

# Burlington Planning Commission

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*Andy Montroll, Chair  
Bruce Baker, Vice-Chair  
Yves Bradley  
Alexander Friend  
Michael Gaughan  
Emily Lee  
Julia Randall*

## Burlington Planning Commission

**Tuesday, September 27, 2022, 6:30 P.M.**

**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

### **Minutes**

Members Present	A. Montroll, M. Gaughan, A. Friend, J. Randall
Staff Present	M. Tuttle, C. Dillard
Public Attendance	N/a

#### **I. Agenda**

Call to Order	Time: 6:30pm
Agenda	No changes.

#### **II. Public Forum**

Name(s)	Comment
No Public Comment	

#### **III. Chair's Report**

A. Montroll	No report.
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#### **IV. Director's Report**

M. Tuttle	<p>M. Tuttle reported on the Planning Department's new work on the impact fee schedule within the Ordinance. A study will help evaluate the rationale behind levying the fee, help determine a possible new fee, and prioritize what the revenues go toward for capital projects. This is a joint project with the regional Planning Commission. A request-for-proposals will be sent out to look at other fees across the City.</p> <p>M. Tuttle also provided an update on the Transportation Demand Management study, Planning staff shared an outline for the scope work for a new RFP at City Council's Transportation Energy and Utilities Commission. The RFP will be released later next month.</p> <p>City Council has delayed discussed on TDM until October. This is delayed from their public hearing in early September. The Ordinance is currently in effect but is waiting on adoption. Some affordable housing developers have expressed concern on the current language of TDM.</p> <p>The Missing Middle tour of downtown adjacent neighborhoods was postponed to 09/29. The Planning Department and Preservation Burlington will host another walking tour on October 9 in the Old North End. Vermont Development Conference will host a discussion on Missing Middle in mid-November.</p>
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**V. Proposed CDO Amendment: South End Innovation District Overlay**

Action: Commission Discussion		
Motion by: n/a	Second by: n/a	Vote: n/a
Type: n/a	Presented by: C. Dillard	
<p>Commission Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C. Dillard provided an overview of the key questions surrounding the draft amendment and the boundaries of the South End Innovation District.</li> <li>• In previous Commission Discussions, Commissioners were interested in revisiting hotel uses, residential uses, building height, FAR, and blocks and streets.</li> <li>• Rationale for permitting hotels include economic development and recruitment, remote work destination, and recreation. Other research suggests hotels may pose a threat to housing stock. Planning staff recommend that hotels still be limited in some way and/or require community benefit as part of hotel development. C. Dillard showed an example of Asheville, NC's hotel and community benefit point system.</li> <li>• M. Gaughan noted that hotels could complement the remote work and arts work that are intended to thrive in this area. Hotels could also help mitigate Airbnb's in the district.</li> <li>• A. Friend inquired about hotel vacancy rates and pointed out that there are two existing hotel permits in the city yet to be built. He wondered if the city is in need of more hotels. Planning Staff responded that, anecdotally, the hotel vacancy remains low. Some evidence supports that more hotels in the city could offset Airbnb's. M. Tuttle also clarified that the sites in the South End Innovation District are quite large and can accommodate multiple types of development. C. Dillard added that developers would receive a .25 entitlement bonus in the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) provision if development were dedicated to housing. M. Gaughan proposed a limit on hotels to only 85% of space in any building. J. Randall added that a community benefit requirement would dissuade chain hotels from developing, but she has some concern regarding the one hotel per parcel limit. She asked whether artist residences or maker spaces could be added to the community benefit requirement. A. Montroll expressed concern over including hotels in the allowable uses for this district, but if hotels are included, they should be in mixed-use buildings. Planning Staff spoke to the use of artist residencies to accommodate recruitment needs for arts/maker businesses. Co-housing is also a new permitted use in the current language. M. Tuttle clarified that "hotels" referenced in this proposed language is defined as a traditional guest services model.</li> <li>• The Commissioners agreed that the limited use of hotels should be defined in the zoning amendment, and not separated into another document or project.</li> <li>• The revised proposal for residential uses reads, "Residential uses will be permitted only in new buildings (buildings not existing as of amendment adoption.)"</li> <li>• A. Montroll supported measures to protect the existing arts and light manufacturing in the South End and warned of a potential burst of competitive housing. Planning Staff stated that there is some interest in developing residential space on top of existing buildings, though feasibility of this is uncertain. The Commissioners discussed whether to include language that mitigates the risk of building demolition to make room for residential buildings. M. Tuttle spoke to an existing ordinance that addresses residential demolition. A. Friend advocated for protections of existing commercial buildings.</li> <li>• Commissioners and Planning Staff discussed the district boundaries and what commercial properties could be at risk of converting to another use.</li> <li>• Commissioners agreed to the proposed language for residential uses.</li> <li>• C. Dillard shared some proposed concepts to address building height. Concept A limits height in some locations (lakeside parcels, east of the rail corridor, Sears Lane, and Pine Street) and allows an 85 ft. building height in all other areas. Concept B keeps the tallest possible buildings to interior lots and height is limited around the boundaries of the district (particularly adjacent to the Barge Canal).</li> </ul>		

