



City of Burlington
Department of Public Works

Technical Services Engineering Division
645 Pine Street, Suite A
Burlington, VT 05402
P 802-863-9094 / F 802-863-0466 / TTY 802-863-0450
www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW

Memo

Date: May 10, 2022

To: Parks & Recreation and Harbor Commission

From: Laura Wheelock, P.E., Senior Public Works Engineer
Olivia Darisse, P.E., Public Works Engineer

CC: Chapin Spencer, Director of Public Works
Norm Baldwin, P.E., City Engineer/Asst. Director – Technical Services
Robert Goulding, Public Information Manager

Subject: Great Streets - Main Street Project Update

The City of Burlington is excited to bring forward the six-block Main Street Great Streets concepts to transform the main artery into and out of our City and rebalance the streetscape for pedestrians, economic vitality and climate resiliency.

Burlington is one of the great cities in America. While we have excellent businesses and community institutions on our Main Street, it is not itself yet a 'Great Street.' The City, stakeholders, and business have already partnered to rebuild St. Paul Street and City Hall Park into holistic public spaces – planned as Great Streets concepts. Additionally, with upcoming milestones to meet to make use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) obligations, the timing is right to begin the reintroduction of Main Street Great Streets with our community. The consensus is clear – cities need an integrated streetscape that serves everyone and helps protect our environment. This is the project that will further that goal.

In October 2021, we procured a design consultant, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to help progress the concept design and begin re-engaging the community in the Great Streets conversation and its focus on Main Street. In November, the project obtained authorization to seek voter approval on the use of TIF to fund the project.

Over the last several months, the City has worked with the design consultant to gather and respond to public feedback and conduct engineering studies and investigations such as assessing the condition of underground utility infrastructure, collecting geotechnical and survey data, and gathering traffic and parking data. Information and input collected to date has been used to influence and advance the concept design beyond the work completed in 2016 and develop refined concept alternatives.

The project team has worked to develop two concept alternatives that encompass the objectives of the Great Streets Initiative: rebalancing space within the street to provide active and alternative transportation facilities; activating spaces for people to rest and gather; creating spaces for public art and events; and incorporating trees and landscaping to reduce impervious surfaces and support sustainable street ecology. On-street parking will be converted from diagonal to parallel parking to accommodate these facilities, and bump-outs will be constructed at intersections to include activation areas for pedestrians as well as opportunities for landscaping and raingardens. While both concept alternatives share these core objectives, they each demonstrate their own unique themes for which the City will be seeking your feedback. During our presentation, we will highlight key differences between the ways the proposed utilization of the green spaces in each concept, and how those differences relate to aesthetics, street ecology, functionality, and long-term maintenance.

In addition to improving the streetscape and rebalancing the space for public use, the effort includes a significant overhaul of our underground utility network. Water and sewer infrastructure will be rehabilitated and replaced throughout the project in order to avoid the need for disruptive repairs within the completed project area in the future. The project team is exploring sustainable stormwater solutions such as utilizing permeable pavers, rain gardens, soil cells and making improvements to existing stormwater infrastructure in an effort to alleviate the burden on our treatment facility. The team has also been working closely with the Burlington Electric Department to support current energy initiatives, and coordinating with private utility companies.

The team has been working closely with the Water Resources Division, the Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department, the Church Street Marketplace, the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Office, the Community Economic Development Office, the Planning Office, and Burlington City Arts, to ensure the project is taking a balanced and inclusive planning approach. The project team has presented the project to the DPW Commission, Church Street Marketplace Commission, Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission, the Burlington Walk Bike Committee, the Burlington Business Associate Waterfront and Downtown Action Groups, Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee, Burlington Aging Council, and collaborated with outside entities such as Green Mountain Transportation and the Flynn Theater. The project team also hosted a series of meetings for five focus groups: Immigrants & Refugees, Youth, Business Owners, BIPOC, and a Mobility Support group. These meetings sought feedback from communities that are generally harder to reach, in an effort to determine how these groups currently use Main Street, and what they consider important for the future of Main Street

The City kicked off the public engagement process with a Neighborhood Meeting and a Business Owner Meeting in early February to reintroduce the project to the community and gather initial feedback. The engagement process continued throughout February and March with presentations to City leadership teams, advisory boards, neighborhood planning assemblies, and focus groups. Input amongst community and business groups varies and includes the desire for affordable shops and dining options; the need for inclusive, accessible, and interactive spaces; creative approaches to aesthetics and public art; sustainability solutions; alternative transportation options; and concerns related to parking and safety.

The project team continues to track public input and inquiries received and issue project updates to email contacts. The project website, www.greatstreetsbtv.com, provides up-to-date information regarding project concepts and upcoming project events, as well as the opportunity provide input through a project survey. The project team has held a second Neighborhood Meeting on April 28th and a Business Owner Meeting on May 6th to present concept alternatives to the general public and collect feedback. The project will also be presented to the City Council on May 9th.

Attached to this communication and request is the full neighborhood presentation. Staff will present a shortened version at the meeting and be available to answer questions and take comments.

Request:

During the May Parks & Recreation and Harbor Commission meeting, we will present concept alternatives and discuss the public engagement process and feedback received to date. The project team is seeking support of these concepts and improvements along Main Street. The City Council will vote on the concept approval on May 23rd.

Thank you.
