

**March 20, 2015 – DRAFT**

## **BTV Mall Public Process Summary and Recommendations**

The owners of the Burlington Town Center mall and the City of Burlington have partnered to seek meaningful citizen input into the redevelopment of the mall property. Guided by public process approved by the City council in December 2014, public engagement and input has been gathered through a variety of public outreach efforts including meetings, comment boxes, and on-line tools. This document summarizes the public engagement process and related recommendations over the first three months of 2015.

### **SCOPE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Input has been contributed through the following processes:

- 1. January 8, 2015 – Public kick-off presentation and public forum**
  - a. Approximately 150 attendees
  - b. 60 comments on Circulation and Mobility
  - c. 80 comments on Mix of Uses
  - d. 58 comments on Public Space and Amenities
  - e. 65 comments on Urban Design
  - f. 263 comments total
  - g. All comments posted to website and reviewed
- 2. Public Process Mall Website launched -**  
<http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/CEDO-BTC-Process>
  - a. 20 total comments submitted through the website
- 3. NPA presentations made to Wards 1-8, 2-3, 5, and 6**
  - a. Presentation on public process and discussion of BTV Mall issues at Neighborhood Planning Assembly meetings in January & February.
- 4. Presentations to public meetings of several City committees**
  - a. Planning Commission
  - b. Accessibility Committee
  - c. Youth Council
- 5. February 18-21 Public Planning Workshops – former GAP space in the mall**
  - a. Kick-off workshop held evening of February 18
  - b. 6 design workshops held February 19 and 20
  - c. Open houses in the GAP space between 9:00AM and 7:30PM on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of February
  - d. Closing workshop the morning of February 21<sup>st</sup>
  - e. Approximately 150 participants in workshops
  - f. Approximately 150 walk-in's throughout the open houses
  - g. Facilitated concept designs have been hanging in the GAP interior mall windows since February 21<sup>st</sup>
  - h. Over 400 total comments submitted, collected and reviewed
- 6. Comment boxes have been distributed across the city.**
  - a. Comments are collected regularly. They are currently at the following locations
    - i. Fletcher Free Library,
    - ii. Associations For Africans living Vermont,

- iii. Living and Learning Student Complex at the University of Vermont,
  - iv. The Boys and Girls Club of Burlington,
  - v. The Fletcher Free Library,
  - vi. McClure Multi-Gen Center,
  - vii. CCTV,
  - viii. Arts Riot,
  - ix. Dress For Success Burlington,
  - x. The VNA Family Room,
  - xi. The Flynn,
  - xii. The Roxy Movie Theater,
  - xiii. Department of Public Works,
  - xiv. Burlington High School
- b. To date, 239 comment forms have been submitted

It is estimated that over 1,000 people have been directly engaged in this planning process to date, including committee members, NPA members, mall employees, citizens, shoppers, neighbors, and downtown business interests. Those contributing have so far submitted over 900 specific comments for consideration.

## SUMMARY OF KEY OBSERVATIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Key observations and recommendations are broken down by the four categories used to organize major public meetings :

### Circulation and Mobility

- **North-South connectivity at both St. Paul Street and Pine Street** – As specified in PlanBTV, pedestrian connections through the “superblock” of the mall are essential to repairing our urban fabric. The possibilities to build these connections are numerous – but their activation is one of the City’s highest priorities. *NOTE: This was the most commonly agreed upon comment of the entire public process.*
- **Prioritization of bike infrastructure** – Residents, employees and other mall users should have access to protected bike parking at multiple convenient points in the redevelopment; on-street bike facilities should be integrated into a master planning for cycling that gets people to the mall and transit center on St. Paul; Pine Street should be considered as a “bike through” connection through the mall.
- **East-West connectivity from Waterfront to Church Street** – Pedestrian mobility through the mall itself should be clear, in straight lines with sight lines as much as possible; connections through the hotels, parking garages, and mall should feel like one safe, intuitive pathway; Cherry Street and Bank Street should be pleasant experiences with a connection to the Waterfront at the foot of Cherry Street at Battery Street.
- **Parking** – Of key concerns is affordable parking for employees of the redevelopment – workforce parking; parking should be easy to use, intuitive, available, and multi-use and shared to support many functions downtown.

There should be no or minimal at-grade parking visible from the street. *NOTE: Mall employees were particularly concerned about affordable all-day parking.*

- **Loading Zones** - These should be thoughtful and shielded as much as possible from the pedestrian experience.
- **Accessibility** - All elements of the mall should be accessible, including for those with visual, hearing and mobility impairments.

