City Council

Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

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To participate in Public Forum in person, sign up at the meeting.
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*****ONLINE closes one hour prior to the beginning of public forum*****

Do not sign up in person and via Zoom - select one only

1. Agenda

Subject	**1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	1. Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to amend/adopt agenda as follows: remove from the Consent Agenda Item 5.9. Request for City Council Initiative Funds for Memorial Auditorium Beautification - BCA (per City Council President Traverse); remove from the Consent Agenda Item 5.21. FY26 ModernGov Initiative Update - Mayor (per COS Jacobsen); remove from the Deliberative Agenda Item 6.6. Authorization to Execute Contract with Interface Studio for planBTV:2050 - Planning (per CAO Schad)

2. Executive Session (25 mins.)

Subject	**2.1. Executive Session to Update the City Council on the PUC Audit**

Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Executive Session (25 mins.)
Department	Burlington Electric Department
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	1. To make a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of confidential audit response strategy would clearly place the City at a substantial disadvantage by discussing privileged matters, including attorney work product, in public; and 2. To move into executive session, based upon the foregoing specific finding, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313 (a)(1)(E), and (a)(1)(F), to confer with BED General Manager Darren Springer regarding the pending PUC Audit of BED, to include the members of the City Council, the Mayor and her staff, the City Attorney and her staff, and the Chief Administrative Officer and her staff.

3. Public Forum: Time Certain: 6:30 pm **See above for signup instructions**

Subject	**3.1. Verbal Comments**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	3. Public Forum: Time Certain: 6:30 pm **See above for signup instructions**
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	open Public Forum close Public Forum

4. Mayor - General City Affairs (up to 10 mins.)

Subject	**4.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	4. Mayor - General City Affairs (up to 10 mins.)
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

5. Consent Agenda

Subject	**5.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda (as amended) and take the actions indicated**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action (Consent) Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt the consent agenda (as amended) and take the actions indicated
Subject	**5.2. Accountability List - DFA**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication Information
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file
Subject	**5.3. Tobacco License Renewals and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Renewals (2026-2027): Kampus Kitchen and Pearl Street Pipe & Beverage**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	approve the 2026-2027 Tobacco License Renewals and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Renewals for Kampus Kitchen and Pearl Street Pipe & Beverage
Subject	**5.4. Communication: Kathy Fox, re: housing development in City of Burlington**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication
Recommended Action	waive the reading and place the communication on file
Subject	**5.5. Communication: Betsy McGavisk, Member, Housing Board of Review, re: Resignation**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the communication, place it on file, advertise the vacancy in Seven Days and send a letter of appreciation to Betsy McGavisk thanking for her time served as a Member of the Housing Board of Review

Subject **5.6. Communication: Ryan Nick, re: Downtown Priorities**

Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication
Recommended Action	waive the reading and place the communication on file

Subject **5.7. Communication: Pike Porter, re: Vehicular trespass**

Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication
Recommended Action	waive the reading and place the communication on file

Subject **5.8. Relevate Power contract - Electric**

Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Burlington Electric Department
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to approve and authorize the General Manager of the Burlington Electric Department or their designee Department to extend its five-year power purchase agreement with Relevate Power for an additional five-year term (for a total of ten years including the Electric Commission’s prior approval) for renewable energy (not to exceed 50,000 MWH/year), RECs, and capacity from New England hydroelectric resources

Subject	**5.9. Request for City Council Initiative Funds for Memorial Auditorium Beautification - BCA **AGENDA ITEM REMOVED****
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	City Arts
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to approve the use of $8,795 from the City Council Initiative Fund for Memorial Auditorium Beautification
Subject	**5.10. CEDO, Community Justice Center - Reclassification of one position from Limited Service to Regular - CEDO/CJC**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO)
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	move to approve the reclassification of the following position: A Data, Communications and Operations Specialist, from a Limited Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, Union, Grade 14 position to a Regular Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, AFSCME, Grade 14 position
Subject	**5.11. Position Updates - Electric**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Burlington Electric Department
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	1. Convert the existing Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Union, tiered, Grade A3/Grade A5 ($66,629.26- $109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position, to a Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, tiered , Grade NU3/NU5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position reporting to the CFO and Manager of Strategy and Innovation. 2. Eliminate the existing Energy Services Engineer, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade NS4($65,272.06-$107,006.64) position. 3. Create the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade N16, ($120,302.00-$166,178.69) position reporting to the General Manager.
Subject	**5.12. Reconnecting Bank & Cherry Project Update - DPW**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda

Department	Public Works Department
Type	Action (Consent) Report
Recommended Action	to accept this report and place it in the file
Subject	**5.13. December 15, 2025 Local Cannabis Control Commission Meeting Minutes - DFA**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Information Minutes
Recommended Action	approve the minutes
Subject	**5.14. December 15, 2025 Local Control Commission Meeting Minutes - DFA**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Information Minutes
Recommended Action	approve the minutes
Subject	**5.15. December 15, 2025 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes - DFA**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Information Minutes
Recommended Action	approve the minutes
Subject	**5.16. December 15, 2025 City Council With Mayor Presiding Meeting Minutes - DFA**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Information Minutes Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	approve the minutes
Subject	**5.17. Mending Wall - REIB**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Racial Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (REIB)
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to approve and authorize the Director of the Racial Equity Inclusion and Belonging Office and the Chief Administrative Officer to issue a sponsorship grant in the amount of $2,950 to Armadillo Collective, Pennington Productions, and AALV to support the Mending Wall project from the Community Celebrations GL
Subject	**5.18. The Annual Burlington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance Sponsorship - REIB**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Racial Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (REIB)
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to approve and authorize the Director of the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Office and the Chief Administrative Officer to issue a sponsorship grant in the amount of $5,000 to the Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center to support the Annual Burlington Fr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance event from the Community Celebrations GL
Subject	**5.19. Unassigned Fund Balance Request for Turning Point Center FY25 Annual Payment - Mayor's Office**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action (Consent)

Recommended Action	to authorize the adjustment of the FY26 budget and a payment to the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County in the amount of $17,450 out of the Unassigned Fund Balance
Subject	**5.20. Update on 2026 Legislative Session**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action (Consent) Information Report
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the report and place it on file
Subject	**5.21. FY26 ModernGov Initiative Update - Mayor **AGENDA ITEM REMOVED****
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action (Consent) Communication Information
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file
Subject	**5.22. FIO Documents**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication Information
Recommended Action	for information only
Subject	**5.23. Resolution: Selection Of Newspapers For Publication Of 2026 Election Warnings And Notices (President Traverse)**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration

Type	Action (Consent) Resolution
Recommended Action	waive the reading and adopt the resolution
Subject	**5.24. Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting -- Advisory Question re Municipal Tax Reform (Councilor Bergman)**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action (Consent) Resolution
Recommended Action	refer it for deliberations and action at the January 20, 2026 Regular City Council Meeting

6. Deliberative Agenda

Subject	**6.1. Appointment of the Director of Human Resources - Mayor (10 mins.)**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action
Recommended Action	move to confirm the appointment of Lynn Reagan to the position of Director of Human Resources
Subject	**6.2. Public Hearing Regarding New Open Space Plan**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Permitting & Inspections
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	open the Public Hearing close the Public Hearing
Subject	**6.3. New Open Space Plan - Burlington Conservation Board (20 mins.)**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Permitting & Inspections
Type	Action
Recommended Action	waive the reading and approve the new Open Space Plan for adoption by City Council

Subject	**6.4. Public Hearing Regarding ZA-26-01 Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Planning
Type	Action Procedural Public Hearing
Recommended Action	open the Public Hearing close the Public Hearing

Subject	**6.5. Ordinance: ZA-26-01 Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions (Office of City Planning, Planning Commission, Ordinance Committee)(15 mins.)**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Planning
Type	Action Ordinance - Second Reading
Recommended Action	2nd reading. Waive the reading and adopt the ordinance as amended by the Ordinance Committee.

Subject	**6.6. Authorization to Execute Contract with Interface Studio for planBTV:2050 - Planning (15 mins.) **AGENDA ITEM REMOVED****
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Planning
Type	Action
Recommended Action	1. approve the expenditure of up to $340,000.00 ($325,755.00 + 4.2% contingency) from the sources identified above; and 2. Authorize the Planning Director to execute the contract with Interface Studio for planBTV: 2050, subject to the review and approval of the City Attorney

Subject	**6.7. Resolution: Burlington Unlocking Infill & Livable Development (BUILD)(Councilors Traverse, Barlow, Brown McKnight, Carpenter, Litwin, Schachter, Singh) (20 mins.)**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Resolution
Recommended Action	waive the reading and adopt the resolution

7. Committee Reports

Subject	**7.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	7. Committee Reports
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

8. City Council - General City Affairs (to include Climate and Public Health & Safety Emergency Updates: up to 5 mins. per Councilor)

Subject	**8.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	8. City Council - General City Affairs (to include Climate and Public Health & Safety Emergency Updates: up to 5 mins. per Councilor)
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

9. City Council President - Council Updates (up to 5 mins.)

Subject	**9.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	9. City Council President - Council Updates (up to 5 mins.)
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

10. Adjournment

Subject	**10.1. Motion to adjourn**

Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	10. Adjournment
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adjourn

11. Informational and Non-Discrimination Statements

Subject	**11.1. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. For more information on access, call Lori Olberg, Council and Licensing Coordinator (802-865-7136)(TTY 802-865-7142). Persons with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate are encouraged to contact 802-865-7000 (voice) or 802-865-7142 (TTY) at least 72 hours in advance so that proper arrangements can be made. This meeting will also air on Town Meeting TV the Wednesday after the meeting, starting at 8:00 pm and repeating at 1:00 am and 7:00 am the following day. The City of Burlington will not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status, crime victim status or genetic information.**
Meeting	January 12, 2026 - City Council Meeting - Monday, January 12, 2026, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	11. Informational and Non-Discrimination Statements
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

MEMORANDUM

To:	City Council
From:	Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak;
Cc:	City of Burlington Department Heads
Date:	January 12, 2026
Re:	FY26 Citywide Goals

Each year, Department Heads meet with the Mayor to review the prior year's goals and to establish new goals for the coming year. Please find below an overview of FY26 Citywide Goals by Department.

FY26 Citywide Goals by Department

Burlington City Arts (BCA)

- **Foster Artistic Excellence in and Development of the Artist Sector**
  - Support the economic and artistic well-being of local artists and artists who reflect the concerns and identities of our local community.
- **Ensure Broad Community Access to Arts Education, Learning and Engagement**
  - Provide skill-building and professional development opportunities for artists and community members and offer gallery programs to ensure that all individuals have access to meaningful artistic learning and expression.
  - Create opportunities for connection and well-being through culturally responsive programming.
  - Support city-wide efforts to maintain a vibrant downtown, including by enhancing community safety.
- **Preserve and Expand Artist Space in Burlington for Creating, Exhibiting, Rehearsing and Performing**
  - Complete Capital Campaign for programmatic expansion at 405 Pine Street.
  - Facilitate access to rehearsal space for artists in Burlington.
- **Strengthen Organizational Sustainability and Build Resilience**
  - Increase revenue opportunities, including donations and earned income.

- Increase regional awareness of BCA's brand and impact.

Burlington Electric Department (BED)

- **Continue to Strengthen BED's Financial Position**
  Maintaining strong financial metrics is important to BED's credit rating and to the health of the utility. At the same time, BED is conscious of cost and affordability burdens and the need to keep rates as low as possible for customers.
  - Identify and implement strategies to offset potential revenue loss from the legislative changes that affect Connecticut renewable energy certificate (REC), including participation in an RFP to preserve access to that REC market.
  - Develop contingency plans and/or alternative REC market plans to manage costs/rate pressure in FY27, in the event BED is not successful with the Connecticut RFP.
  - Negotiate a fair IBEW extension for FY27 and beyond.
- **Improve Regulatory Engagement**
  BED has not performed to expectation in the regulatory space, as documented in correspondence from the Department of Public Service and the PUC. BED has committed to improving its performance with our regulatory work. At the same time, BED is facing a greater regulatory burden than it has in the past and is interested in opportunities to align the regulatory burden with its staff capacity.
  - Address performance not at expectations for regulatory work with Department of Public Service and PUC.
  - Seek to address the overall regulatory burden for a municipal utility.
- **Continue Net Zero Energy/Electrification Progress Despite Federal Headwinds**
  The federal administration has frozen grants for EV charging and worked with Congress to eliminate or phase out key incentives for a variety of renewable energy and electrification technologies, including electric vehicles, heat pumps, wind and solar. Vermont no longer funds EV rebate programs, and the federal government is actively promoting fossil fuel projects, requiring coal plants to stay open, and freezing offshore wind construction. BED and the City of Burlington will attempt to continue forward progress at a time where there are significant headwinds.
  - Continue progress on encouraging EV adoption in Burlington.
  - Continue progress on encouraging heat pump adoption in Burlington.
  - Partner with Planning and other departments to explore geothermal opportunities in new developments.
  - Continue progress on overall thermal/ground transportation emissions reductions.
- **Redefine the Future of the McNeil Generating Station**
  In the near term, BED has several key objectives with McNeil, including progressing battery storage at the plant, completing and evaluating two third-party studies, and resolving REC market access options in the wake of legislative changes in Connecticut's REC market. In

the medium term, BED sees significant opportunities to make progress on reducing stack emissions, improving efficiency, and improving reliability by making significant improvements to the current plant and/or repowering with new technologies.
    - Complete and evaluate the Velerity third-party study.
    - (Cross reference to Goal 1) Resolve the REC market access issue.
    - Finalize decisions on district energy, wood chip dryer, and ownership negotiations (pending the REC market access issue resolution), and plan for and present medium-term vision for McNeil.
- **Continue to Innovate and Not Stagnate on Equity and Energy Efficiency**
  BED has made significant progress on innovation in the energy efficiency and equity spaces through its Energy Assistance Program, energy efficiency legislation (Act 142 of 2024), and community events and engagement. BED seeks to continue to grow these efforts.
    - Continue to engage the community in new ways/places and partner across Departments.
    - Grow the Energy Assistance Program.
    - Continue the Energy Efficiency Modernization Act Beyond 2026.
    - Consider new opportunities for efficiency program.
    - Work with TEUC and Department of Permitting and Inspections on policy development related to energy benchmarking/BERO, and implementation of rental weatherization policy and carbon fee policy.

City Attorney's Office

- **Increase the Enforcement of Municipal Ordinances**
    - Launch City Circle in January 2026 with the Burlington Community Justice Center and coordinate with the Burlington Police Department and Chittenden Superior Court.
- **Continue to Increase the Efficiency and Pace of Compliance and Enforcement Efforts, in Collaboration with the Department of Permitting & Inspections.**
    - Develop new strategic methods to bring/file cases more quickly and increase compliance in the city.
- **Support Human Resources with IBEW and AFSCME CBA Negotiations**
    - Complete negotiations with IBEW and AFSCME
- **Submit Charter Change Proposals to Voters and Work to Successfully Shepherd Charter Changes through the General Assembly**
    - Facilitate "Charter Summit" to identify priority Charter changes and a strategy/timeline for submitting proposed Charter changes to voters.
- **Continue to Monitor Federal Administration Changes and Impacts on Municipal Governments and Develop Appropriate Legal Defense Strategies**
    - Continue to consult with IMLA, Public Rights Project, Vermont AGO, and other organizations filing and tracking lawsuits relating to federal Executive Orders and the resulting impacts on States and municipalities.

- Identify and track injunctions that offer us protection from unlawful grant requirements and will also help us identify where we are not protected and should consider joining or initiating our own litigation.

Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO)

- **Stabilize the Department and Create a Unifying Mission**
  - Create a collaborative and supportive culture for staff where everyone can identify their work as part of the overall mission.
- **Create Overall Housing Strategy and Roadmap with the Mayor's Office and Other Departments, including the Office of City Planning, Department of Public Works and Department of Permitting & Inspections**
  - Advance the Mayor's goal of creating an abundance of affordable housing. This roadmap will include CEDO's work with public-private partnerships (P3), evaluating the Housing Trust Fund, evaluating the process around HOME funds, tightening up the regulations around the lead program, and creating a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS).
- **Stabilize CEDO's Finances to Create a Fiscally Sustainable Department**
  - Create clear processes and systems around the management of funds, including grants, remaining ARPA, and general fund.
  - Make the budget clear and transparent, involve more employees in the budgeting process, so managers understand their own finances.
- **Advance the Department's Normal Annual Work**
  - Continue to oversee the Church Street Marketplace, workforce development programs, lead paint removal in Burlington and Winooski, small business support citywide, marketing to encourage place-based and tourism economic development and to stimulate consumer activity, and events management in the downtown with Burlington City Arts.
  - Attract and retain businesses and develop a sustainable future for the Church Street Marketplace.

Department of Finance Administration (DFA)

- **Ensure the Long-term Financial Health of the City Using the Principles of Affordability, Equity, and Good Governance**
  - Produce a detailed FY27 budget according to budget the calendar.
  - Support financial negotiations with AFSCME and IBEW.
  - Explore the use of equitable budgeting practices by developing materials and educating employees and residents on the City budget.
- **Increase Transparency of City Budget**
  - Continue to create financial policies and procedures, including revisions to the reclassification process (working with HR), and finalizing the user fee policy.

- Finalize budget manual.
- Pilot participatory budgeting practices with the Regional Programs budget for FY27.
- Oversee inclusive, cross-City process of selecting new financial software that will enable more people more access to the City budget and financial reports.

- **Expand All Resident Voting and Language Access Education Efforts for City Elections**
  - Work with a fellowship awardee on a project regarding all resident voting to analyze what has worked to date and to provide actionable recommendations in advance of Town Meeting Day 2026.
  - Partner with Trusted Community Voices and advocate for their recommendations.
- **Develop Mission and Culture of DFA that Focuses on Our Values of Accountability, Customer Service-oriented, Fiscally Responsible, Collaborative, and Human-centered**
- **Improve the Accessibility and Utility of City Data for Both Internal and Public Users**
  - Improve the open data site, including the budget portal.
  - Use data and analytics to inform and improve the City's community safety strategies.

Fire Department

- **Reduce Occupational Health Risks and Enhance Member Wellness Through Cancer Prevention, Early Detection, Protective Practices, and Education**
  - Launch a formal Cancer Risk Reduction Program.
  - Establish regular cancer screenings aligned with IAFF/IAFC best practices.
  - Provide annual training on cancer risks, prevention, and decontamination.
  - Achieve "Gold Helmet Department" recognition via the National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer.
  - Research clean cab, gross decon, and gear/apparatus decontamination practices.
  - Study facilities to reduce cross-contamination.
  - Enforce strict PPE/SCBA use during all fireground and training operations.
  - Develop and enforce SOPs for PPE cleaning, storage, and hygiene.
  -
- **Strengthen Leadership Capacity and Succession Planning Through Professional Development, Education, and Practical Command Experience**

  - Create a leadership roadmap aligned with NFPA standards and credentialing (FO, CFO, CEMSO, etc.).
  - Expand participation in National Fire Academy, Vermont Fire Academy, and regional leadership seminars.
  - Partner with local and online colleges/universities to support higher education career pathways.
  - Expand acting officer and temporary command assignments (Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief progression).

    - Increase joint training with regional partners for interoperability and readiness.
- **Strengthen Community Trust, Safety, and Resilience by Expanding Prevention, EMS Outreach, and Public Health Initiatives That Address Today's Risks and Anticipate Future Challenges**
    - Expand public education programs by delivering fire safety, injury prevention, and risk reduction programs in schools, senior centers, and community organizations.
    - Grow Community Paramedicine by expanding to home visits for high-risk patients, connecting vulnerable residents to healthcare and social services, and reducing repeat 911 calls.
    - Improve resilience and climate preparedness by educating the public on emergency preparedness for flooding, heat events, and severe weather linked to climate change.
    - Implement public messaging campaigns using media and outreach to promote proper 911 use, injury prevention, and wellness initiatives.
- **Lay the Groundwork for Achieving National Staffing Standards and Implementing a Modern, Wellness-focused Work Schedule**
    - Study the Fall River, MA model, and develop strategies to achieve NFPA 1710 staffing standard (4 firefighters per unit).
    - Evaluate the feasibility of transitioning to a 24/72 four-platoon schedule.
    - Collect data on overtime, fatigue, wellness, and recruitment/retention to support future changes.
    - Prepare for potential state-level 42-hour workweek legislation.
- **Ensure Burlington's Fire and Public Safety Services are Supported by Modern, Safe, and Efficient Facilities That Meet Operational Needs and Community Expectations**
    - Engage in the planning process for a new firehouse/public safety building with City leadership and stakeholders.
    - Evaluate the location, design, and space needs to support both current and future operational demands.
    - Ensure the building design prioritizes firefighter wellness (clean/dirty zones, decon areas, fitness space, bunking for rest/recovery).
    - Establish phased project milestones.

Fletcher Free Library (FFL)

- **Secure $35 Million in Funding to Support the Transformational Renovation of the Fletcher Free Library, Remodeling It into a More Accessible, Sustainable, Updated, and Inclusive Community Anchor**
    - Continue to support and work with the Friends of the Fletcher Free Library to reach a milestone of $28 million in secured and/or pledged funding by December 31, 2026, through targeted efforts in the silent phase of the campaign. Ensure that Federal grants and other partner grants are coordinated with the City. Be able to navigate and pivot as things change.
    - Continue to support and work with the Friends of the Fletcher Free Library to build campaign momentum internally with strong systems for donor tracking, reporting, and stewardship.

    - Continue to facilitate strong communication between the Friends of the Fletcher Free Library and the Mayor's office throughout all phases of the campaign.
- **Implement the Library's Strategic Directions Plan in Alignment with Mayoral Goals, Guiding All Library Departments in Delivering Equitable, High-impact Services That Respond to Community Needs Across Five Key Focus Areas**
    - Finalize the Strategic Directions Plan with Mayor's office approval and prepare for its phased departmental implementation.
    - Initiate implementation of Strategic Directions in five core areas: Public Space, Programming, Collections, Safety, and Housing Support.
    - Establish internal evaluation systems and feedback loops to track implementation progress and prepare for public release of plan.
- **Maintain High-quality Internal Operations and Public Services in Spite of Reduced Staffing Capacity, With an Emphasis on Equitable Workload Distribution, Continued Financial Accuracy, and Front-facing Service Reliability**
    - Ensure financial operations continue smoothly without a dedicated financial assistant by redistributing tasks, documenting processes, and providing cross-training to key staff.
    - Minimize impacts on public service delivery—particularly at the Computer Help Desk and on Saturdays—due to the loss of the part-time computer assistant.
    - Support staff well-being and retention through proactive workload monitoring, feedback loops, and open communication about capacity.
- **Maintain and Improve High Leadership and Professional Skills While Being Mindful of Sustainability**
    - Develop Skills and Network to explore new areas of public libraries.
    - Maintain balance by managing workloads to prevent overextension and burnout.
    - Work towards more community and department collaboration.

Leahy BTV Airport

- **Deliver on Major Capital Projects, including Project Next, the North Terminal Building**
    - Ensure the project remains on time and within budget while minimizing disruption to our traveling public.
    - Replace the parking garage revenue system to allow us to better utilize our surface lots by implementing new access controls.
    - Buildout of our new Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) building, including designing a new building to better house our maintenance needs, including providing proper equipment storage and repurposing the current space for additional revenue-generating rental space.
    - Continue implementing our noise compatibility program by sound insulating as many eligible properties as possible and exploring additional funding sources beyond the Federal Aviation Administration.

    - Continue to advance sustainability goals through Major Capital Projects, including launching the next phase of our carbon reduction program, expanding our electric fleet and making operational changes critical to reducing our carbon footprint.
- **Accelerate General Aviation, Passenger, and Maintenance**
    - Continue with long-term planning for new hangars, ramp space, and maintenance infrastructure.
    - Continue to center passenger needs with careful terminal planning and operational support, including the renovation of the terminal's entire second level.
    - Pursue new air service opportunities while supporting upgauging (larger aircraft) and load factor growth with our existing airline partners.
- **Expand Tenant Capacity and Revenue Opportunities**
    - Maximize every available opportunity to support both new and existing tenants while strengthening our revenue base.
- **Support a Strong, Inclusive Workforce**
    - Develop our leadership team and support upward mobility across all levels of the organization, centering leadership growth, retention, and accountability.
    - Continue evaluating our staffing structure to ensure we are positioned to meet the demands of our growing operation.
    - Build a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the community we serve, including enhancing inclusive hiring practices and expand our participation in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program to support minority-owned businesses and suppliers.

Parks, Recreation and Waterfront (BPRW)

This department will develop its goals in December under the leadership of our new BPRW Director Phil Lewis.

Office of City Planning

- **Continue to Serve as a Leader Within City Government to Create Accessible Community Engagement for Policy and Budget Decisions**
    - Coordinate effective and efficient community engagement events and other engagement touch points where traditionally under-engaged populations are prioritized that address a broad spectrum of disciplines and city functions so that residents understand and internalize the interconnectedness of short- and long-range planning decisions.
    - Coordinate with DFA, CEDO, and REIB on reimagining the Neighborhood Planning Assembly model as a means to improving the effectiveness and equity of the City's engagement practices.
    - Conduct and complete the interdisciplinary planBTV: 2050 process in a manner that delivers a high-quality, accessible deliverable, in both online and print format, that

is a living source of information for Burlington residents and others regarding the City's short- and long-term plans.

- **Ensure Burlington Residents Have Access to and Enjoy Safe, Affordable and High-quality Housing**
    - Advance, through collaboration with CEDO and involvement in the Mayor's Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, social housing as a new housing model based on national and international best practice.
    - Educate local developers on best practices in specific housing typologies that respond to current and anticipated community needs, including and especially the need to address racial and economic disparities.
- **Accelerate Achievement of Climate Goals for the City and Its Residents, through Holistic Planning, Course-correction Where Possible**
    - In collaboration with DPW, coordinate land use and transportation planning to support non-car travel through both capital project planning and TDM program support.
    - Advocate to and with regional and state partners for the establishment of a sustainable construction industry based on the principles of a circular economy where waste in construction and redevelopment processes is eliminated and where bio-based building materials (e.g., mass timber, straw panels and others) achieve primacy in local development.
- **Continue to Address Complex Opportunities and Challenges, Internally and Externally, With Holistic Strategies**
    - Integrate planning functions currently separated along department boundaries into a centralized and multi-disciplinary planning office that creates efficiencies and improves staff performance.
    - Explore reforming the Planning Commission's role and position within the organization, including opportunities for greater collaboration with the City Council.
    - Conduct and prepare for on-time completion of the interdisciplinary planBTV: 2050 process that will establish a holistic and mutually supportive framework of planning goals and objectives for land use, economic development, transportation and parks.
- **Develop a Proposal Through the ModernGov Initiative to Explore the Centralization of the City's Planning and Urban Design Functions and to Effectively Integrate Staff Currently Situated Within Multiple Departments**
    - Seek guidance from HR, other Department Heads, and others in the management of larger teams as the planBTV: 2050 and ModernGov processes are implemented.

Permitting and Inspections (DPI)

- **Increase Public Awareness of Our Work to Revitalize Distressed Properties, Reduce Blight and Vacancy to Increase Housing Availability, Return Properties to Productive Use, and Improve Neighborhood Quality of Life**

- Facilitate a quarterly collaborative situation table/forum with key departments (DPI/CEDO/BFD/Assessor/City Attorney) to address and find solutions for the issues surrounding vacant and problematic commercial properties.
- Use data and sister city case studies (e.g., Lawrence, MA) to inform best practices.
- Routinely communicate the status of vacant properties to the public.
- Provide a report back to the Mayor and City Council for mid-year and by end of FY26 on the impact of 2025 Ordinance changes and fee increases.
- Coordinate this work with the Mayor's overall housing initiative.

- **Improve Rental Unit Safety Through Eliminating All Inspections Overdue by a Year or More and Bring Overdue Balances Current on All Rental Registrations**
  - Expedite the most overdue inspections, proactively scheduling them and actively enforcing against non-compliant owners with fees, penalties, and prosecution for all violations.
  - Compare sister cities with higher inspection compliance rates for comparisons and opportunities for improvement.
  - Reduce incidents of smoke/CO detection as a rental unit deficiency.
  - Increase tenant education on our inspection program and tenant safety.
  - Increase Short Term Rental enforcement and coordinate this work with CEDO.
- **Integrate Climate Solutions into Housing Inspections, DPI Will Empower Residents and Landlords to Advance the City's Climate Goals and BED's Net Zero Initiative**
  - Ensure Housing Inspectors provide written and electronic information to property owners on new technologies and financial incentives available for rental properties.
  - Implement regular staff training for DPI to designed to ensure that rental properties are properly weatherized to keep tenants warm in the winter, cool in summer.
  - Provide materials to inspectors such as pamphlets on electrification or climate goals referring property managers to available resources.
  - Create a tracking report within 6 months to evaluate Thermal Energy Systems permits issued.
- **Ensure Greater Financial Accountability by Tracking Fees and Overdue Balances and Pursuing Legal Action, Including Late Fees, Liens and Enforcement Action Against Delinquent Balances Held by Property Owners**
  - Develop a detailed report outlining outstanding open records fees, broken down by departmental division, to facilitate a prioritized action plan.
  - Explore Permit fee increases for building and plumbing permits to ensure permit fees are commensurate with the market rate and are fully covering the city's cost of providing the associated services.
  - Educate all staff members on basic accounting practices for their division.
- **Collaborate with the Burlington Board of Health and Community Partners to Enhance Public Safety and Promote Awareness of Safe Syringe Practices**
  - Complete the wrap up of the Board of Health report to the Mayor and City Council on follow up questions from the Board's 2025 Syringe Report.