- A. Friend pointed out that 8 story (85 ft.) buildings could be less attractive for the pedestrian experience.
- J. Randall advocated for a building height buffer for the lakeside, barge canal, and Pine Street.
- C. Dillard noted that both concepts place the tallest possible buildings next to Champlain Parkway to mitigate noise and light pollution. He also noted that floors 7 and 8 have limited floor plates of 10,000 sf. During the public engagement process, the community felt comfortable with an 8-story maximum. 2021 Vermont building codes (to be adopted) allow mass timber builds of over eight stories. C. Dillard noted that eight stories also still protects the view shed from farther distances.
- M. Gaughan asked about the plans for barge canal. Nothing is formalized yet, but there are some visions of low-impact public use, like boardwalks.
- Some Commissioners favored Concept A that Planning Staff shared. M. Gaughan did not have a formal opinion between the two concepts yet, in light of the vague plans of barge canal.
- C. Dillard presented the differences between an FAR of 2.25 versus an FAR 2.5. Planning Staff recommend an FAR of 2.25. In the existing language, there is a minimum inclusionary zoning of 15%.
- Planning Staff recommend a block perimeter standard to establish a minimum distance around any block, therein requiring a new provision of streets. These do not necessarily need to be accessible by cars. C. Dillard presented two concepts; Concept A establishes a min. block perimeter of 1,600 ft. and Concept B establishes a min. street block perimeter or 2,400 ft. and min. path block perimeter of 800 ft. There is a potential third option, which provides even more granularity by establishing different block perimeters for car-accessible streets, bike paths, and pedestrian paths.
- C. Dillard noted that developers are interested in highly pedestrian blocks. A. Friend asked if the language could prescribe highly pedestrian blocks, rather than leave room for flexibility. M. Tuttle responded that the block perimeter proposal attempts to balance both a desire for prescription and flexibility.
- Commissioners generally favored Concept A for the block perimeter standard.
- A. Montroll requested another Planning Commission meeting to discuss language before warning this amendment for a public hearing.

**VI. Commissioner Items**

Action: n/a		
Motion by: n/a	Second by: n/a	Vote: n/a
Type: n/a	Presented by: n/a	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next Planning Commission meeting is 10/11.</li> <li>• J. Randall is attending the Colorado American Planning Association Conference and plans to report relevant knowledge and updates.</li> </ul>		

**VII. Minutes and Communications**

Action: Approve the minutes and accept the communications		
Motion by: J. Randall	Second by: M. Gaughan	Approved Unanimously
Minutes Approved: September 13		
Communications Accepted: in the agenda packet and posted at <a href="https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CityPlan/PC/Agendas">https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CityPlan/PC/Agendas</a>		

**VIII. Adjourn**

Adjournment	Time: 8:30pm
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*Tuesday, September 27, 2022*

Motion: A. Friend	Second: J. Randall	Vote: Approved Unanimously
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