

Burlington Planning Commission
149 Church St.
Burlington, VT 05401

October 6, 2015

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

Please accept this letter as a request for a zoning amendment to conditionally permit Animal Boarding/Kennel/Shelter use in the Downtown, Downtown Transition, Downtown Waterfront and/or Battery Street Transition zones. This request is in order to allow Dottiepants Day Club for Dogs to open a facility convenient to Burlington's dog-friendly hotels, Boathouse and central business district that would offer high-end hourly dog daycare primarily marketed to tourists, discounted dog daycare for downtown employees and locally-sourced pet retail products.

Locating this business in one of the aforementioned zones would benefit the City's businesses, residents, employees and tourist market in these ways:

- 1) **It would solve a problem for Burlington's dog-friendly hotels.** Guests frequently leave dogs unattended in their rooms, resulting in nuisance barking, damage, inconvenience to housekeeping, and stress for the dogs and owners. Both the Hilton Burlington and Hotel Vermont have said that they would refer their guests to Dottiepants (see enclosed letter from Jeff Webb, General Manager of Hilton Burlington).
- 2) **It would benefit Burlington's waterfront events, each of which bring \$1-4 million in economic opportunity for the City.** Transient boaters and other tourists are inclined to bring their dogs to major waterfront events, such as the July 3rd Fireworks, Brewfest, Oktoberfest, concerts, the Marathon, etc. Dogs can be a nuisance or even a liability at these events, due to the throngs of people (including children) they draw and food being served. Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront has said that they would refer boaters and campers to Dottiepants (see enclosed letter from Jesse Bridges, Director of BPRW).
- 3) **It would benefit the Church Street Marketplace and surrounding businesses.** When tourists know that their dogs are having fun and being well cared for, they feel more comfortable staying out and enjoying Burlington—dining at restaurants and patronizing local businesses.
- 4) **It would benefit Burlington employees.** Employees working in the Downtown and Downtown Transition zones currently have to travel outside of the downtown area to access the nearest dog daycare services. Dottiepants offers discounted full-day dog care packages to employees who work in downtown Burlington, offering peace of mind to both the employees and their dogs.
- 5) **It would enhance Burlington's image as a welcoming place.** Vermont is number one in the nation for pet ownership with 70.8% of residents owning pets, and the dog service industry is booming in Vermont. Annually, the Church Street Marketplace draws 235,000 Vermont area customers plus 3.5 million annual Church Street visitors from New England, New York and Canada. It's safe to assume that the majority of these visitors are pet owners. And yet, there is no pet-centric business in Burlington's busiest commercial area.

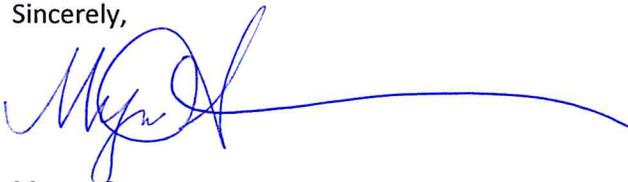
Foreseeable concerns about allowing dog boarding in one of the aforementioned zones might include noise, odor and the limited availability of outdoor space. As a former employee of the Humane Society of Chittenden County, I learned first-hand that a facility holding large numbers of animals can be kept clean, quiet and odorless. Here is how Dottiepants will address each of these concerns:

- **Noise:** In general, dogs bark when they feel threatened or anxious. Keeping barking to a minimum is not only in the interest of the City; it's also beneficial to Dottiepants, for the sake of employee (and canine client) well-being and demonstrating to customers that their dogs are well cared for. While it's impossible to prevent all barking, dogs who are happy and engaged are much less likely to bark. Skilled stewardship of the dogs in the care of Dottiepants will be the first deterrent to excessive barking. To *ensure* that neighbors are not disturbed, the inside dog play area and private rooms will be outfitted with soundproofing products that stop noise from traveling through walls, ceilings, floors, doors and windows.
- **Odor:** Using non-absorbent, easy-to-clean materials, a specialized ventilation system and good cleaning practices is key to preventing odor. In addition, Dottiepants will have onsite laundry facilities so there is no storage of soiled bedding.
- **Outdoor space:** To account for the limited availability of outdoor space in downtown Burlington, Dottiepants is prepared to bring the outdoors in. Dottiepants' potty area will be outfitted with K9 grass, a specialized artificial turf for dogs, offering antimicrobial properties and superior cleaning abilities.

Should other concerns arise, conditionally permitting this use would allow the Commission a great deal of control over similar activities in the future. Furthermore, regulations could be included in the ordinance to help mitigate concerns, such as requiring noise proofing, proper ventilation, onsite laundry and sufficient play space for the dogs, etc. Should it be helpful, I would be happy to provide the Commission with a research document on industry best practices for dog daycare.

I look forward to discussing this issue with you, and thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Megan Stearns

Burlington resident and owner of Dottiepants Day Club for Dogs