- Explore and implement new sharps drop box locations based on hot spot activity.
- Educate inspection staff members on updated practices for their safety and public responsiveness to SeeClickFix reports about syringes.

Police Department

- **Expand and Diversify the Applicant Pool to Hire Qualified, Community-oriented Officers Who Reflect Burlington's Values and Demographics**
  - Launch targeted outreach campaigns focused on workforce diversity, including with the AALV and King Street Youth Center.
  - Partner with local schools, colleges, military transition programs, and community organizations to develop workforce pipelines.
  - Evaluate applicant data and identify areas for process evaluation, such as where and why do applicants fall out of the process.
- **Foster a Supportive Work Environment to Retain Experienced Officers and Reduce Attrition**
  - Reinstate and assess the employee evaluation system.
  - Enhance employee wellness programs and mental health resources.
  - Provide clear career progression and internal promotion opportunities.
  - Leverage data to identify gaps in systems that strain police resources; sources of the data will include the Situation Table and special Community Accountability Docket.
  - Advocate for legislative reform to address repeat offenders.
- **Cultivate Internal Talent and Prepare Mid-level Supervisors for Future Leadership Roles**
  - Establish a formal leadership development program.
  - Offer mentorship and shadowing opportunities with command staff.
  - Provide access to external leadership training (e.g., FBI LEEDA, IACP, DCPLA, Policing Leadership Academy).
- **Strengthen Relationships with Residents Through Transparency, Communication, and Relationship-based Policing**
  - Attend one NPA meeting per Ward with another Department member.
  - Orient USB Lieutenants to assigned patrol districts and the reinstatement of neighborhood policing.
  - Clarify the Police Commission expectations and process for reviewing use-of-force incidents.
  - Evaluate the 2021 Executive Order related to use-of-force disciplinary cases with Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak.
  - Implement a department liaison to the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

- **Ensure a Smooth Leadership Transition That Aligns the Department with Long-term Strategic Goals**
    - Review and update Department Directives. prioritizing statutory mandates.
    - Facilitate staff input into the Chief selection process.
    - Prepare a transition plan with short- and long-term priorities for the new Chief's consideration.

Public Works (DPW)

- **Build Infrastructure That Unleashes Housing Development, Bolsters Community Vitality and Strengthens Our Climate Resilience**
    - Initiate design and secure funding for South End wastewater collection system upgrades to support South End development such as the SECORD project.
    - Successfully complete the Champlain Parkway on-time and on-budget in 2026.
    - Successfully complete Great Streets Main Street on-time and on-budget in 2026.
    - Skillfully manage wastewater treatment plant upgrades by evaluating a construction manager at risk (CMAR) approach, securing grants, and coordinating with Reconnecting Cherry and Bank Streets project.
    - Construct additional stormwater facilities to further protect the lake and other water resources while enabling additional housing development.
    - Initiate assessment and conceptual planning for water treatment facility and distribution system upgrades.
    - Substantively advance bike/pedestrian, traffic calming, transit and transportation demand management (TDM) projects for a multi-modal, safer, climate-forward future.
    - Fully launch public process to update citywide transportation plan as part of planBTV 2050.
- **Bolster Base DPW Operations and Maintenance to Deliver Affordable and Dependable Services**
    - Advance an FY27 operations budget that has a Fix It First focus.
    - Continue expansion of DPW's Water Resources Affordability Program (WRAP).
    - Decide on an interim recycling program operation so we can fully staff Street Maintenance to at least previous levels to meet workplan goals and revenue targets.
    - Utilize voter-approved bond funding to get the City's paving and sidewalk replacement programs closer to a sustainable level of reconstruction each year.
    - Work with the City's Fleet Committee to develop a plan to more sustainably fund fleet replacement and DPW Equipment Maintenance operations.
    - Design and begin construction of a modern and safe soil management facility at 201 Flynn Avenue.
    - Expand the Drop Off Center and its services at 339 Pine Street in partnership with CSWD.

- Implement license plate reader technology for new flexible parking products (such as 10-day passes) and efficient parking enforcement operations.
- Grow downtown parking revenue by at least $300K to continue to pay down Parking Facilities debt in FY26 and fund parking and transportation innovations in the longer term.
- Initiate an assessment of Manhattan Dr. landfill systems and develop a budget for capital repairs.

- **Strengthen City Government Through Change Management, Systems Development and Employee-Centered Policies**
  - Recruit and retain a more diverse DPW workforce so that it better represents the community it serves.
  - Implement tiering of Union and non-Union positions further across department to incentivize employees to grow their skills.
  - Actively support City's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) procurement and implementation.
  - Update and strengthen DPW's Public Engagement Plan.

Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

- **Build a Robust and Sustainable Scope of Work for the Trusted Community Voices (TCVs) That Allows Them to More Fully Actualize Being the Bridge Between Their Communities and the City**
  - Ensure job descriptions clarify the liaison role with City offices and the Burlington School District.
  - Arrange bi-monthly meetings with the Mayor to share community concerns and needs.
  - Implement programming and outreach that advances Burlington's New American communities' understanding of city government and the resources offered.
- **Collaborate with Human Resources to Develop and Implement Citywide Employee and Manager Trainings That Advance Collective Intercultural Competence and the Ability to Build Bridges Across Difference Through Deliberate Inclusion**
  - Integrate with UKG HRIS.
  - Make implicit bias explicit in order to engage the self-work necessary to create sustained behavior change through building capacity for deep self-awareness, tolerance for ambiguity, and empathy.
  - Engage managers in identity-conscious supervision, fair process and transparent decision-making, and other trainings that allow them to lead recruitment and retention efforts to diversify the City workforce.

- **Evolve Language Access Policy to Ensure That All Individuals, Regardless of Language Proficiency, Have Equal Access to Information, Services, and Opportunities Within City Government**
    - Reduce costs to departments through increased use of TCVs and other community agents to disseminate information verbally instead of total dependence on written forms of communication.
    - Work to expand collective thinking around compiling metrics and data collection to improve survey develop and implementation practices as well as employing methodology beyond surveys.
    - Address identified challenges in current system and policy (e.g., translation back to English for materials received by a City office in another language).
- **Collaborate with Human Resources Talent, Development, & Diversity Manager to Build and Implement Employee Resource Networks (ERNs) to Foster a Sense of Belonging Among City Employees**
    - Review the data and history of this venture to determine prior roadblocks to implementation.
    - Develop a groundswell pf interest through inviting employees to focus groups to share their experiences.
    - Focus efforts on building momentum and forming networks to inform FY27 work around policy and SOP development.
- **Facilitate an REIB Charter Change Resolution Item on the Town Meeting Day 2026 Ballot to Formally Establish the Office as Part of the City Charter**
    - Work with Mayor's Office, City Attorney, Interim Director of Human Resources, and other relevant City partners to draft language to establish the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Burlington City Charter.
    - Hold community listening sessions to gather input to refine charter language.
    - Present the charter item to the Council Charter Change Committee to advance to the full Council and then to the ballot.

Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

MEMORANDUM

To: City Council
From: Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
Date: January 7, 2026
Re: FY26 ModernGov Initiative Update

FY26 ModernGov began with a targeted, operational assessment focused on two specific topics: examining the effectiveness and sustainability of our **community health response** and reimagining our **Office of City Planning.** This ModernGov phase intentionally concentrated on a limited set of functions to improve clarity, coordination, and long-term sustainability, while minimizing disruption and avoiding new budget implications. Throughout the fall, the Mayor's Office engaged city unions, the staff of affected City departments, and department heads in FY26 reorganization work. The feedback we received guided revisions of early proposals and informed our final decisions.

Pursuant to the administrative, personnel, and managerial authority designated to the Mayor in Burlington City Charter Section 116, this update includes a summary of a modest personnel reorganization of our city government through the merging of two departments. Aside from the scheduled conclusion of the BTV CARES program due to the expiration of its grant funding, these changes do not impact the City's FY26 budget and, thus, we are not requesting a work session with the Council at this time.

Community Health Updates

This fall, the ModernGov team examined our community health response as a city, including work by city government and by community partners. Our ultimate goal is to improve immediate response to crises while also supporting a resilient and financially sustainable system of care that protects the health and safety of all residents. To start, we focused on the Burlington Fire Department's Community Response Team (CRT) and PREVENT Program; the Burlington Police Department's Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention (CAIP) programs, which included the BTV CARES program; and the Urban Park Rangers program within the Department of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront.

Former Senior Advisor to the Mayor on Community Safety, Ingrid Jonas, spent several months early in 2025 mapping our community health response and advising the ModernGov team. With Ingrid's help, we concluded that many programs have emerged in Burlington to address our community health challenges in recent years, but that gaps and overlaps persist that create confusion for residents, inefficiencies for providers, and strain on the City's emergency services. We decided to address this in three ways: 1) Clarify roles and responsibilities within our community health response, 2) Examine the sustainability of funding for programs, and 3) Eliminate overlapping services where it was reasonable to do so.

Deeper work remains on broader community health topics such as homelessness, substance use, public health infrastructure, and community paramedicine; these topics will be considered in future phases of ModernGov

work. This work will include examining how we reinstitute prior tools like CommStat and continuing to evolve long-standing relationships with community health service providers.

Burlington Fire Department's Community Response Team (CRT) and PREVENT Program

The **Community Response Team (CRT)** launched in late 2023 to respond to overdose and unresponsive patient calls, reducing reliance on the fire department for these situations and offering proactive community engagement. Funding for the program comes from the City's allocation of opioid settlement dollars and is staffed by voluntary overtime shifts. In 2024 and 2025, CRT responded to 280 incidents and 288 incidents, respectively. ModernGov concluded that this program is sustainable with its current staffing model and funding from opioid settlement dollars. The program also continues to meet its goal to address community needs for overdose and unresponsive patient services while reducing the pressures and costs of a full response by the fire department. The CRT program will thus continue as it currently operates, with no changes planned at this time.

The **PREVENT Program** launched on November 15, 2024, to empower paramedics and advanced emergency medical technicians (AEMTs) to administer buprenorphine/Suboxone – critical medications for treating opioid use disorder – to opioid overdose patients at the scene of the overdose. This approach has been shown to help reduce barriers to opioid addiction treatment. During the first year of the pilot program, buprenorphine was administered once but offered on multiple occasions. Low uptake was primarily driven by patient-related barriers, including an unwillingness to engage with emergency medical service (EMS) providers and the refusal of medication-assisted treatment. Nevertheless, the PREVENT Program will remain active and continue to be offered by our existing paramedics when patients meet the criteria.

Burlington Police Department's Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention (CAIP) programs

As noted in a prior communication, the state grant funding for the **BTV CARES program** expired, and the program ended at the end of December 2025. Aside from this wind down of BTV CARES, other aspects of the Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention (CAIP) programs remain unchanged, including roles such as Community Support Liaisons (CSLs). This fall, the police department created new procedures to clarify the roles and responsibilities of CSLs and Community Safety Officers (CSOs) to improve internal department use of these important positions and to clarify the purpose of the roles with other City departments and community partners.

Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront's Urban Park Rangers program

The **Urban Park Ranger** positions were evaluated, given the synergies with other initiatives within the City's broader community health response. The core responsibilities of these positions include stewardship of public spaces, education and engagement with park users, and addressing quality-of-life issues in City parks. We considered whether these roles should sit within the Burlington Police Department, but given the program's focus, the Department of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront was determined to remain as the most appropriate placement.

<u>City Planning Updates</u>

As part of FY26 ModernGov, the **Office of City Planning (OCP)** will be moving – in its entirety and as currently structured – into the Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO), forming a ***new Office of Planning & Design***. This new structure is designed to better align long-range planning, land use regulation, housing policy, and project and urban design, creating a cohesive framework to support the administration's and city council's priorities. The Office of Planning & Design will focus on vision, strategy, and design.

The Office of Planning & Design will continue to hold all of the powers and exercise all of the duties set forth in 24 V.S.A. 4321, *et seq.* The current OCP department head will transition to a division director role, reporting directly to the CEDO department head, but will continue to be appointed pursuant to the Charter.

City staff from both OCP and CEDO were notified about this organizational change in December and expressed overwhelming support for the transition, acknowledging the positive impact a closer relationship between the two offices will have on achieving the City's housing goals.

The new Office of Planning & Design will work with Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront (BPRW), the Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Department of Permitting and Inspections (DPI) to reduce communication silos and strengthen coordination through a matrix-management structure that helps coordinate city plans, ordinance management, and planning expertise across departments. This approach will allow the City to better coordinate planning and design work more effectively, a timely approach as we begin the work of updating several critical strategic planning documents (e.g., the City's Comprehensive Plan).

Office of City Planning staff shared the new structure with the Planning Commission at its December 9th meeting. Commissioners expressed general support and acknowledged the benefits of closer collaboration on housing policy and cross-departmental land use and urban design collaboration.

Next Steps

FY26 ModernGov changes to City Planning are scheduled to take effect on or around January 30th, 2026. As we did with the changes in the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) and CEDO last year, these changes are being implemented on a ***trial*** basis to ensure improvements in coordination, efficiency, and service delivery. Results will be evaluated over the year before considering permanent changes.

We are beginning a new partnership with UVM's Community Development and Applied Economics (CDAE) to build out an assessment process for our ModernGov work to-date. This will include a review of the mergers initiated on July 1, 2025, with CEDO and DFA, as well as the design and development process we used over these first two rounds of reorganization work. Look for more information on this effort in the late winter/early spring.

Conclusion

The FY26 ModernGov changes in community health and City Planning are operational, targeted, and low impact, with no budgetary implications beyond the scheduled conclusion of BTV CARES.

- In community health, the focus is on clarifying roles and ensuring continuity as CRT and the Urban Park Rangers continue their work and BTV CARES concludes, while strengthening partnerships with long-term service providers like the Howard Center.
- In City Planning, the new Office of Planning & Design establishes a cohesive framework for planners and designers, while integrating closely with BPRW, DPW, and DPI in a matrix structure, setting the stage for future alignment and operational efficiencies.

These efforts provide a foundation for more coordinated, sustainable, and effective City services, while maintaining continuity for residents, staff, and partner organizations.

CITY COUNCIL ACCOUNTABILITY LIST

This list is a working document. It is a record of resolutions, ordinances, communications that have come to the Council and there is an action requested.

Prepared by: Lori Olberg, Council and Licensing Coordinator

1/12/2026

	Meeting Date	Type of Document and Title	Action Requested	Updated Next Steps in the Process
1	7/24/2023	Resolution: The Climate Emergency and the Council Request to Count Vermont Air National Guard GHG Emissions and to Plan to Eliminate VTANG Aviation and Ground GHG Emissions in the Spirit of the City's 2030 Net Zero Goals	requests that the Vermont Air Force National Guard Adjutant General, beginning for the year 2023, calculate aviation and ground fuel usage at the VTANG base and to annually provide BTV Director and TEUC with a complete record of the calculated aviation and ground greenhouse gas emission; for VTANG to work collaboratively to draft a plan to adopt simulation and augmented reality training to substantially reduce or eliminate GHG with initial meeting on or before 12/31/23 and follow up at TUEC's March 2024 meeting	Initial meeting of the parties by 12/31/2023; UPDATE: parties met at March TEUC meeting
2	5/20/2024	Resolution: A Building Emissions Reduction Ordinance	referred to TEUC	TEUC refer any working draft BERO and any related ballot language to the Ordinance Committee no later than the last City Council meeting in October of 2024
3	9/23/2024	Resolution: The Establishment Of A Downtown Public Safety HUB	the Public Safety Committee shall engage the community on its vision for a public safety hub, and this engagement shall include consultation with interested community partners, including, but not limited to, Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, the DPW Commission, Board of Health, Director of Business and Workforce Development and Church Street Marketplace Commission, Burlington Police Department & Crisis Advocacy Intervention Programs (CAIP), Burlington Fire Department and its Critical Response Team (CRT), Howard Center Street Outreach Team, Burlington Community Justice Center, Burlington Business Association and the general business community	the Public Safety Committee shall report back on the needs and input from the community to the City Council on or by January 21, 2025, including any specific options or recommendations for a public safety hub (e.g.) new or existing freestanding structures, existing storefront space, a mobile public safety hub, etc.); and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after receiving this report from the Public Safety Committee, it is the stated intent of the full City Council to act on specific options or recommendations from the Public Safety Committee on or by March 10, 2025
4	1/27/2025	Resolution: Establishing A Violation Reporting Incentivization Pilot (VRIP)	referred to the Ordinance Committee, to report back to the City Council; CJC to report back to the City Council and Ordinance Committee	on or before March 24, 2025; by March 10, 2025 **UPDATE: The note with the action should state that the attorney-client privilege was waived for this communication by the Ordinance Committee and approved for publication at our September 18, 2025 committee meeting and that the committee deliberated and decided to table the matter to an unspecified future date.**
5	7/14/2025	Ordinance: An Amendment to Appendix D, Sections 2 and 5, Updating Parks Rules and Regulations	referred to to the Parks, Arts and Culture Committee	not-specified
6	8/25/2025	Resolution: Welcoming President Marlene Tromp, Re-affirming Our Longstanding Partnership With the University of Vermont, And Ackowledging Our Shared Commitment to Affordable, Safe, and High Quality Housing for Students	it was requested that the Mayor provide an update on the City and UVM's shared goals on housing, safety, and well-being	end of this calendar year
7	9/8/2025	Resolution: Consumer Choice And Disclosure For Fuel Purchases Made With Debit Cards	referred to the Ordinance Committee	not-specified
8	9/8/2025	Resolution: Consumer Choice And Disclosure Of Parking Terms & Rates In Privately Owned Lots	referred to the Ordinance Committee	not-specified
9	10/6/2025	Resolution: Financial Disclosure For Local Elected Officials	referred to the Ordinance Committee	not-specified
10	10/21/2025	Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Charter Change re: General Fund Tax Fairness (Referral to Charter Change Committee)	referred to the Charter Change Committee	12/1/2025
11	10/21/2025	Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Charter Change re: City Council Authority to Pledge Credit of the City (Referral to Charter Change Committee)	referred to tbe Charter Change Committee	12/1/2025
12	11/17/2025	2025 Open Space Plan	to refer the Open Space Plan for public hearing and adoption by the City Council	12/15/25; 01/12/26 (2nd and final public hearing and adoption)
13	12/1/2025	Ordinance: CDO--Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions ZA-26-01	waive the firsr reading, schedule a public hearing for January 12, 2026, and refer to the Ordinance Committee for a report back to the full City Council	no later than its January 12, 2026 meeting
14	12/15/2025	Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Increase In Police & Fire Tax Rate	referred to the Board of Finance	no later than its January 26, 2026 meeting

January 6, 2026

TO: City of Burlington Councilors

FROM: Kathy Fox, South Burlington resident

Dear Councilors,

I listened to Councilor McKnight's comments on "The Morning Drive" (WVMT) recently, in which she expressed disappointment about the slow pace of housing development in the City of Burlington under the current administration. With respect to this sentiment, I want to remind the Council about what I perceive to be nonstrategic layoffs the Mayor conducted in May 2025. Three important facts for the Council and the public to bear in mind:

1) Prior to May 2025, the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) was constituted by three staff members working exclusively on housing issues. Two additional staff members worked on addressing homelessness (total of five devoted to housing and homelessness.) Two of those staff members--the longest serving ones with decades of experience between them--were laid off. Since then, all three of the others have resigned! A few are being replaced. But suffice it to say, the capacity to create more affordable housing at the City has been decimated. Moreover, the Mayor had promised to hire a housing advisor (which placated the Council at the time of the layoffs), but that position is on hold because of one of the many recently uncovered budget miscalculations.

2) As CEDO Director, Brian Pine had decades of housing expertise and municipal government experience. Under the auspices of CEDO, thousands of housing units came online by partnering with Champlain Housing Trust, and other entities. Brian Pine was replaced with someone who has business expertise, but zero housing expertise. In fact, I hear people joke that CEDO doesn't exist anymore; instead they refer to it as "EDO" because the focus is now on businesses and not the larger community, and certainly not the most vulnerable.

3) Finally, it is easy to feel you are accomplishing something by dismantling what exists. But one would hope that the dismantling would be replaced by some sort of game plan for how to do things better. The Mayor has not released any sort of plan on housing or homelessness, except a few statements that she wants "innovative solutions," tax restructuring, and vague wish lists. None of these bring more units into being. Burlington's innovative Housing Trust model has been studied by many cities. There was book written about it called *Building the Progressive City: Third Sector Housing in Burlington*, edited by John Emmeus Davis (Temple University Press, 1990). Burlington was among the first cities to create a housing trust fund, which enables home ownership among lower income people and other forms of affordable housing.

The Mayor says that housing and homelessness are top priorities. Yet the destructive actions and inaction of this Mayor have led to countless missed opportunities to make Burlington more affordable for its most vulnerable residents. Nearly two years into her tenure, housing efforts have ground to a halt with no sign of action or even a strategic plan. As the city faces yet another

eight-figure budget shortfall, residents should worry that this mayor will again end critical functions without a plan to mitigate the negative impact.

I urge the Council to hold the Mayor accountable to her stated priorities.

Lori Olberg

From: Betsy McGavisk
Sent: Wednesday, January 7, 2026 4:28 PM
To: Lori Olberg
Cc: Erik Ramakrishnan; Shay Brunvand
Subject: Housing Board of Review Resignation

Hi Lori!

I'm writing to let you know that I will be leaving my position on the Burlington Housing Board of Review as I have accepted a position at DPI and have been advised that would be an actual/appearance of conflict of interest. I'm sad to say goodbye but am so grateful for the opportunity to have been on the board! Erik suggested that I let you know so you can move forward with posting the opening. Please let me know if there's anything else you need from me.

Best,
Betsy

Please note that this communication and any response to it will be maintained as a public record and may be subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Act.

Lori Olberg

From: Ryan Nick <vermonter1992@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 3:24 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Lori Olberg; Mayor's Office; Kara Alnasrawi; Samantha McGinnis; mark.homeport@gmail.com
Subject: Downtown Priorities

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

Good afternoon Councilors,

I wanted to bring to your attention an incident that occurred at a Church Street retailer two Fridays ago during the Marketplace's Shop, Sip, & Snack event.

The store was serving champagne but hadn't filled out the correct paperwork to serve alcohol. Instead of working with the merchant to sort out the miscommunication, officials shut the event down and forced the retailer to put away their champagne. The owner of the store thought they were in compliance and did not intend to subvert the rules. They were working with representatives of the Church Street Marketplace to participate. Unfortunately, the steps to compliance were confusing, exceedingly difficult, and burdensome. What could have been a fun event designed to boost foot traffic downtown became yet another conflict between the City and our downtown business community.

I have to look at this incident and ask, what are this city's priorities? The store was serving small amounts of champagne to shoppers while participating in a city run event. This surely can't be the biggest issue our city is facing when it comes to the consumption of intoxicating substances. Perhaps if they gave it away in paper bags on the street, the city wouldn't have minded, maybe the Howard Center could hand out free glassware next year...

The business community downtown often feels like we have to swim upstream when it comes to our relationship with the City. Often it feels like even the smallest of issues can balloon into a standoff when it doesn't need to be this way. Especially given the business climate in Burlington, it would be nice to have a little grace whenever these situations arise. We need all the help we can get to turn this dire situation around. It is our hope that the City recognizes the importance of our economic and cultural impact and endeavors to work with us better in the future so we can figure out solutions to our problems rather than create more points of conflict.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to our City,

Ryan

Lori Olberg

From: Pike Porter <pikeporter@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 12, 2025 12:28 PM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: Fwd: Vehicular trespass

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

Hi Lori,

can you include this email to city council and the mayor to the agenda as a public comment?

Thanks.

Pike

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Pike Porter** <pikeporter@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Dec 12, 2025 at 12:18 PM
Subject: Vehicular trespass
To: <citycouncil@burlingtonvt.gov>, <mayor@burlingtonvt.gov>

Hi all,

for several reasons I ask you to use different language for the new vehicular trespass ordinance.

The first reason rests on the moral/ethical principal that governments should not be criminalizing what we think or know. Huxley, Atwood, and Orwell and others have shown what our world might look like when governments begin to police what we know and think. Trump and his enablers have demonstrated that we shouldn't just consider those worlds as speculative fiction. Knowledge that one doesn't have consent should not be a crime.

The second reason is that the clause, 'and know that the person....," may be attempting to prevent a legal problem that does not exist. It is a premise established almost for as long as we've had laws, that ignorance of a law is not a defense. Scholars attribute Aristotle to writing, "nemo censetur ignorare legem," "nobody is thought to be ignorant of the law." If this clause is included to foreclose the possibility that someone can claim, "I didn't know," well, it doesn't matter if they know it was a crime or not because, ignorance of the law is no excuse.
See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignorantia_juris_non_excusat for more information on this premise

My third concern is that by including the clause, "and know that the person...," you are providing the trespasser an affirmative defense that he or she would not otherwise have. Imagine the defendant stating, "You honor, yes I broke into the car, but I was on half a dozen different narcotics and a bottle of Jim Beam at the time and I did not know I did not have the legal authority or consent to enter the car." Why provide this defense when ignorance of the law is no excuse? Why provide an opportunity for an excuse?

Please consider this simple revision that makes the ordinance stronger, clearer, and doesn't move us one more small step toward totalitarianism:

b) It shall also be unlawful for a person to enter the motor vehicle of another ~~and know that the person does not have the legal authority or~~ without the consent of the person in lawful possession of the motor vehicle. Notice of trespass shall not be required under this subsection.

Thanks.

Pike Porter
Burlington resident bewildered by the fact that no cost benefit analysis is being considered for McNeil even though it will now lose about $5,000,000 more dollars annually than it did before Oct 1.

MEMORANDUM

To: Burlington Board of Finance and City Council

From: Darren Springer, General Manager
James Gibbons, Director of Policy & Planning
Emily Stebbins-Wheelock, CFO and Manager of Strategy & Innovation

Date: December 15, 2025

RE: Relevate Power contract

The Burlington Electric Department (BED) received approval from the Electric Commission (under its delegated authority) to sign a five-year hydropower power purchase contract with Relevate Power for energy, associated renewable energy credits (RECs) and capacity from hydroelectric assets in New England. BED is interested in extending the term of the agreement by an additional five years (for a total of ten), and that term is beyond the Commission's delegated authority, and requires City Council approval. BED is seeking that approval from the Board of Finance at its meeting on December 15, 2025 and the Council at its meeting on January 12, 2026.

Background
BED has three renewable energy contracts expiring before the end of 2026, each of which provides approximately 10% of BEDs energy needs. The expiring contracts are:

1. FirstLight (Shepaug Generating Station, CT), which replaced a previous contract with Great River Hydro:
   a. Contract term 7/1/24-12/31/25 (18 months)
   b. Normal percent of BED load served: 11%

2. Vermont Wind (Sheffield, VT):
   a. Contract term 10/19/11-10/18/26 (ten years extended by 5 additional)
   b. Normal percent of BED load served: 9%

3. Hancock Wind (Hancock, ME)
   a. Contract term 12/10/16-12/9/26 (ten years)
   b. Normal percent of BED load served: 10%

Throughout 2024 and 2025, we have been evaluating options for replacing these contracts. We have solicited possible replacements from the parties whose contracts are expiring and others through market outreach. Earlier this year, Relevate Power contacted BED independently, offering a portfolio of hydro resources in New England and New York.

Proposed Contract

The proposed contract from Relevate is a unit-contingent, ten-year contract providing renewable energy (energy and RECs) and capacity from some of Relevate's hydro assets in New England. A unit-contingent contract means that Relevate's obligation to deliver (and BED's option to pay for) energy only exists if the units are producing energy. The contract is structured as a ten-year contract with the first five years becoming effective upon authorization (i.e., based on unanimous approval received on September 10, 2025 from the Burlington Electric Commission under their delegated authority). The second five years (i.e., years 6-10) are contingent upon approval of the City Council and are the reason for this memo and presentation.

The contract provides for energy equal to the unit output, not to exceed 50,000 MWH per year (15% of BED's current load). The initial assets providing that energy would be as follows (asset information located at Relevate Power | Where we are):

Asset Summary

Asset	State	Capacity (MW)
Dundee	ME	2.40
Eel Weir	ME	1.20
Wyre Wynd	CT	2.78

Additional units could be added to the list above as long as the total output did not exceed 50,000 MWH.

Discussion & Analysis

BED considers potential purchased power contracts both in comparison to other contemporaneous offers and as they compare to BED's long-term Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) planning assumptions. BED compared the offers that we received from five other parties, adjusting for differences such as unit type, REC type, delivery location, and energy profile to compare them on an equal basis. Relevate appeared to offer the most economical proposal and BED engaged in contract discussions with Relevate on that basis.

BED's evaluation of the Relevate contract against the long-term IRP assumptions shows that the proposed contract is generally close to the current market price projections. The potential that the market prices could rise higher than the contract price (yielding net benefit to BED) appears slightly greater than the chance that they could fall below them

(yielding net cost to BED). Not included in the IRP analysis was any of the ancillary value of retaining BED's 100% renewability, which exempts BED from statewide renewable purchases (known as Standard Offer). Statewide renewable energy prices averaged $180 per MWH in 2024 (significantly higher that the proposed contract from Relevate) and being 100% renewable also increases the value BED receives from its strategic electrification programs.

Execution of the contract will entail some additional risk of potential changes in the value of REC markets (particularly the MA class 2 market) over the contract term. Changes in REC market prices is something that BED is currently exposed to from many of its renewable energy contracts. The Relevate resources in question share a REC market with BED's own Winooski One facility, which can be a value (as BED would have multiple sources to meet contracts for RECs in that market) but also increases BED's exposure to changes in that market. On the other hand, the contract will significantly reduce BED's risk related to potential increases in market energy prices.

