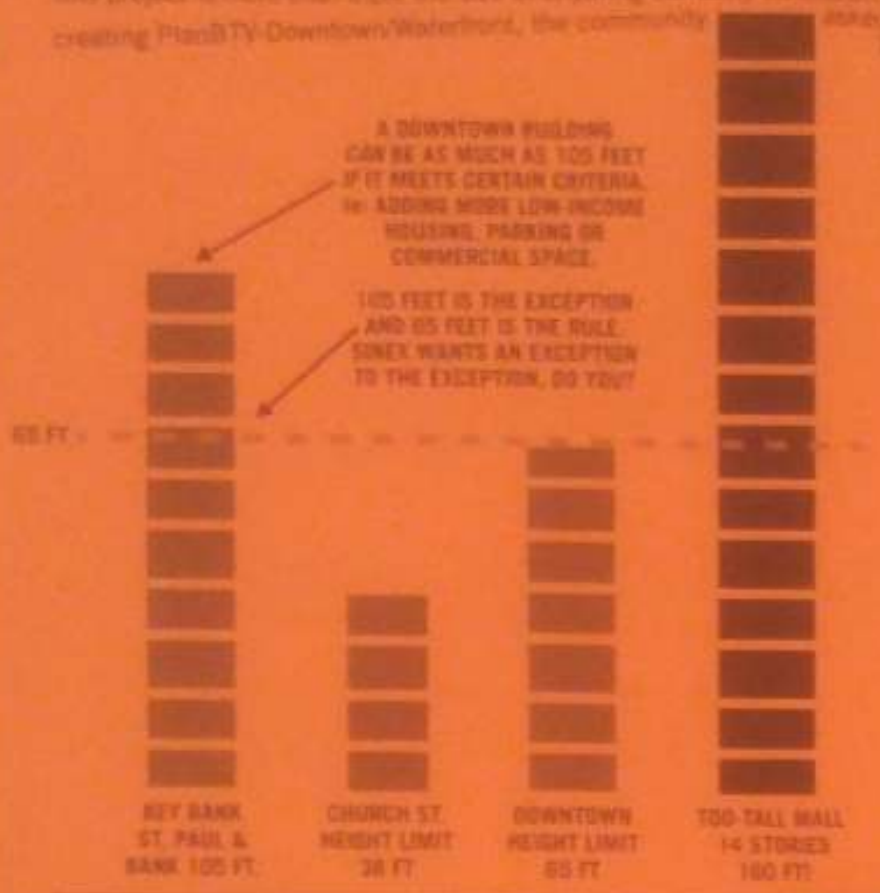
An explanation of

DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON BUILDING HEIGHT

The Coalition for a Livable City has been working hard to share information and bring the public up to speed on the issues that concern us about Don Sinex's mall project and the fact that our city councilors have passed a pre-development agreement despite the fact that much information is still unknown and current zoning does not allow for the height of this building. Sinex is requesting an exception which some call "spot zoning". Spot zoning is illegal, and would set a dangerous precedent. At **14 stories and a mass of more than one city block**, this project is more than triple the size of anything currently downtown. During the two year public process of creating PlanBTV-Downtown/Waterfront, the community asked for human-scale buildings. This is not human-scale.



"Building height varies depending on what side is measured and whether rooftop mechanical equipment and features such as solar panels are taken into consideration. Stories are not standardized. A building with higher ceilings and fewer stories might end up being taller than a structure with lower ceilings and more stories. For these reasons, height limits are often formulated with a maximum number of feet as well as consideration of stories."

Steven Dopp, June 2019

"When City Council was debating height, there were many public meetings and people did not want 105 ft (height that includes special bonuses). Council pushed that height, called it a compromise."

Lee F., Burlington Resident

Get involved. Write to City Councilors:
www.burlingtonvt.gov/CityCouncil

Write to Planning Commissioners:
www.burlingtonvt.gov/PZ/PCMembership

Come to city meetings and speak during the public comment period.

From PlanBTV pages 37, 42

"**Scale** relates to the size of buildings in relation to ourselves and the world around us. Human scale is what feels comfortable to people. Both short and tall buildings—**like those pictured here**—can be human scale, and having this variation is important. The proportions of doors and windows, the height of each story, and the relationship between details of the building all impact whether a building is at a scale that feels right to a person."

Of the public polled **less than 15-20% were dissatisfied with the scale of buildings** on Church Street and downtown. That means **a great majority of people like the scale of our city as it is** — honoring our natural assets — lake and mountain views.

Planning Commission

June 9th, Thursday 6-8 pm Police Station, work session with short public comment period

June 14th, Tuesday 6-30 Police station, regular public comment period

July 6th, Wednesday 6-30 Centers, **Public Hearing** City Council as Centers

July 11th, Monday 6-30 [illegible]

Learn more: **Facebook**: Stop the 14-Story Mall **Blog**: coalitionforalivablecity.blogspot.com

Coalition for a Livable City: Position on the Town Center Project

- The developer wants to wrap his project in a specially designed zoning [illegible] is spot zoning. We demand that the City reject spot zoning.

- We do not know anything about this developer and no agreement should be signed with him before his viability and conformity have been responsible vested.

- The requested zoning change, up from 65 feet from the absolute highest allowable with bonuses, allows 160 feet buildings, twice the height of the Hotel Vermont and eleven stories above much of the downtown. The City must reject this height explosion and retain the height established by Plan BTV just two years ago, 65 or 105 feet.

- All new structures should be 100% Healthy Building/LEED/Platinum certified green, and meet the 2030 energy challenge.

- Height, mass, and shadow patterns affect the realm survey that pedestrians and vendors desire. The developer must present a physical scale model of his plan prior to any City action that shows these values are protected. 3-5 stories is the optimal height for downtown buildings to maintain quality of life and character.

- The developer, and Plan BTV, admit the present configuration of the mall is a failure. Before the City supports a new configuration, the public needs to see market studies that support the viability of any proposed design.

- The rationale for City support of this project rests on the affordable units of housing it will bring—a mere 20% of the total, with the possibility that he will default and just pay a fine. A better project would have every unit be affordable.

- A pre-lease agreement with Champlain College puts 80 units and as many as 160 or more students into any apartments on a segregated floor. Student housing downtown should be treated like all other housing with annual leases at comparable rates in any portion of the housing complex.

- The Town Center "superblock" includes two street footprints obtained through federal Urban Renewal funding and transferred to the mall. Now the mall owner wants taxpayers to give him millions of dollars via a TIF bond for the public use of these self-private streets which he will use for retail frontage and access to his apartment blocks and office. The City must reject this outrageous demand!

- The developer is able to avoid undergoing Act 250 environmental review because he is planning 274 units—one unit below the 275 threshold. This is an avoidance in bad faith and should not be allowed, especially considering the fact that this development would be the highest building in the state of Vermont, with a mass of 300 feet x 300 feet by 160 feet high.

- Sound city planning begins with a definition of Burlington as pedestrian friendly, architecturally-interesting, and view-maximizing, a rarely city of street cafés and locally-owned businesses. To get there we must preserve lower building heights, expand pedestrian streets, reduce cars and visible parking lots, and add more mass transit. Planning fails when it is a knee-jerk embrace of developer surge proposals. If the City won't change course, the public must step in, demand change, and vote down any public subsidy for this behemoth!