

Downtown and Waterfront Plan

Public Outreach and Engagement Strategy

The Burlington Planning Commission is responsible for comprehensive planning for the City of Burlington with about 38,000 residents. The Planning Commission recognizes that public participation is a key component in effective planning. If Burlington is to realize its growth potential in the 21st Century, it is essential for that the residents of the City have a voice in how the city's plans are formulated.

The purpose of this Public Outreach and Engagement Strategy is to increase public awareness and participation while widening the range of voices and views in the planning process. The strategy explains how the Planning Commission operates, established core values for public participation and outlined strategies for increasing public involvement and participation in the planning process.

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy seeks to develop a proactive public participation process in the City of Burlington that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing the Downtown/Waterfront Plan, as well as others.

SUMMARY OF STATE REGULATIONS VIS-À-VIS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - TITLE 24, CHAPTER 117

Subchapter 2, 4325 - Powers and Duties of the Planning Commission

Any planning commission may:

- (7) Hold public meetings.
- (12) Undertake comprehensive planning, including related preliminary planning and engineering studies.

Subchapter 5. Municipal Development Plan, 4384 – Preparation of plan; hearings by planning commission

(a) Any plan for a municipality shall be prepared by the planning commission of that municipality. At the outset of the planning process and throughout the process, planning commissions shall solicit the participation of local citizens and organizations by holding informal working sessions that suit the needs of local people.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To demonstrate its commitment to informing, educating and involving the public during the Downtown/Waterfront planning process, the Planning Commission has developed this Public Outreach and Engagement Strategy. The guidelines are defined below:

1. The public should engage and guide decisions about actions that affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will be considered in the decision-making process.
3. The public participation process:
 - communicates the interests and considers the needs of all participants;
 - seeks out and facilitates involvement of those potentially affected by the Downtown & Waterfront Plan;

- provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
- communicates to participants how their input influenced the decisions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS AND METHODS

Below are a set of outreach and public engagement goals the Planning Commission will strive to reach during the Downtown & Waterfront planning process. To achieve the following goals, the Planning Commission has also established different strategies or methods.

A. OUTREACH

Goal: Design and implement outreach activities that will facilitate public participation from all segments of the community and all interested and/or affected stakeholders.

- Increase the number and diversity of people involved in the planning process both regionally and locally by identifying members of the public who have expressed an interest in or may be affected by upcoming activities.
- Facilitate effective public participation through early notification and a variety of channels for upcoming events or opportunities for input, providing for adequate time and resources for outreach activities and evaluation of those activities. Outreach should be ongoing and active throughout the process.

Methods – Identify “Champions” or key contacts for each group of identified stakeholders and have them help with outreach throughout the process

Online Web Initiative – Develop an interactive web environment to reach out to the residents and businesses of Burlington and engage them in the planning process.

- Develop a Downtown & Waterfront Plan Website where current information will be housed.
- Use Front Porch Forum to communicate with the public at large
- Develop a Facebook Page to post meetings dates and updates on the process
- Use Constant Contact email marketing, survey tool and event marketing to inform the public and engage stakeholders in the process

Civic Initiative – Ensure ongoing contact with community and business leaders and residents who have an interest in the process.

- Work with the media to write and/or produce stories on the process (Seven Days, Free Press, Burlington Community News, CCTV, Television Stations, etc.)
- Make presentations at regular groups/stakeholders meetings – go to them directly
- Develop printed material (flyers, brochures, etc) about the process that will be available at different specific locations in the City (library, ferries, airport, etc.)
- Develop a display that could be used for tabling at events or place in downtown businesses.

Youth Initiative – Collaborate with schools and youth-service organizations to increase the current participation of youth in planning.

- Send information on the planning process through the schools

For each new initiative where outreach is appropriate, the Planning Department will develop a contact list and add to the list any members of the public who request to be added. The Planning

Department will update the list frequently and strive to ensure that information is regularly shared with members who have signed up.

B. ENGAGEMENT

Goal: Provide venues and tools to engage the public in planning dialogue.

- Utilize a variety of activities, events and other public engagement tools so the public can provide meaningful input throughout the decision-making process.

Methods - Information Resources and Visualization Tools – The Planning Department will utilize a variety of printed and electronic tools to inform and engage the public

- Use the Downtown & Waterfront Plan Website to gather comments and input on the process

Education – The Planning Department will host workshops, seminars, public meetings and forums to educate the public at places easily accessible to interested and affected persons and organizations.

- Speaker Series – make sure those are taped and available on CCTV and webpage

Involvement – Feedback from members of the public is essential to creating plans they will then support. Feedback is obtained through surveys and comment forms distributed on-line and in person; at public meetings, workshops, charrettes and open houses; from focus groups and committees; and from other organizations that partner with the Planning Commission in the planning process.

- Poster contest for school kids
- Charrettes
- Downtown/Waterfront Space for education and input
- Surveys – online and in-person
- Public Meetings

STAKEHOLDERS

A list of “champions” or key contacts will be developed and kept up to date throughout the process to ensure that all the identified stakeholders are kept well aware of the planning process.

- Citizens – Homeowners, Downtown & waterfront residents
- City Entities – City Council, Boards and Commissions, Employees, Burlington Airport
- Business Community – BBA, Church St Marketplace, GBIC, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Employers who have left or think of coming downtown, Developers, Lake Champlain Transportation Company, Hotels, Business travelers, Burlington Town Center, etc.
- Housing Organizations – VHFA, Champlain Housing Trust, Burlington Housing Authority, COTS
- Transportation Organizations – Local Motion, CCTA, CATMA, Taxi companies, Bike/Walk Council
- Institutions and Schools – Burlington School District, UVM, Champlain College, Burlington College, Places of Worship

- Tourists & Recreation – Shoppers & Diners, Tourists (US and Canadians), boaters, sailors, cyclists, pedestrians
- Arts and Entertainment Community – Flynn Center, Local Artists,
- Food and Agriculture – Intervale Center, Food Council
- Others – Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs), Refugee organizations, AARP, Disability Organizations, Coast Guard, Social Services Agencies, State representatives

The Planning Commission and Planning & Zoning Department are committed to a public participation process that involves residents and businesses in every step of the planning process – from concept to final plan. Along the way, the Planning Commission and Department will provide the information the public needs to make educated and informed decisions, afford opportunities for the public to evaluate and respond to that information, and take the public’s response into consideration before finalizing any plans.

There are opportunities for public participation throughout the planning process. This strategy is meant to articulate how those opportunities will be facilitated. Please visit the Downtown & Waterfront Plan website for specific involvement activities.