map of the Waterfront and Downtown TIF Districts*

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# Waterfront and Downtown Public Investment Action Plan (PIAP) Summary

January 7, 2013

We have long known that overcoming the challenges of an increasingly expensive and economically constrained city lay in developing a more walkable, mixed-use downtown and waterfront. While many cities around the country have seen an urban renaissance of downtown housing and vitality over the past decade, progress in Burlington has been frustratingly slow.

Over the past two years, PlanBTV has outlined an exciting vision for a more creative and sustainable city. Over the next two years, our two Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts offer an unprecedented opportunity to invest millions of dollars in public infrastructure supporting that vision without increased taxpayer burden.

**On February 4, 2013, we will launch an open, competitive process to generate the most catalytic ideas for public investment in the Waterfront TIF District.** The process will be rigorous, transparent, and efficient. But time is short. One year from today, we propose to have a comprehensive slate of public improvements to take to the voters in March 2014. A similar process will follow for the Downtown TIF District.

**The range of catalytic public infrastructure investments that could result from the PIAP is broad.** We envision funding investments as small as converting two parking spaces into a micro-park to enliven a retail street, to a major staircase and elevator designed to get more pedestrians to and from the waterfront, to a substantial expansion of the lakefront boardwalk and marina. The PIAP will allocate at least \$5 million in waterfront investment and \$10 million in downtown investment. These estimates could grow significantly in relation to the level of private investment leveraged by the public infrastructure.

#### **Criteria for Public Investment will include:**

- Advance existing plans – PlanBTV, Waterfront Revitalization Plan, Harbor Plan
- Leverage complementary investment, municipal revenues, and economic activity
- Ability to Implement within TIF timeframe
- Expand waterfront access and public use, increase housing opportunities (where allowed), reduce surface parking, and amplify pedestrian life
- Contribute to an inviting, accessible Downtown and Waterfront for all

**Public Investment Team** - A “Public Investment Team” appointed by the Mayor in consultation with the City Council will evaluate the proposals. The team members will have finance and development experience and be representative of the broader community. Deliberations will be in warned, open public meetings with opportunity for public comment.

**Public Participation** – Using the best lessons from the successful PlanBTV process, concepts will be accessible online and in public places for review and comment. Also, a variety of groups including the City Council, the Parks, Arts and Culture Committee, the Community Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Committee, the Waterfront Action Group, the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, and other citizen groups will be briefed at regular intervals as process unfolds.

**Timeline:**

February-March 2013: Request for Concepts (RFC) – 60-day open call for concepts (anyone can propose) for projects within three categories:

- Projects on publicly owned land (Moran, Waterfront Park, etc.)
- Public projects on privately-owned land that have the support of current land owners
- Special Projects: \$1 million for smaller creative / innovate projects

April 2013: Concept Review and Finalist Selection – The “Public Investment Team” reviews concepts within well-defined parameters and selects finalists to advance to next stage of the process.

June 2013: Request for Proposals (RFP) Release – 90-day RFP issued to finalists to bring back detailed proposals for public investment projects by the end of summer.

Fall 2013: Project selection – Public Investment Team, the Administration, and the City Council will work together to review final proposals. The projects will be sorted into a prioritized slate of public investments. Project rank will be established based on financial analysis, impact analysis, City capacity, and advancement of the key principles, etc.

Early Winter 2014: City Council Authorization - The final slate will be brought to the City Council for authorization to place on the Town Meeting Day ballot.

March 2014: Public Vote - Town Meeting Day vote on slate of Public Investment Projects.

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TDD: (802) 865-7142

January 7, 2013

Open Letter to the People of Burlington,

Happy New Year!

It was a great honor to attend and participate in Burlington's 30th First Night as your mayor. Thank you again for your trust and support over the last nine months – we will be working hard to continue make good on that confidence throughout 2013.

#### **Waterfront + Downtown Public Investment Action Plan**

The Administration has begun 2013 by launching our most significant initiative yet, our Waterfront and Downtown Public Investment Action Plan (PIAP). Over the next two years, through a highly-transparent and efficient process, we will identify and begin to implement prudent public investments in the waterfront and downtown intended to create jobs, make Burlington more affordable, and to grow the property tax base and other municipal revenues. By acting collaboratively and purposefully, the City will execute the PIAP without impacting municipal property tax rates while creating a more livable city.

