

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Vision Statement

Burlington is a community where residents participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them. Neighborhood and citywide groups as well as individuals and adjacent communities have a clear voice in a city policy-making process that is open and accessible.

Many issues, including those in the areas of transportation, housing, land use, solid waste, recreation, and the protection of natural areas (including Lake Champlain and the Winooski River) are addressed in regional forums. Burlington continues to cooperate with neighboring communities and regional entities to seek comprehensive solutions.

This plan sets forth a vision for Burlington over the next ten years and offers both policies and actions to implement that vision. The document by itself, however, will accomplish nothing included here. The City, through its Departments, Commissions, Administration, and City Council must now implement this plan through the array of tools available, and in partnership with other governments and the private and non-profit sectors.

This section discusses how various implementation tools relate to specific actions recommended in the plan. Each section of the Plan contains a more complete discussion of necessary actions.

Ongoing Community Participation

This document was shaped by the concerns of the citizens of Burlington. This process does not end with the completion of the Plan. The City must continue its policy of sharing information with the public, listening to their concerns, and acting on them. Only in this way will the Municipal Development Plan be an effective document for guiding growth and change. Community participation must include citizen education and ways to encourage meaningful involvement.



Neighborhood Planning Assemblies are one of the primary vehicle through which the City acquires feedback from citizens. NPA's have been the center piece of citizen engagement in Burlington for nearly two decades. They are a principle forum through which citizens provide feedback to the City on projects, plans, and policies. In the past three years alone over 1,000 citizens have participated in NPA's.

However this is not enough. One of the central objectives of the *Legacy Project Action Plan* is to involve a broad section of citizens in all aspects of decision-making.

This means involvement that occurs not only in the voting booth at election time. It also means providing the opportunity to have a greater impact on all decisions made not only by the government, but also by local businesses, institutions, non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, and more.”

In striving toward this kind of wide-ranging public participation in governance, Burlington must address three key issues: the need for responsiveness and accountability on the part of government, the need for local control over decisions affecting neighborhoods, and the need for informed decision-making.

Providing our young people with the education to make informed decisions and participate more effectively in our community is just the first step toward greater empowerment for youths. Burlington must also strive to provide "a place at the table" for youths when making decisions that effect their community and their future¹.

Priority Actions included in the Plan include:

- Increase diversity - including youths and minorities - on decision-making boards of all types and provide a regular "report card" on progress.
- Implement a neighborhood design process as part of each municipal development plan update, providing residents with more of a voice about how their neighborhood will grow in the future.
- Reorganize city government to make it more responsive and accountable to the voters, with the mayor overseeing city departments while balancing strong input from commissioners and other committed citizen-volunteers with more effective and centralized management.
- Provide youth representation on city boards and commissions, with the representative(s) to be chosen by youths themselves.
- Identify community service and internship placements for students to participate in civic affairs.

¹ *Burlington Legacy Project Action Plan*, May 2000.

To improve citizen education the City should:

- work with the school department to add a city government module to civics classes.
- encourage the media to more fully cover all aspects of city government.
- expand the town meeting television coverage of Planning Commission, Development Review Board, and City Council meetings.
- extend the use of town meeting television to all city commissions.

To encourage meaningful participation the City should:

- explore ways to strengthen the neighborhood planning assemblies and improve attendance.
- better publicize and advertise neighborhood planning assembly meetings and encourage early review of major development proposals at the neighborhood level.
- insure neighborhood planning assembly participation in and review of institution development plans and projects.

Regional Cooperation

Cooperation between state and federal government, neighboring municipalities, regional entities, and the non-profit and private sectors will be absolutely necessary for many of the policies in this plan are to be successfully implemented. Pooling resources make regional solutions more cost efficient and effective. Regional coordination and cooperation must be an on-going process.

Many of the issues facing Burlington, such as natural resource protection, transportation, housing, and waste management, must be addressed on a regional level. All communities, for example, must share fairly the provision of housing for the homeless, the disabled, low-income households with children, and for renters of every income. Each section of the Plan describes regional relationships associated with the area discussed. Burlington must continue to work with other municipalities, both individually and in collective regional forums, to seek solutions to common problems.

However, the City must insure that Burlington residents are fairly represented in these regional forums. Burlington has over 28% of the County's population, one third of the County's jobs, and has been designated a "Regional Growth Center" in regional land use plans. Yet, when it comes to regional land use policy and decision-making, Burlington is in no better position to effect change than a community one tenth its size.

Burlington is presently a member of the following regional organizations:

- Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA): A regional transportation authority responsible for providing public transportation in Burlington, South

Burlington, Winooski, Essex, and Shelburne. Burlington representation: 2 of 10 members.

- Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO): Governed by federal law, the CCMPO identifies, plans, prioritizes, and programs transportation improvements within the urbanized portion of the region. Burlington representation 1 of 9 voting members.
- Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD): Consisting of a majority of municipalities in the region, the District is responsible for management and disposal of solid waste including the planning, siting, design, and operation of facilities. Burlington representation 1 of 16 members.
- Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD): This nonprofit organization acquires and manages open space, wildlife habitat, farmland, and other natural areas within the watershed of the Lower Winooski River. Burlington representation 1 of 7 members.
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC): This quasi-governmental organization includes all municipalities in the county. It provides planning support services to its member communities, and develops regional land use plans and policy. Burlington representation 1 of 22 members.

Public/Private Partnerships

Combined efforts between public and private partners are another way to implement the Plan policies. Presently the City participates in many shared efforts including:

- The Downtown Partnership
- Banking Council
- Bio-Tech Task Force
- Chittenden County Alcohol and Drug Alliance

Cooperation between the public, private, and non-profit sectors plays an important role in problem solving and future planning. Burlington must continue to work with the University and the other institutions to solve parking, transportation, and housing problems. The Planning Commission and the institutions will cooperate to find appropriate sites for on-campus housing and concentrate new development. CEDO will continue to work with the private sector to retain and expand the job base. Public/private partnership may be particularly helpful in resolving transportation issues. The City should explore the potential for a downtown transportation management organization that would implement solutions to congestion and parking. This organization would include representatives from the business community, city government, and users. The City should join with the private sector to revitalize the transitional areas north and south of the downtown.

Inter-Departmental Collaboration

Coordination and partnerships must extend to city departments as well. While city government is separated into 25 departments and offices - many of which with an independent governing commission - all city government serves the residents and taxpayers of Burlington. In order to serve the community most effectively, city departments must continue to search for ways to improve communication, share information and collaborate on joint projects. For example, Planning and Zoning, Parks and Recreation, and the Schools can work together to design more diversified, multifunctional school facilities. Planning and Zoning can share economic, demographic, and geographic information with other departments, and coordinate permitting processes with Public Works. CEDO and Public Works can coordinate the minimum housing inspection program with the low-interest Home Improvement Program.

Inter-departmental collaboration begins with improvements in communications between departments and how the city shares information both internally and with the public. Realizing that many city functions rely heavily on data/communication flows, and that efforts to date have focused on the specific needs of individual departments, an evaluation of current city investments in technology was started in 1996. Recommendations will address how the City can make the best use of emerging technologies to improve efficiency and services. This study must be followed by the necessary investments in hardware, software, and training. In this information age, city government cannot afford to be left behind.

Each section of this Plan's Action Plan defines specific actions to be accomplished within a generalized time frame, and identifies key partners responsible for specific actions. The following table outlines these relationships in general:

Topic Area:	Key Partners:
Land Use	Planning & Zoning All City Departments
Natural Environment	Planning & Zoning Public Works Parks & Recreation
Built Environment	Planning & Zoning Public Works Parks & Recreation
Historic Preservation	Planning & Zoning CEDO
Transportation System	Public Works Planning & Zoning CEDO
Economic Development	CEDO Planning & Zoning
Community Facilities and Services	All City Departments
Energy	BED Public Works Planning & Zoning
Housing	CEDO Planning & Zoning Public Works
Education	School Dept. Parks & Recreation Planning & Zoning

Inventories, Sector Plans and Studies

The policies and actions recommended in this plan originate from public input, technical information, and analysis. Planning and development is an ongoing process; as conditions change, actions needed to implement policies and visions will change. Moreover, additional research is needed to implement some of the policies in this plan.

Collection of Information:

Inventories, plans, and studies are all based on relevant information. Each department in city government collects information on its projects and programs. Examples include traffic data and road conditions, building and zoning permits, land records, and socio-economic data. This information should be collected in such a way that it will be useful and available to all city departments. For example, GIS is an important tool in gathering and analyzing spatially referenced information. Nearly all data collected by the City is referenced to places on the ground. The city should encourage departments to collect information in a format compatible with the GIS database.

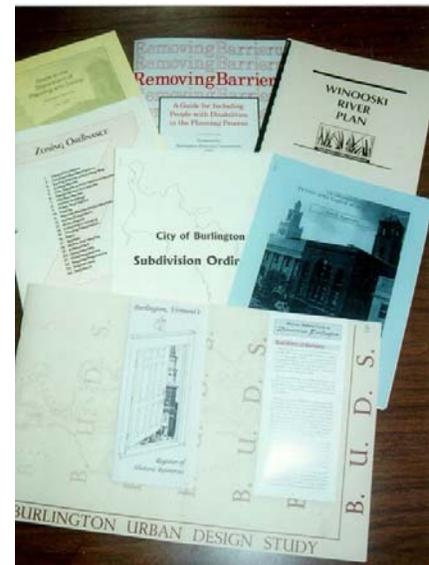
Inventories and Studies:

This plan recommends the completion of several inventories and studies that will help in formulating new regulations and programs. They will also be important tools for monitoring progress and success. Examples include an assessment of citywide preservation activities, an inventory of public buildings and their condition; a feasibility study for an energy district in the CBD; an inventory of public art and cultural facilities; and inventories of historic buildings and natural resources.

