

Amy Wright
483 North Street
Burlington, VT 05401

June 12, 2014

Honorable Miro Weinberger, Mayor
City Hall
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Dear Mayor Weinberger and City Council,

I am unable to attend the public forum on June 12th, 2014 regarding the Downtown Housing Development Strategy, and I would like to add my voice to those of others who seek to have the policy address affordability in a more comprehensive manner.

I am a resident of Ward 1 in Burlington, and I have worked with low and moderate-income families and seniors for 30 years. I understand the severe challenges that low-income households face in our current housing market, and I have seen the success of past efforts to insure that low and moderate income households benefit from the City's housing policies. I understand the efforts that must go on year after year to gain ground and improve the housing situation for citizens of limited resources. It is difficult to see a housing policy put forth that fails to include this sector of the City's population. I am especially concerned because policy directs resources and affects regulation, so the failure to include the needs of these households in the Downtown Strategy could mean that a difficult housing burden becomes much worse for citizens of modest means.

The Downtown Housing Strategy report is essentially silent on the challenges that low income households face as a result of current housing conditions. The Strategy refers repeatedly to the term "affordable housing", but emphasizes need to make housing affordable for those in relatively high wage jobs. It does not speak in any meaningful way about the priorities that are a part of the City and State Consolidated Plan for housing. The Consolidated Plan is a City document that looks at housing needs in the City and is intended to direct public resources to address housing issues. Other housing policies should build on this report, and should not fail to address the essential issues that the Plan addresses regarding housing need.

I believe that seeking to encourage young urban professionals to live in Burlington is a valid part of a housing strategy, but only a part. This population certainly is already well represented in the activities that occur in Burlington's downtown core. Equally important is keeping our City and our downtown a place that all citizens belong. Too much emphasis on the young urban population will hurt your efforts to maintain a balance with families and seniors feeling like the downtown is a comfortable place for all. Low-income

persons seek to locate close to jobs and services too. I believe your Strategy lacks balance.

I want to thank you for your efforts to proactively address Burlington's housing shortage, and encourage you to revise the proposed Downtown Strategy to add balance and address the needs of the City as a whole.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Amy Wright