

Strategies to Guide Policy and Projects

Now that we know more about the actions we need to take to preserve and enhance the South End’s characteristics, let’s take a closer look at the strategies we can use to help us achieve these goals. You’ve seen these icons throughout the plan, which represent which theme each of the “Key Strategies” relates to. Here’s where you’ll find those key strategies...and more! In this section, all of the plan’s strategies are grouped by theme, so that we better understand what it will take within a particular system, or by a particular group of people to implement #OurVision for the South End.



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How to Read This Section

For each of the themes that follow, you’ll find a series of recommended strategies. Each of these strategies includes a “first step” to make it happen, and identifies potential stakeholders that might be involved in getting it going.



Recommended Strategy



First steps to make it happen



Stakeholders who should be involved

CREATIVE & VIBRANT ECONOMY



Second only to Burlington’s downtown, the South End has long been an economic engine for the City and the region. It’s a place where businesses grow from fledgling start-ups to national success stories. A place where manufacturing and R&D operations produce and prototype well-renowned products that have become staples in their industries. A place where artists and creatives ‘make and break’ things, and where innovative companies are discovering solutions for the future. This is a place where hundreds of people, with a wide range of occupations, come to work. Despite its small geographic area—just 4% of the city’s land area—the South End’s Enterprise District is home to 20% of the city’s jobs and over 90% of its current industrial space.

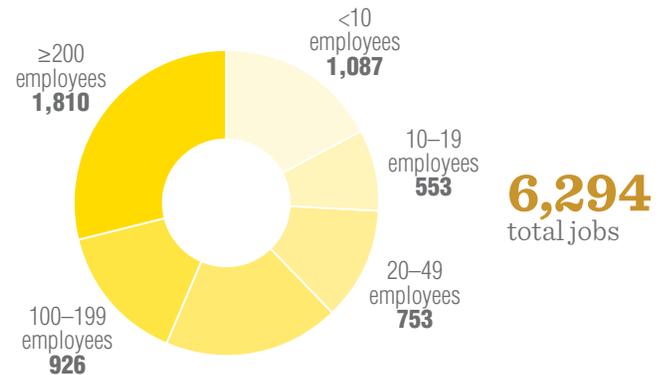
The South End has evolved quite significantly over time, and today enterprise, innovation and the arts form the interconnected economic and social identity of the district. As the economy has changed, the types of work spaces within the South End have changed, too. A hundred years ago, South End buildings bustled with heavy-duty industrial activities—coal was transformed into gas, structural steel and iron castings were fabricated, and the Lumiere Brothers manufactured plates for development of color photographs. By the 1980s, many of these buildings, and a new generation of one-story industrial and commercial structures, stood vacant. In today’s economy, these spaces are being adapted to support a rich and eclectic mix of small-scale manufacturing, food processors, artists and entrepreneurs, and a variety of offices and services.



PHOTO BY LEE KROHN



Number of employees by size of business, South End, 2014



The Burlington South End Market Study, prepared during Phase One of this planning process, identified some of the important trends and issues that are shaping the South End today, and that will continue to drive this important economic district. These trends include:

Growth in the “New Economy” sector. Industries focused on technology, traditional and industrial arts and design, research and development, and small-scale artisanal and food manufacturing have been fueling the economic evolution of the South End. These creative industries are making their home among the industries that currently exist, and are likely to continue to be important sectors of the South End’s economy. Growth in this “New Economy” should be planned carefully, as the South End is already witnessing the impacts of its evolution, including:

- Demand for spaces that combine industrial AND retail operations is strong and growing. These include businesses like breweries with tap rooms, prototype facilities that welcome shoppers and offer tours, and artists’ studios with retail space. As a result, industrial rents are \$2.20/SF higher in the South End than in Chittenden County as a whole, reflecting the appeal of the South End for blended industrial/retail operations.
- Office rents that are comparable to downtown are a result of the desirability of the South End to businesses in search of office space that want to be part of the emerging and eclectic vibe of the district, and want to take advantage of its resources, like availability of parking.
- Increasing difficulty in finding affordable and available space for businesses that are looking for traditional warehouse/manufacturing space, and for artist and small startups that are looking for inexpensive spaces in which to launch and grow.

An evolving economy and workforce that supports mixed uses. The “New Economy” is no longer about large spaces with few workers. Many former manufacturing spaces have evolved into workspaces that look and function like offices, bringing with them far more workers and types of activities than the traditional uses. These redefined spaces are



PHOTO BY LEE KROHN

simultaneously driving the increased diversity of jobs in the South End, and contributing to its gentrification by creating a demand for:

- Opportunities for collaboration, both within companies themselves and among businesses and industries. The adaptive reuse of some buildings has allowed for a variety of businesses to share resources, space and ideas and to work together on innovative solutions for their industries and the community.
- Retail, entertainment and service uses which are being introduced into the South End in response to a demand from workers and nearby neighbors who are looking for places to eat, shop, exercise and socialize within walking distance.