Given BED's commitment to remain 100 percent renewable, BED staff believes that approval of the additional five-year term of the Relevate contract is a prudent move to help meet BED's customers' needs with renewable energy at known, stable prices from 2031 to 2035 and requests approval from the City Council to have the contract continue beyond the initial five-year term for a full ten years.

Motions

Board of Finance:
To approve and recommend the City Council authorize the General Manager of the Burlington Electric Department to extend its five-year power purchase agreement with Relevate Power for an additional five-year term (for a total of ten years including the Electric Commission's prior approval) for renewable energy (not to exceed 50,000 MWH/year), RECs, and capacity from New England hydroelectric resources.

City Council:
To approve and authorize the General Manager of the Burlington Electric Department or their designee Department to extend its five-year power purchase agreement with Relevate Power for an additional five-year term (for a total of ten years including the Electric Commission's prior approval) for renewable energy (not to exceed 50,000 MWH/year), RECs, and capacity from New England hydroelectric resources.

Relevate Power Contract

December 15, 2025 Board of Finance

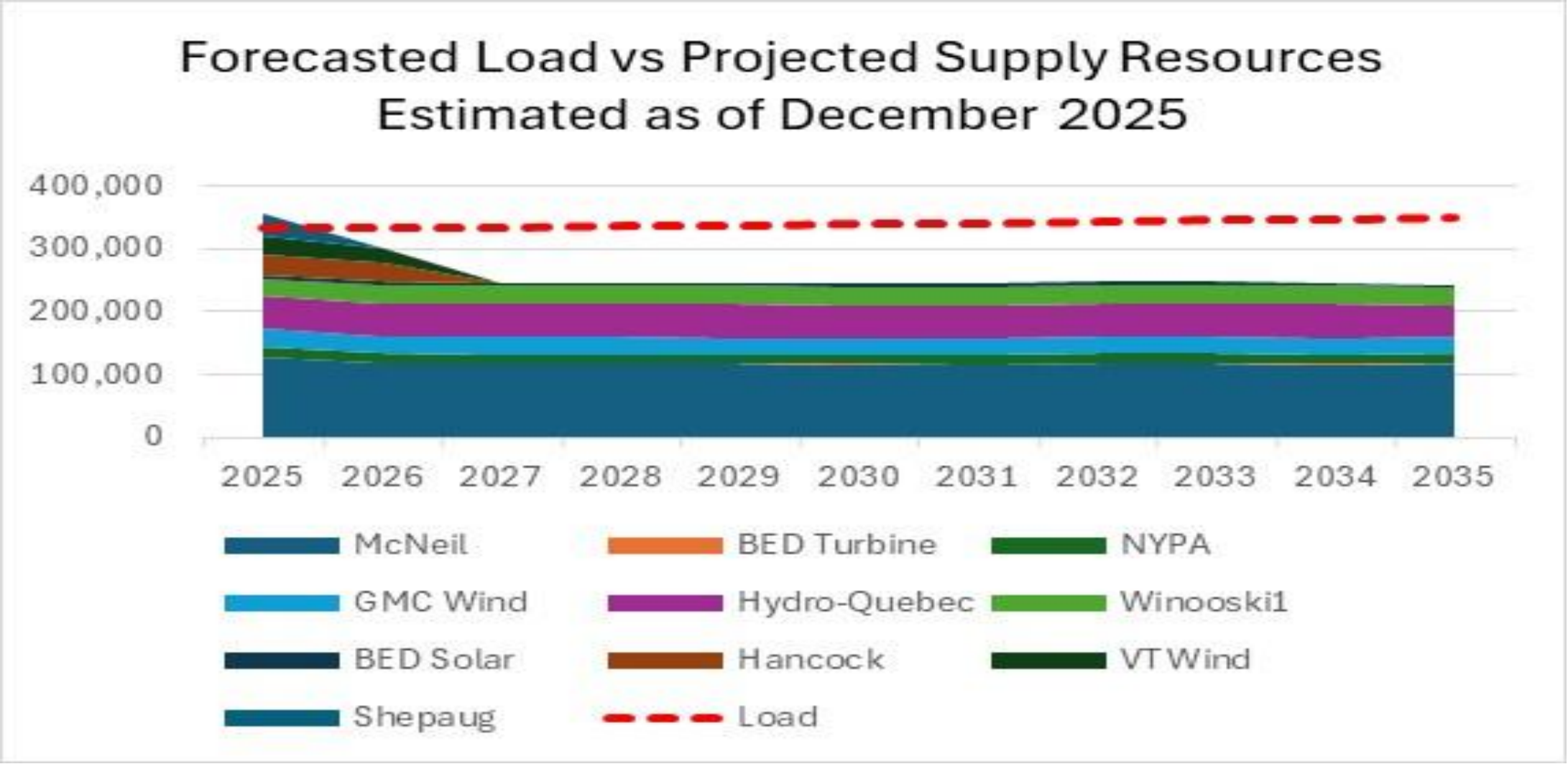
January 12, 2026 City Council

Darren Springer, General Manager

James L. Gibbons, Director of Policy and Planning

Burlington Electric Department

BED Energy Resources “Yawning Gap”



Relevate Contract Summary

- Unit-contingent contract replacing existing unit-contingent hydro contract
- BED compared offers received from several parties – Relevate's was most economical
- Includes energy, renewable energy credits, and capacity
- Energy (not to exceed 50,000 MWH/year) from pool of New England small hydro assets
- Dundee and Eel Weir are Low Impact Hydro Institute Certified
- Initial contract pricing based on current wholesale markets
- Reduces energy price risk – reduces capacity price risk – slightly increases REC risk
- Initial five years effective upon signature (approved by BEC)
- Additional five years (for ten total) if approved by City Council

Economics of Relevate Proposal



Dundee (2.4 MW) (16,000 MWH)

- The Dundee Project, originally constructed in 1913, is located on the Presumpscot River in Cumberland County, Maine. Dundee is one of five individual hydroelectric plants on a 9-mile stretch of the Presumpscot River at the outlet of Sebago Lake in southwestern Maine. The project includes: a 1,492-foot-long dam, a powerhouse containing three horizontal turbine-generators, a bypass reach, a tailrace channel, and an eel lift.





Eel Weir (1.20 MW) (4,000 MWH)

- The Eel Weir Project is located on the Presumpscot River at the outlet of Sebago Lake in the towns of Windham and Standish, Maine. Eel Weir is one of five individual hydroelectric plants on a 9-mile stretch of the Presumpscot River at the outlet of Sebago Lake in southwestern Maine. The project headgates were installed in the mid-1800s at the outlet of Sebago Lake and the generating facilities were later commissioned in 1903. The project includes a powerhouse containing three horizontal Hercules turbines with a total installed capacity of 1.8 MW; and a 3.5-mile-long 11 kV transmission line.

Wyre Wynd (2.78 MW) (10,634 MWH)

- The Wyre Wynd Hydroelectric Project is located on the Quinebaug River in Jewett City, Connecticut. Originally designed to support a textile mill in the 1800s, the station now produces enough clean energy to power 2,000 homes.



Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: Burlington Electric Submitter: Darren Springer, Emily Stebbins-Wheelock and James Gibbons

Title/Subject: Hydropower Contract

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☒	Board of Finance	12/15/2025
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Both BOF and Council	Click or tap to enter a date.

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	12/8/2025	Darren Springer
Mayor's Office	Yes	12/9/2025	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	Yes	9/10/2025	Electric Commission
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Yes	12/9/2025	Jessica Brown, motions included
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	12/8/2025	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

BCA

To: City of Burlington, City Council
City of Burlington, Board of Finance
From: Doreen Kraft, BCA Director
CC: Colin Storrs, Public Art Manager
Date: December 15, 2025
Subject: Request for City Council Initiative Funds for Memorial Auditorium Beautification

---

Burlington City Arts respectfully requests $8,795 from the unallocated FY26 City Council Initiative funds to support the reinstallation of a temporary public art project at Memorial Auditorium. Building on lessons learned during the previous installation, the project will transform construction fencing into a vibrant, welcoming visual installation that celebrates Burlington's creative spirit while deterring vandalism. Efforts are underway to engage a broader coalition of community members with neighborhood watch and maintenance. Because we have already licensed the artwork, the majority of the cost is materials.

As before, the installation will feature a vinyl banner along the Main Street and South Union Street fences, incorporating, ten works of licensed artwork by local artists, and a prominently designed "Welcome to Burlington" message in multiple languages (mirroring the welcoming stairwell installation in City Hall). The design will blend recognizable Burlington imagery with abstract patterns and color schemes aimed at discouraging vandalism/tagging. The material will be graffiti resistant and easily cleanable with graffiti remover.

Project Goals:

- Enhance the visual experience for pedestrians and visitors entering the city
- Celebrate Burlington's identity as a creative and inclusive community
- Deter vandalism
- Engage volunteers and stakeholders
- Improve the aesthetics of a key downtown gateway during an interim redevelopment phase.

Proposed Budget:

Banner Printing	$8,145
Installation Supplies	$500
Graffiti Remover	$150
Total	$8,795

BCA requests the Department of Finance and Administration implement a budget amendment that allows the department to manage these funds efficiently.

This project offers a timely and meaningful enhancement to a prominent public site, with a lasting impact as the community awaits future redevelopment of Memorial Auditorium.

Warmly, Doreen



Doreen Kraft
Executive Director
Burlington City Arts

Motions

Burlington City Arts (BCA) respectfully requests that the City Council approve the following motions:

Board of Finance Motion:

To recommend that City Council approve the use of $8,795 from the City Council Initiative Fund for Memorial Auditorium Beautification

City Council Motion:

To approve the use of $8,795 from the City Council Initiative Fund for Memorial Auditorium Beautification

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: City Arts Submitter: Colin Storrs

Title/Subject: Request for City Council Initiative Funds for Memorial Auditorium Beautification

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☒	Board of Finance	12/15/2025
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Both BOF and Council	Click or tap to enter a date.

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	12/4/2025	Doreen Kraft
Mayor's Office	Yes	12/5/2025	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	No	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Yes	12/9/2025	Emmett Wood
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	12/8/2025	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Department: CEDO Submitter: Rachel Jolly

Title/Subject: Reclass of Limited Service to Regular CJC position

	Approval:	Meeting Date:
☒	Board of Finance	12/15/2025
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Concurrent	Click or tap to enter a date.

This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials, and sent with the final submission. Please do not indicate that a signoff was received until it has actually been obtained.

Signoffs Received

Signoff Needed	Received	Date Received	Note
Department Head	Yes	11/20/2025	Kara Alnasrawi
Mayor's Office informed and approved memo	Yes	12/5/2025	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission, if required	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office has approved contract and/or legal documents, -Identify attorney in note	N/A		
City Attorney's Office has approved memo and motion(s) or resolution(s) -Identify attorney in note	Yes	12/8/2025	Emmett Wood
CAO has reviewed budget, financing, and memo	Yes	12/5/2025	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action -Identify HR Manager in note	Yes	11/14/2025	Orieta Glozheni
CIO, if an IT-related investment/purchase	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Materials Included

	Included?	Note
Final Memo Attached?	Yes	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contract Attached, if applicable?	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.
Additional Materials, if necessary	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.
Draft Resolution or Motion?	Yes	Click or tap here to enter text.
If for submission to Council, are sponsors identified?	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
149 CHURCH STREET • ROOM 32 • CITY HALL • BURLINGTON, VT 05401
(802) 865-7144 • (802) 865-7024 (FAX)
www.burlingtonvt.gov/cedo

To: Board of Finance and City Council

From: Rachel Jolly, Community Justice Center Director
Orietta Glozheni, Human Resources Manager

DATE: December 15, 2025 Board of Finance; January 12, 2026 City Council

RE: CEDO, Community Justice Center –Reclassification of one position from Limited Service to Regular

---

Executive Summary

The Community Justice Center (CJC) is seeking approval for the reclassification of one position:

- Data, Communications and Operations Specialist, from a Limited Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, AFSCME, Grade 14 position to a Regular Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, AFSCME, Grade 14 position.

Background and Financial Impact

The Data, Communications, and Operations Specialist position was created in October 2024 when the administrative, evaluation and communications needs of the CJC outgrew any existing position's capacity. The position is funded with a combination of AGO, DOC and CJC General Fund dollars. We started this new position as Limited Service as we didn't have a guarantee about future funding.

This position is 50% grant funded and 50% funded with General Fund dollars. The DOC and AGO grants are two of our most stable, the former being consistent since 1998, and the latter since 2019. We have no reason to think they won't continue into the future. The financial impact to the City for the addition of retirement is $3,254.71 /year and this can be absorbed within the CJC's existing GF budget.

Both the DOC and the AGO have selected the BCJC as the regional provider of services, resulting in an increase in data and administrative needs.

Board of Finance Motion:

Move to approve and recommend that the City Council approve the reclassification of the following position:

- A Data, Communications and Operations Specialist, from a Limited Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, AFSCME, Grade 14 position to a Regular Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, AFSCME, Grade 14 position.

City Council Motion:

Move to approve the reclassification of the following position: A Data, Communications and Operations Specialist, from a Limited Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, Union, Grade 14 position to a Regular Service, Full-Time, Non-Exempt, AFSCME, Grade 14 position.

MEMORANDUM

To:	Burlington City Council Burlington Board of Finance
From:	Darren Springer, General Manager Munir Kasti, COO and Manager of Utility Services and Engineering Emily Stebbins-Wheelock, CFO and Manager of Strategy and Innovation Tim Clancy, Human Resources Manager
Date:	December 15th, 2025
Subject:	Position Updates

Through this memorandum, Burlington Electric Department (BED) respectfully requests that the Board of Finance and City Council approve the following position changes:

1. **Convert and update the existing tiered Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Union, Grade A3/Grade A5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position, to tiered **Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade NU3/NU5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position reporting to the CFO and Manager of Strategy and Innovation.
2. **Eliminate the existing Energy Services Engineer**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade NS4 ($65,272.06- $107,006.64) position.
3. **Create the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade N16 ($120,302.00-$166,178.69) position. We conducted a salary survey for the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer position and the results were very close to the existing BED N16 Grade, which is the recommended Grade for this position. The PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer will report to the General Manager.

Position Updates Rationale BED submits the position updates in this memo to accomplish several key objectives. First, with consultation and support of the IBEW Local 300, BED is converting the current tiered IBEW Financial Analyst position to a

non-union tiered Financial Analyst position in recognition of the confidentiality required for the budget development and analysis responsibilities of the Financial Analyst position. The Financial Analyst position is currently vacant following retirement of the prior incumbent.

Second, to improve regulatory engagement, be responsive to concerns raised by the Department of Public Service and Public Utility Commission, and recognize the increased complexity of the regulatory work BED undertakes and the staff capacity required to complete that work, BED proposes to eliminate the vacant Energy Services Engineer position and create a new PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer position. The Energy Services Engineer position has been vacant for several years. The PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer position will provide legal and compliance guidance similar to that received previously from outside regulatory counsel. BED's current outside regulatory counsel is moving to work at Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) in 2026. While BED will retain some of his services through a staff-sharing agreement with VPPSA, BED is conscious of the need for greater internal capacity to address the increased regulatory workload. The creation of the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer position is one of a number of steps BED has undertaken to improve regulatory engagement, and will provide legal advice specifically in the PUC context distinct from services BED relies on from the City Attorney's Office.

Overall Financial Impact

The FY26 financial impact on BED will be net positive (approximately $92,300) as shown in Appendix D. The PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer position is only expected to be filled for three months in FY26. In addition, BED will be reducing expenditure on outside counsel for PUC matters once the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer position is filled.

The tiered Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst non-union position has the same pay range as the Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst union position, and some savings will accrue after the position is filled.

We will attend the December 15th, 2025 Board of Finance and the January 12th City Council meetings to answer any questions or provide additional information. BED's 2025-2026 Strategic Direction is attached as Appendix A. The current organizational chart and proposed changes thereto are attached as Appendices B and C, respectively. A summary spreadsheet detailing the changes and the financial impact is Appendix D. The job description changes are attached in Appendices E-G as noted below.

Board of Finance & City Council Motions

- Board of Finance: To approve and recommend approval to the City Council the following:

1. **Convert the existing Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Union, tiered, Grade A3/Grade A5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position, to a Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, tiered, Grade NU3/NU5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position, reporting to the CFO and Manager of Strategy and Innovation.
2. **Eliminate the existing Energy Services Engineer**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade NS4($65,272.06-$107,006.64) position.
3. **Create the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade N16, ($120,302.00-$166,178.69) position reporting to the General Manager.

- City Council: To approve the following:

1. **Convert the existing Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Union, tiered, Grade A3/Grade A5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position, to a Financial Analyst/Senior Financial Analyst, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, tiered , Grade NU3/NU5 ($66,629.26-$109,227.66)/($74,653.28-$122,382.42) position reporting to the CFO and Manager of Strategy and Innovation.
2. **Eliminate the existing Energy Services Engineer**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade NS4($65,272.06-$107,006.64) position.
3. **Create the PUC Counsel and Compliance Officer**, a Regular, Full-time, Exempt, Non-Union, Grade N16, ($120,302.00-$166,178.69) position reporting to the General Manager.

Thank you for your consideration.

BURLINGTON ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

2025–2026 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

MISSION

To serve the energy needs of our customers in a safe, reliable, affordable, sustainable, and socially responsible manner.

VALUES

Safety, Reliability, Community, Innovation

VISION

Make Burlington a Net Zero Energy city by eliminating fossil fuel usage across the electric, thermal, and ground transportation sectors by strategically electrifying, managing demand, realizing efficiency gains, and expanding local renewable generation while increasing system resilience.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Engage Customers and Community

Focus on customer first-call resolution to provide exceptional customer care

Expand education and engagement to enhance capacity-building and energy literacy with customers on our Net Zero Energy vision through all communications channels, with a focus on web and social media and video

Work with frontline communities to ensure programs and services are equitable, fully accessible, and build community resilience, so all Burlingtonians including people whose primary language is not English and low-to-moderate income, rental, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, and refugee populations can benefit from Net Zero Energy initiatives

Evolve traditional energy efficiency programs to complement strategic electrification efforts, drive deeper greenhouse gas emissions reductions, fill gaps due to federal program changes, help manage peak demand, and improve community resilience and environmental health

Proactively seek customer input, with the help of existing and strategic community partners, and incorporate their input into program design

Strengthen Reliability

Maintain five-year Distribution System and Generation construction plans to accommodate potential load increases due to the Net Zero Energy goals, and design and construct projects to continue to improve safety, reliability, and efficiency

Continue to follow maintenance plans for McNeil Generating Station, Winooski One Hydro, Gas Turbine, and the Distribution System

Take steps to ensure reliable operations through staff succession planning

Ensure consistent fuel supply availability at McNeil based on annual operational strategy and procurement procedures

Implement Outage Management System (OMS) and grid analytics to improve response to system outages, system reliability, and efficiency

Provide website and other educational tools so that customers can evaluate both cost and greenhouse gas emission reduction outcomes from heat pumps, electric vehicles, and other electrification technologies relative to current fuel sources

Invest in Our People, Processes, and Technology

Attract, develop, and retain a diverse workforce with the knowledge, skills, and ability to support BED's Net Zero vision and strategic objectives

Develop a culture of integrity, safety, inclusion, innovation, teamwork, cyber-awareness and continuous learning and improvement

Continually improve internal processes to design and deliver innovative programs and services, maximize operational efficiency and effectiveness, and optimize use of data to inform decision-making

Plan and invest in the technology infrastructure necessary to support BED's mission, vision, and strategic priorities, including multi-year replacement of core business systems

Lead by example in reducing vehicle miles traveled through remote work flexibility, support for multi-modal transportation and carsharing partners, and supporting bicycling (both conventional and e-bikes) through employee programs

Innovate to Reach Net Zero Energy

Advance district energy, networked geothermal, battery storage projects, and local renewable energy production including customer-owned and community-based projects

Improve and expand automated demand response capability, with focus on EV charging and thermal, and implement appropriate end-use technologies to manage loads

Advance additional dynamic and creative rates to achieve Net Zero Energy goal

Continue to track and report to the community on progress toward the Net Zero Energy Roadmap goal

Provide clean and affordable transportation fuel through renewable electricity, and invest in and encourage use of the necessary infrastructure to serve customers across all modes of transportation, including electric bikes, electric vehicles, and electric transit buses, and ensure charging infrastructure is available for all Burlingtonians, including in locations near affordable and rental housing, frontline communities, and small businesses in under-resourced areas

Actively participate in City policy processes aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the ground transportation and building sectors

Maintain and invest in quality facilities and use them to pilot and showcase new technologies that advance Net Zero Energy

Manage Budget and Risks Responsibly

Create financially responsible and sustainable budgets that promote affordability, target investment in vulnerable communities, and protect against cost burdens for low-income customers and that balance the need for stable rates, investment in core infrastructure, and strong credit rating factors

Develop and maintain a sustainable debt financing plan for Net Zero Energy to support electrification while mitigating upward rate pressure

Strengthen internal policies and procedures to ensure timely and diligent compliance with risk, safety, financial, environmental, and other legal and regulatory standards

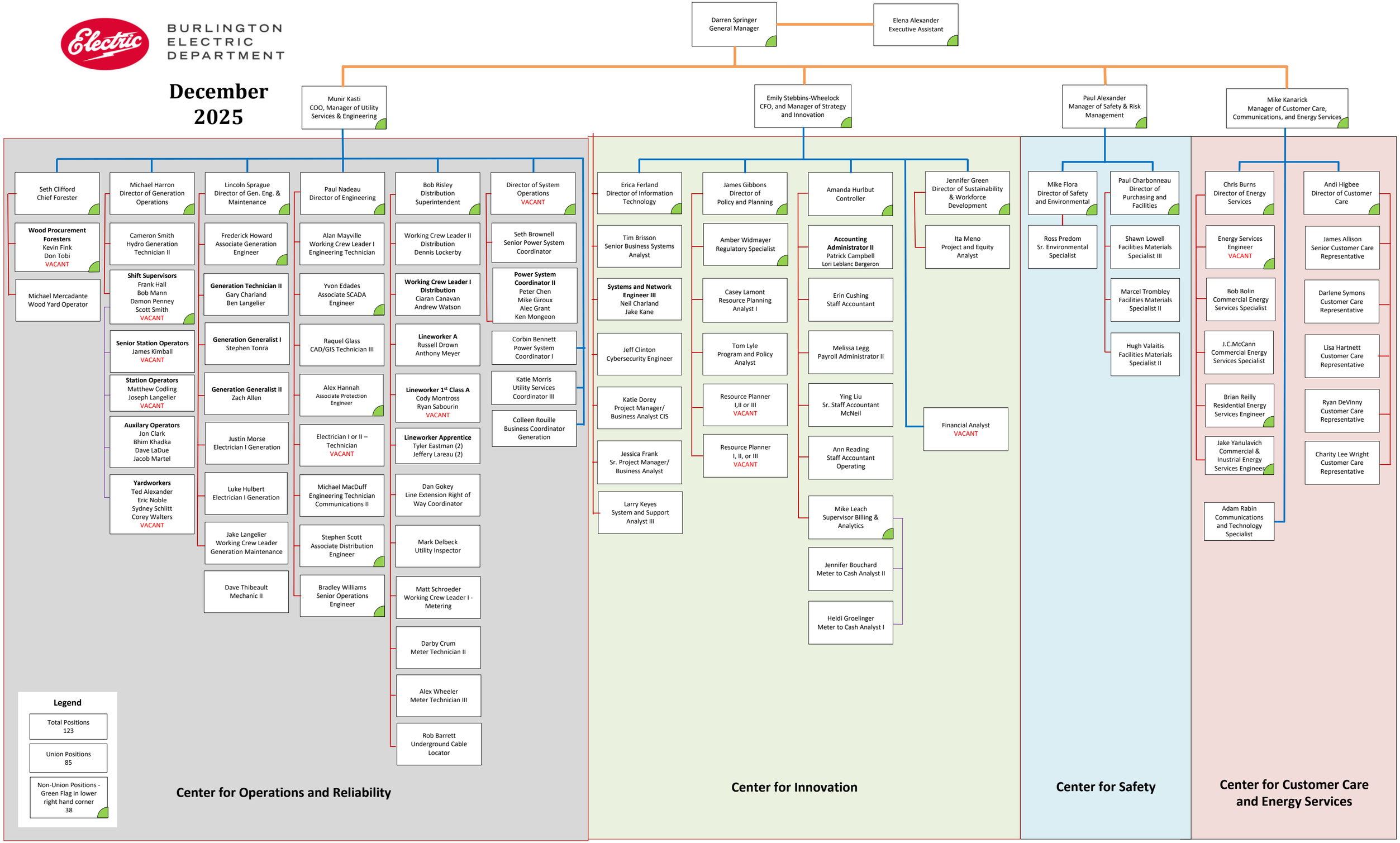
Efficiently and effectively manage procurement of goods and services

Strengthen cybersecurity by investing in advanced technologies, improving threat response processes, and providing continuous staff training to protect our infrastructure and customer data

Build and maximize use of partnerships that provide unique value, broaden engagement, and offer opportunities to make progress toward Net Zero Energy at a more rapid pace and greater scale

BURLINGTON ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

December 2025



Appendix C

BURLINGTON ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

Proposed Changes to Organizational Chart December 2025

PUC Counsel & Compliance Officer

Darren Springer
General Manager

Elena Alexander
Executive Assistant

Center for Operations and Reliability

Munir Kasti
COO, Manager of Utility Services & Engineering

Seth Clifford
Chief Forester

Wood Procurement Foresters
Kevin Fink
Don Tobi
VACANT

Michael Mercadante
Wood Yard Operator

Michael Harron
Director of Generation Operations

Cameron Smith
Hydro Generation Technician II

Shift Supervisors
Frank Hall
Bob Mann
Damon Penney
Scott Smith
VACANT

Senior Station Operators
James Kimball
VACANT

Station Operators
Matthew Codling
Joseph Langelier
VACANT

Auxilary Operators
Jon Clark
Bhim Khadka
Dave LaDue
Jacob Martel

Yardworkers
Ted Alexander
Eric Noble
Sydney Schlitt
Corey Walters
VACANT

Lincoln Sprague
Director of Gen. Eng. & Maintenance

Frederick Howard
Associate Generation Engineer

Generation Technician II
Gary Charland
Ben Langelier

Generation Generalist I
Stephen Tonra

Generation Generalist II
Zach Allen

Justin Morse
Electrician I Generation

Luke Hulbert
Electrician I Generation

Jake Langelier
Working Crew Leader
Generation Maintenance

Dave Thibeault
Mechanic II

Paul Nadeau
Director of Engineering

Alan Mayville
Working Crew Leader I
Engineering Technician

Yvon Edades
Associate SCADA Engineer

Raquel Glass
CAD/GIS Technician III

Alex Hannah
Associate Protection Engineer

Electrician I or II – Technician
VACANT

Michael MacDuff
Engineering Technician
Communications II

Stephen Scott
Associate Distribution Engineer

Bradley Williams
Senior Operations Engineer

Bob Risley
Distribution Superintendent

Working Crew Leader II
Distribution
Dennis Lockerby

Working Crew Leader I Distribution
Ciaran Canavan
Andrew Watson

Lineworker A
Russell Drown
Anthony Meyer

Lineworker 1st Class A
Cody Montross
Ryan Sabourin
VACANT

Lineworker Apprentice
Tyler Eastman (2)
Jeffery Lareau (2)

Dan Gokey
Line Extension Right of Way Coordinator

Mark Delbeck
Utility Inspector

Matt Schroeder
Working Crew Leader I - Metering

Darby Crum
Meter Technician II

Alex Wheeler
Meter Technician III

Rob Barrett
Underground Cable Locator

Andi Higbee
Director of System Operations

Seth Brownell
Senior Power System Coordinator

Power System Coordinator II
Peter Chen
Mike Giroux
Alec Grant
Ken Mongeon

Corbin Bennett
Power System Coordinator I

Katie Morris
Utility Services Coordinator III

Colleen Rouille
Business Coordinator Generation

Legend

Total Positions
123

Union Positions
84

Non-Union Positions - Green Flag in lower right hand corner
39

Conversion Update

Position Eliminated

New Position

Center for Innovation

Emily Stebbins-Wheelock
CFO, and Manager of Strategy and Innovation

Erica Ferland
Director of Information Technology

Tim Brisson
Senior Business Systems Analyst

Systems and Network Engineer III
Neil Charland
Jake Kane

Jeff Clinton
Cybersecurity Engineer

Katie Dorey
Project Manager/ Business Analyst CIS

Jessica Frank
Sr. Project Manager/ Business Analyst

Larry Keyes
System and Support Analyst III

James Gibbons
Director of Policy and Planning

Amber Widmayer
Regulatory Specialist

Casey Lamont
Resource Planning Analyst I

Tom Lyle
Program and Policy Analyst

Resource Planner I,II or III
VACANT

Resource Planner I, II, or III
VACANT

Amanda Hurlbut
Controller

Accounting Administrator II
Patrick Campbell
Lori Leblanc Bergeron

Erin Cushing
Staff Accountant

Melissa Legg
Payroll Administrator II

Ying Liu
Sr. Staff Accountant
McNeil

Ann Reading
Staff Accountant
Operating

Mike Leach
Supervisor Billing & Analytics

Jennifer Bouchard
Meter to Cash Analyst II

Heidi Groelinger
Meter to Cash Analyst I

Jennifer Green
Director of Sustainability & Workforce Development

Ita Meno
Project and Equity Analyst

Financial Analyst
VACANT

Center for Safety

Paul Alexander
Manager of Safety & Risk Management

Mike Flora
Director of Safety and Environmental

Ross Predom
Sr. Environmental Specialist

Paul Charbonneau
Director of Purchasing and Facilities

Shawn Lowell
Facilities Materials Specialist III

Marcel Trombley
Facilities Materials Specialist II

Hugh Valaitis
Facilities Materials Specialist II

Center for Customer Care and Energy Services

Mike Kanarick
Manager of Customer Care, Communications, and Energy Services

Chris Burns
Director of Energy Services

Energy Services Engineer
VACANT

Bob Bolin
Commercial Energy Services Specialist

J.C.McCann
Commercial Energy Services Specialist

Brian Reilly
Residential Energy Services Engineer

Jake Yanulavich
Commercial & Insutrial Energy Services Engineer

Adam Rabin
Communications and Technology Specialist

Director of Customer Care
VACANT

James Allison
Senior Customer Care Representative

Darlene Symons
Customer Care Representative

Lisa Hartnett
Customer Care Representative

Ryan DeVinny
Customer Care Representative

Charity Lee Wright
Customer Care Representative

Ref.#	Change	Area	Current Title	New Title	Current Report	New Report	Filled/Open	Current Grade	New Grade	Current Range	New Range	Maximum Current Pay Range	Maximum New Pay Range	Difference in Maximum Pay Range	Difference in Maximum Pay Range + Overhead	Employees	Total Difference	BED Cost Allocation	Maximum BED FY26 Portion
1*	Re-classification & update	BED	Financial Analyst	Financial Analyst	CFO/Manager of Strategy & Innovation	CFO/Manager of Strategy & Innovation	Open	A3	UN3	$66,629.26-$109,227.66	$66,629.26-$109,227.66	$109,227.66	$109,227.66	$0.00	$0	1	$0	100%	$0
	Re-classification & update	BED	Senior Financial Analyst	Senior Financial Analyst	CFO/Manager of Strategy & Innovation	CFO/Manager of Strategy & Innovation	Open	A5	NS5	$74,653.28-$122,382.42	$74,653.28-$122,382.42	$122,382.42	$122,382.42	$0.00	$0	0			
2**	Eliminate position	BED	Energy Services Engineer	N/A	Director of Energy Services	NA	Open	NS4	NA	$65,272.064-$107,006.64		$107,006.64		-$107,006.64	-$150,879	1	-$150,879	100%	-$150,879
3***	Add position	BED		PUC Counsel & Compliance Officer		General Manager			N16		$120,302.00-$166,178.69	$0.00	$166,178.69	$166,178.69	$234,312	1	$234,312	100%	$58,578
Total Cost (Savings)																			**-$92,301**

* Assume position filled on 4/1/26.
** Position eliminated.
*** Assume position filled on 4/1/26.