This initiative is the next step in my commitment to get the City moving again.

#### What is the PIAP?

As a result of two state-approved Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts, the City has the opportunity to make tens of millions of dollars of waterfront and downtown public infrastructure investments in the coming years without impacting property tax rates. In an era of declining federal funding and constrained local resources, this funding is precious and irreplaceable.

The PIAP is a public process for identifying what TIF investments the City will make. The waterfront process will begin with a request for concepts open to all in February, involve a Public Investment Team of respected individuals who will review and evaluate these concepts as a public body, and culminate in a public vote on a slate of investments in the spring of 2014. A similar process for downtown investments will follow the waterfront effort.

A summary of the PIAP process can be found at [www.burlingtonvt.gov/mayor](http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/mayor).

#### What problems will the PIAP address?

With the snow and holiday lights, Church Street looked magical on First Night. There is so much to celebrate in our City that it is easy to lose sight of our challenges.

However, our challenges are significant and growing. Household incomes in Burlington have been flat for many years. A startlingly large percentage of our schoolchildren are living in poverty. Too many talented individuals are forced to leave the region because they cannot break into our tight job market. In terms of local housing prices relative to local incomes, Burlington has become one of the most expensive cities in the country to live in – a phenomenon that threatens to push the middle class out of the City. Municipal expenses are rising at a faster rate than revenues.

Our best solution to many of these challenges is mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, green, "infill" redevelopment of our downtown and waterfront in a manner that enhances the character of the City we love. By reclaiming the surface parking lots and other underutilized urban lots that total more than 1/3 of the City's core with human-scaled housing and office space above busy sidewalk shops and cafes, well-designed infill development has the potential to increase housing and job opportunities, grow municipal revenues, and allow Burlington businesses to grow and evolve.

This promise of the waterfront and downtown has been understood for decades. Numerous city plans, including the current PlanBTV, have sought to move the city towards this vision of an even more dynamic and vibrant waterfront and downtown.

Yet, despite broad agreement in this vision, advancement toward it has been very slow in recent years. More than a decade has passed since the last significant progress reclaiming the waterfront from its industrial past. Over the last twenty years – as cities around the country saw large increases in downtown residents for the first time since WWII – Burlington has built only a handful of new homes in the city center.

**The purpose of the PIAP is to achieve progress towards this long-sought vision of Burlington by identifying and implementing public infrastructure investments that: catalyze additional investment in Burlington, grow our property tax base and other city revenues, advance PlanBTV and other long-standing City plans, increase public access and enjoyment of the waterfront, and increase housing opportunities for all.**

What kind of public infrastructure investments will be considered?

The range of catalytic public infrastructure investments that could result from the PIAP is broad. We envision funding investments as small as converting two parking spaces into a micro-park to enliven a retail street, to a major staircase and elevator designed to get more pedestrians to and from the waterfront, to a substantial expansion of the lakefront boardwalk and marina.

What does this mean for the Moran Plant Redevelopment?

The Moran Plant is located within the Waterfront TIF district and redevelopment proposals for it will be considered as part of this process. We anticipate that one or more concepts for the building and site will be considered as part of this process. However, after nearly three decades of failed efforts to redevelop Moran it is time to broaden the waterfront initiatives under consideration. The PIAP will ensure that potential public investment in Moran will be weighed against a wide range of other public investment opportunities.

Next steps

We will be seeking public comment on the PIAP at NPAs and through other community venues throughout the month of January. You are also invited to e-mail comments on the plan to CEDO Director Peter Owens ([peter@burlingtonvt.gov](mailto:peter@burlingtonvt.gov)) and to post your comments publicly at the Mayor's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/MiroBTV](http://www.facebook.com/MiroBTV)). Our intent is to submit a finalized version of the plan for City Council approval at the January 28, 2013 meeting.