### Mix of Uses

- **Housing** - Near universal support for density, diversity and affordability:
  - increased density of units to create a more walkable downtown;
  - affordability desired across multiple price points, desire to include places where downtown workers could afford to live;
  - opinions divided on student housing at this location;
  - micro units should be explored. *NOTE: Strong desire among public participants for affordable and workforce housing specifically.*
- **Retail** - Range of affordability desired, but STRONG desire for both local and national retailers. Highlights include:
  - In general a call for more variety in both retail options and restaurants.
  - From comment boxes specifically, overwhelming support for Target, restaurants, local food options, and cultural events.
  - The most mentioned retailer (by far) other than Target was Forever 21, which was strongly correlated with younger participants.
  - Younger participants overwhelmingly wanted affordable fast food options;
  - Older participants overwhelmingly wanted locally grown foods and farmer's market options.
  - Entertainment options were mentioned with great frequency. Examples include bowling, arcades, cinema, music venues, fitness studios, etc.
- **Multi-Generational** - The mall should cater to all ages. Frequent recurring suggestions include
  - space for seniors to congregate, socialize and exercise
  - places for after-school activities for youth in a structured environment.
  - indoor walking amenities—a welcoming space to get out of the weather , and enjoy a bright expansive space in the dark winter months.
- **Visual and Performing Arts** - Mall should be a venue for viewing public and art and a place with a variety of venues and opportunities for performing arts and festivals.
- **Support Local Employment / Job Training** - Mall uses, tenants and constructions should leverage opportunities for jobs and job training programs for local residents to the greatest extent possible.
- **No strong feelings** - The public had little input or was divided in opinion on the topics of:
  - Convention center and/or hotel—general concern for big, faceless convention center but more support for smaller hotel and conference space to serve smaller conventions IF it adds jobs and customers for local residents and retailers.
  - Increased office space—but general support for local serving jobs and downtown workplaces that facilitate increased transit use / reduce automobile commuting and associated traffic and environmental impacts

- *NOTE: City's position on convention uses and hotels is still under consideration pending more intensive study and market analysis and is generally supportive of office space development if supported by the market.*

## Public Space and Amenities

- **Indoor Civic Space and Amenities** – Overall support for inviting, publically accessible civic spaces should be well intergrated into the project
  - Restrooms – Better public facilities that must include adult assisted restroom facilities.
  - Places for the public to gather in a place that feels safe.
  - Spaces that have natural light and feature a welcoming expansive scale where people can spend time in the dark winter.
  - Indoor spaces should be designed to house key community uses such at the Burlington Farmer's Market.
  - Recycling should be prioritized, visible, and ubiquitous.
  - Community space available for meetings is desired.
  - Plants and natural light are important.
  - Strong opinions and concerns about proposed arcades and how “public” those act and feel. Many participants nervous about them becoming a place for undesirable behavior; others equally nervous about it feeling too much like a private space.
- **Outdoor Park and Amenities** – Overall support for a major new publically accessible networks of rooftop park / garden space as an organizing element of the site design
  - Should provide a variety of open spaces that are sunny, include programmed activities and work to activate adjacent uses opening onto these spaces
  - Near unanimous support for green roofs, with thoughtful clear access from the interior and exterior of the mall.
  - Provide good visual cues in the form of the building to let people know that there is a park upstairs.
  - Having a public view of the water from some vantage point is very important. *NOTE: This was a VERY common comment.*
  - There is divided opinion but interest in exploring a plaza style entrance to the mall off of Church Street.
  - Bike parking and potentially servicing for downtown commuters is desired.

## Urban Design

- **Cherry Street Activation** – Activation of Cherry Street with street-level infill, improved infrastructure, and thoughtful redevelopment and operation of the parking garage will rebuild and rebrand Cherry Street as a primary connection between the waterfront and Church Street. An inside-out orientation is important.
- **Bank Street Activation** – Street-level infill and capitalization on currently underutilized public spaces could bring great life to Bank Street. Coordination with neighbors will make for a more engaging streetscape and open opportunities for redevelopment. An inside-out orientation is important.

- **Vertical Expansion** – Thoughtfully designed vertical expansion on top of the existing mall will add valuable retail, office, and housing opportunities to our constrained downtown.
  - Height was commented on often, with the majority of workshop participants and comment box users being in favor of significant heights.
  - There was more skepticism of height as an issue at the opening forum on January 8<sup>th</sup>.
  - A diversity of heights along streets is desired with tallest structures put toward the middle of the site.
  - Added height should be carefully shaped to reduce winds and shadows, and to provide for better public viewing opportunities of the lake and mountains.
  - Vertical expansion should include iconic structures – divided opinion on the balance (and definition) between modern and New England contextual.
  - *NOTE: The City is in favor of maximizing height in thoughtful ways on this site, particularly to support increased density of housing units.*
- **Stormwater Improvements** – The City of Burlington and the mall can be regional leaders in demonstrating stormwater mitigation pilot projects on both public and private property. This should be prioritized.
- **Look and feel** – Design and materials are important. This should not look like anywhere USA, but unique to this place and opportunity.
  - Interior light should be increased.
  - Pay attention to the familiar heights in historic Burlington buildings, but allow for greater height above a base, to accommodate space for housing primarily, but possibly for a hotel or offices.
  - Streetscape should be enhanced with lighting, better materials, and lush tree plantings to improve the sense of place and pedestrian experience.