Sector Plans:

While the Municipal Development Plan defines general policy directions and land use for **all** areas of the city, more detailed sector plans are necessary to address the needs of certain neighborhoods. These include Riverside Avenue, the Pine Street corridor, Downtown, the Downtown Waterfront, and the Intervale. These sector plans should be based on already-existing work, such as the Waterfront Urban Renewal Plan, the Riverside Revitalization Plan, and the Downtown Partnership Study, and should include extensive public participation and review.

Besides these sector plans, the City, through the Planning Department, Community and Economic Development Office, and Neighborhood Planning Assemblies should undertake conservation plans for each neighborhood in the city. These plans would inventory building conditions, identify important physical elements, and define the architectural characteristics worth protecting in each neighborhood. These include traditional building types, setbacks, street layout, densities, landscaping, and street details. Each plan would also include an inventory of the current level of neighborhood services. New development or changes should reinforce and enhance the existing neighborhood patterns and not diminish the current level of neighborhood services as defined in this plan. Work on the sector and conservation plans should begin shortly after the plan is adopted.



COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN RE-WRITE

As noted previously, the Legacy Project provides a roadmap for change that will guide Burlington in sustaining its role as the vital economic, social, and cultural hub of the region. It envisions growth into a “real city” with both a significantly higher population and an outstanding quality of life, including a thriving business sector; full, high-wage employment; a vibrant downtown and waterfront; excellent housing opportunities; strong social supports; and an environment that is managed and protected with great care. The Burlington Legacy Project provides a blueprint for ongoing, community-wide dialogue about the nature and extent of future development based on the principles of sustainable development. It also calls for a strong collaboration with surrounding communities and regional organizations.

The next revision of the City’s Municipal Development Plan will be the first complete and comprehensive re-write of the Master Plan since 1991, and will advance the Legacy Project’s vision for Burlington to the next stage by outlining more specific policies and land use plans that will facilitate the City’s future growth. This will require two significant initiatives and investments by both the City and the residents. First, studies will be necessary to better understand the City’s physical capacity to grow significantly as proposed in the community vision adopted in the *Legacy Project Action Plan*. The City will need to address the questions of **what is possible** and **what might it look like** in order to determine the public’s comfort level with significantly increased density. Second, the public’s attitudes and desires for future development must be sought. This plan offers a framework, but more detail is necessary regarding specific density levels and building heights that will be acceptable to the community. For this, a series of neighborhood forums and design charrettes will be conducted over the next two years. Finally, an assessment of the capacity of the City’s infrastructure (water, sewer, transportation, schools, etc.) to accommodate addition growth must be determined. This will be essential information for determining the city’s total capacity for growth and estimating the public investments that will be necessary to encourage and support future development. Each of these efforts will be very high priority actions, and will require outside expertise and funding to undertake. The goal is to have a new plan to present to the public sometime in 2003.

Zoning and Subdivision

State law gives municipalities the power to regulate land use through tools such as zoning by-laws, subdivision regulations, shoreline by-laws, and an official map. These regulatory tools address many different issues, among them design control, historic preservation, parking and traffic, densities, land use and cover, and resource protection. While other plans, programs and policies affect development within city, the zoning and subdivision regulations are the City's principle regulatory means used to carry out the policies and recommendations of the Municipal Development Plan.

This plan recommends studying the following land use changes for inclusion in the zoning ordinance as an example.

- Protection of all or part of the following natural areas: Mount Calvary Red Maple Swamp, Redstone Quarry, Barge Canal, Flynn Estate, Northshore Wetland and those areas identified as Natural Areas of Local Significance
- The creation of neighborhood mixed-use activity centers in the following proposed locations: Ethan Allen Shopping Center area, and along North Winooski Avenue near Riverside Avenue
- Evaluate the types of uses encouraged in the South End.
- Complete the Institutional Core Overlay Zone.
- Evaluation of street design and lighting standards
- Increase densities within the downtown and Neighborhood Activity Centers, and along major transit corridors, including North Avenue, Shelburne Street, South Winooski Avenue, Pearl Street, and Colchester Avenue
- Implementation of shoreline zoning along the Winooski riverfront and the lakeshore.
- Adoption of a trip reduction and redistribution ordinance to limit the number of vehicle trips generated by new development.
- Re-evaluation of parking requirements and further enhance use of the Parking and Mass Transit Capital Fund.

