

*Housing Action Plan, 11/10/2014 draft  
Comments & proposed changes  
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**Introduction/page 1**

*Comments & questions:*

I share the concerns expressed by the Champlain Housing Trust in their most recent testimony of 11/20/2014. There seems to be a strong disconnect between the emphasis on affordability in the introduction and the strategies that follow. As Brenda Torpy wrote, “the Plan document opens by suggesting that the city has failed somehow in meeting its affordability goals in spite of substantial success and innovation in this regard. And further vaguely links the current affordability crunch to these and then pivots to a market supply side approach.”

*Proposed changes:*

- I would like to see more context for understanding the different income levels in Burlington in the introduction. CEDO’s annual reports to federal funders provide rich data on the realities of poverty and homelessness in Burlington; can some of this be included here, along with more general data around median incomes, etc.
- I think the salary and rental cost data provided in testimony by affordable housing partners around the table has been particularly helpful in understanding/illustrating the varying needs and capacity’s of Burlington’s workforce. Can some this be included as introductory or appended information?

**I. Reduce regulatory barriers & disincentives...**

**1. Eliminate Parking Minimums**

*Comments:*

- I am not prepared to support the elimination of parking minimums in the downtown without seeing the results of both the downtown and residential parking studies that are currently underway. We’ve held off on implementing other policy changes without those results and I believe the same principle should apply here.

*Proposed changes:*

- Change title to “Consider eliminating parking minimums...”
- Change last sentence to read, “Pending results of downtown and residential parking studies that are currently underway, Burlington may join the large and growing number of...”

**2. Implement a Form-Based Code**

*Proposed changes:*

- Change to “On October 20<sup>th</sup> the City Council passed a resolution stating that.... [add] *and subsequently appointed a joint committee with the planning commission to review the proposed form-based code. The City should complete these efforts.*”

### 3. Consider Revisions to IZ

*Comments:*

- I am concerned about the 90 day period and question why it needs to be so quick and whether a thoughtful consideration can really occur within that timeframe
- Is this an area where a consultant with an outside eye and expertise in effective affordable housing models could aid CEDO’s consideration process, particularly given Brian’s departure?
- I would support minimal changes to thresholds (e.g. ten vs. five units)
- I support consideration of allowing for in-lieu payments or land donations
- If I understand correctly, there’s also some consideration of raising income targeting to 80%. I do not currently support this and don’t think the case has been fully made to justify it.

### 4. Reform the Building Code

*Comments:*

- Supportive of further investigation
- How will this overlap with form-based code review and considerations?

### 5. Explore the Adaptation of a Rehabilitation Code

*Comments:*

- I support further investigation
- An important consideration for me in the development of any rehab code would be ensuring that it incentivizes preservation and restoration of historic and/or family homes over the potential for further conversion of this housing stock to units for short-term renters

### 6. Reduce Inappropriately High Zoning and Building Fees

*Comments:*

- I support this, given the language about the City covering it’s costs. As others have pointed out, it’s important that assessment reflects the full range of staffing support for permit processing. I also appreciated the suggestion at the last meeting that we look at comparable fees in surrounding communities to fully determine a market value.

*Proposed changes:*

- Change language to “Some of Burlington’s construction-related fees *may be* unusually high and should be adjusted to ensure the rates reflect the City’s costs of permit processing, *with particular attention to staffing cost*”

*coverage...Planning and Zoning...should be directed to review the fee schedule for residential zoning, **compare Burlington's fees to comparable rates in surrounding areas** and consider revisions..."*

## **7. Review South End Zoning and Housing Policies**

*Comments:*

- While there is tremendous opportunity for housing development in the South End, there's also tremendous potential risk to the affordability of existing housing stock in any growth strategy. I am hearing this loud and clear from artists in the area.

*Proposed changes:*

- Add final sentence reading: "Investigate, develop and implement strategies to prevent over-gentrification and to preserve the affordability of existing housing, artists' work spaces and small business spaces in the South End."

## **II. Pursue new strategies for housing college students...**

*Proposed change:*

I would like to add an additional objective here that speaks to the city's commitment to preserving existing and historic housing for longer-term residents such as working families, professionals, seniors, etc. through the review, development and enforcement of ordinances and codes that address issues relating to neighborhood quality of life. Ditto a commitment to landlord accountability through these instruments.