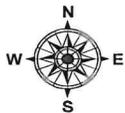
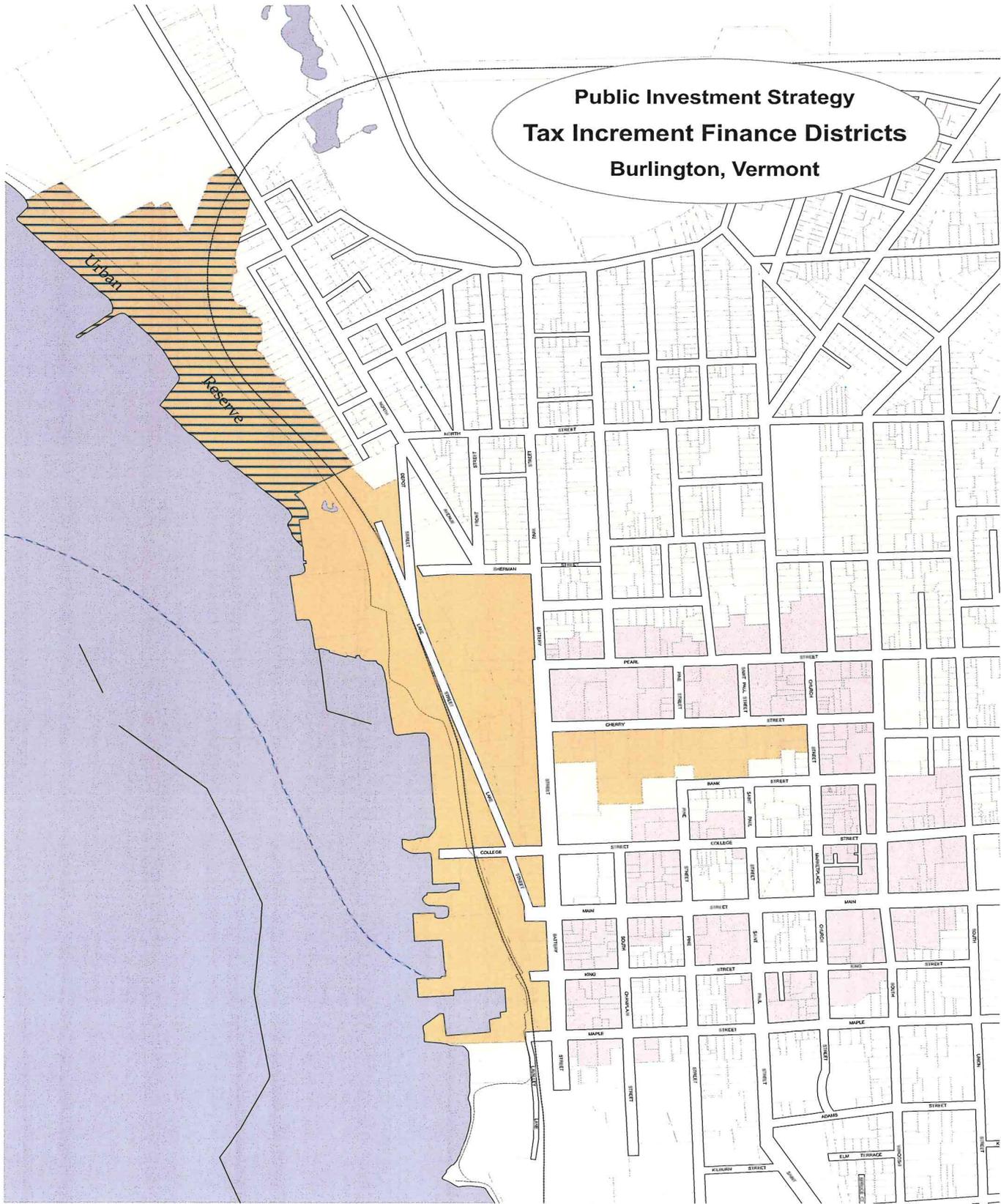
In February the Request For Concept period will begin and will be open to all. You will be invited to submit concepts of your own and to comment on those submitted by others. One year from now we expect to have an exciting slate of public improvements to put before the voters in March, 2014.

**I invite you to review and engage the PIAP and to share the considerable enthusiasm my Administration has about the exciting effort ahead.**

Sincerely,

Miro Weinberger

**Public Investment Strategy  
Tax Increment Finance Districts  
Burlington, Vermont**



**Legend**

- Waterfront TIF District
- Downtown TIF District
- Urban Reserve

City of Burlington GIS  
<http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/>



Map Date: January 4, 2013

MXD Saved: 1/4/2013