City of Burlington
Job Description

Position Title:	Financial Analyst		
Department:	Burlington Electric Department		
Reports to:	~~Director of Finance~~CFO and Manager of Strategy & Innovation		
Pay Grade:	~~A-3~~ NU3	**Job Code:**	
Exempt/Non-Exempt:	Exempt	**Union:**	~~IBEW~~Non-Union

General Purpose:
The~~is~~ Financial Analyst ~~position~~ is responsible for financial analysis, budgeting, and forecasting; financial reporting and other performance reporting; ~~developing the annual Operating and Capital budgets and monthly budget reporting and analysis~~and cost-of-service/rate analysis. This position works closely with BED executive management and all area directors to support decision-making~~is also responsible for conducting research, general financial analysis and creating and evaluating department-wide performance measurements. In addition, this position provides support for rate analyses and filings.~~

Essential Job Functions: (This section outlines the fundamental job functions that must be performed in this position. The "Qualifications/Basic Job Requirements" and the "Physical and Mental/Reasoning Requirements and Work Environment" state the underlying requirements that an employee must meet in order to perform these essential functions. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations may be made to qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the position.)

Budgeting and Forecasting

- ~~•~~ Develop ~~and report on~~ and maintain ~~short-term~~ financial budgets, plans, and forecasts, including ~~but not limited to~~ BED's annual ~~O~~operating and ~~C~~capital ~~B~~budgets; year-end forecast; ~~-~~
- ~~Develop, implement,~~ and ~~maintain BED's 5~~five- ~~Y~~year ~~F~~financial ~~P~~plan.
- Assist with the development of a calendar year budget for the McNeil Generating Station.
- ~~•~~ Coordinate budgeting and forecasting processes, review budget submissions, and ~~Assist with the development of a fiscal year budget for the Winooski One Hydro facility.~~
- ~~P~~provide~~s~~ training and support ~~and direction~~ to other BED personnel on ~~all~~ budgetary issues.

Financial Analysis & Reporting

- ~~• Track Department spending by generating associated budget reports, including but not~~

~~limited to, capital spending and operating expenses.~~

- Develop and generate various financial, operational, or performance ~~-~~reports for internal and external ~~reporting~~ needs~~, including but not limited to, monthly budget variance reports and capital spending reports~~.
- Develop, monitor, and analyze key financial ratios and other performance indicators for the Department; provide insights and recommendations to management.
- ~~—~~
- Analyze ~~Monitor Department spending~~financial, operational, or performance data and trends to assess performance and ~~notify appropriate personnel of~~identify opportunities, deficiencies, or irregularities.
- Compile data for and file quarterly and annual reports for ~~Responsible for maintaining and reporting of~~ BED's Service Quality & Reliability ~~and~~ Performance, Monitoring & Reporting Plan ("SQRP"). ~~This includes calculating service quality point/penalties when the company fails to meet the standards in certain areas.~~
- ~~Completes APPA Surveys and Reports as required including but not limited to *"American Public Power Association Performance Indicators Survey".*~~
- Prepare financial and statistical information for external audiences, such as ~~related to~~ for bond offerings and refinancings~~.~~,
- ~~Prepare financial and statistical information for C~~continuing d~~D~~isclosure on bond obligations, credit rating reviews, and American Public Power Association surveys.~~-~~

Subject matter expert for ~~Compute and analyze Moody's Bond Rating service Financial Indicators, including debt service coverage ratio, days cash on hand and debt ratio.~~Develop, coordinate, and monitor key financial ratios for the Department.

~~Develop and generate monthly financial reports for the Burlington Electric Commission.~~

- ~~Responsible for maintaining~~ budgeting and financial reporting functions of ~~s utilizing~~ the Department's enterprise ~~accounting~~ software system~~-~~(s)~~report writer software~~.

~~Ensures proper coding of accounts for accounting system report writing.~~

- ~~—~~

Rates and Other Analyses

- Assist with preparation of schedules, work papers, testimony, and analyses for cost allocation/rate design studies; ~~and filings.~~
- ~~Assist with preparing schedules, work papers and analyses for~~ revenue requirement~~-~~; and other regulatory filings.
- Provide information and analysis ~~Assist~~ as needed ~~with~~ to support rate~~-~~making ~~issues, and rate hearings, providing information to legal counsel and BED staff~~.
- ~~Develop, produce, and m~~Maintain documentation of budgeting, reporting, and planning ~~various accounting~~ policies and procedures ~~manuals~~.

- ~~Coordinate the review and revisions of "BED's Operating Guidelines", which reflect the Department's operating policies and regulatory requirements.~~
- Perform financial and statistical research, analysis, and modeling ~~as required~~to support decision-making and strategic planning.
- Participate in and contribute to ~~Conduct financial and accounting research as required.~~
- ~~Develop, coordinate, and monitor key financial ratios for the Department.~~
- ~~Develop and generate monthly financial reports for the Burlington Electric Commission.~~
- ~~Responsible for maintaining financial reports utilizing accounting system report writer software.~~
- ~~Ensures proper coding of accounts for accounting system report writing.~~
- ~~Serves as the "Working Team" coordinator for Finance on the purchase and implementation of a new Financial Information System (FIS).~~
- ~~Initiate, facilitate, and lead group discussions no less than annually involving other staff on~~ process improvement and operational efficiency efforts~~s pertaining to respective areas of responsibility using lean principals of management when determined to be appropriate~~.
- ~~Responsible for maintaining and updating process improvement flowcharts and other documentation pertaining to areas of responsibility.~~
- ~~Cross train in other accounting positions as determined by the Director of Finance and Administration.~~

~~Performs specialized accounting projects and specific other accounting functions/tasks as assigned by the Director of Finance and Administration.~~

- ~~Performs other responsibilities in absence of coworkers and during periods of high volume as directed.~~

Non-Essential Job Functions:

- ~~Performs~~ Perform select ~~other~~ responsibilities of other finance team members in absence of coworkers and during periods of high volume as directed.
- Perform~~s~~ other duties as required.

Qualifications/Basic Job Requirements:

- Bachelor's ~~of Science D~~degree in finance, ~~A~~accounting, ~~B~~business ~~Administration~~, or other related field.
- Additional experience may be substituted for a degree requirement on a two-for-one year basis.
- Three (3) years of relevant budgeting, reporting, and financial analysis experience ~~in a responsible accounting position~~ required.
- Utility ~~E~~experience ~~with electric utility accounting~~ preferred.
- Strong analytical and quantitative skills and attention to detail.

- High technical aptitude and proficiency with spreadsheet, complex data, and enterprise financial and reporting systems required.
- Knowledge of generally accepted accounting principles and utility rate-making principles.
- ~~Attend a minimum of sixteen (16) hours of training approved by the Director of Finance and Administration every two years.~~
- Ability to understand and ~~comply~~ apply principles of fund accounting and ~~with~~ Federal Energy Regulatory Commission uniform system of accounts~~(FERC) accounting standards and practices~~.
- ~~Must possess a working knowledge of generally accepted accounting practices.~~
- Ability to maintain strict ~~carry out duties and functions in a~~ confidentiality ~~manner~~of sensitive information.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
- Ability to ~~establish~~ collaborate effectively ~~and maintain good relations with co-workers.~~
- ~~Ability to have a high level of initiative and enthusiasm to work with~~in a team environment.
- ~~Ability to operate in a Windows based environment using word processing; spreadsheet and database software is required.~~
- ~~Familiarity with computerized accounting systems preferred required.~~
- ~~Demonstrate proficiency in Excel spreadsheet skills is required.~~
- ~~Demonstrated analytical ability and attention to detail.~~
- ~~Ability to be able to listen to and appropriately react to a supervisor's feedback and incorporate said feedback to improve employee performance.~~
- Ability to be self-directed, organize and prioritize workflow, and meet deadlines.
- Ability to work well under pressure~~.~~
- required~~Ability to work with minimal supervision~~.
- Ability to actively support City diversity, equity, and cultural competency efforts within stated job responsibilities and work effectively across diverse cultures and constituencies.
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as evidenced by ongoing trainings and professional development.
- Regular attendance is necessary and is essential to meeting the expectations of the job functions.
- Work beyond the normal 40-hour work week, attendance at evening meetings, and occasional travel to conferences and workshops may be required.
- ~~Ability to understand and comply with City standards, safety rules and personnel policies.~~
- ~~Ability to work beyond the normal forty (40) hour work week as needed consistent with the provisions of the BED/IBEW Collective Bargaining Agreement.~~
-

Physical & Mental/Reasoning Requirements; Work Environment:
These are the physical and mental/reasoning requirements of the position as it is typically performed. Inability to meet one or more of these physical or mental/reasoning requirements will not automatically disqualify a candidate or employee from the position. Upon request for a reasonable accommodation, the City may be able to adjust or excuse one or more of these requirements, depending on the requirement, the essential function to which it relates, and the proposed accommodation.

_x_ seeing	_x_ ability to move distances within warehouses and offices
_x_ color perception (red, green, amber)	__ lifting (specify __ pounds)
_x_ hearing/listening	__ carrying (specify __ pounds)
_x_ clear speech	__ climbing
_x_ touching	_x_ driving
x dexterity __ hand __ finger	__ ability to mount and dismount forklift
reading – basic	__ pushing/pulling
x reading – complex	__ shift work
math skills – basic	__ moving objects
_x_ math skills – complex	__ pressurized equipment
__ writing – basic	__ extreme heat
_x_ writing – complex	__ extreme cold
x analysis/comprehension	__ high places
x judgment/decision making	__ noise
x clerical	__ fumes/odors
x inside	__ dirt/dust
_x_ outside	__ hazardous materials
_x_ works alone	__ electrical equipment
x works with others	__ mechanical equipment
_x_ face-to-face contact	
_x_ verbal contact w/others	

Supervision:

Directly Supervises: __0___ Indirectly Supervises: __0___

Disclaimer:
The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by employees to this classification. They are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and/or skills required of all personnel so classified.

Approvals:

Department Head: _____ Date: _____

Human Resources: _____ Date: _____

Revised 9/14/15
Revised 11/2/18
Revised 03/2021
Revised 11/2025

City of Burlington
Job Description

Position Title: Senior Financial Analyst

Department: Burlington Electric Department

Reports to: ~~Director of Finance~~CFO and Manager of Strategy & Innovation

Pay Grade: ~~A-5~~NU5 **Job Code:**

Exempt/Non-Exempt: Exempt **Union:** ~~IBEW~~Non-union

General Purpose:
The~~is~~ Senior Financial Analyst ~~position~~ is responsible for ~~developing the annual Operating and Capital budgets and monthly budget reporting and analysis.~~ Financial analysis, budgeting, and forecasting; financial and other performance reporting; and cost-of-service/rate analysis. This position works closely with BED executive management and all area directors to support decision-making.~~This position is also responsible for conducting conducts research, general financial analysis and creating and evaluating department-wide performance measurements. In addition, this position provides support for rate analyses and filings.~~

Essential Job Functions: (This section outlines the fundamental job functions that must be performed in this position. The "Qualifications/Basic Job Requirements" and the "Physical and Mental/Reasoning Requirements and Work Environment" state the underlying requirements that an employee must meet in order to perform these essential functions. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations may be made to qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the position.)

Budgeting and Forecasting

- Develop~~, report on,~~ and maintain ~~short-term~~ financial budgets, plans, and forecasts, including ~~but not limited to~~ BED's annual ~~O~~operating and ~~C~~capital ~~B~~budgets; year-end forecast; andfive-~~.~~
- ~~Develop, implement, and maintain BED's 5-Y~~year ~~F~~financial ~~P~~plan.
- Assist with the development of a calendar year budget for the McNeil Generating Station.
- ~~Assist with the development of a fiscal year budget for the Winooski One Hydro facility.~~
- Coordinate budgeting and forecasting processes, review budget submissions, and ~~P~~provide~~s~~ training and support ~~and direction~~to other BED personnel on ~~all~~ budgetary issues.

Financial Analysis & Reporting

- ~~Track Department spending by generating associated budget reports, including but not limited to, capital spending and operating expenses.~~
- Develop and generate various financial, operational, or performance reports for internal and external ~~reporting~~ needs~~, including but not limited to, monthly budget variance reports and capital spending reports~~.
- Develop, monitor, and analyze key financial ratios and other performance indicators for the Department; provide insights and recommendations to management.
- Analyze financial, operational, or performance data and trends ~~Monitor Department spending and notify appropriate personnel of~~ to assess performance and identify opportunities, deficiencies, or irregularities.
- ~~Compile data Responsible~~ for ~~maintaining~~ and file quarterly and annual report~~sing of~~ for BED's Service Quality & Reliability ~~and~~ Performance, Monitoring & Reporting Plan ("SQRP"). ~~This includes calculating service quality point/penalties when the company fails to meet the standards in certain areas.~~
-
- ~~Completes APPA Surveys and Reports as required including but not limited to *"American Public Power Association Performance Indicators Survey"*.~~
- Prepare financial and statistical information for external audiences, such as for ~~related to~~ bond offerings and refinancings, ~~.~~
- ~~Prepare financial and statistical information for c~~Continuing d~~D~~isclosure on bond obligations, credit rating reviews, and American Public Power Association surveys~~.~~
- ~~Compute and analyze Moody's Bond Rating service Financial Indicators, including debt service coverage ratio, days cash on hand and debt ratio.~~.
- Subject matter expert for budgeting and financial reporting functions of the Department's enterprise software system(s).
-

Rates and Other Analyses

- Assist with preparation of schedules, work papers, testimony, and analyses for cost allocation/rate design studies ~~and filings;~~ ~~.~~
- ~~Assist with preparing schedules, work papers and analyses for~~ revenue requirement~~-~~; and other regulatory filings. Provide information and analysis as needed to support rate-making.
- ~~Assist as needed with rate issues, and rate hearings, providing information to legal counsel and BED staff.~~
- ~~Develop, produce, and m~~Maintain documentation of budgeting, reporting, and planning ~~various accounting~~ policies and procedures ~~manuals~~.
- ~~Coordinate the review and revisions of "BED's Operating Guidelines", which reflect the Department's operating policies and regulatory requirements.~~

- Perform financial and statistical research, analysis, and modeling ~~as required~~to support decision-making and strategic planning.
- ~~•~~ Participate in and contribute to process improvement and operational efficiency efforts~~Conduct financial and accounting research as required.~~
- ~~Develop, coordinate, and monitor key financial ratios for the Department.~~
- ~~Develop and generate monthly financial reports for the Burlington Electric Commission.~~
- ~~Responsible for maintaining financial reports utilizing accounting system report writer software.~~
- ~~Ensures proper coding of accounts for accounting system report writing.~~
- ~~Serves as the "Working Team" coordinator for Finance on the purchase and implementation of a new Financial Information System (FIS).~~
- ~~Initiate, facilitate, and lead group discussions no less than annually involving other staff on process improvements pertaining to respective areas of responsibility using lean principals of management when determined to be appropriate~~.
- ~~Responsible for maintaining and updating process improvement flowcharts and other documentation pertaining to areas of responsibility.~~
- ~~Performs specialized accounting projects and specific other accounting functions /tasks as assigned by the Director of Finance and Administration.~~
- ~~Performs other responsibilities in absence of coworkers and during periods of high volume as directed.~~

Non-Essential Job Functions:

- Perform select responsibilities of other finance team members in absence of coworkers and during periods of high volume as directed.
- Perform~~s~~ other duties as required.

Qualifications/Basic Job Requirements:

- Bachelor's ~~of Science D~~degree in finance, ~~A~~accounting, ~~B~~business ~~Administration~~, or other related field.
- Additional experience may be substituted for ~~a bachelor's~~ degree requirement on a two-~~-~~for-one year basis.
- Eight (8) years of relevant budgeting, reporting, and financial analysis experience ~~in a responsible accounting position~~ required.
- **Financial Modeling & Valuation Analyst (FMVA) Certification or equivalent is required.**

- ~~Five (5) of these years in electric u~~Utility ~~accounting~~ experience preferred.
- Strong analytical and quantitative skills and attention to detail required.
- High technical aptitude and proficiency with spreadsheet, complex data, and enterprise financial and reporting systems required.
- ~~Certified Public Accountant (CPA) license or Graduate Certificate in Finance, Budgeting or related field is required. Additional experience will not be a substitute for a Graduate Certificate.~~
- ~~Demonstrate proficiency in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) accounting standards and practices is required.~~
- ~~Demonstrate proficiency and expertise in cross trained accounting positions is required.~~
- ~~Must possess a w~~Working knowledge of generally accepted accounting ~~practices~~principles and utility rate-making principles.
- Ability to understand and apply principles of fund accounting and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission uniform system of accounts.
- Ability to ~~carry out duties and functions in a~~ maintain strict confidentiality of ~~manner~~sensitive information.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
- Ability to collaborate effectively ~~establish and maintain good relations with co-workers.~~
- ~~Ability to have a high level of initiative and enthusiasm to work with~~in a team environment.
- ~~Ability to operate in a Windows based environment using word processing, spreadsheet and database software is required.~~
- ~~Familiarity with computerized accounting systems required.~~
- ~~Demonstrate proficiency in Excel spreadsheet skills is required.~~
- ~~Demonstrated analytical ability and attention to detail required.~~
- ~~Ability to be able to listen to and appropriately react to a supervisor's feedback and incorporate said feedback to improve employee performance.~~
- Ability to be self-directed, organize and prioritize workflow, and meet deadlines.
- Ability to work well under pressure required.
- ~~Ability to work with minimal supervision.~~
- Ability to actively support City diversity, equity, and cultural competency efforts within stated job responsibilities and work effectively across diverse cultures and constituencies.
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as evidenced by ongoing trainings and professional development.
- Regular attendance is necessary and is essential to meeting the expectations of the job functions.
- Work beyond the normal 40-hour work week, attendance at evening meetings, and occasional travel to conferences and workshops may be required.

- ~~Ability to understand and comply with City standards, safety rules and personnel policies.~~
- ~~Ability to work beyond the normal forty (40) hour work week as needed consistent with the provisions of the BED/IBEW Collective Bargaining Agreement.~~

Physical & Mental/Reasoning Requirements; Work Environment:
These are the physical and mental/reasoning requirements of the position as it is typically performed. Inability to meet one or more of these physical or mental/reasoning requirements will not automatically disqualify a candidate or employee from the position. Upon request for a reasonable accommodation, the City may be able to adjust or excuse one or more of these requirements, depending on the requirement, the essential function to which it relates, and the proposed accommodation.

_x_ seeing	_x_ ability to move distances within warehouses and offices
_x_ color perception (red, green, amber)	__ lifting (specify __ pounds)
_x_ hearing/listening	__ carrying (specify __ pounds)
_x_ clear speech	__ climbing
_x_ touching	_x_ driving
_x_ dexterity __ hand __ finger	__ ability to mount and dismount forklift
__ reading – basic	__ pushing/pulling
_x_ reading – complex	__ shift work
__ math skills – basic	__ moving objects
_x_ math skills – complex	__ pressurized equipment
__ writing – basic	__ extreme heat
_x_ writing – complex	__ extreme cold
_x_ analysis/comprehension	__ high places
_x_ judgment/decision making	__ noise
x_ clerical	__ fumes/odors
_x_ inside	__ dirt/dust
_x_ outside	__ hazardous materials
_x_ works alone	__ electrical equipment
_x_ works with others	__ mechanical equipment
_x_ face-to-face contact	
x_ verbal contact w/others	

Supervision:

Directly Supervises: __0___ Indirectly Supervises: __0___

Disclaimer:
The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by employees to this classification. They are not intended to be construed as an

exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and/or skills required of all personnel so classified.

Approvals:

Department Head: _____ Date: _____

Human Resources: _____ Date: _____

Revised 9/14/15
Revised 11/2/18
Revised 03/2021
Revised 11/10/2025

City of Burlington
Job Description

Position Title: Public Utility Commission Counsel and Regulatory Compliance Officer
Department: Burlington Electric Department
Reports to: General Manager
Pay Grade: N16 **Job Code: XXX**
Exempt/Non-Exempt: Exempt **Union: Non-Union**

General Purpose: The Public Utility Commission Counsel and Regulatory Compliance Officer leads BED's regulatory engagement with the Department of Public Service and the Public Utility Commission. The position represents BED as legal counsel and provides legal advice on regulatory matters. This position works closely with BED's executive management team. The position also coordinates with The Director of Policy and Planning. The position must collaborate effectively in particular with the Director of energy Services in matters related to BED's EEU functions. Additionally, the position works collaboratively with all other BED divisions to ensure timely, accurate and complete regulatory filings.

Essential Job Functions: (This section outlines the fundamental job functions that must be performed in this position. The related job requirements and physical, mental, and reasoning requirements outlined in the next two sections state the underlying requirements that an employee must meet in order to perform these essential functions. The three sections together describe the essential functions of this position)

- Represent BED as legal counsel and enter appearances when necessary in Public Utility Commission proceedings. Work with external counsel as directed.
- Provide legal advice or guidance to BED as it relates to Public Utility Commission dockets, legal briefs, filings, and procedures; permits and permitting activity; drafting and reviewing of relevant regulatory memoranda of understanding; and/or engagement with the Department of Public Service.
- Monitor proceedings and work with other BED staff to develop strategy. Coordinate BED's response as necessary.
- Draft and submit certain Public Utility Commission filings and/or provide support and review filings prepared by other team members providing citations to legal/regulatory precedent as needed.
- Primary liaison with attorneys and staff at the Department of Public Service, as well as legal counsel or regulatory compliance officers at other distribution and energy efficiency utilities. Develop and maintain strong working relationships through regular communication.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of state and local laws, rules, and regulations relevant to distribution and energy efficiency utility operations/business in Vermont, including Public

Utility Commission and other legal precedents relevant to BED's regulatory work and laws in other New England States to the extent they impact BED's operations.
- Ensure timely, accurate, and complete regulatory filings, including SQRP and other compliance filings, periodic reports, rate case filings, tariff filings, and Energy Efficiency Utility and other filings.
- Lead internal, cross-disciplinary working group(s) related to regulatory matters.
- May participate or represent BED in external working groups or committees.
- Serve as BED's primary compliance officer for state and local regulatory processes.
- Responsible for tracking of docket and compliance filing deadlines.
- Serve on the BED leadership team.

Qualifications/Basic Job Requirements:
- Juris Doctorate (J.D.) and current admission to practice law in Vermont required.
- Current admission to practice law in New England states other than Vermont a plus.
- Minimum of 5 years' experience in legal utility or regulatory representation as an attorney before a Public Utility Commission required.
- Knowledge of utility regulatory practice in Vermont required, with strong preference for understanding of Energy Efficiency Utility (EEU) regulatory requirements.
- Knowledge of utility rate case and tariff laws, rules, and procedures required.
- Knowledge of administrative law and procedure in Vermont required.
- Demonstrated leadership and project management skills required.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills with demonstrated abilities in translating technical information effectively for a diverse audience and public speaking, public information, and use of presentation software and equipment required.
- Ability to organize and prioritize workload, complete multiple projects, and meet established deadlines required.
- Demonstrated analytical ability and attention to detail required.
- Ability to actively support City diversity, equity, and cultural competency efforts within stated job responsibilities and work effectively across diverse cultures and constituencies.
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as evidenced by ongoing trainings and professional development.
- Regular attendance is necessary and is essential to meeting the expectations of the job functions.
- Ability to understand and comply with City standards, safety rules and personnel policies.
- Ability to obtain and maintain a valid VT driver's license required.
- Ability to establish and maintain good relations with co-workers.
- A strong desire to improve and maintain service to internal and external customers is required as is a high level of personal creativity, initiative, and enthusiasm to work within a constantly changing organization.
- Ability to work in a team environment.
- Must be able to listen to and appropriately react to a supervisor's constructive criticism and incorporate said criticism to improve employee performance.
- Ability to work with minimal supervision.

Physical & Mental/Reasoning Requirements; Work Environment:

These are the physical and mental/reasoning requirements of the position as it is typically performed. Inability to meet one or more of these physical or mental/reasoning requirements will not automatically disqualify a candidate or employee from the position. Upon request for a reasonable accommodation, the City may be able to adjust or excuse one or more of these requirements, depending on the requirement, the essential function to which it relates, and the proposed accommodation.

_x_ seeing	_ _ ability to move distances within warehouses and offices
__ color perception (red, green, amber)	_ _ lifting (specify __ pounds)
_x_ hearing/listening	_ _ carrying (specify __ pounds)
_x_ clear speech	_ _ climbing
_ _ touching	_x_ driving
_ _ dexterity _X_ hand _X_ finger	__ ability to mount and dismount forklift
__ reading – basic	_ pushing/pulling
_x_ reading – complex	__ shift work
_x_ math skills – basic	_ _ moving objects
_ _ math skills – complex	__ pressurized equipment
__ writing – basic	_ _ extreme heat
_x_ writing – complex	_ _ extreme cold
_x_ analysis/comprehension	_ _ high places
_x_ judgment/decision making	_ noise
_x_ clerical	_ _ fumes/odors
_x_ inside	_ _ dirt/dust
__ outside	_ _ hazardous materials
_x_ works alone	_ _ electrical equipment
_x_ works with others	_ _ mechanical equipment
_x_ face-to-face contact	
_x_ verbal contact w/others	

Supervision:

Directly Supervises: __0__ Indirectly Supervises: __0__

Disclaimer:

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by employees to this classification. They are not intended to be construed as an

 exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and/or skills required of all personnel so classified.

Approvals:

Department Head: _____ Date: _____

Human Resources: _____ Date: _____

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: Burlington Electric Submitter: Darren Springer and Munir Kasti and Emily Stebbins-Wheelock

Title/Subject: Position Updates

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☒	Board of Finance	12/15/2025
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Both BOF and Council	Click or tap to enter a date.

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	12/8/2025	Darren Springer
Mayor's Office	Yes	12/8/2025	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Yes	12/9/2025	Jessica Brown
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Yes	12/9/2025	Jessica Brown, motions included
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	12/8/2025	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Yes	12/8/2025	Tim Clancy
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

CITY OF BURLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Chapin Spencer
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Julia Ursaki, PE, Public Works Transportation Engineer (DPW)
Laura Wheelock, PE, Division Director of Tech Services/City Engineer (DPW)

DATE: January 12, 2026

CC: Chapin Spencer, Director of Public Works

RE: Reconnecting Bank & Cherry Project Update

Request

To accept this report and place it in the file.

Introduction

Reconnecting Bank & Cherry is the next phase in the Great Streets reinvestment into our downtown. This project includes restoring the downtown grid by building new street segments of Saint Paul and Pine – reconnecting Bank to Cherry. The project incorporates Great Streets Design Standards along with best practices and community priorities. These improvements were first imagined under the City's comprehensive plan in 2011 and then advanced in 2016 when developers announced the redevelopment of the downtown mall.

The project includes: a curbless section of Cherry Street to promote walkability, community events, and easy commerce, green infrastructure to continue our tradition of protecting Lake Champlain, better lighting, more seating, additional bike parking, healthier trees, and more. Additional information can be found on the project website: https://greatstreetsbtv.com/gs-initiative/reconnecting-bank-cherry/

Funding Shortfall

Earlier this year, the project's design consultant provided updated Bank & Cherry project construction estimates totaling approximately $48 million. There is $31,395,000 available in grant funding for construction of this project, leaving a funding shortfall of approximately $16.6 million.