The land use section, as well as other parts of this plan, contains more detailed recommendations regarding changes in the zoning and development regulations. While all recommended changes should be included in the revised zoning ordinance, priority should be given to protecting the natural environment, designating growth and activity centers and implementing trip reduction and parking strategies.

PROCESS CHANGES

Policies in this plan can be implemented through changes in the development and permitting process. The City should consider ways in which the development review process can be streamlined and simplified to insure that the cost of development does not rise unnecessarily. Ordinances and guidelines should be easily understood by the public, and requirements should be made clear at the outset. To accomplish this:

- The City should undertake a comprehensive review of all development permit processes to ensure consistency, compatibility, and efficiency.
- The City should establish a central permit office for “one-stop shopping” in the downtown.
- The Planning Commission, in concert with the Design Advisory Board and the Public Works Commission, should establish a set of *Burlington Design Principles* to serve as the foundation for future public and private development.

- The Design Review section of the Zoning should be rewritten to emphasize the integral relationship between proposed projects and neighborhood patterns.

Capital Improvement Program

The City of Burlington and its various departments own approximately 1,000 acres of land. Excluding those at the Burlington International Airport, but including Burlington Electric Department, the City owns property valued at over \$193 million. These buildings serve functions as diverse as ice hockey, offices, public meeting space, and wastewater treatment. The City also owns sewer and water lines, roads and right-of-ways, electric lines and other utilities.

To provide services, the City must maintain its existing facilities and utilities, upgrade them to meet community interests and needs, and expand them as the city grows. Police and fire vehicles must be replaced regularly, sewer treatment facilities must be upgraded to improve the quality of Lake Champlain, and the City must expand its park system as the number of users increase.

Capital improvements cost money. Various needs must be balanced against each other. To do this effectively, the City has implemented a capital budget and program that proposes and ranks capital projects based on goals established in this plan and on established standards for the appropriate provision of services. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) outlines a schedule for the expenditure of municipal funds for public physical improvements over a six-year period. It consists of two components: **a capital budget**, which lists and describes the capital projects to be undertaken during the coming fiscal year, and **a capital program**, which lists and describes the capital projects proposed to be undertaken during each of the following five years.

Capital improvement projects are typically major expenditures, such as the purchase, construction, reconstruction, renovation, or replacement of a public building, facility, or major equipment item. The capital program gives highest priority to projects that in the long run will save the city money, especially in terms of energy efficiency, or that are necessary to protect public health and safety. Projects to expand, replace, or upgrade facilities must be based on established service standards. New projects should not be financed at the expense of neglecting existing infrastructure and facilities.

Capital improvements do not include maintenance of existing facilities, property and buildings however - perhaps the City's most pressing financial need. The City must continue to invest in maintenance - making it a high priority - in order to make the best use of existing resources and prevent unnecessary capital costs caused by neglect.

Impact Fees

To help mitigate the impact of new development on the property tax, the Vermont Legislature enacted legislation allowing communities to assess equitable impact fees on new development to cover associated municipal capital costs. Since 1992, the City has been assessing impact fees for a range of municipal services including transportation, fire, police, parks, library, and schools. In FY95, over \$140,000 in impact fees were assessed on new or expanded development.

The use of funds collected through Impact Fees is limited to capital improvements to accommodate the demands created by new growth. Impact fees must be used within six years of payment. When fees raised are not enough to address large capital improvements on their own, they could be used to pay down the debt associated with the issuance of a bond for the same purpose. The City will continue to monitor the assessment and expenditure of impact fees to ensure fees assessed are paid in a timely manner, and that fees levied are properly utilized.

Program and Project Implementation

While many of the goals of this plan can be implemented through legislation and regulation of the private sector, many other policies must be put into place by direct action of the City and its departments. These programs will need the financial support of the capital planning process, impact fees, or direct budget allocation. Major new programs and actions that have priority include:

- Land conservation program to purchase or protect natural areas.
- A transportation system and demand management program.
- Improvements to Riverside Avenue, North Street and Champlain Connector.
- Treatment of stormwater run-off.
- Wastewater capacity in the downtown area

On-going projects that have priority include:

- Sidewalk and pedestrian improvements.
- Accessibility improvements.
- Downtown Waterfront Infrastructure.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE

In some instances, implementation of this plan will require legislative initiative on the state or federal level. The City must work with the appropriate legislative groups to realize the plan's vision, for example, to expand the allowed land uses along the downtown waterfront or to enable local option taxes to fund open space protection.

EVALUATION

This plan recommends ongoing evaluation of the various programs recommended to determine their effects and if they are in fact successful. This is particularly important for ordinances and zoning bylaw changes. For example, the City should monitor the existing inclusionary zoning, housing replacement, and housing demolition ordinances to assess their effectiveness in preserving affordable housing.