A demand for housing in the South End to accommodate a growing workforce. As there is throughout the City, there is a significant demand for housing in the South End to support the workforce’s ability to live near their jobs and in an area with a high quality of life.

- Housing scarcity and affordability issues, which are confronting both the City and the region, are well-documented. But development economics and land use regulations present significant barriers to creating new, and a more diverse, housing types near significant South End employers.
- Employees of South End businesses, many of whom are commuting from housing outside of the City, are forced to drive and park, adding to traffic congestion and spill-over parking in residential neighborhoods.
- These factors are having an increasingly negative effect on businesses throughout the South End, and individual businesses' ability to attract talented employees to their companies and to the area. However, the demand for new housing has the potential to further threaten the availability and affordability of space for new and growing South End businesses. As a result, for more than two decades, City policy and regulations have prevented any new housing from being created within the Enterprise District.

Cities around the world have experienced similar trends, witnessing the transformation of former industrial districts into places where the “New Economy” is flourishing. These places have been defined and carefully planned for as “Innovation Districts.” These districts are compact, mixed-use, sociable places. They utilize an array of economic, physical and networking resources to drive more sustainable, collaborative economic development. And, they are living laboratories, building and testing solutions to help evolve businesses and strengthen communities.

The South End has evolved over time in a somewhat organic manner; today it is home to many of the resources and activities that are found in innovation districts. The trends, however, point to the reality that the demand for space across all industry sectors in the South End exceeds the current supply. The Enterprise District is at an important juncture, one at which we need to rethink land use policy and economic development strategies to ensure that the arts, industry and creative enterprise can continue to coexist without putting one another at significant risk.

To this end, finding creative solutions to increase the supply of space for these activities must be a central focus of this plan in order for the district to thrive. There are a finite number of potentially developable parcels within the South End. In order to meet the needs of new and expanding businesses, policies are needed that unlock the potential of underutilized land through higher-density, more compact development. In addition to other economic development programs and policies, a key step to achieving this potential is to explore finer-grained land use policies that balance the preservation and continued evolution of the South End's economic landscape.

As we look toward the future, we must be sure to **preserve what makes the South End great**—its character and authenticity—while also working to **enable and facilitate its continued evolution** as the City's arts, innovation and enterprise district, in which a diversity of businesses and job opportunities are located.

planBTV South End outlines a strategy to:

- preserve and support the character of the South End by redefining the one-size-fits-all approach to land use regulation
- recruit additional investment, jobs, and people to ensure its sustained vitality by increasing space and rebuilding important infrastructure
- continue to provide a platform for innovation and enterprise to take root and grow through creativity and collaboration

Strategies for a Creative & Vibrant Economy

ADVANCE LAND USE POLICY CHANGES TO PRESERVE AND EXPAND THE VALUE OF THE SOUTH END TO THE CITY.

Land use policy and regulation must evolve from a one-size-fits-all approach to one that recognizes the unique and varied character of the South End, and prioritizes strategies that will preserve and enhance those characteristics. This strategy supports the protection and expansion of the Enterprise Zone’s creative enterprise, manufacturing, business and arts sectors, while also identifying the need to find creative solutions to minimize conflicts with nearby residential areas and natural resources.

 **Evaluate possible changes to the Enterprise Zoning District that will reflect and enhance the experiences created by the built environment and types of activities within and around the district.** These changes should recognize the variation in character throughout the district, and consider the relationship of the Enterprise Zone to its neighboring residential areas.

A more fine-grain approach to land use regulation within the Enterprise Zone will guide future growth, redevelopment and/or reinvestment in such a way that the arts, industry and creative enterprise can continue to coexist—alongside strong and desirable residential neighborhoods and important natural resources. Revised zoning regulations will address how and where to concentrate and support the arts and artists more directly; where the emerging creative and innovation economy can grow and flourish, and where more traditional manufacturing businesses can continue without direct competition from more sanitized development and land uses.

These changes should reflect the South End’s characteristics, as discussed in this plan, and incorporate guidance on urban design, types of land uses, integration of transportation facilities and other infrastructure. Furthermore, any changes to the Enterprise Zone

**SOUTH
END
CRAWL**

What about the South End
would you change?
...and why?

- Full occupation of Factory space with diversified employment

should be considered together with the Housing section of this plan’s recommendation to evaluate the appropriateness of the zoning of properties within walking distance of the district.