Table 1. Cost Estimate for All Streets

Bank Street	$	15,368,478.72
Saint Paul Street	$	1,319,974.66
Pine Street	$	1,254,543.36
Cherry Street	$	29,450,064.00
Other Costs	$	631,000.00
	$	**48,024,060.74**
	$	*(16,629,060.74)*

The project team has considered different options to close this shortfall. We applied for another RAISE/BUILD grant earlier this year but were not successful. We are also considering items for value engineering but determined that the full $16.6 million shortfall could not be made up with value engineering alone. While it is still possible to apply for other grant funding to help fill this gap, waiting for grant cycles does not give us enough time to meet our construction obligation deadline for the Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) of June 2026. The CDS grant is $15 million, specifically for Cherry Street.

In late October, the project team met with the Mayor and other city staff to discuss moving the Bank Street portion of this project into a different phase that is not funded with the CDS or RAISE/BUILD grant.

Proposed Phase One:

- 5 blocks of Cherry Street (Battery St to Winooski Ave)
- 1 block of St Paul Street (Bank St to Cherry St – new)
- 1 block of Pine Street (Bank St to Cherry St – new)

Proposed Phase Two:

- 3 Blocks of Bank Street (Pine St to Winooski Ave)

This would allow the city to use the grant funding that we have already been awarded to move forward with the project on Cherry Street and the new blocks of Pine Street and Saint Paul Street while we seek other grant funding for Bank Street. Removing Bank Street from this phase of the project, there is still a budget shortfall of approximately $1.2 million, which the project team feels confident we can close using value engineering and smaller grant opportunities.

Table 2. Cost Estimate without Bank Street

Saint Paul Street	$	1,319,974.66
Pine Street	$	1,254,543.36
Cherry Street	$	29,450,064.00
Other Costs	$	631,000.00
	$	**32,655,582.02**
	$	*(1,260,582.02)*

The project team is pursuing an amendment to our RAISE grant agreement to move Bank Street from the scope of our current grant funding into a new Phase which will separate it from the other streets. The proposed scope still meets the purpose and need of this project by reconnecting Bank Street and Cherry Street with the new blocks of Pine Street and Saint Paul Street. The City will still complete preliminary engineering and right-of-way for Bank Street under this grant so that it is a competitive "shovel ready" project for future funding opportunities. This proposed scope will still include isolated work on Bank Street to tie in the new Saint Paul Street and Pine Street.

Pursuing Bank Street construction in another phase of the project with separate funding has several benefits:

- It closes a budget shortfall identified in our preliminary plan estimates while still allowing the City to meet our grant obligation deadlines and reconstruct 7 of the 10 blocks included in the original project.
- It supports our local businesses by reducing the amount of construction happening downtown at once, which is a concern we have heard during our community engagement.
- The contractor's means and methods could result in work occurring at the same time on Bank Street and Cherry Street to meet the schedule of this grant. These are parallel corridors in our downtown and reconstructing both of them at the same time could cut off access to entire buildings and parcels in the downtown. Separating them into two phases ensures that the contractor will only work on one major street at a time.

There are a few downsides or risks with removing Bank Street from the project, including:

- Waterfront TIF – this project was described to the Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC) as including Bank Street. This scope change will need to be approved by VEPC via a substantial change.
- Utilities – the sewer main on Bank Street is in poor condition and in need to repair. There is a risk that there will be more sewer breaks on Bank Street before the corridor is reconstructed. The water main on Bank Street is also very old and only 6 inches, which does not meet the current fire protection standards. There are also risks of water main breaks on Bank Street before the corridor is reconstructed.
- Other aging assets – the pavement condition, bricks crossing the Church Street Marketplace, and sidewalk on some sections on Bank Street are in need of repair and will continue to age as we delay construction.

Limiting Construction Impacts Downtown

The project team also met with business owners on Bank Street and Cherry Street earlier this year. We discussed several options for construction phasing and traffic control to reduce impacts to downtown, including:

- Complete new blocks of Pine and St Paul first for more detour route options
- Leave one lane open on each street at all times
- Night work
- Winter construction shut down with isolated winter work as necessary
- Reopening street closures nights and weekends
- Isolated full street closures only when necessary

- Limit size of work area to ~400 feet (one block) and on one side of the street at a time

We also discussed other items needing coordination by the City during construction, including:

- GMT Schedules and Routes
- Providing parking opportunities in the project area
- Business hours of operation and access during construction
- Maintaining public building access
- Timing of private utility relocations
- Timing of Church Street Marketplace re-bricking

We have actively been discussing these strategies with our designers and will incorporate as many of them as possible into our traffic control plan and contract documents. Between these strategies and removing Bank Street from this phase of funding of the project, we will reduce the impacts of construction on our downtown.

The DPW project team provided a very similar project update to the Transportation, Energy & Utilities Committee on 11-25-25 including the proposed phasing of the project. The Committee took no formal action, but committee members expressed individual support for the phased approach.

Next Steps

The project team will progress plans for the entire project area through the right-of-way phase. We will return to the City Council seeking approval for a Waterfront TIF substantial change in the coming months. We expect to put the Cherry Street, St Paul Street, and Pine Street portion of the work out to bid in late 2026 and would seek Council authorization to award a construction contract in late 2026 or early 2027.

Motion

To accept this report and place it in the file.

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: Public Works Submitter: Julia Ursaki

Title/Subject: Reconnecting Bank & Cherry Project Update

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	Click or tap to enter a date.
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Both BOF and Council	Click or tap to enter a date.

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	12/5/2025	Chapin Spencer
Mayor's Office	Yes	12/9/2025	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Yes	12/9/2025	Erik Ramakrishnan
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Yes	12/9/2025	Erik Ramakrishnan
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	12/8/2025	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

BURLINGTON LOCAL CANNABIS CONTROL COMMISSION
CONTOIS AUDITORIUM, 149 CHURCH STREET, 2ND FLOOR
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 15, 2025

1. Agenda

1. Agenda
City Council President Traverse convened the meeting at 7:31 pm.
Members present: Commissioners Kane and Litwin (both online); City Council President Traverse, Commissioners Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, McKnight, Neubieser, Schachter and Singh (all in person)
Others present: Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, COS Jacobsen, Deputy COS Zakaras, CAO Schad, City Attorney Brown and Lori Olberg

Subject	**1.1. Motion to adopt agenda**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Cannabis Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	1. Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt agenda

1.1. Motion to adopt agenda
Motion made by Commissioner Broderick, seconded by Commissioner Schachter, to adopt the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consent Agenda

2. Consent Agenda
Motion made by Commissioner Broderick, seconded by Commissioner Schachter, to adopt the consent agenda as presented and take the actions indicated. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**2.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Cannabis Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board

Type	Action (Consent) Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated

2.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated

Subject	**2.2. Apex Arboretum Inc., dba Upstate Elevator Operators (location change only)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Cannabis Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	approve the location change only for the wholesaler license for Apex Arboretum Inc., dba Upstate Elevator Operators from 699 Pine Street to 701 Pine Street Suite B (current license expires October 2026)

2.2. Apex Arboretum Inc., dba Upstate Elevator Operators (location change only)

3. Adjournment

3. Adjournment

Subject	**3.1. Motion to adjourn**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Cannabis Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	3. Adjournment
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adjourn

3.1. Motion to adjourn
City Council President Traverse adjourned the meeting at 7:32 pm.

BURLINGTON LOCAL CONTROL COMMISSION
CONTOIS AUDITORIUM, 149 CHURCH STREET, 2ND FLOOR
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 15, 2025

1. Agenda

1. Agenda

City Council President Traverse convened the meeting at 7:31 pm.
Members present: Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, City Council President Traverse, Commissioners Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, McKnight, Neubieser, Schachter and Singh (all in person): Commissioners Kane and Litwin (both online)
Others present: City Attorney Brown, CAO Schad, COS Jacobsen, Deputy COS Zakaras and Lori Olberg

Subject	**1.1. Motion to adopt agenda**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	1. Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt agenda

1.1. Motion to adopt agenda
Motion made by Commissioner Broderick, seconded by Commissioner Schachter, to adopt the agenda as presented.
Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consent Agenda

2. Consent Agenda

Subject	**2.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board

Type	Action (Consent) Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated

2.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated
Motion made by Commissioner Broderick, seconded by Commissioner Schachter, to adopt the consent agenda as presented and take the actions indicated.
Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**2.2. Second Class Liquor License Renewal (2025-2026): CSC Quick Stop, 1563 North Avenue**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	approve the 2025-2026 Second Class Liquor License Renewal for CSC Quick Stop, 1563 North Avenue with all standard conditions

2.2. Second Class Liquor License Renewal (2025-2026): CSC Quick Stop, 1563 North Avenue

3. Adjournment

3. Adjournment

Subject	**3.1. Motion to adjourn**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Local Control Commission Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:15 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	3. Adjournment
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adjourn

3.1. Motion to adjourn
City Council President Traverse adjourned the meeting at 7:31 pm.

BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL
CONTOIS AUDITORIUM, 149 CHURCH STREET, 2ND FLOOR
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 15, 2025

1. Agenda

1. Agenda

City Council President Traverse convened the meeting at 6:10 pm.
Members present: Councilors Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, McKnight, Neubieser, Schachter, Singh and City Council President Traverse (all in person); Councilors Kane and Litwin (both online)
Others present: Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, CAO Schad, Deputy COS Zakaras, COS Jacobsen, City Attorney Brown and Lori Olberg

Subject	**1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	1. Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to amend/adopt agenda as follows: remove from the deliberative agenda item 6.8. Reconnecting Bank & Cherry Project Update - DPW and place it on the January 12, 2026 City Council Consent Agenda (per City Council President Traverse per DPW Director Spencer).

1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda
Motion made by Councilor McKnight, seconded by Councilor Schachter, to adopt the agenda as amended/presented.
Motion passed unanimously.

2. Work Session Regarding Memorial Block Redevelopment Project Update (25 mins.)

2. Work Session Regarding Memorial Block Redevelopment Project Update (25 mins.)

Subject	**2.1. Work Session Regarding Memorial Block Redevelopment Project Update**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Work Session Regarding Memorial Block Redevelopment Project Update (25 mins.)

Department	Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO)
Type	Discussion Information Presentation

2.1. Work Session Regarding Memorial Block Redevelopment Project Update
Kara Alnasrawi, Gummi Johnson, Eric Larkin and Samantha Dunn spoke to this agenda item.

3. Public Forum: Time Certain: 6:30 pm **See above for signup instructions**

3. Public Forum: Time Certain: 6:30 pm **See above for signup instructions**
City Council President Traverse opened Public Forum at 6:42 pm.
City Council President Traverse closed Public Forum at 7:15 pm.

Subject	**3.1. Verbal Comments**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	3. Public Forum: Time Certain: 6:30 pm **See above for signup instructions**
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	open Public Forum close Public Forum

3.1. Verbal Comments
BTV residents (in person):
Solveig Overby: Memorial Block
Charlie Messing: Memorial Auditorium & #11 Bus route
Jim Carrier: immigrants & F35s
Romeo Von Hermann: 6.11
Bruce Wilson: 2026 event
Andre Clara: shelter capacity
Nolana Rogers: Tax Fairness Ballot Item
Jak Tiano: DPW recycling program
Joan Shannon: advisory question, 6.14

BTV residents (online):
Sharon Bushor: Memorial/recycling (in house)
Emma Kouri: unhoused neighbors
Robert Bristow Johnson: TEUC meeting (Tuesday)

Non - BTV residents (in person):
Finn Hamilton: in support of Memorial Block
Brian Clifford: shelter capacity

Non - BTV resident (online):
Keren Sita: did not appear to speak

4. Mayor - General City Affairs (up to 10 mins.)

4. Mayor - General City Affairs (up to 10 mins.)

Subject	**4.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	4. Mayor - General City Affairs (up to 10 mins.)
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

4.1. Verbal reports

5. Consent Agenda

5. Consent Agenda

Subject	**5.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action (Consent) Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated

5.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated
Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by Councilor Singh, to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**5.2. Accountability List - DFA**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication Information
Recommended Action	waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file

5.2. Accountability List - DFA

Subject	**5.3. December 1, 2025 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes - DFA**

Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Information Minutes
Recommended Action	approve the minutes

5.3. December 1, 2025 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes - DFA

Subject	**5.4. December 1, 2025 Full Board of Abatement of Taxes Meeting Minutes - DFA**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Information Minutes
Recommended Action	approve the minutes

5.4. December 1, 2025 Full Board of Abatement of Taxes Meeting Minutes - DFA

Subject	**5.5. Request to Accept a Gift from Cliff Landesman - BCA**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	City Arts
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to accept the donation of two Endangered Alphabet Project panels to the City of Burlington from Cliff Landesman

5.5. Request to Accept a Gift from Cliff Landesman - BCA

Subject	**5.6. City Council Initiative Fund Support of Free 2025 Highlight Buttons - BCA**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	City Arts
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to approve the use of $5,000 from the City Council Initiative Fund to subsidize Highlight tickets

5.6. City Council Initiative Fund Support of Free 2025 Highlight Buttons - BCA

Subject	**5.7. CJC FY26 Budget Amendment - CEDO/CJC**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO)
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	approve the proposed CJC budget amendment as shown on the attached budget amendment request and authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to effectuate the changes in substantial conformance with the request

5.7. CJC FY26 Budget Amendment - CEDO/CJC

Subject	**5.8. Hannaford Donations - Fire**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Fire Department
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to approve and authorize the Burlington Fire Department to accept donations from the Hannaford Community Bag Program in a total Fiscal Year 2026 amount not to exceed $500, subject to the review and approval of the Chief Administrative Officer or designee

5.8. Hannaford Donations - Fire

Subject	**5.9. Communication: Beth Royer, Chittenden County Clerk, re: Chittenden County Budget Meeting Monday, December 15, 2025 @ noon**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda

Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication
Recommended Action	waive the reading and place the communication on file

5.9. Communication: Beth Royer, Chittenden County Clerk, re: Chittenden County Budget Meeting Monday, December 15, 2025 @ noon

Subject	**5.10. Communication: Linda Cherkassky, re: Making Public Health and Welfare the Priority**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication
Recommended Action	waive the reading and place the communication on file

5.10. Communication: Linda Cherkassky, re: Making Public Health and Welfare the Priority

Subject	**5.11. Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Renewals (2025-2026): CSC Quick Stop, 1563 North Avenue**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	approve the 2025-2026 Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Renewals for CSC Quick Stop, 1563 North Avenue

5.11. Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Renewals (2025-2026): CSC Quick Stop, 1563 North Avenue

Subject	**5.12. FIO Documents**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration

Type	Action (Consent) Communication Information
Recommended Action	for information only

5.12. FIO Documents

Subject	**5.13. Ordinance: Ticketing Authority For Parking Violations In City Parks (Ordinance Committee)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	City Attorney
Type	Action (Consent)
Recommended Action	to waive the reading of the proposed ordinance amending B.C.O. § 22-23, and to suspend the rules to place the ordinance in all stages of passage (2/3 vote required)

5.13. Ordinance: Ticketing Authority For Parking Violations In City Parks (Ordinance Committee)

Subject	**5.14. Resolution: Release Of Certain Glebe And Perpetual Lease-Land Interests And Revision Of The City Of Burlington Perpetual Lease Land Interests List (Councilor Traverse)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	5. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action (Consent) Resolution
Recommended Action	waive the reading and adopt the resolution

5.14. Resolution: Release Of Certain Glebe And Perpetual Lease-Land Interests And Revision Of The City Of Burlington Perpetual Lease Land Interests List (Councilor Traverse)

6. Deliberative Agenda

6. Deliberative Agenda

Subject	**6.1. Indoor Entertainment Permit Application (2025-2026): SEABA, 400 Pine Street**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action
Recommended Action	approve the 2025-2026 Indoor Entertainment Permit Application for SEABA, 400 Pine Street with all standard conditions

6.1. Indoor Entertainment Permit Application (2025-2026): SEABA, 400 Pine Street
Motion made by Councilor Broderick, seconded by Councilor Singh, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.2. Tobacco Substitute Endorsement Application (2025-2026): Catamount Tobacco and Convenience LLC, 75 Church Street**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action
Recommended Action	approve the 2025-2026 Tobacco Substitute Endorsement Application for Catamount Tobacco and Convenience LLC, 75 Church Street

6.2. Tobacco Substitute Endorsement Application (2025-2026): Catamount Tobacco and Convenience LLC, 75 Church Street
Motion made by Councilor Broderick, seconded by Councilor Schachter, to approve the motion as presented.
Roll call vote was taken:
Ayes: Councilors Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, Kane, McKnight, Neubieser, Schachter, Singh and City Council President Traverse
Nays: Councilor Litwin
11:1= motion passed

Subject	**6.3. Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Applications (2025-2026): Store #1 Burlington, 457 St. Paul Street**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action
Recommended Action	approve the 2025-2026 Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Applications for Store #1 Burlington, 457 St. Paul Street

6.3. Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement License Applications (2025-2026): Store #1 Burlington, 457 St. Paul Street

Motion made by Councilor Broderick, seconded by Councilor Carpenter, to approve the motion as presented.
Roll call vote taken:
Ayes: Councilors Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, Kane, Litwin, McKnight, Neubieser, Schachter, Singh and City Council President Traverse
12 = motion passed

Subject	**6.4. Public Hearing Regarding MDP-26-01 Burlington's Open Space Plan**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Planning
Type	Action Public Hearing
Recommended Action	open Public Hearing close Public Hearing

6.4. Public Hearing Regarding MDP-26-01 Burlington's Open Space Plan
City Council President Traverse opened the Public Hearing at 8:13 pm. City Council President Traverse closed the Public Hearing at 8:50 pm.
In person speakers were:
Dan Cahill, City Land Steward
Zoe Richards, Conservation Board member
Jill Allen Dixon and Rhiannon Sinclair (the consultants that presented the slides)
Duncan Murdoch, Natural Areas Stewardship Coordinator
Patrick Dunseith, Land Manager, of the Intervale Center
Kate Krusei of Grow Wild
Laura Hill, Ph.D, of UVM
Lauren Chicote, Parks Manager of the Winooski Valley Park District

Online speakers were:
Rebecca Roman, Conservation Board Chair, spoke online
Sharon Bushor. I think that's it.

Subject	**6.5. 2025 Open Space Plan - Burlington Conservation Board (15 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Planning
Type	Action
Recommended Action	waive the reading and refer the Open Space Plan for a second and final public hearing and adoption by City Council on January 12, 2026

6.5. 2025 Open Space Plan - Burlington Conservation Board (15 mins.)
Motion made by Councilor Neubieser, seconded by Councilor Bergman, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.6. Authorization to Execute a Grant to CVOEO to support Recovery Shelter - Mayor's Office (20 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action
Recommended Action	authorize the Mayor to provide a grant to CVOEO in the sum of $104,000, to be paid out of the City's FY26 opioid settlement funds

6.6. Authorization to Execute a Grant to CVOEO to support Recovery Shelter - Mayor's Office (20 mins.)
COS Jacobsen and Sarah Russell spoke to this agenda item.
Motion made by Councilor McKnight, seconded by Councilor Bergman, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.7. Burlington Police Department - Police Unified Pay Scale Adjustments (15 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Police Department
Type	Action
Recommended Action	move to approve, adopt, and authorize the proposed adjustments to the Police Unified Pay Scale, as outlined above, and to further authorize the extension of the benefits as outlined herein to all Class-A, sworn, non-union, supervisory personnel within the Burlington Police Department, as part of the comprehensive benefits package for such positions, subject to the final review and approval of the Chief Administrative Officer

6.7. Burlington Police Department - Police Unified Pay Scale Adjustments (15 mins.)
Interim Police Chief Burke spoke to this agenda item.
Motion made by Councilor Grant, seconded by Councilor Schachter, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.8. Reconnecting Bank & Cherry Project Update - DPW (20 mins.) **AGENDA ITEM REMOVED AND WILL BE PART OF THE 01/12/26 CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA****
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Public Works Department

Type	Action
Recommended Action	to accept this report and place it in the file

6.8. Reconnecting Bank & Cherry Project Update - DPW (20 mins.) ****AGENDA ITEM REMOVED AND WILL BE PART OF THE 01/12/26 CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA****

Subject	**6.9. Recycling Program Update and Extension of Employee Recruitment and Retention Memorandum of Agreement between AFSCME Local 1343 and City of Burlington - DPW (25 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Public Works Department
Type	Action
Recommended Action	authorize the DPW Director to extend the DPW Employee Retention and Recruitment Memorandum of Agreement between AFSCME Local 1343 and City of Burlington, Department of Public Works through December 31, 2026, subject to the review and approval of the City Attorney

6.9. Recycling Program Update and Extension of Employee Recruitment and Retention Memorandum of Agreement between AFSCME Local 1343 and City of Burlington - DPW (25 mins.)
Chapin Spencer and Lee Perry spoke to this agenda item.
Motion made by Councilor Barlow, seconded by Councilor Broderick, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.10. Ordinance: Sidewalk Interference BCO Chapter 27, Art. I (Department of Permitting and Inspections, Ordinance Committee)(10 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Permitting & Inspections
Type	Action Ordinance - Second Reading
Recommended Action	waive the second reading, approve the ordinance as amended by the Ordinance Committee

6.10. Ordinance: Sidewalk Interference BCO Chapter 27, Art. I (Department of Permitting and Inspections, Ordinance Committee)(10 mins.)
Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by Councilor Barlow, to suspend the rules and complete the Deliberative Agenda. Motion passed unanimously at 10:28 pm.

Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by Councilor Barlow, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.11. Ordinance: Unlawful Entry Into A Motor Vehicle (Councilor Traverse, Ordinance Committee)(10 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Ordinance - Second Reading
Recommended Action	waive the second reading and adopt the ordinance

6.11. Ordinance: Unlawful Entry Into A Motor Vehicle (Councilor Traverse, Ordinance Committee)(10 mins.)
Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by Councilor McKnight, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.12. Resolution: Compensation For School Board Members (Councilor Traverse) (10 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Resolution
Recommended Action	waive the reading and adopt the resolution

6.12. Resolution: Compensation For School Board Members (Councilor Traverse) (10 mins.)
Motion made by Councilor Barlow, seconded by Councilor Singh, to approve the motion as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**6.13. Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting -- Increase In Police & Fire Tax Rate (Councilor Bergman)(20 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action Resolution
Recommended Action	waive the reading and refer to the Board of Finance

6.13. Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting -- Increase In Police & Fire Tax Rate (Councilor Bergman)(20 mins.)

Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by Councilor Grant, to approve the motion as presented.
Roll call vote was taken:
Ayes: Councilors Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, Kane, Litwin, Neubieser, Schachter
Nays: Councilors McKnight, Singh and City Council President Traverse
Motion passed: 9:3

Subject	**6.14. Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Advisory Question Re Municipal Tax Reform (Councilor Bergman)(20 mins.)**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	6. Deliberative Agenda
Department	Mayor's Office
Type	Action Resolution
Recommended Action	to begin deliberation on the question but postpone action until January 12, 2026

6.14. Resolution: March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Advisory Question Re Municipal Tax Reform (Councilor Bergman)(20 mins.)
Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by Councilor Neubieser, to approve the motion as presented.
Roll call vote taken:
Ayes: Councilors Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, Kane, Litwin, Neubieser, Schachter and Singh
Nays: Councilor McKnight and City Council President Traverse
Motion passed: 10:2

7. Committee Reports

7. Committee Reports

Subject	**7.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	7. Committee Reports
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

7.1. Verbal reports

8. City Council - General City Affairs (to include Climate and Public Health & Safety Emergency Updates: up to 5 mins. per Councilor)

8. City Council - General City Affairs (to include Climate and Public Health & Safety Emergency Updates: up to 5 mins. per Councilor)

Subject	**8.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor

Category	8. City Council - General City Affairs (to include Climate and Public Health & Safety Emergency Updates: up to 5 mins. per Councilor)
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

8.1. Verbal reports

9. City Council President - Council Updates (up to 5 mins.)

9. City Council President - Council Updates (up to 5 mins.)

Subject	**9.1. Verbal reports**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	9. City Council President - Council Updates (up to 5 mins.)
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

9.1. Verbal reports

10. Adjournment

10. Adjournment

Subject	**10.1. Motion to adjourn**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	10. Adjournment
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adjourn

10.1. Motion to adjourn
City Council President Traverse adjourned the meeting at 11:31 pm.

11. Informational and Non-Discrimination Statements

11. Informational and Non-Discrimination Statements

Subject	**11.1. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. For more information on access, call Lori Olberg, Council and Licensing Coordinator (802-865-7136)(TTY 802-865-7142). Persons with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate are encouraged to contact 802-865-7000 (voice) or 802-865-7142 (TTY) at**

	least 72 hours in advance so that proper arrangements can be made. This meeting will also air on Town Meeting TV the Wednesday after the meeting, starting at 8:00 pm and repeating at 1:00 am and 7:00 am the following day. The City of Burlington will not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status, crime victim status or genetic information.
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - Regular City Council Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 6:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	11. Informational and Non-Discrimination Statements
Department	Council and Board
Type	Information

11.1. This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. For more information on access, call Lori Olberg, Council and Licensing Coordinator (802-865-7136)(TTY 802-865-7142). Persons with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate are encouraged to contact 802-865-7000 (voice) or 802-865-7142 (TTY) at least 72 hours in advance so that proper arrangements can be made. This meeting will also air on Town Meeting TV the Wednesday after the meeting, starting at 8:00 pm and repeating at 1:00 am and 7:00 am the following day. The City of Burlington will not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status, crime victim status or genetic information.

BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL WITH MAYOR PRESIDING
CONTOIS AUDITORIUM, 149 CHURCH STREET, 2ND FLOOR
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 15, 2025

1. Agenda

1. Agenda

Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak convened the meeting at 7:16 pm.
Members present: Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, City Council President Traverse, Councilors Barlow, Bergman, Broderick, Carpenter, Grant, McKnight, Neubieser, Schachter and Singh
Others present: COS Jacobsen, Deputy COS Zakaras, City Attorney Brown, CAO Schad and Lori Olberg

Subject	**1.1. Motion to adopt agenda**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - City Council With Mayor Presiding Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	1. Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adopt agenda

1.1. Motion to adopt agenda
Motion made by Councilor Bergman, seconded by City Council President Traverse, to adopt the agenda as presented.
Motion passed unanimously.

2. Consent Agenda

2. Consent Agenda

Subject	**2.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - City Council With Mayor Presiding Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action (Consent) Procedural

Recommended Action Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated

2.1. Motion to adopt the consent agenda and take the actions indicated
Motion made by City Council President Traverse, seconded by Councilor Bergman, to adopt the consent agenda as presented and take the actions indicated. Motion passed unanimously.

Subject	**2.2. Openings: Boards and Commissions - DFA**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - City Council With Mayor Presiding Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	2. Consent Agenda
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action (Consent) Communication Information

Recommended Action waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file

2.2. Openings: Boards and Commissions - DFA

3. Commission Appointment

3. Commission Appointment

Subject	**3.1. Board of Health: Term Expires 6/30/28**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - City Council With Mayor Presiding Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	3. Commission Appointment
Department	Department of Finance and Administration
Type	Action

Recommended Action

3.1. Board of Health: Term Expires 6/30/28
Councilor Bergman nominated Rachel Bolton. Rachel Bolton introduced herself and shared her work experience with the Mayor and Council.
Roll call vote taken 6:7:
Ayes: Councilors Bergman, Broderick, Grant, Kane, Neubieser and Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak Abstentions: Councilors Barlow, Carpenter, Litwin, McKnight, Schachter, Singh and City Council President Traverse

Councilor Litwin nominated Kate Tracy. Kate Tracy introduced herself and shared her work experience with the Mayor and Council.
Roll call vote taken 7:6:
Ayes: Councilors Barlow, Carpenter, Litwin, McKnight, Schachter, Singh and City Council President Traverse
Abstentions: Councilors Bergman, Broderick, Grant, Kane, Neubieser and Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak

Kate Tracy was appointed to the Board of Health, term expiring 06/30/28.

4. Adjournment

4. Adjournment

Subject	**4.1. Motion to adjourn**
Meeting	December 15, 2025 - City Council With Mayor Presiding Meeting - Monday, December 15, 2025, 7:00 PM, Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, 2nd Floor
Category	4. Adjournment
Department	Council and Board
Type	Action Procedural
Recommended Action	Motion to adjourn

4.1. Motion to adjourn
Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 12, 2026
To: Board of Finance and City Council

From: Kelli Perkins, Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
CC: Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer

Re: **Mending Wall**

Request

The Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) is seeking approval and authorization to execute a sponsorship agreement subject to the review and approval of the City Attorney's Office, granting City funds as follows: one agreement with Armadillo Collective, Pennington Production, and AALV to support their Mending Wall project granting $2,950; Funding for this agreement will come from the Community Celebrations GL.

Background

The REIB seeks to sponsor the Mending Wall project. This project will be a community quilt that celebrates connection across generations and cultures. Participants will take part in designing quilt squares while skilled machinists will sew the pieces together to ensure every contribution will become a part of the quilt. Alongside the quilting, an interview booth will invite individuals and families to share short oral histories about life in Burlington. The event will be rooted in simplicity with quilting, storytelling, music, and food at the O.N.E. Community Center. The recordings will be archived with CCTV and, in a future installation, projected onto blank quilt squares to become a part of a larger story of the Burlington community. The vision of this project is to grow every year as a quilt and community archive that expands with new squares, voices, and new stories.

Supporting the Mending Wall project directly advances the REIB's mission to foster racial equity, inclusion, and belonging in Burlington. The project provides an opportunity to build community and connect across generations and cultures. The quilt serves as an artifact and a living installation and stitches together what we share. Each square will be a gesture of repair

and a reminder that community is built by the practice of tending to one another. The low-barrier structure of the event ensures that anyone can take part and ensures it can be a feasible and sustainable project. This project will have taken place on New Year's Eve, these funds will serve to cover the costs.

