

## **Burlington Conservation Board**

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## **Annual Report of the Burlington Conservation Board** **Fiscal Year 2011: June 30, 2010 – July 1, 2011**

The Burlington Conservation Board (BCB) acts as the primary entity within the City for comprehensive environmental planning and review. Conservation Board members provide volunteer services in their areas of environmental expertise, which include wetland biology, engineering, water quality, stormwater management, land conservation and management, and the law. The Board provides thoughtful comment and guidance on all major impact development projects and conducts field observations when appropriate. We strive to develop and sustain effective communication with the Planning Commission, Development Review Board, and other City departments. The BCB has partnered with the Department of Parks and Recreation on open space management through the Conservation Legacy Program. The BCB has also worked with personnel from the Department of Public Works on stormwater management matters in the city. The work of the Conservation Board relies upon the support of the Department of Planning and Zoning, which provides staffing, development review coordination, and planning expertise crucial to Board function.

In the past year, the Board has focused on three primary areas: (1) development review, (2) implementation of Chapter 26: Stormwater, Wastewater, & Pollution Control, and (3) amendments to the Comprehensive Development Ordinance. Some of our achievements during the last year are described below.

### **FOCUS AREAS:**

#### **1) DEVELOPMENT REVIEW**

The number of projects reviewed by the BCB was close to the number reviewed the previous year. In FY 2011, the BCB evaluated the following development proposals and gave public testimony, advice, and specific recommendations to the Development Review Board, Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Department of Public Works:

- **475 Lake St** Redevelopment of the Moran plant
- **0 Lake St** Temporary staging area associated with redevelopment of the Moran Plant
- **693 Riverside Ave** Proposed 8-unit apartment building
- **323-325 College St** Proposed 4 story, 4-unit apartment building
- **476 South Prospect St** Proposed 400-bed student apartment complex at UVM
- **163 South Willard St** Proposed 3 student dormitories at Champlain College
- **451 Ethan Allen Pkwy** Proposed 9-unit planned residential development
- **1 College St** Renovations and stormwater improvements for the existing ECHO facility
- **847 Pine St** Expansion of existing mental health crisis center
- **70 Appletree Point Ln** Proposed 32-unit residential subdivision
- **142-144 North Champlain St** Proposed 6-unit residential building

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The BCB supported most of these projects and made specific recommendations pertaining to stormwater management and maintenance and to the minimization of wetland impacts. One project, 451 Ethan Allen Parkway, was not recommended for approval due to wetland impacts. This project is undergoing substantial revisions in order to address BCB concerns about wetland impacts and will be reviewed again later this year.

## **2) IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 26**

Chapter 26: Wastewater, Stormwater, & Pollution Control was substantially revised and updated in April 2009.

Since the adoption of the revised Chapter 26, the Conservation Board has worked with project applicants and the Stormwater Administrator in implementing the stormwater management provisions of this ordinance. The BCB has played an active role in developing performance standards for new and redevelopment projects to achieve insofar as stormwater management is concerned. Particular attention has been paid to unique site sensitivities, receiving waters or city systems, and feasibility within the context of particular development proposals. There has been a consistent push to manage stormwater to the maximum extent practicable in each case. Doing so decentralizes impacts to city infrastructure and, ultimately, to receiving waters such as Lake Champlain.

## **3) COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS**

The Conservation Board has commented on several proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Development Ordinance (CDO). Most significantly, it has recommended changes to the city's wetland map, and it has recommended the adoption of incentives to encourage low impact development (LID) in new and redevelopment projects.

The updates to the wetland map have been finalized, adopted, and incorporated into the CDO after an extensive review process. Provisions to encourage LID have been recommended by the BCB to the Planning Commission. Review at the Planning Commission level is underway and may result in a broader interdepartmental discussion for improved coordination to encourage LID via regulatory, financial, and other incentives.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **CONNECTIONS**

In the course of these activities, the Conservation Board has maintained important connections with other city departments and organizations during the past year, including:

- Development Review Board (review of individual development proposals)
- Parks & Recreation Department (Conservation Legacy Program & Fund)
- Planning Commission (CDO amendments)
- Long Range Planning Committee (Downtown & Waterfront Plan)
- Department of Public Works (stormwater management)
- Champlain College
- CEDO (Legacy Program)

### **FUTURE PRIORITIES**

The Burlington Conservation Board will continue to provide the City and developers with timely review of proposals that have potentially significant environmental impacts. We will continue to work with the DRB on development review issues. Stormwater management will continue to be a high priority, and the BCB will work for the successful implementation of the stormwater program. The BCB will continue to push for the incorporation of progressive environmental standards into the Comprehensive Development Ordinance and will work to begin updating the city's 1999 Open Space Protection Plan. Work on the Conservation Legacy Program remains a priority, focusing on conservation planning, education, and targeting parcels of importance to the City.