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TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Meagan Tuttle, AICP, Director and Charles Dillard, AICP, Principal Planner
DATE: February 13, 2023
RE: Proposed ZA-22-04 Trinity Campus Zoning Amendment

Background

In December 2021, Mayor Weinberger announced the ["10 Point Housing Action Plan"](#) to serve as a roadmap with two main goals: to double the rate of housing production within the city over the next 5 years, and end chronic homelessness in Burlington. The action plan includes a number of financial investments, resource expansion, and zoning policy changes to achieve these goals. The plan continues to build on nearly a decade of work to address housing availability and affordability—including many policy reforms the Planning Commission has previously been engaged in. In particular, the plan builds on and expands objectives from the 2015 Housing Action Plan and the 2019 Housing Summit.

The 2021 plan identifies three major zoning policy amendments to support its overarching goals, including "opening new on-campus University of Vermont (UVM) student housing opportunities by rezoning the former Trinity Campus to reduce UVM's pressure on the housing market."

Reviewing the applicability of the Trinity Campus overlay zoning district for this part of UVM's campus has been discussed periodically in recent years. [planBTV: Comprehensive Plan](#), updated in 2019, identifies the institutions' campuses and the major thoroughfares that function as the city's eastern gateways as [special growth areas](#). *planBTV* states that these areas are an essential focus for the growth of the institutions within their campuses, particularly to create new and additional housing options for students. *planBTV* also notes this area of campus as being important to help "better balance on-campus housing opportunities between the north and south of the core academic areas of campus."

Existing Trinity Campus Overlay Zoning District & Requested Amendments

The *Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance (CDO)* includes five Institutional Core Campus Overlay Districts, which apply to sub-areas of the Institutional zoning district. These overlay districts are intended to provide for growth within the core of the institutions' campuses, by allowing an increased development intensity than would typically be found in the underlying zoning district, and providing transitions between sections of campus and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The UVM Trinity Campus (ICC-UVMT) overlay zone applies to a parcel on UVM's campus along Colchester Avenue on the north side of the intersection of Colchester and East Avenues. The parcel is currently home to a number of UVM [residence halls](#) such as McCauley and Mercy Halls, as well as other uses for the institution. UVM intends to create additional graduate and undergraduate beds in the vicinity of these existing residence halls, and has identified a number of limitations under the current ICC-UVMT overlay zone. The requested zoning changes included allowing buildings within the existing Colchester Avenue Buffer, and increasing allowable height and lot coverage. In reviewing the existing ICC-UVMT standards, staff identified four additional areas to update: density limits, allowance for non-residential uses, major impact threshold, and context on campus planning within this area of campus. The enclosed amendments address both UVM and the department's recommended changes.

Proposed Amendment

Amendment Type

Text Amendment	Map Amendment	Text & Map Amendment
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Purpose Statement

The proposed amendment updates the dimensional and use standards for development within the Trinity Campus Overlay zone, and establishes new requirements for supplemental application materials for developments on the Trinity Campus.

Proposed Amendments

The following changes to the *Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance* are proposed:

1. **Amends standards for setbacks, height, and lot coverage within the Trinity Campus Overlay district (ICC-UVMT)**

These changes address requests made by UVM to facilitate infill development on the Trinity Campus in support of additional on-campus housing and include:

- Establishes a new front yard setback between the property line and the existing Colchester Avenue Buffer.
- Allows new buildings between the new setback and the existing Colchester Avenue buffer up to 45 ft., and increases the height limit to 80 ft. for buildings beyond the existing buffer.
- Increases the allowable lot coverage on the Trinity Campus from 40% to 60%.
- Replaces existing setback measurements that are measured from the property line to be measured instead from the centerline of Colchester Avenue.

2. **Removes the Trinity Campus-specific limit on density and lowers threshold for Major Impact Review**

- With the exception of ICC-UVMT and the Champlain College overlay, the campus overlays do not apply a limit on housing density in order to enable institutions to maximize their anticipated growth within their campus areas. This amendment proposes to remove this limit for dorms and residential units created for students.
- This proposes to remove the lower threshold for Major Impact review that applies only to Trinity Campus. This would instead utilize the standards of the underlying Institutional District for when this would be applicable.

3. **Adjusts allowable residential and non-residential uses allowed on the Trinity Campus, and allows non-residential uses in new buildings in addition to existing**

- ICC-UVMT allows for some non-residential uses such as cafés, small grocery stores, and similar business types in existing buildings on the Trinity Campus. However, these same uses are a conditional use if they are incorporated in new buildings. This amendment proposes to allow these uses regardless of the age of the buildings.
- This also removes Single Family and Duplex homes from the allowable uses; adds Beauty/Barber Shop, Laundromat, and Parking Garage to the list of permitted uses; and updates other uses to be consistent with changes to Uses in Appendix A since this district was established.

4. **Creates new application requirements for developments on the Trinity Campus**

- There is strong City and public interest in overall growth & development plans for the Institutions and how a specific project proposal fits the vision. This proposes additional information about growth and enrollment forecasts to be submitted as part of an application for development on the Trinity Campus.

Relationship to planBTV

This following discussion of conformance with the goals and policies of planBTV is prepared in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. §4441(c).

Compatibility with Proposed Future Land Use & Density

The proposed changes are consistent with *planBTV*. Specifically, this amendment is intended to enable greater on-campus development in an area identified for future institutional growth. *planBTV* notes that this area of campus is important to creating a better balance among on-campus housing opportunities to the north and south of the core academic campus areas.

Impact on Safe & Affordable Housing

The proposal is intended to support the creation of new and additional housing options on campus for students of multiple academic programs. Together with changes to allowable non-residential uses, the proposed amendments seek to enable vibrant campus developments that will be attractive to a range of students, including those not otherwise required to live on campus. This also supports the [2015 Housing Action Plan](#) goal to create new on-campus beds in order to create a better balance of housing opportunities with our community, improve quality of life in near-campus neighborhoods, and reduce student pressures on area rents.

Planned Community Facilities

This amendment has no impact on any planned public facilities, but is anticipated to support planned residential infill development on the UVM Trinity Campus.

Process Overview

The following chart summarizes the current stage in the zoning amendment process, and identifies any recommended actions:

Planning Commission Process				
Draft Amendment referred by: Staff	Presentation & discussion: 2/8/22, 5/25/22, 7/12/22, 9/13/22, 10/11/22	Approve for Public Hearing	Public Hearing 11/15/2022, 12/20/2022	Approve & forward to Council 12/20/23
City Council Process				
First Read & Referral to Ordinance Cmte 2/21/23	Ordinance Committee discussion & recommendation	Council 2 nd Read	Public Hearing	Approval & Adoption
				Rejected