Funding for Project

The Mending Wall grant from the REIB is $2,950 and is included in the REIB's FY26 Community Celebrations GL.

Department Contact

If you have any questions, please contact Kelli Perkins, Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging at kperkins@burlingtonvt.gov.

Motions

The Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging requests the City Council and Board of Finance approve the following motions:

1. To approve and authorize the Director of the Racial Equity Inclusion and Belonging Office and the Chief Administrative Officer to issue a sponsorship grant in the amount of $2,950 to Armadillo Collective, Pennington Productions, and AALV to support the Mending Wall project from the Community Celebrations GL.

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: REIB Submitter: Vicky Luciano

Title/Subject: Mending Wall

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	Click or tap to enter a date.
☐	City Council	Click or tap to enter a date.
☒	Both BOF and Council	1/12/2026

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	12/30/2025	Kelli Perkins
Mayor's Office	Yes	1/6/2026	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Yes	1/5/2026	Emmett Wood
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	1/6/2026	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 12, 2026
To: Board of Finance and City Council

From: Kelli Perkins, Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
CC: Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer

Re: **The Annual Burlington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance Sponsorship**

Request

The Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) is seeking approval and authorization to execute a sponsorship agreement subject to the review and approval of the City Attorney's Office, granting City funds as follows: One agreement with Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center to support and manage the annual Burlington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance event granting $5,000. Funding for this agreement will come from the Community Celebrations GL.

Background

The REIB seeks to sponsor the Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing cultural awareness and inclusion. Its annual Burlington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance event honors the legacy of Dr. King through reflection, community engagement, and celebration of equity and justice. This year, attendees are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items to support the Jamaica Hurricane Relief Effort.

The event uplifts Vermont-based organizations and individuals who have demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The 2026 keynote speaker is Alhassan Susso, an award-winning educator, author, and national leader in social and emotional learning whose work has transformed student outcomes and advanced inclusive education nationwide.

Supporting this event directly advances the REIB's mission to foster racial equity, inclusion, and belonging across Burlington by uplifting community-led efforts that promote understanding, civic engagement, and collective responsibility. The Annual Burlington Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr. Remembrance event provides an opportunity for residents to come together in reflection, learning, and action while honoring leaders and organizations advancing equity in meaningful ways. By investing in this partnership, the City affirms its commitment to strengthening community connections, and ensuring that all residents feel seen, valued, and empowered to participate fully in civic life.

Funding for Project

The Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center sponsorship grant of $5,000 is included in the REIB's FY26 Community Celebrations GL.

Department Contact

If you have any questions, please contact Kelli Perkins, Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging at kperkins@burlingtonvt.gov.

Motions

The Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging requests the City Council and Board of Finance approve the following motions:

1. To approve and authorize the Director of the Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Office and the Chief Administrative Officer to issue a sponsorship grant in the amount of $5,000 to the Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center to support the Annual Burlington Fr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance event from the Community Celebrations GL

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: REIB Submitter: Vicky Luciano

Title/Subject: The Annual Burlington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	Click or tap to enter a date.
☐	City Council	Click or tap to enter a date.
☒	Both BOF and Council	1/12/2026

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
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Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	12/30/2025	Kelli Perkins
Mayor's Office	Yes	1/6/2026	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	1/6/2026	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Finance
City Council
From: Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
Jen Monroe Zakaras, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor
Date: January 12, 2026
Subject: Unassigned Fund Balance Request for Turning Point Center FY25 Annual Payment

This memo outlines a request for approval for a Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget adjustment and a payment to a Regional Program from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

Background

Since FY14, the City of Burlington has made an annual payment through a Regional Programs appropriation to the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County (Turning Point Center) for their work to support Burlington residents in recovery for substance and/or alcohol addiction. In FY23, the prior Mayoral Administration and City Council approved an increase in the Regional Programs appropriation to the Turning Point Center from $4,500 to $17,450. This increased payment was intended to more fully capture a proportional commitment from the City for Turning Point Center programming that supports Burlington residents.

During the budget process for FY25, and efforts to close the $14 million budget gap at that time, the $17,450 appropriation for Turning Point Center did not make it into the Regional Programs budget. Due to a breakdown in communications, the Turning Point Center was not informed of this change and thus anticipated the payment, including it in their budget for the 2025 fiscal year. This issue came to light when Turning Point submitted an invoice to the City for the $17,450 payment in the fall of 2025.

The City acknowledges that the Turning Point Center plays a vital role in the City's community health response, and a gap of this magnitude in their modest annual budget creates a strain on the organization, particularly in this difficult funding climate at the local, state, and federal levels. The City would like to honor the long partnership with the Turning Point Center and satisfy this anticipated 2025 annual payment. To avoid communication lapses in the future, the City will continue working with the City Council through the CDNR Committee and in the FY27 budgeting process to create clarity and standardization around expenditures of City funds for community organizations. The City will then provide clear communication to organizations who received grant funding in prior fiscal years about the availability of any funds--and where funds are available, about the City's grant funding process.

Request

The Mayor's Office respectfully requests that the Board of Finance and City Council approve the adjustment to the FY26 budget and a payment to the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County in the amount of $17,450 out of the Unassigned Fund Balance. There are no sufficient funding options (including from opioid settlement funds) to satisfy the payment, hence the rare request to draw from the Unassigned Fund Balance.

Motions

Board of Finance

To approve and recommend that the City Council authorize the adjustment to the FY26 budget and a payment to the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County in the amount of $17,450 out of the Unassigned Fund Balance.

City Council

To authorize the adjustment of the FY26 budget and a payment to the Turning Point Center of Chittenden County in the amount of $17,450 out of the Unassigned Fund Balance.

Mickenberg, LLC
Zatz & Renfrew Consulting

Memorandum

To: City of Burlington
From: Virginia Renfrew, Gail Zatz, David Mickenberg and Christina McLaughlin, Lobbyists for the City of Burlington
Date: January 8, 2026
Re: Update on 2026 Legislative Session

Overview

The Legislature began the 2026 Legislative Session on Tuesday, January 6th. Priorities, similar to last year, include housing, health care, property taxes, education, and addressing federal funding cuts.

Updates on the City of Burlington Legislative Priorities and Budget

The Budget Adjustment bill is under consideration. Several committees of jurisdiction have begun hearing from state agencies and departments, as well as advocates.

The FY 2026 Budget bill will begin to be worked on by the House Appropriations Committee.

Housing

H.91 was returned to the House Human Services Committee after the bill was vetoed by the Governor last session. The "new H.91" is H.594. We will be monitoring that bill closely.

The House General and Housing Committee and the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee began the session with several hearings on housing. They have been gathering information from state entities and community partners as to what is working now and what needs improvement.

Mental Health and Substance Use

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee received a report on the successes of recovery residences. It is anticipated that mental health and substance use will continue to be a priority this session.

Judicial and Pre-Monitoring Systems

House Corrections and Institutions is in the midst of taking testimony on the Accountability Court in Chittenden County. Discussion has focused on the successes of the court and the future of the possible expansion of the court to other counties.

Mickenberg, LLC
Zatz & Renfrew Consulting
10 Nash Place, Burlington, VT 05401
david@mickenbergvt.com, christina@mickenbergvt.com, zatz@sover.net, renfrew@sover.net

Senator Lyons just introduced a new bill re: Community Justice Centers - S.184.

Water Infrastructure
The House Environment Committee heard an introduction on water law and current water issues this week.

Gun Reform
Many bills have been introduced this biennium addressing various gun reform issues. It is unclear as to which, if any, will move forward.

Charter Changes
Ahead of the Burlington press conference on S.131 (banning guns in bars), the House Government Operations Committee took testimony on both S.131 and H.508 (landlords notice to residential tenants prior to the termination of a tenancy, repeal of the codified ward boundaries, and authorization of the City Council to reapportion the City wards).

The charter change bills that we are monitoring are:
H.59 Board of Police Commissioners/Police Department
H.462 Just cause eviction
H.508 Landlord notice/ward boundaries
S.131 Banning firearms in bars

Other Bills/Issues of Interest
H.528 Improper disposal of a hypodermic needle or syringe in a sensitive area
H.605 Speed limits in downtown centers
Office of New Americans - reports

Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

MEMORANDUM

To: City Council
From: Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
Date: January 7, 2026
Re: FY26 ModernGov Initiative Update

FY26 ModernGov began with a targeted, operational assessment focused on two specific topics: examining the effectiveness and sustainability of our **community health response** and reimagining our **Office of City Planning.** This ModernGov phase intentionally concentrated on a limited set of functions to improve clarity, coordination, and long-term sustainability, while minimizing disruption and avoiding new budget implications. Throughout the fall, the Mayor's Office engaged city unions, the staff of affected City departments, and department heads in FY26 reorganization work. The feedback we received guided revisions of early proposals and informed our final decisions.

Pursuant to the administrative, personnel, and managerial authority designated to the Mayor in Burlington City Charter Section 116, this update includes a summary of a modest personnel reorganization of our city government through the merging of two departments. Aside from the scheduled conclusion of the BTV CARES program due to the expiration of its grant funding, these changes do not impact the City's FY26 budget and, thus, we are not requesting a work session with the Council at this time.

Community Health Updates

This fall, the ModernGov team examined our community health response as a city, including work by city government and by community partners. Our ultimate goal is to improve immediate response to crises while also supporting a resilient and financially sustainable system of care that protects the health and safety of all residents. To start, we focused on the Burlington Fire Department's Community Response Team (CRT) and PREVENT Program; the Burlington Police Department's Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention (CAIP) programs, which included the BTV CARES program; and the Urban Park Rangers program within the Department of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront.

Former Senior Advisor to the Mayor on Community Safety, Ingrid Jonas, spent several months early in 2025 mapping our community health response and advising the ModernGov team. With Ingrid's help, we concluded that many programs have emerged in Burlington to address our community health challenges in recent years, but that gaps and overlaps persist that create confusion for residents, inefficiencies for providers, and strain on the City's emergency services. We decided to address this in three ways: 1) Clarify roles and responsibilities within our community health response, 2) Examine the sustainability of funding for programs, and 3) Eliminate overlapping services where it was reasonable to do so.

Deeper work remains on broader community health topics such as homelessness, substance use, public health infrastructure, and community paramedicine; these topics will be considered in future phases of ModernGov

work. This work will include examining how we reinstitute prior tools like CommStat and continuing to evolve long-standing relationships with community health service providers.

Burlington Fire Department's Community Response Team (CRT) and PREVENT Program

The **Community Response Team (CRT)** launched in late 2023 to respond to overdose and unresponsive patient calls, reducing reliance on the fire department for these situations and offering proactive community engagement. Funding for the program comes from the City's allocation of opioid settlement dollars and is staffed by voluntary overtime shifts. In 2024 and 2025, CRT responded to 280 incidents and 288 incidents, respectively. ModernGov concluded that this program is sustainable with its current staffing model and funding from opioid settlement dollars. The program also continues to meet its goal to address community needs for overdose and unresponsive patient services while reducing the pressures and costs of a full response by the fire department. The CRT program will thus continue as it currently operates, with no changes planned at this time.

The **PREVENT Program** launched on November 15, 2024, to empower paramedics and advanced emergency medical technicians (AEMTs) to administer buprenorphine/Suboxone – critical medications for treating opioid use disorder – to opioid overdose patients at the scene of the overdose. This approach has been shown to help reduce barriers to opioid addiction treatment. During the first year of the pilot program, buprenorphine was administered once but offered on multiple occasions. Low uptake was primarily driven by patient-related barriers, including an unwillingness to engage with emergency medical service (EMS) providers and the refusal of medication-assisted treatment. Nevertheless, the PREVENT Program will remain active and continue to be offered by our existing paramedics when patients meet the criteria.

Burlington Police Department's Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention (CAIP) programs

As noted in a prior communication, the state grant funding for the **BTV CARES program** expired, and the program ended at the end of December 2025. Aside from this wind down of BTV CARES, other aspects of the Crisis, Advocacy, Intervention (CAIP) programs remain unchanged, including roles such as Community Support Liaisons (CSLs). This fall, the police department created new procedures to clarify the roles and responsibilities of CSLs and Community Safety Officers (CSOs) to improve internal department use of these important positions and to clarify the purpose of the roles with other City departments and community partners.

Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront's Urban Park Rangers program

The **Urban Park Ranger** positions were evaluated, given the synergies with other initiatives within the City's broader community health response. The core responsibilities of these positions include stewardship of public spaces, education and engagement with park users, and addressing quality-of-life issues in City parks. We considered whether these roles should sit within the Burlington Police Department, but given the program's focus, the Department of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront was determined to remain as the most appropriate placement.

<u>City Planning Updates</u>

As part of FY26 ModernGov, the **Office of City Planning (OCP)** will be moving – in its entirety and as currently structured – into the Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO), forming a ***new Office of Planning & Design***. This new structure is designed to better align long-range planning, land use regulation, housing policy, and project and urban design, creating a cohesive framework to support the administration's and city council's priorities. The Office of Planning & Design will focus on vision, strategy, and design.

The Office of Planning & Design will continue to hold all of the powers and exercise all of the duties set forth in 24 V.S.A. 4321, *et seq.* The current OCP department head will transition to a division director role, reporting directly to the CEDO department head, but will continue to be appointed pursuant to the Charter.

City staff from both OCP and CEDO were notified about this organizational change in December and expressed overwhelming support for the transition, acknowledging the positive impact a closer relationship between the two offices will have on achieving the City's housing goals.

The new Office of Planning & Design will work with Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront (BPRW), the Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Department of Permitting and Inspections (DPI) to reduce communication silos and strengthen coordination through a matrix-management structure that helps coordinate city plans, ordinance management, and planning expertise across departments. This approach will allow the City to better coordinate planning and design work more effectively, a timely approach as we begin the work of updating several critical strategic planning documents (e.g., the City's Comprehensive Plan).

Office of City Planning staff shared the new structure with the Planning Commission at its December 9th meeting. Commissioners expressed general support and acknowledged the benefits of closer collaboration on housing policy and cross-departmental land use and urban design collaboration.

Next Steps

FY26 ModernGov changes to City Planning are scheduled to take effect on or around January 30th, 2026. As we did with the changes in the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) and CEDO last year, these changes are being implemented on a ***trial*** basis to ensure improvements in coordination, efficiency, and service delivery. Results will be evaluated over the year before considering permanent changes.

We are beginning a new partnership with UVM's Community Development and Applied Economics (CDAE) to build out an assessment process for our ModernGov work to-date. This will include a review of the mergers initiated on July 1, 2025, with CEDO and DFA, as well as the design and development process we used over these first two rounds of reorganization work. Look for more information on this effort in the late winter/early spring.

Conclusion

The FY26 ModernGov changes in community health and City Planning are operational, targeted, and low impact, with no budgetary implications beyond the scheduled conclusion of BTV CARES.

- In community health, the focus is on clarifying roles and ensuring continuity as CRT and the Urban Park Rangers continue their work and BTV CARES concludes, while strengthening partnerships with long-term service providers like the Howard Center.
- In City Planning, the new Office of Planning & Design establishes a cohesive framework for planners and designers, while integrating closely with BPRW, DPW, and DPI in a matrix structure, setting the stage for future alignment and operational efficiencies.

These efforts provide a foundation for more coordinated, sustainable, and effective City services, while maintaining continuity for residents, staff, and partner organizations.

Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: VLCT Weekly Legislative Report <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Friday, December 12, 2025 7:03 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: Legislative Preview for 2026

For complete information I. additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

Click here to view this email as a web page.

The new legislative session officially begins on January 6, 2026, and the VLCT Advocacy team is excited to tackle some unfinished business and emerging issues in the second half of this biennium. By all accounts it looks like this could be a difficult session, with the affordability agenda front and center amid competing priorities of housing, healthcare, education, property taxes, and transportation fund shortfalls.

Our *2026 Legislative Preview* touches on several current topics, including:

- VLCT's 2026 Legislative Priorities
- Community Housing and Infrastructure Program (CHIP) guidelines
- Land use reform taking shape – too quickly for rural leaders' comfort
- Our proposal concerning municipal authority over agricultural practices
- Takeaways from the Joint Fiscal Office's recent budget brief to legislators

We'll be discussing the upcoming session this Monday, December 15 at 1 PM. Register and join us via Zoom. As always, **please stay in touch**. We want to hear your ideas, feedback, and concerns.

Read the Preview

Advocacy Zoom Chats Resume!

Be sure to **join us on Monday, December 15 at 1 PM**, for the session kick-off of our Advocacy Chat discussion series.

Then tune in for future chats starting on January 26. We rely on hearing your ideas and concerns as the session progresses.

Register now!

Manage Your Preferences

Lori Olberg

From: VLCT News <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Friday, December 12, 2025 10:11 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: Reminder: Assistance from PVR, TIFs for CHIP, Latest Model Procurement Policy, and more

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

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Municipal employees, officials, and their dependents who want to work or volunteer in local government can apply for a $2,000 VLCT Municipal Service Scholarship before 2/11/26.

Announcements & Updates

Updated Town Meeting Preparation Resources

Visit our Town Meeting topic page to find the broad range of resources we've made for our members. Look for our most recently updated resources: two model documents and two info sheets.

Is Your Procurement Policy Up To Date?

Federal grant requirements concerning procurement changed in October 2024. To avoid audit issues, review your procurement policy to make sure it uses our latest model.

New from PVR: Commercial Appraisal and Litigation Assistance

The Property Valuation and Review (PVR) division of the Vermont Department of Taxes has a new program to ensure the accurate and equitable assessment of high-valued and unique properties. Municipalities use an online form to request this help.

New Resources

Actions to Enable Housing Development in Your Community

This set of lists offers many simple, practical ideas for how communities of all sizes can support affordable and workforce housing.

Funding Opportunities for Enabling Housing Development

Easily find several resources that not only ease the burden of complex development tasks but also build confidence in navigating the housing process.

The 2025 VLCT Summary

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Lori Olberg

From: VLCT Advocacy News <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 7:31 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: TODAY @ 1 PM VLCT's Advocacy Chat: Preview of 2026

For complete information / additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

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Tune in TODAY at 1 PM for the Advocacy Chat: Preview of 2026. It's not too late to register.

Register Here

Preview of 2026

Tune in Monday, December 15 at 1 PM to anticipate what's in store for the 2026 legislative session. Learn from Josh Hanford, VLCT's Director of Intergovernmental Relations, and Samantha Sheehan, VLCT's Municipal Policy and Advocacy Specialist, about the progress that has been made since June on the issues that matter most to local government. Also hear what your municipal colleagues from around the state have to say about the hot topics and share your concerns and ideas for legislative action.

Register for the December 16 Preview

Join us for additional chats on the following dates.

Upcoming Chats
Monday, January 26, 2026
Monday, February 9, 2026
Monday, February 23, 2026
Monday, March 9, 2026
Monday, March 23, 2026
Monday, April 6, 2026
Monday, April 20, 2026
Monday, May 4, 2026

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Vt. League of Cities & Towns | 89 Main St. Suite 4 | Montpelier, VT 05602 US

Lori Olberg

From: VLCT Training & Events <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 7:30 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: Introduction to the Governing All with Skill Course

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

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For complete information / additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

Governing All with Skill

On January 13, we invite you to join Ted Brady, VLCT Executive Director, and Dr. Jude Rachele Smith, PhD., Co-Founder of Abundant Sun, **for an in-depth introduction to the Governing All with Skill course.**

The Governing All with Skill course is designed to help municipal leaders combine the legal requirements of governing with the reality that the hardest part of the job is often effectively communicating and engaging with community members.

The program is explicitly framed as something different from diversity training. Its unique purpose is to challenge leaders to understand *why* the human mind can struggle with concepts like calling people in, sharing power, or its aversion to conflict. Instead of just stating principles, it provides the tools to understand the internal barriers that prevent those principles from becoming a reality.

January 13 @ 1 PM
FREE

Register

Throughout the year we will host **additional roundtable sessions** for engaging, real-time discussion of the course's on-demand modules.

The roundtables serve as valuable opportunities to share what you have learned and how you have applied your learning in your municipal work.

These sessions also provide a chance to speak with your peers across Vermont, to exchange insights, compare approaches, and explore collaborative strategies that strengthen alignment and connection statewide.

The sessions will be informally moderated by Abundant Sun and JuJuBee team members who designed Governing All with Skill. As part of this collective effort, **your input is very important**. We look forward to welcoming you to each session and **encourage you to attend all.**

Lori Olberg

From: alexg@moduframebuilders.com
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 8:14 AM
Subject: MMAV Summit Toronto, Canada | March 2026
Attachments: MMAV Summit Toronto (Brochure) 2 Michelle.pdf

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

For correspondence information / additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

MMAV Summit Toronto, Canada | March 2026

Modular. Mass Timber. VDC. The Fast Lane to Affordable, Sustainable U.S. Construction.

North America's construction sector is under immense pressure. The U.S. faces a shortage of over **7 million affordable homes**, while Canadian cities like **Toronto** struggle with long waitlists and rising costs. Both countries are urgently turning to modern construction technologies to build faster, smarter, and more sustainably.

Two solutions are leading this transformation: **modular construction** and **mass timber**. Across the U.S., modular projects are scaling rapidly, delivering housing **30–50% faster**, while the American mass timber market is on track to exceed **$4B by 2030**. Canada is also pushing forward—Vancouver, Toronto, and Quebec are emerging as regional leaders in mass timber and prefabricated housing.

Unifying these advancements is **Virtual Design & Construction (VDC)**. With AI-powered modeling, digital twins, and 4D/5D simulations, VDC is becoming essential for reducing risk, improving coordination, and cutting project timelines across major U.S. and Canadian infrastructure and commercial builds.

This **combined conference** brings together American and Canadian builders, regulators, and innovators to explore how modular, mass timber, and VDC can reshape North America's construction landscape. Attendees will gain practical strategies, discover proven case studies, and connect with industry leaders driving the next era of affordable, sustainable, and high-performance construction.

WHY YOU CANNOT MISS THIS EVENT

- Gain exclusive insights into innovative solutions for Canada's housing crisis, including groundbreaking case studies and projects in affordable housing.
- Learn how to effectively leverage modular and mass timber construction to build homes faster, more affordably, and with a strong focus on sustainability.
- Explore the power of Virtual Design and Construction (VDC) to streamline workflows, enhance collaboration, and achieve significant cost and schedule savings on projects.
- Go beyond theory and discover actionable strategies and cutting-edge methodologies for integrating modern construction techniques and digital technologies.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Lori Olberg

From: ANR - ENB Administrator <ANR.ENBAdministrator@vermont.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 5:20 PM
To: Burlington Town Clerk
Subject: Vermont Environmental Notice Bulletin Stakeholder Update by Location

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

For complete information & additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

You are receiving this message because you have been signed up to receive email notifications via the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' Environmental Notice Bulletin (ENB). These notifications are intended to inform you of environmental activities relevant to your town or organization based on location or activity type.

Below are current activities for which you have been signed up to receive notifications. To view the details of these activities please visit the ENB. When one or more activities that match your specific criteria is posted to ENB, you will receive a single email notification compiling the information. If you have been signed up to receive updates step-by-step throughout the review process for these activities the updates will appear in the second half of the email.

To modify the subscription, please contact the staff person listed on the individual activity page or the ENB Administrator at anr.enbadministrator@vermont.gov.

Regards,
ENB Support
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Changes to Activities I'm Following

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit/ID #	Applicant	Town	Most Recent Update	Date	Status	ENB Link
Section 401 Water Quality Certification - General Permit	*Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the Proposed 2026 Nationwide Permits*	*2025-001-2026-Nationwide-Permits*		*Statewide*	*A final action for this activity has been reached and may be reviewed by visiting the ENB. The appeal period is open for 30 days following the final decision date.* *The administrative record set for this activity has been modified. Please visit*	*2025-12-16*	*Final Decision Reached - Appeal Period*	*PN25.0031824*

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Lori Olberg

From: VLCT <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Friday, December 19, 2025 10:42 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: New Program to Help Municipal Leaders Learn the Humane Side of Governing

For complete information / additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

New VLCT Program Aims to Help Municipal Leaders Learn the Humane Side of Governing

VLCT is happy to announce a new free education program called Governing All with Skill. This eight-module virtual course is free to VLCT members and aims to help municipal leaders combine the legal requirements of running their cities, towns, and villages with essential communication and engagement skills that drive participation.

Governing All with Skill will focus on the "psychology of governance," equipping leaders with crucial skills in diplomacy, conflict resolution, and dealing with complexity. Designed in collaboration with Abundant Sun, a cultural transformation agency led by Vermonters Dr. Jude Smith Rachele and Rosi Gowdey, the course aims to help municipal leaders create and maintain an engaged democracy.

The program provides all VLCT members with free access to:

- **Quarterly roundtable meetings** to share observations with the course creators and with other course participants
- **On-demand access to eight modules customized for VLCT**
- **Access to curated content related to psychology and pro-social behavior**, through the JuJuBee learning platform.

Learn more about Governing All with Skill in our **recent announcement** and by visiting **vlct.org/Governing-All-Skill**.

Are you already interested? **Attend the launch roundtable discussion via Zoom on January 13 from 1 to 2 PM. Click below to register.**

Register for the first Roundtable

If our website doesn't answer all of your questions about the new Governing All with Skill program, please contact afriedman@vlct.org.

Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: ANR - ENB Administrator <ANR.ENBAdministrator@vermont.gov>
Sent: Friday, December 19, 2025 5:18 PM
To: Burlington Town Clerk
Subject: Vermont Environmental Notice Bulletin Stakeholder Update by Location

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Regards,
ENB Support
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

New Activities

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit # / ID	Applicant	Town	Status	ENB Link
Multi-Sector General Permit 3-9003 (MSGP): Notice of Intent	Queen City Steel	4847-9003.R1	Queen City Steel	Burlington	In Review	PN25.0058650
General Permit 3-9050 For Operational Stormwater Discharges	3-9050 Stormwater Draft General Permit	3-9050 Stormwater Draft General Permit		Statewide	Final Decision Reached - Appeal Period	PN25.0058648

Changes to Activities I'm Following

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit # / ID	Applicant	Town	Most Recent Update	Date	Status	ENB Link
General Permit 3-9050 For Operational Stormwater Discharges	3-9050 Stormwater Draft General Permit	3-9050 Stormwater Draft General Permit		Statewide	The administrative record set for this activity has been modified.	2025-12-19	Draft Decision - Public Comment Period	PN25.0049867

Lori Olberg FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: VLCT Journal <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Monday, December 22, 2025 1:05 PM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: Reminder: Manager Recruitment, Town Meeting, Annual Training Schedule, and More!

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December 2025

Lori Olberg,

It's amazing how quickly the new year starts to rush in. We don't want to skip right past December (remember to apply for the Municipal Service Scholarship soon), but there are a few early January items you shouldn't miss. First, take a look at the updated Legislative Priorities before the session begins January 6 and, if you haven't already, read VLCT Advocacy's Legislative Preview. Then take a look at the Town Meeting resources and make sure to attend the Town Meeting Articles and Warnings training on January 7. You can find that and see more of what's planned for 2026 on the Annual Events and Training Schedule webpage.

News Resources Claims Careers Events

Legal Notes

Town Meeting Resources – New Updates!

As you prepare for Town Meeting, take a look at the resources VLCT has to offer. The Model Town Meeting Articles, Australian Ballot Info Sheet, Failure to Elect Officers Info Sheet, and the Model Social Services Appropriation Policy have all been updated recently.

Can Regulatory Fees Be Used to Raise Revenue?

As a general rule, no: regulatory fees cannot be used to raise revenue. However, the answer will always depend on the specific wording of the enabling authority (the power the State gives municipalities to act) and the purpose (i.e., the objective) and scope of the regulatory services that the fees finance.

Vicious Dog Euthanization Upheld by Superior Court

The Chittenden County Superior Court upheld the decision because there was adequate evidence to support the selectboard's conclusion. The court explained that its role is not to "independently weigh the evidence to make its own findings," but rather to "determine if there was adequate evidence to support the selectboard's decision."

Risk Management

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Lori Olberg

From: ANR - ENB Administrator <ANR.ENBAdministrator@vermont.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 5:14 PM
To: Burlington Town Clerk
Subject: Vermont Environmental Notice Bulletin Stakeholder Update by Location

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To modify the subscription, please contact the staff person listed on the individual activity page or the ENB Administrator at anr.enbadministrator@vermont.gov.

Regards,
ENB Support
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Changes to Activities I'm Following

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit # / ID	Applicant	Town	Most Recent Update	Date	Status	ENB Link
Multi-Sector General Permit 3-9003 (MSGP): Notice of Intent	*Queen City Steel*	*4847-9003.R1*	*Queen City Steel*	*Burlington*	*A draft decision for this activity has been reached and may be reviewed by visiting the ENB. Comments may be submitted through the ENB when the public comment period is open.* *The administrative*	*2025-12-30*	*Draft Decision - Public Comment Period*	*PN25.0058650*

Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: ANR - ENB Administrator <ANR.ENBAdministrator@vermont.gov>
Sent: Monday, December 29, 2025 5:15 PM
To: Burlington Town Clerk
Subject: Vermont Environmental Notice Bulletin Stakeholder Update by Location

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Regards,
ENB Support
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

New Activities

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit # / ID	Applicant	Town	Status	ENB Link
Category 1 Underground Storage Tank - Operating/Renewal	UVM Medical Center	1545-18429	UVM Medical Center	Burlington	Draft Decision - Public Comment Period	PN25.0059568

Changes to Activities I'm Following

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit # / ID	Applicant	Town	Most Recent Update	Date	Status	ENB Link
Category 1 Underground Storage Tank - Operating/Renewal	UVM Medical Center	1545-18429	UVM Medical Center	Burlington	A draft decision for this activity has been reached and may be reviewed by visiting the ENB. Comments	2025-12-29	Draft Decision - Public Comment Period	PN25.0059568

Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: VLCT Training & Events <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Friday, January 2, 2026 7:31 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: January Attorney Office Hours

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January Attorney Office Hours

Join MAC attorneys for our monthly **live Q&A session open to all topics**. Bring your lunch and your questions—you might walk away with answers to questions you didn't even know to ask!

