



Square Corporation
Mayor Miro Weinberger and CEDO,

*Healthy Homes
Caring Communities
Positive Aging*

July 18, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Downtown Housing Strategy Report. I commend the City for conducting this study and working to address the housing problems Burlington faces.

The report emphasizes the need for affordable housing for young professionals. I urge you to not focus exclusively on this demographic. It is critical that the housing needs of families and seniors of modest means in Burlington be prioritized in order to build on the past successes of the City's housing policies, and to maintain a healthy, vibrant, mixed-income, multigenerational community.

The report is silent on our aging demographic and the impact that this will have on housing and services. Vermont is one of the oldest states in the nation and the number of seniors continues to grow. In 2017, one in three Vermonters will be 55+. The number of Vermonters over the age of 80 will double between 2010 and 2030. As the number of seniors continues to increase, so does the need for non-institutional, independent living options with supportive services (the most cost effective way to deliver services).

Cathedral Square's initiative - Support And Services at Home - 'SASH', is serving over 3,500 people statewide including Vermont's lower income seniors and persons with disabilities, 1,000 of which are in Burlington. SASH embeds care management and coordination programming in the home, allowing seniors and persons with disabilities to remain at home independently which decreases the need for residents to move to higher level of care facilities when their health status changes. SASH is making a positive impact on health outcomes and early data demonstrates significant health care savings.

I encourage you to focus the report not just on the downtown, but city-wide, as there are other areas in the city that offer ideal locations for dense housing development which are close to services, have access to public transportation, and are proximate to health care services. Thayer Commons in the new north end is an excellent example – a successful combination of affordable senior housing, affordable family housing, and market rate rental housing developed collaboratively with non-profit developers and a for-profit developer. Both the State of Vermont and the City were critical partners in the success of Thayer Commons. This mixed-income, multigenerational neighborhood - densely developed and well planned - is adjacent to services, transportation and shopping. This is an excellent example of a multi-goal project that can be accomplished in other parts of the city, given adequate incentives and resources. The mix of seniors, families and young people in this new neighborhood is a key to the success of this development, as is the fact that the public investment in the affordable housing is protected through affordability covenants.

I encourage you to revise the proposed Downtown Strategy to promote affordable housing not only for young urban professionals, but for all members of society including seniors, as well as to extend the geographic scope of the report so it is city-wide in order to address the needs of the city as a whole. I welcome the opportunity to further address the housing and service needs of seniors and persons with disabilities in the City and for partnership opportunities with the City to do so. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

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