## **8. Over the Next Five Years, Create...1500...Student Housing...**

*Comments:*

- I support the creation of mixed-use development that will attract students *and others* in Burlington's downtown and outlying neighborhoods, but I am concerned about a strategy that overly prioritizes student housing downtown (potentially crowding out families, young professionals or low-income people) or that develops large, dormitory-like settings exclusively devoted to student housing in our downtown. My constituents, although they stand to benefit from the direct removal of students in their own neighborhoods are deeply concerned about the transfer of quality of life issues from our neighborhoods to our downtowns. I favor a more measured approach that distributes student housing more equitably throughout the city and that continues to push for institutional accountability and maximum feasibility of on-campus housing.

*Proposed changes:*

- Is greater clarity/specificity possible about the city's goals re: on-campus vs. off-campus housing development?
- I would like to add language about including student voices in planning for a student housing strategy.

## **9. Negotiate Significant Extensions of College Housing Commitments**

*Proposed changes:*

- Think reference to #7 is a typo

## **10. Create a Neighborhood Stabilization Program**

*Comments:*

- 90 day window feels way to short to explore options in full. Most interesting strategy on this to emerge so far has been the one about employee housing investments and would require exploration and buy-in with multiple potential institutional and business partners. Three months is not enough time to deliver a proposal with chance of success.

## **III. New homeless and low-income strategies...**

*Comments:*

- There is only one strategy for low-income housing here and while laudable, it stands to generate only minimal additional funds for the city in relationship to existing needs. I have a nascent idea about how to further strengthen planning for low-income housing that I will bring to the table at our meeting.
- I would like us to consider adding language about investigating the possibility of creating an ordinance and/or other policy related to the creation of a city-sanctioned encampment (e.g. a temporary encampment, or structured camping facility ordinance). A handful of other cities have studied or implemented this. The idea is to improve safety in encampments while improving access to services and amenities such as bathrooms. A revelation (for me) of the 100K registry project was learning that many of Burlington's homeless residents don't want traditional housing and prefer campground-style living.

## **11. Increase Revenues for Housing Trust Fund**

*Comments:*

- Fully support this

## **12. Explore Housing First**

*Comments:*

- I support this, but think we need an additional commitment to partnering with local non-profits and philanthropic entities to increase available housing stock for homeless individuals and families. Without this, the current Housing First/100K homes approach is a prioritization exercise (and a very important one!)

## **13. Explore Establishing a Low-Barrier Shelter**

*Comments:*

- Fully support

#### **IV. Provide Appropriate Housing Options for an Aging Population**

##### **14. Explore Strategies to Expand Accessibility**

*Comments:*

- Fully support

##### **15. Consider Expanded Home-Sharing**

*Comments/changes:*

- Fully support this and would like to see us be more explicit about tax incentives, as we were in previous drafts. I am supportive of investigating an incentive in the \$400-500 range.
- This has potential benefits for seniors but for low-income Burlingtonians as well; seems like a strategy with broader potential – move to previous section?

##### **16. Review Accessory Dwelling**

*Comments:*

- Echoing Councilor Bushor’s comments here: “As I represent Ward I, there continues to be a big concern regarding Accessory Dwelling Units in close proximity to UVM. Created for a family member then sold to an investor, this could pave the way to continued expansion of what I call the off-campus mini dorm. There would need to be clear, legal restrictions to prevent this from happening.”

##### **17. Code for our Community**

*Comments:*

- I support this

**OVERALL ISSUES:**

- Does Plan BTV provide adequate housing targets? How do we determine what amounts of housing are needed for various segments of the population – particularly affordable, low-income, and market rates. On market rate housing (which I fully believe we need to increase, along with other kinds of housing), how do we know when we’ve reached the “right” amount of growth to retain Burlington’s unique character? Do we let the market decide? Are the checks and balances currently in place with planning, zoning and other relevant policies adequate to prevent over-gentrification or loss of character and affordability as we grow in this area? Should we look more closely at the geographical distribution of housing types across the city and establish goals for various districts?