January 15 @ 12 PM
FREE

Register

Upcoming 2026 Live Attorney Office Hours:
Thursday, February 12
Wednesday, March 11
April, *coming soon!*
May, TBD
June, TBD
July, TBD
August, TBD
September, TBD
October, TBD
November, TBD
December, TBD

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Vt. League of Cities & Towns | 89 Main St. Suite 4 | Montpelier, VT 05602 US

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Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: VLCT Events & Trainings <info@vlct.org>
Sent: Monday, January 5, 2026 7:30 AM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: January Events Digest

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January Training & Events

Have you been struggling to keep track of all the events, chats, meet-ups, and trainings VLCT offers? You can use this email, which arrives the first Monday of each month, to plan what you'd like to attend.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
			1/1 **Happy New Year!** VLCT Office Closed	1/2
1/5	1/6	1/7 10 - 12 PM **Town Meeting Warning and Article Legal Requirements**	1/8	1/9
1/12	1/13 1 - 2 PM **Governing All with Skill - Launch Roundtable (virtual)**	1/14	1/15 12 - 1 PM **Attorney Office Hours**	1/16
1/19 VLCT Office Closed	1/20	1/21	1/22	1/23
1/26 1 - 2 PM **Advocacy Chat 2026**	1/27	1/28	1/29 12 - 1 PM **Workplace Matters: Performance Improvement Plans that Work**	1/30

Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: ANR - ENB Administrator <ANR.ENBAdministrator@vermont.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 5, 2026 5:15 PM
To: Burlington Town Clerk
Subject: Vermont Environmental Notice Bulletin Stakeholder Update by Location

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Regards,
ENB Support
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Changes to Activities I'm Following

Activity Type	Activity/Project Name	Permit # / ID	Applicant	Town	Most Recent Update	Date	Status	ENB Link
Air Pollution Control Minor Source Construction / Subchapter X Operating Permit	*Edlund Company LLC*	*AOP-25-007*	*Edlund Company LLC*	*Burlington*	*A final action for this activity has been reached and may be reviewed by visiting the ENB. The appeal period is open for 30 days following the final decision date.* *Minor information related to this activity has been changed. This could be a change to:*	*2026-01-05*	*Final Decision Reached - Appeal Period*	*PN25.0006233*

Lori Olberg

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

From: Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development <accd.dhcd@vermont.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 6, 2026 4:52 PM
To: Lori Olberg
Subject: New Year, Funding Awards, Developer Trainings, and more

For complete information / additional text, please contact the City Clerk's Office

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AGENCY OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT View this email in your browser

Department of Housing and Community Development

JANUARY 2026

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Happy New Year! 2026 is here and the DHCD team is excited to continue our work in making local communities more vibrant places. We have good momentum from last year with federal disaster recovery funds ready to head out the door, the Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP) set to launch, and the Vermont Housing Improvement Program close to topping 1,000 completed housing units brought online.

The legislative session is now officially underway and as you will hear in the Governor's State of the State Address on Wednesday, January 7th we will once again be advocating for reducing regulatory barriers to housing development, increasing small-scale development statewide, and strengthening our neighborhoods through targeted investment.

As the Governor's budget comes into focus over the next few weeks, we will share more details of our housing and community development legislative proposal.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Lori Olberg

From: liamt@smartaffordablehousing.com
Sent: Wednesday, January 7, 2026 6:59 AM
Subject: Mountain Resort Towns Conference Vienna, Austria | April 2026
Attachments: Mountain Resort Towns (Premailer) Ryan.pdf

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Mountain Resort Towns Conference Vienna, Austria | April 2026

From Seasonal Ski Towns to 365-Day Economic Powerhouses

Mountain resort towns are no longer seasonal businesses—they are year-round economic engines. With North American ski visits hitting a **record 65.4 million**, U.S. resorts face rising pressure to adapt to climate volatility, infrastructure strain, and sustainability mandates while protecting long-term returns.

Leading U.S. destinations—from **Aspen to Park City**—are accelerating shifts toward **365-day tourism**, diversified revenue streams, and smart, low-impact development. Europe's Alpine resorts are already delivering results, with **up to 40% of revenue now generated outside winter**, driven by advanced land-use planning, low-carbon mobility, and climate-adaptive infrastructure.

The **Mountain Resort Towns Conference in Vienna** delivers a rare, high-impact platform for U.S. stakeholders to learn directly from **Europe's most advanced mountain resort developments**, global planners, and sustainability leaders. Expect hard insights—not theory—on year-round destination design, climate adaptation, mobility solutions, environmental compliance, and digital visitor experiences.

If you are responsible for the future of a U.S. mountain resort town, this is where global best practices meet real-world execution.

WHY YOU CANNOT MISS THIS EVENT

- Discover cutting-edge technologies and innovative design principles for enhancing guest experience and operational efficiency in challenging mountain environments, from advanced snowmaking and lift systems to smart resort infrastructure and seamless guest services
- Explore opportunities in resort financing, public-private partnerships, and emerging mountain destinations.
- Understand land use policies, environmental regulations, and planning frameworks in alpine regions.
- Discover how experts are designing avalanche barriers, rockfall netting, and landslide stabilization systems to protect and future-proof mountain environments.
- Gain firsthand insights into the challenges and breakthroughs of building infrastructure in high-altitude terrains

Resolution Relating to

SELECTION OF NEWSPAPERS FOR PUBLICATION
OF 2026 ELECTION WARNINGS AND NOTICES

RESOLUTION_____

Sponsor(s): President Traverse
Introduced: _____
Referred to:_____
_____
Action: _____
Date: _____
Signed by Mayor: _____

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-Six…….

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

That WHEREAS, Vermont state statute (17 V.S.A. 2641) requires the legislative body of the municipality annually to designate a newspaper of general circulation for the publication of required election warnings and notices;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council designates *Seven Days* to be the newspaper in which all required election warnings and notices for the elections held in 2026 are published; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council designates *The Burlington Free Press* to be the newspaper to publish required election notices and warnings for the elections held in 2026 in emergency situations where time is of the essence and it is not possible to use *Seven Days*.

SM/Resolutions 2026/*Selection of Newspapers for Publication of CY26 Election Warnings*
2026-01-12

Resolution Relating to

MARCH 3, 2026 ANNUAL CITY MEETING – ADVISORY QUESTION RE MUNICIPAL TAX REFORM

RESOLUTION_____
Sponsor(s): Councilor Gene Bergman
Introduced: _____
Referred to: _____
_____
Action: _____
Date: _____
Signed by Mayor: _____

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-five……
Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

That WHEREAS, in CY25, the Mayor established a Tax Fairness Working Group to study the City's property tax system and to make recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council; and

WHEREAS, on October 6, 2025, the working group delivered its report to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, among the working group's suggestions were splinter tax reform and the establishment of a universal homestead real property tax exemption to make the City's property tax system more progressive; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of a universal tax exemption would require resetting tax rates to avoid a significant loss of existing revenues for the City; and

WHEREAS, the municipal tax rate is determined, not by a single municipal tax on the grand list, but by a combination of more than fifteen tax rates, referred to as "splinter taxes", each for a different purpose and with its own method of calculation set by the City Charter; and

WHEREAS, the City Council is considering whether to overhaul the City's municipal tax system, consistent with the suggestions in the final report of the Tax Fairness Working Group, and desires to engage the community and to obtain its feedback regarding proposed reforms;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council directs that the following advisory question be placed on the ballot for the March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting:

Advisory Question No. 1. In 2025, the Mayor created a Tax Fairness Working Group to explore changes to Burlington's city tax system. The Working Group recommended a homestead tax exemption. This means the City would exclude part of the value of homestead properties when calculating municipal property taxes. Homestead properties are the primary homes people live in. This would lower the amount of property tax for lower-valued homes and would raise the taxes for higher-valued homes and for non-homestead properties, including second homes, rental properties, and commercial buildings. The total amount of property tax collected by the city would stay the same.

Would you support this change? Yes No

er/ Resolutions 2025/*TMD 2026 Advisory Question re Tax Fairness*
December 11, 2025

BURLINGTON VERMONT

TO:	City Council
FROM:	Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
CC:	Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer Jessica Brown, City Attorney Jen Monroe Zakaras, Deputy Chief of Staff Nancy Stetson, Senior Policy & Data Analyst
DATE:	December 15, 2025
RE:	Background and Analyses for Town Meeting Day 2026 Advisory Question on $30k Homestead Tax Exemption

---

Purpose

This memo provides background context and the results of data analyses concerning the proposed advisory question for Town Meeting Day 2026 focused on a $30,000 homestead property tax exemption. Specifically, this memo describes the overall impacts of the exemption on homestead and non-homestead properties, as well as the impacts on rental properties, small multifamily properties, senior housing, permanently affordable housing, and commercial properties. The memo also presents overall impacts of the homestead exemption by city ward.

Key Points

- The proposed advisory question is non-binding and allows residents to voice their opinions on this issue ***before*** the Mayor and City Council take action.
- The proposed $30k homestead exemption is designed to help low- and moderate-income homeowners to continue to afford to live in Burlington.
- Nearly two-thirds of all homestead properties in Burlington would see a decrease of $150 or more off of their annual municipal tax bill. A homestead property is an owner-occupied primary residence.
- Tax rates set by the City Charter would be adjusted so that the proposed $30k homestead exemption would be revenue neutral. This means that non-homestead properties and high-value homestead properties would see increases in their annual municipal tax bills.
- The 3.1% increase in municipal tax bills for non-homestead properties is not expected to significantly increase rents in the city, for reasons explained starting on page 4.
- A revenue-neutral tax reform should be viewed holistically, considering the needs of renters, low- and moderate-income homeowners, and businesses alike, so that we balance “ability to pay” to ensure we maintain economic diversity and equity in Burlington.

Background

This year, the Mayor convened a Tax Fairness Working Group to study how to make Burlington's municipal tax system more equitable. A key finding[1] was that *inequitable property assessment* systematically burdened lower-value homeowners in the city. Specifically, lower-value properties are consistently over-assessed compared to their market value, while high-value properties are consistently under-assessed.[2] This means modest homeowners pay disproportionately more relative to their property's true market value. Inequitable property assessment is a well-documented issue in many parts of the country, not only Burlington, due to a number of structural and administrative reasons.[3]

A recommendation[1] from the Group that received the most support from members proposed creating a universal exemption for the first $30k to $50k of property value on homestead properties in the City, which would address the inequities in assessed values across low- and high-value properties. Value-based homestead exemptions exist in many states throughout the country. For example, South Carolina and Louisiana exempt $75,000 and $50,000, respectively, off of homestead properties. Burlington currently has a value exemption of $40,000 limited to veterans who are disabled, which is based on State law.

With the Mayor's commitment to addressing affordability in Burlington, she supports this recommendation[4] as a straightforward way to address the municipal tax burden on residents and rebalance how we raise revenue from primary residents compared to other types of property.

The proposed $30k homestead exemption is the minimal threshold to address the impacts of the assessment inequity noted by the Urban3 study. It is designed so that residential properties on the lowest end of the value scale receive the largest benefit. Tax rates set by the City Charter would be adjusted so that this is a *revenue-neutral measure*; therefore, the homestead exemption would

[1] See Tax Fairness Working Group Report:
https://burlingtonvt.portal.civicclerk.com/event/8227/files/attachment/11257
[2] According to a 2023 equity analysis of property in Burlington conducted by real estate analysis firm, Urban3:
https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9216/Urban3-Presentation
[3] David Schleicher. "Your House Is Worth More Than They Think: The Strange Case of Property Tax Regressivity." Harvard Law School Journal on Legislation, Volume 62.1 (Winter 2025).
https://journals.law.harvard.edu/jol/2025/02/22/your-house-is-worth-more-than-they-think-the-strange-case-of-property-tax-regressivity/
[4] See the Mayor's memo to City Council on October 16, 2025 concerning Municipal Financial Policy Changes:
https://burlingtonvt.portal.civicclerk.com/event/8589/files/attachment/11629

lead to a 3.1% increase in municipal property taxes for all non-homestead properties and for the highest value homestead properties.[5]

These exemptions help *working households* in particular because they lower residential property-tax burdens, offering the greatest relief where it's most needed. This is especially helpful when home values rise faster than wages, as we are seeing in Burlington. Importantly, the proposed homestead exemption would apply only to primary homestead residences, which means the tax relief would go to people actually living and working in the community – especially important for working-class households.

Consistent with a core recommendation of the Tax Fairness Working Group, an advisory question would allow for *meaningful public engagement* – which is an essential component of implementing any tax reforms – by ensuring that residents have opportunities to learn about proposed changes and provide input before final decisions are made through a charter change. Robust public engagement is a key priority of Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak's administration.

An advisory question is a question placed on a ballot to measure public opinion, not to create or change law directly. The result does not force the City to make changes to existing laws, ordinances, or charter provisions, so it is *non-binding*. Instead, lawmakers can use the result to help decide whether to pursue charter or ordinance changes, adjust policy, or drop an idea altogether. Advisory questions thus strengthen democratic participation and public engagement by giving residents a chance to express their preferences on specific policies in ways that can guide future decision-making by elected officials.

Potential Impacts of the Proposed Homestead Exemption

Homestead Properties

Homestead properties, as defined by the state, are limited to owner-occupied primary residences. The benefit from the exemption is inversely proportional to the value of the homestead.

[5] The exemption has two mechanisms - a reduction in value for homesteads, and an increase in the tax rate to ensure the same level of overall revenue. For non-homestead properties, the only effect they see is the increase in the tax rate. For homestead properties, there is both a reduction from the exemption and an increase from the tax rate, but for most homestead properties the reduction from the exemption is higher than the increase from the tax rate, resulting in lower bills. For the highest value homestead properties, the tax rate increase counteracts the decrease in taxes from the exemption.

Out of 5,917 total homestead properties[6] in Burlington, nearly two-thirds (3,638) would see a decrease of $150 or more off of their annual municipal tax bill.

- A $30,000 exemption would eliminate the municipal property tax burden on properties assessed at less than $30,000 – for example, many of the mobile homes at the North Avenue Co-op.
- Homestead properties in Burlington assessed at under $200k (N=410), such as modest condos, would see their municipal bill reduced by a median of $210 annually, or about 17% off of the annual median municipal bill for those properties.
- Homestead properties with a value of $200k to $400k (N = 3,089) would see a median decrease of $178 annually, or 7% of their annual median bill.
- At an assessed value of about $1 million, the exemption and accompanying tax rate increase would balance, resulting in no change to the annual municipal bill. There are 118 homestead properties assessed at more than $1 million; these properties would see a median increase of $65 on their annual municipal bills, or about 0.6%.

Non-Homestead Properties

Non-homestead properties are those that are not owner-occupied primary residences. Examples include second homes or vacation properties, rental properties, and commercial properties.

All non-homestead properties would see a tax increase of 3.1% under the proposed $30k homestead exemption.

Rental Properties

As noted above, properties in Burlington that are rented would not receive the homestead exemption, resulting in an approximately 3.1% increase in the annual municipal property tax bill for these properties.

This table shows the effect of the homestead exemption on a selection of rental properties, from small to large scale and representing various levels of value.

[6] For the purposes of this analysis, any property that is at least partially a homestead is included here (e.g., homestead properties that are partially rentals or also have a business use).

Depending on the assessed value per unit, the municipal bill change, *if* entirely and evenly passed down to renters, could result in a small monthly increase of about $8 or less per month per unit.

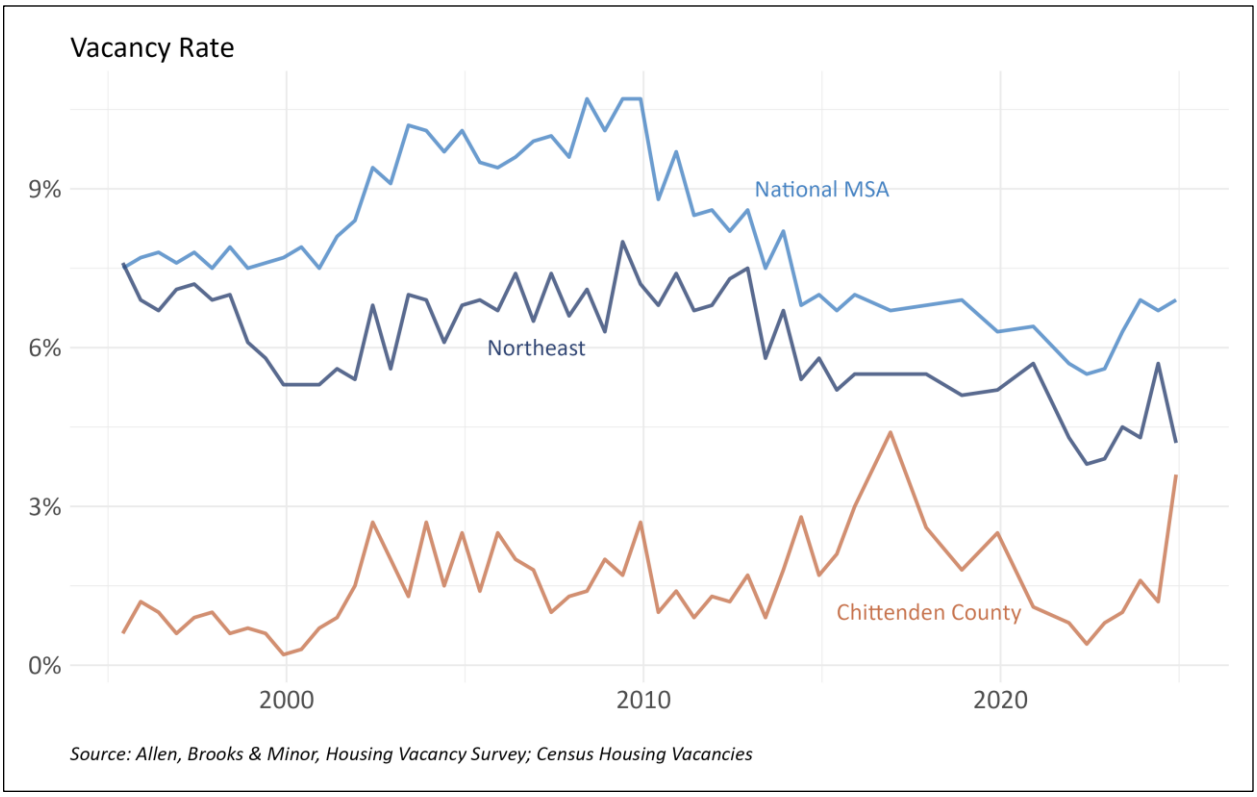
Address	**Assessed Value**	**Units**	**Average Assessed Value per Unit**	**Municipal Bill**	**Municipal Bill Change with Exemption**	***Annual* per Unit Change**
North Ave Apartments	$14,065,540	106	$132,694	$118,151	+$3,617	$34.12
Riverside Townhomes	$1,314,500	10	$131,450	$11,042	+$342	$34.20
Pearl St Apartments	$1,672,700	10	$167,270	$14,481	+430	$43.00
Home Ave Quadplex	$770,000	4	$192,500	$6,468	+$201	$50.13
Pine St Apartments	$11,683,200	49	$238,430	$98,139	+$3,042	$62.09
S. Union St Duplex	$738,000	2	$369,000	$6,202	+190	$95.00

Given the lack of tenant protections enshrined in law, it is a reasonable concern that the effects of the homestead exemption on municipal tax bills could be passed down to renters in the form of higher rents. The degree to which a landlord can do this is a matter of economic debate, and there is empirical evidence that landlords pass on some, but not all, of these costs. For example, a rigorous study[7] finds that landlords of residential units are able to pass down 14% of increased property tax cost to renters. *This memo conservatively shows a hypothetical and much higher 100% pass-through rate.*

There are many factors that shape a landlord's ability to increase rental rates, including market conditions and tenant behavior that can limit landlords' pricing power. In other words, landlords can charge what tenants are willing and able to pay, and some rent increases will simply be too much. While there are studies that show higher pass-through rates, these often focus on commercial rents, rather than residential ones.

[7] David J. Schwegman & John Yinger, 2020. "The Shifting of the Property Tax on Urban Renters: Evidence from New York State's Homestead Tax Option," Working Papers 20-43, Center for Economic Studies, U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2020/adrm/CES-WP-20-43.html

It is also worth highlighting that the most recent measurement of the Chittenden County rental vacancy rate by Allen and Brooks, at 3.6%, was the highest it has been since 2016. A high vacancy rate further diminishes landlords' ability to raise rents, regardless of property tax costs.



Small Multifamily Property

According to state statute, a homestead may consist of a part of a multidwelling or multipurpose building but does not include any portion of a dwelling that is rented.[8] Owner-occupied duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes can thus qualify as homestead properties for tax purposes; however, those that are not owner-occupied would not receive the proposed exemption. Instead, they, too, would see an approximately 3.1% increase in their municipal property tax bill. If conservatively estimating a 100% pass-through rate, this could result in a small increase of approximately $3 - $5 per unit per month.

[8] Residents can only file their homesteads on one property. If someone owns a duplex, and the duplex has separate parcels, the resident would only file the homestead for the unit that they live in. If the building they own only has one parcel with multiple living units on that property, they would file their homestead on that parcel and claim rental/business use for the percentage of space that they are not occupying as their primary residence.

Land Use	Median Assessed Value	Units	Median Assessed Value per Unit	Municipal Bill	Municipal Bill Change with Exemption	*Annual* Per Unit Change
R2 - 2 Family	$433,800	2	$216,925	$3,644	+$113	$56.50
R3 - 3 Family	$537,200	3	$179,900	$4,533	+$140	$46.70
R4 - 4 Family	$611,600	4	$152,888	$5,137	+$159	$39.75

Senior Housing

Like other non-homestead properties, senior housing would see a 3.1% increase in municipal property taxes under a homestead exemption. Due to the low per-unit assessments of these properties, the dollar value of increases per unit and month would be smaller than increases across other rental properties.

This table shows the effect of the homestead exemption on a selection of senior housing properties in Burlington.

Name	Assessed Value	Assessed Value Per Unit	Units	Municipal Bill	Municipal Bill Change with Exemption	*Annual* Per Unit Change
Converse Home	$1,097,300	$17,989	61	$9,217	+$282	$4.62
Birchwood Terrace	$11,937,400*	$74,609	160	$100,274	+$3,108	$19.42
Elderwood	$13,351,800	$89,012	150	$112,155	+$3,476	$23.18
Burlington Health and Rehab	$7,212,600	$82,903	87	$60,586	+$1,878	$21.59

* Includes the value of the building and leased land.

Permanently Affordable Housing

While affordable rental housing would not receive the homestead exemption, tenants would be shielded from large impacts on their monthly rents as these rents are capped based on household income. Some properties, like Decker Towers and others owned by the Burlington Housing Authority or the Champlain Housing Trust, are entirely exempt and do not pay property taxes. In situations where landlords are not yet charging the maximum amount of rent they are allowed by

law (i.e., they are charging below the rent cap[9]), any hypothetical pass through of municipal property tax increase onto tenants would be expected to be very low, given that the hypothetical increases discussed for private rental properties above is already quite small, and affordable housing is assessed at a discount per state/federal law.

Commercial Property

Commercial property would see an increase of 3.1%, like other non-homestead properties. The increase would be in direct proportion to the property's assessed value, so the magnitude of the increase would vary based on the wide variation in commercial property values. For example, a 1,000 sq. Ft. commercial condo in the Adams Building on South Union Street (assessed value: $119,800) would see an increase of $37 in municipal taxes per year. The Zero Gravity Restaurant and Brewery (assessed value: $4,325,600) would see an increase of $1,347. Hula, with an assessed value of $27 million, would see an increase of $8,355, or 3% more than what it paid for municipal taxes in FY25 ($270,480).

We recognize and appreciate that tax increases of any kind are serious considerations for our local businesses. We'd also like to emphasize that the City is committed to its business community and has made several recent changes and investments to help create a stronger environment for businesses to grow and thrive.

For example, beginning this year, the City has fully eliminated the Business Personal Property Tax, which historically raised approximately $1.1M annually from over 200 different businesses. That tax had been found to distort markets by discouraging capital investment, expansion, and replacement, while imposing high administrative and compliance costs and was thus eliminated. We invested $600K more in Great Streets Main Streets to reopen the street for the last several months during nights and weekends. We increased downtown BPD foot patrols since early summer 2025 and invested four-times more into the Howard Center Street Outreach Team compared to past years, both of which are very important to improving community safety in the downtown corridor. Additionally on the community safety front, we launched the Situation Table in July and worked with the Governor to develop a short-term response plan this fall.

Effects by Ward

The wards that would see the largest ***decrease*** in total municipal taxes are Wards 4 and 7, where there is a large percentage of relatively modest homesteads. Other wards would see an overall increase, though some increases, like for Wards 2 and 5, are minimal. Ward 3 sees the highest

[9] Vermont does not have a single, universal rent cap for all affordable housing; instead, rents are capped based on specific federal/state programs.

total increase due to the large overall grand list value there and the low percentage of homestead properties given its location that overlaps with the downtown area.

Ward	Parcels	Homestead Parcels		Non-Homestead Residential Parcels		Commercial Parcels		Median Homestead Assessed Value	Total Grand List	Tax Diff
1	961	439	46%	478	50%	44	5%	$433,102	$501M	$16,251
2	1,277	573	45%	641	50%	63	5%	$329,500	$570M	$7,576
3	1,200	272	23%	646	54%	282	24%	$464,396	$1,120M	$221,358
4	1,774	1,334	75%	422	24%	18	1%	$399,585	$839M	$(127,025)
5	1,700	1,065	63%	545	32%	90	5%	$453,949	$1,088M	$6,752
6	1,092	682	62%	367	34%	43	4%	$634,069	$760M	$20,256
7	1,911	1,458	76%	434	23%	19	1%	$294,147	$641M	$(201,664)
8	520	94	18%	388	75%	38	7%	$498,545	$371M	$71,827

Conclusion

As we consider the proposed tax reform, it's important to take a full and balanced view of what our city needs to remain healthy and equitable. Lower-income residents and working families have long needed meaningful relief, and many homeowners have not seen support despite rising housing costs and ongoing economic pressures. A revenue-neutral approach that adjusts the tax structure can help ensure that our overall system better reflects the realities facing all parts of our community. We must recognize the contributions and needs of businesses, residents, and homeowners alike to ensure that Burlington remains a place where everyone can succeed.

Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

January 7, 2026

Dear Councilors,

I am pleased to bring forward for your consideration the appointment of Lynn Reagan, to the position of Director of Human Resources for the City of Burlington.

Lynn Reagan has served as Interim Director of Human Resources since July of 2024, providing steady, confident direction in support of City employees, my administration, and the Human Resources team. Throughout her tenure, Lynn has demonstrated consistent and effective leadership – overseeing the daily operations of a complex Human Resources department while also guiding the City through significant and challenging processes, including staff layoffs and Police and Fire contract negotiations. She has also been a tireless mentor and champion to her Human Resources team and a strong strategic partner to organizational leadership on thoughtful, data-driven workforce planning.

Lynn brings more than 20 years of extensive experience in human resources development, labor and employee relations, organizational effectiveness, performance management, and benefits and risk management. She has served the City of Burlington for nearly 10 years, first as Manager and then as Assistant Director of Human Resources. Lynn holds an Associate's Degree in Business Management from Champlain College.

The City conducted a competitive, nation-wide search for its next head of Human Resources. Lynn's nomination was strongly endorsed by Human Resources staff, and a hiring panel representing City departments, the City Council, and the Unions unanimously selected her as the panel's top candidate for the position.

Upon confirmation, Lynn will begin serving as the Human Resources Director on January 13, 2026.

I have full confidence that Lynn will serve the City of Burlington well as our next Human Resources Director, and I thank you for your consideration of this appointment.

With gratitude,

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
Mayor

149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

MDP-26-01 Burlington's Open Space Plan

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4385, 4387, 4432, and §4444, notice is hereby given of public hearings by the Burlington City Council to hear comments on the proposed Burlington Open Space Plan:

The first public hearing will take place on **Monday, December 15, 2025 during the Regular City Council Meeting which begins at 6:00 pm in Contois Auditorium, Burlington City Hall, 149 Church Street, Burlington, VT or you may access the hearing/meeting as follows:**

On-line: https://zoom.us/j/93242298515
By telephone: +1 305 224 1968 US
Webinar ID: 932 4229 8515

The second public hearing will take place on **Monday, January 12, 2026 during the Regular City Council Meeting which begins at 6:00 pm in Contois Auditorium, Burlington City Hall, 149 Church Street, Burlington, VT or you may access the hearing/meeting as follows:**

On-line: https://zoom.us/j/99551944677
By telephone: +1 646 931 3860 US
Webinar ID: 995 5194 4677

Pursuant to the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4444(b):

Statement of purpose
The Open Space Plan is a roadmap to guide the City of Burlington and its residents, partners, and collaborators as they work together to grow and steward Burlington's open spaces now and in the future. Burlington is a place where open spaces, water, and the built environment are intertwined in a symbiotic relationship that helps to make Burlington the unique place that is it. As Burlington continues to intensify in density to accommodate its increasing population, the City aims to continue its long-standing commitment to providing equitable access to quality open spaces and stewarding the health of the city's ecosystems.