Utilizing this guidance to shape a more fine-grain land use regulation within the Enterprise Zone will result in more predictable infill and development outcomes, clearly communicating what should be preserved and where new things can happen. Furthermore, it will support the growth and expansion of existing businesses while accommodating creative enterprises and innovation, and help to mitigate potential impacts on nearby natural resources and residences.

 *Consider a range of land use tools that could be used to guide the future growth and redevelopment of the Enterprise Zone; advance specific proposals for desired zoning changes.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office*

INCREASE SPACE AND REBUILD CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN AND RECRUIT INVESTMENT, JOBS, AND PEOPLE TO SUPPORT THE SOUTH END.

Throughout the planning process, it has been clear that one of the major challenges impacting the South End is the ability to keep up with the demand for space across a broad range of business scales and types.

Encourage the redevelopment of under-developed sites to create new opportunities for businesses. Infill and new development can expand the stock of available space, as well as provide more variety in the size and types of spaces available.

 *Work with property owners to identify barriers to, and discuss potential strategies for, redevelopment of key sites.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office, property owners*

Facilitate the adaptive reuse of existing buildings in ways that keep them available to existing and potential businesses, artists and fledgling entrepreneurs. Reuse of these facilities can help maintain the character of the South End, maintaining affordable space over new construction, while also allowing for its continued evolution.

 *Foster collaboration among land owners and tenants to find opportunities for adaptive reuse of structures that will ensure long-term viability and affordability.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning, property owners, tenants*

 **Re-build critical infrastructure** to facilitate the continued evolution and expansion of businesses, set a high standard for environmental protection, and increase safety for all modes of transportation.

 *Implement plans for expanded street connectivity, improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and stormwater.*

 *Dept. of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office, Dept. of Public Works, Dept. of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, CCRPC, property owners*

Create new and diverse housing opportunities within walking and biking distance of the Enterprise District to address the demand from the South End’s workforce, and create places where employees can live in close proximity to where they work. **(See the “housing” recommendations)**

 **Consider the future role of the Shelburne Road corridor** in accommodating the City’s ongoing needs for transportation, housing, and employment opportunities.

 *Advance a Shelburne Road corridor study and implement recommendations of the regional ECOS Plan and City Council Housing Action Plan; ensure the study is broad in its evaluation of transportation and land use opportunities*

 *Dept. of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office, Dept. of Public Works, CCRPC*

PRESERVE THE SOUTH END AS A PLACE WHERE INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE CAN TAKE ROOT AND GROW.

The South End has long been an economic driver for the City. Strategies should focus on preserving what makes the South End great, while allowing for its continued evolution.

 **Prepare an economic development plan/strategy for the South End.** This strategy should consider the businesses, employees and resources available today, and the needs of existing and prospective businesses in the future. If this is included within a city-wide economic development strategy, the role of and opportunities for the South End should be clearly identified.

 *Prepare an economic development strategy; identify specific opportunities for the South End.*

 *Department of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office, elected leadership*

 **Expand the economic development toolbox available to support growth.** There are many barriers, but relatively few tools available to assist the City, property owners, and businesses in advancing economic development objectives in the South End. Using an economic development strategy as a guide, the City can look for ways to expand upon its existing economic development tools. Some opportunities could include:

- **Expand the financial tools available from state and regional resources to support development of new facilities,** including grants, new economic development programs, or state designations that can enhance allocation of public resources. Work cooperatively with state government and regional development entities.

- **Continue to provide technical assistance to businesses,** including new enterprises and existing operations, who are seeking space in the South End. Help identify potential space; provide succession planning assistance to existing businesses and property owners; and assist businesses with navigating the city/state permitting processes.
- **Provide workforce training support** by working with local schools, colleges and universities and other regional institutions to ensure educational programs are preparing the workforce for the jobs of the future.

CEDO has a legacy of providing a range of support and assistance to businesses in Burlington, and in particular, those in the South End. This strategy is about expanding the resources available to support South End employers, which are critical to the economy and provide important jobs and services to our region. Funding and capacity to provide these services are limited, so creative partnerships may help the City achieve its economic development goals in the future.

 *Work cooperatively with state government, regional development entities, and local businesses, foundations and educational institutions to expand financial and strategic economic development tools; ensure sufficient resources are available to support these activities.*

 *Dept. of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office, elected leadership*

 **Communicate the South End’s unique character and advantages** to potential future companies and enterprises that could locate in the district.

 *Continue and expand the “They Chose Burlington” campaign as a tool to tell the story about the South End when working to recruit, retain and grow the diverse mix of businesses in the district.*

 *Community & Economic Development. Office, SEABA*