Burlington's Open Space Plan takes an interdisciplinary approach to documenting the City's open spaces, updating open space goals, and identifying specific resource targets and timelines through a robust community-focused engagement process. Ultimately, this plan is created to ensure that both the community—those who live, work, and recreate here—and the wildlife and flora will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Geographic areas affected
Burlington's Open Space Plan is applicable to all areas within the City of Burlington.

List of section headings affected
Burlington's Open Space Plan is a comprehensive rewrite of the previously adopted Open Space Protection Plan (2000 & 2014) and replaces all chapters, appendices, maps, and references.

The full text of the draft 2025 *Burlington Open Space Plan is* available online at www.burlingtonvt.gov/planbtv/OpenSpace. Upon request, a hard copy of the proposed plan can be viewed at the Department of Permitting and Inspections located 645 Pine Street, Burlington, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Burlington Conservation Board
311 North Avenue
Burlington, VT 05408
http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/dpi
Telephone: (802) 865-7188

Rebecca Roman, Chair
Ryan Crehan, Vice Chair
Zoe Richards
Don Meals
Ryan Crehan
Ethan Ely
Dale Azaria
Kelly Farrell
Evan Horne
Alan Reichard

TO:	Burlington City Council Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak
FROM:	Burlington Conservation Board Scott Gustin, AICP, DPI Principal Planner
DATE:	January 12, 2026
RE:	New Open Space Plan

Following more than a year of collaboration and outreach, the Burlington Conservation Board is pleased to present the new Open Space Plan for a second, and final, public hearing with the City Council.

This plan is the result of extensive work including dozens of community outreach and engagement events, assessments, visioning, and writing. The effort to rewrite the city's Open Space Plan has been a collaborative effort between the core city team, UVM's Spatial Analysis Lab, and Agency Landscape & Planning. The Conservation Board, Parks Commission, and Planning Commission have also engaged in the planning process. Conservation, Parks, and Planning Commission have all voted to approve the plan and forward it to City Council for adoption.

This new plan builds on the legacy of the original Open Space Protection Plan adopted some 25 years ago and sets the vision for Open Space in Burlington for years to come. This new plan is founded on four primary components:

- Conserve
  Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city
- Connect
  A landscape stitched together by stewardship and green design standards for development
- Experience
  Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington
- Cultivate
  Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs

This new Open Space Plan builds on the conservation legacy of the original plan and creates a vision for collaborative, community wide efforts to retain and strengthen our green network as we continue to grow, to provide for diverse outdoor experiences for all, and to ensure sustainable and accessible local food systems.

The Open Space Plan is incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan. The first of two required public hearings occurred December 15, 2025. We are seeking City Council approval of this plan tonight. Ultimately, the plan will be included in the Comprehensive Plan when that document is updated and adopted.

City Council Motion
Waive the reading and approve the new Open Space Plan for adoption by City Council.

FINAL VERSION
December 10, 2025



BURLINGTON OPEN SPACE PLAN





"WHILE IT INITIALLY TAKES EFFORT TO NOTICE SOMETHING NEW, OVER TIME A CHANGE HAPPENS THAT IS IRREVERSIBLE. REDWOODS, OAKS, AND BLACKBERRY SHRUBS WILL NEVER BE "A BUNCH OF GREEN." A TOWHEE WILL NEVER SIMPLY BE "A BIRD" TO ME AGAIN, EVEN IF I WANTED IT TO BE. AND IT FOLLOWS THAT THIS PLACE CAN NO LONGER BE ANY PLACE."

– JENNY ODELL,
HOW TO DO NOTHING



Message from the Mayor

December 2025

Dear Neighbors,

I am proud of our city's new Open Space Plan—a roadmap for preserving and enhancing the natural areas, parks, and green spaces that make our community vibrant and livable.

Burlington has long been recognized for its commitment to environmental stewardship, and this plan builds on that legacy by identifying opportunities to protect critical habitats, expand recreational access, and strengthen connections between our neighborhoods and the outdoors.

Our open spaces are more than scenic landscapes—they are vital to our health, well-being, and resilience in the face of climate change. By investing in their protection and thoughtful management, we are ensuring that current and future generations can enjoy the beauty, diversity, and ecology that define Burlington.

I want to thank our residents, partners, and local organizations whose input and dedication helped shape this plan. Together, we can continue to cultivate a city where nature and community thrive side by side.

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

Mayor of Burlington, Vermont



Letter from the Open Space Plan Team

Welcome to Burlington's 2025 Open Space Plan!

This plan is the result of dozens of community outreach and engagement events, stakeholder sessions, and the input and participation of hundreds of community members. It builds on the legacy of the original Open Space Protection Plan adopted 25 years ago and sets the vision for Open Space in Burlington for years to come.

Burlington has a wealth of green spaces spanning the expansive working lands of the Intervale to the wooded urban wilds such as Arthur Park and Arms Forest to the small pockets of green within our downtown. These open spaces are integral to the fabric of our community and provide spaces for wildlife, food production, and social connections.

The original 2000 Open Space Protection Plan created our first open space inventory and served as the foundation for regulatory protection of significant natural areas such as the Lake Champlain shoreline, our urban wilds, and even more developed riparian corridors such as along Englesby Brook. Just as significantly, the original plan provided the basis for establishing the Conservation Legacy Fund. This fund has helped conserve 236 acres of land across 10 different parcels. The original plan has served our community well over the past 25 years.

A lot has changed in 25 years. The city has grown, the climate crisis has intensified, and our concepts of what open spaces should be and do have evolved. Protection of our open space network remains paramount, but we also seek more functionality with things like urban orchards and secure local food production, carbon sequestration, and neighborhood cooling with a robust urban tree canopy.

This new Open Space Plan builds on the conservation legacy of the original plan and creates a vision for collaborative, community wide efforts to retain and strengthen our green network as we continue to grow, to provide for diverse outdoor experiences for all, and to ensure sustainable and accessible local food systems.

In sum, this Open Space Plan reflects the community's vision for open space into the future. It is a vision that we will realize together.

Sincerely yours,

- Dan Cahill, City Land Steward
- Scott Gustin, Principal Planner
- Sarah Morgan, Principal Planner
- Zoe Richards, Conservation Board Representative
- Sophie Sauvé, Parks Planning Division Director
- Juliet Shen, Marketing & Communications Manager



Acknowledgments

Core City Team
- Dan Cahill, City Land Steward
- Scott Gustin, Principal Planner
- Sarah Morgan, Principal Planner
- Zoe Richards, Conservation Board Representative
- Sophie Sauvé, Parks Planning Division Director
- Juliet Shen, Marketing & Communications Manager

Conservation Board
- Rebecca Roman
- Ryan Crehan
- Dale Azaria
- Ethan Ely
- Kelly Farrell
- Evan Horne
- Don Meals
- Zoe Richards

Parks Commission
- Nate Lantieri
- Ryan Bergmann
- Kirsten Boehm
- Halle Davis
- Robert Etter
- Harley Johnson
- Katie Flanagan Mobley

Planning Commission
- Andy Montroll
- Alex Friend
- Michael Gaughan
- Erhard Mahnke
- Erin Malone
- Ryan Nick
- Julia Randall

City Council
- Ben Traverse
- Mark Barlow
- Gene Bergman
- Becca Brown McKnight
- Marek Broderick
- Sarah Carpenter
- Melo Grant
- Joe Kane
- Evan Litwin
- Carter Neubieser
- Allie Schachter
- Ranjit “Buddy” Singh

Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

Consultant Teams
- Agency Landscape + Planning
- Chapman EcoLandscape
- UVM Spatial Analysis Lab
- Christine Tyler Hill

Funding provided by the Conservation Legacy Fund

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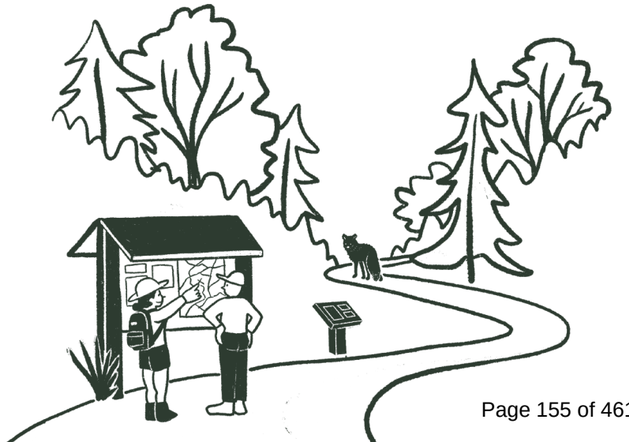


Plan Summary

Nestled on the shores of Lake Champlain at the confluence with the winding Winooski River, Burlington sits at a regionally significant location.

Open spaces are at the heart of what makes Burlington special — enabling high quality of life for the community, supporting the city's economy, growing local food, providing home to local and migrating wildlife, and keeping the city cool in a changing climate.



Burlington's open spaces do more than provide spaces for recreation and wildlife habitats!

They also help to absorb stormwater and reduce the impacts of flooding, help cool the city, grow food, sequester carbon, and clean the water and air.

Burlington's Open Space Plan establishes a framework for conserving, managing, and expanding open space across the city.

As Burlington continues to grow, the plan works to protect vital natural environments and open space and ensure they are an integral part of a livable, resilient city. This plan builds on the plans that have come before it and aims to align closely with other planning initiatives, including the upcoming comprehensive plan, to create synergy across city departments.

The plan frames the open space system as an healthy network that supports climate resilience, biodiversity, equitable access, and high quality of life. During the plan process, several key findings and opportunities were identified:

The City is well served by open space with opportunities to expand access and connect natural resources.

Burlington already contains a substantial share of open space, nearly half of its land area falls under some open- or green-space designation.

However, some neighborhoods have abundant access to parks and nature areas, while others have limited access. Many open areas are also disconnected from one another. The plan underscores the importance of wildlife corridors, riparian buffers, greenbelts, and connected trails as essential to ecological health and public use.

City population growth should be balanced with thoughtful conservation policies.

With increasing development pressure, especially in infill and densification areas, there is heightened tension between protecting open land and meeting housing, infrastructure, and economic goals. As part of the plan's engagement process, residents raised concerns about losing natural areas, water quality, wildlife habitat, and floodplain functions. Public feedback frequently emphasized the need to balance growth with conservation and employ green design standards.

We need to plan for increasing climate, ecological, and stormwater demands today!

The plan reaffirms that nature-based solutions like forest and tree canopy management, wetland protection, and urban greening, will play an important role in Burlington's climate resilience strategy.

Many open spaces double as stormwater buffers, floodplains, or carbon sinks. Managing these places that provide multiple benefits is critical in adapting to increasing rainfall, heat, and ecological stress.

This plan is an opportunity to coordinate the many stewards and landowners who contribute to the open space network.

The plan identifies the need for stronger coordination across city departments, clearer roles and funding, and tools to help implement the plan's actions. It emphasizes that conservation cannot rely only on the City and on city regulations, but must take advantage of existing landowners, partners, and engaged stewards.

The Community's vision is at the center of this plan.

The planning process has intentionally reached out and welcomed ideas and worries from the many diverse residents who make up Burlington's community. A recurring theme is that residents value both access to nature (walking, recreation) and preserving "wild" spaces—especially as the city grows.

Plan at a Glance

Nestled on the shores of Lake Champlain at the confluence with the winding Winooski River, Burlington sits at a regionally significant location. Open spaces are at the heart of what makes Burlington special — enabling high quality of life for our community, supporting our city's economy, growing local food, providing home to local and migrating wildlife, and keeping us cool in a changing climate.

The Open Space Plan provides a roadmap for how to continue to protect the city's open space and urban forest network through a collaborative stewardship approach. Balancing the need to grow with healthy ecosystems is possible with thoughtful planning and collaboration.

VISION

SEE PAGES 56 - 65

Burlington is a Nature-Filled City

with healthy open spaces where wildlife thrive in forests, streams, and the lake; where people enjoy nature's various offerings and eat what their gardens and farms grow; and **where people and ecosystems flourish together.**



GOALS

STRATEGIES

SEE PAGES 66 - 141



GOAL ONE

CONSERVE

Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city

- Expand restoration and management city-wide
- Support wildlife movement and ecological health
- Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs
- Collaborate to protect open space for future generations



GOAL TWO

CONNECT

Knitting the landscape together through green infrastructure, stewardship, and green design standards

- Grow and celebrate nature-based climate solutions
- Cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship
- Enhance and protect Burlington's urban forest
- Encourage new development to incorporate nature-based principles



GOAL THREE

EXPERIENCE

Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington

- Increase awareness about Burlington's open spaces
- Grow public access to nature-based experiences
- Break down barriers to open space access



GOAL FOUR

CULTIVATE

Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs

- Cultivate sustainable and resilient agriculture practices
- Expand community gardens
- Support the cultivation of alternate food sources

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The open space plan is a collaborative roadmap to stewarding the future of our city's open spaces.

While the focus is on actions the City of Burlington can take, it also offers strategies we all can take to expand stewardship.

The implementation roadmap identifies:

- Implementation Lead
- Key Partners
- Implementation Timeframe





Arms Forest

1

Introduction

Burlington wouldn't be Burlington without its open spaces. This plan provides a vision and roadmap for protecting them together now and in the future.

Plan Purpose

The Open Space Plan is a roadmap to guide the City of Burlington and its residents, partners, and collaborators as they work together to grow and steward Burlington's open spaces now and in the future.

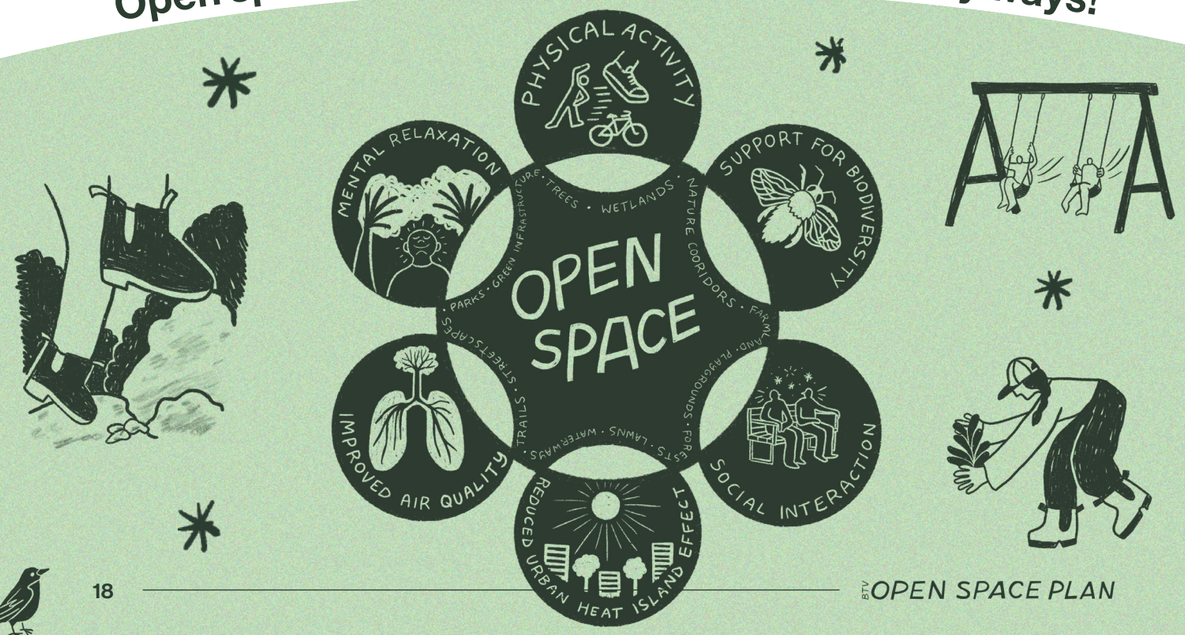
Burlington is a place where open spaces, water, and the built environment are intertwined in a symbiotic relationship that helps to make Burlington the unique place that is it. The conservation of open space and waterways enhances the quality of life for residents and allows for the continued preservation, restoration, and functioning of the natural systems of which we are a part.

The city benefits from an abundance of open space totaling almost 50% of its geographic area and is naturally bound by Lake Champlain and the Winooski River. The city's environmental ethic has pushed for preservation, adaptation, and access to its diverse open spaces.

As Burlington continues to intensify in density to accommodate its increasing population, the City aims to continue its long-standing commitment to providing equitable access to quality open spaces and stewarding the health of the city's ecosystems.

Burlington's Open Space Plan takes an interdisciplinary approach to documenting the City's open spaces, updating open space goals, and identifying specific resource targets and timelines through a robust community-focused engagement process. Ultimately, this plan is created to ensure that both the community—those who live, work, and recreate here—and the wildlife and flora will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Open space matters to Burlington in so many ways!







WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

"Open space" encompasses all the green, outdoor spaces in the city that are important for its ecological health and people's mental health. It includes natural areas, agricultural lands, parks, greenbelts, rain gardens, pocket parks, and trees, as well as school grounds, campuses, and private yards.

Open spaces are used by people for many reasons, including recreation, play, leisure, and growing food. Environmentally, they're critical for wildlife and for climate resilience. They also provide residents with a connection to nature. Open spaces include publicly accessible green spaces owned by the City of Burlington, as well as privately owned open spaces. They vary in character, size, and distribution throughout the city. Together, our open spaces create an important network for people, nature, and our city.

Within the city there are...





WORKING LANDS

50 miles of shoreline

Scenic Views

380 acres of wetlands



WATERS + WETLANDS

14 community gardens

Everyday Nature Experiences

50% of the city's land area is open space



PARKS



FORESTS

50+ parks and urban wild areas

40% tree canopy



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Natural Communities

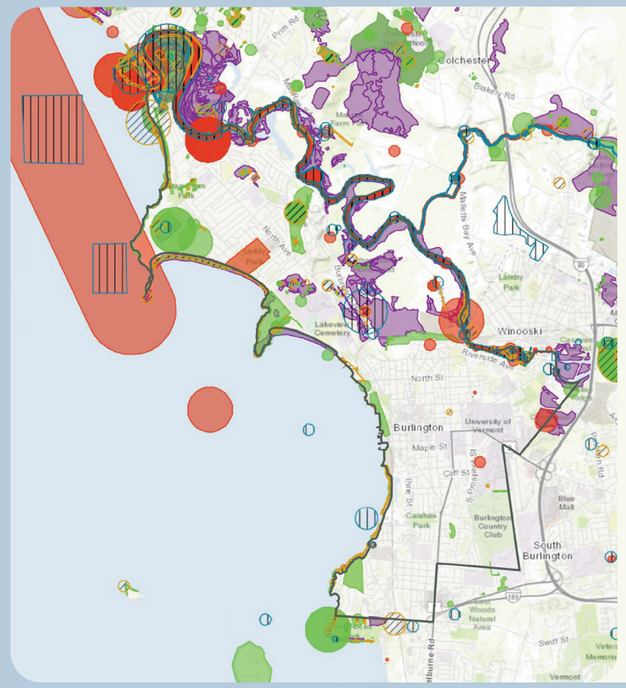


LAWNS + AUXILIARY GREEN SPACES

Why does Open Space matter?

Burlington's open spaces play a critical role in regional ecosystems.

At the confluence of the Winooski River Basin and Lake Champlain, Burlington is home to not only 44,000 residents, but also a rich diversity of plants and wildlife species. The City includes plants, animals, and natural communities that are uncommon in Vermont, as well as species classified as rare, threatened, and endangered by the State. Many of these significant natural communities are found along Burlington's waterways, from the shores of Lake Champlain to the Winooski River corridor.



VT Uncommon Species

- Plant
- Animal
- Natural Community

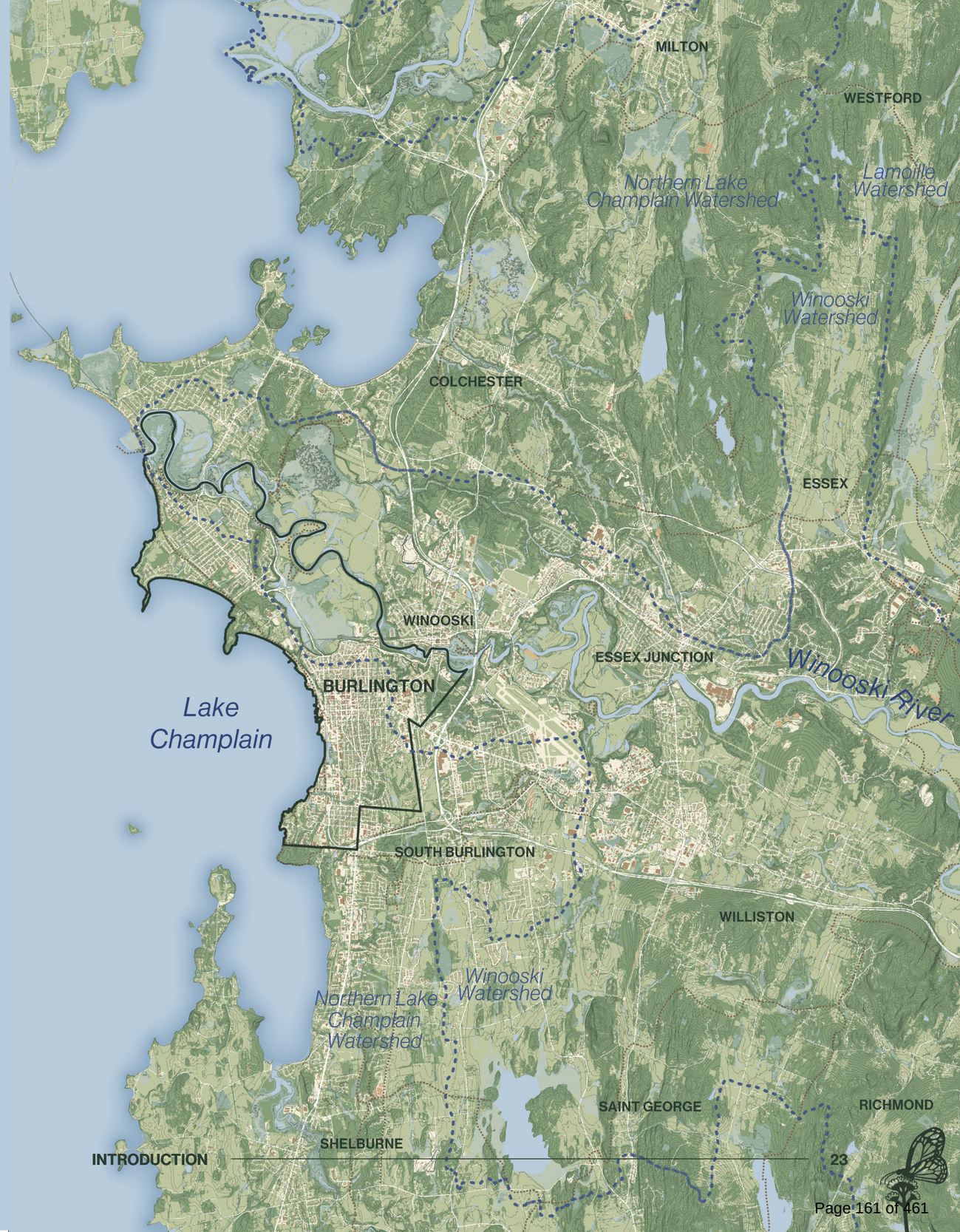
VT Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

- RTE Animal
- RTE Plant

VT Significant Natural Communities

- VT Significant Natural Communities

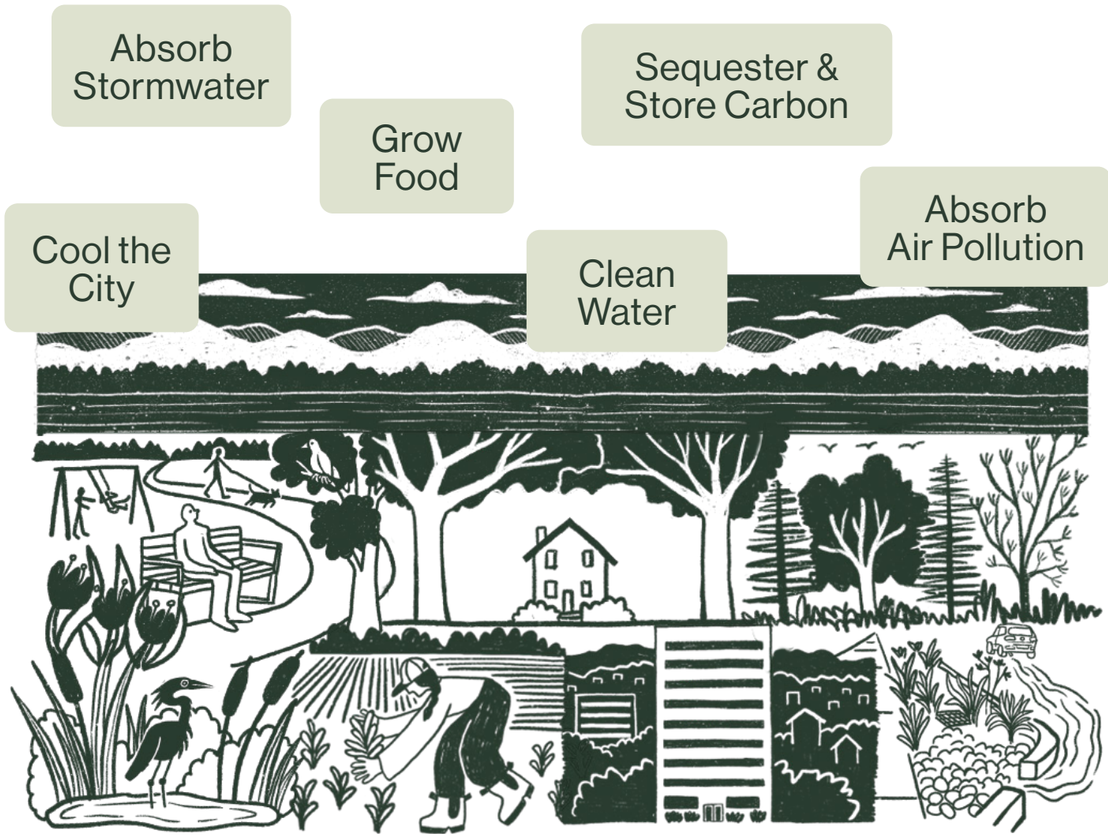
VT Natural Resources Atlas



Why does Open Space matter?

Burlington's open spaces act as natural infrastructure for the city.

The city's green spaces are just as important for its function as roads and hard infrastructure, like pipes and power lines. Like other kinds of infrastructure, they keep the city running and thriving. You might not think of a tree as a piece of infrastructure, but it and the other green spaces in our city provide important services like cleaning water, absorbing pollution, and keeping our city cool.



Ecosystem Services



Open spaces are increasingly important as our climate changes.

Burlington is the 4th fastest warming city in the US.

Burlington's tree canopy and green spaces act as natural air conditioning, keeping our city cool. A shaded house can keep a home's temperature cooler in the summer and with the right tree, can let in more light and heat during the winter. The cooling power of trees is just one example of how they keep our city livable and healthy for all of us. These superpowers will be even more critical as our climate changes. We need our tree canopy and open spaces now more than ever.

Why does Open Space matter?

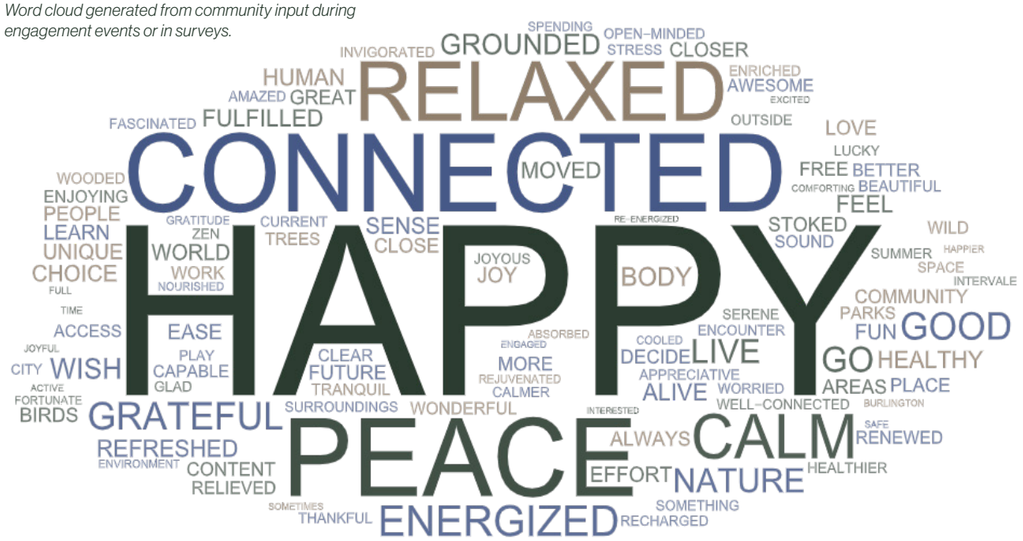
Supporting Human Health and Wellbeing

From providing places for being active to quiet spots to relax and recharge, open spaces help keep us healthy. They also provide spaces for us to gather, strengthening our community. Public parks offer free spaces to recreate, and research shows that access to parks results in healthcare savings.



Being in Burlington's open spaces make you feel...

Word cloud generated from community input during engagement events or in surveys.



Supporting Our City's Economy

Open spaces also contribute to our local economy. From direct employment of city staff who care for parks, to saving our city money with the ecosystem services open spaces provide, like reducing local flooding. They also play an important role in our city's economy by driving tourism and supporting outdoor recreation businesses.



Ecosystem of Stewardship



We're all partners in the future of Burlington's open spaces.

While this document is primarily a roadmap for the City of Burlington, by working together, we can expand our collective impact. Continuing to steward, protect, and enhance our open spaces depends on all of us. Many of these organizations are regularly collaborating on open space initiatives and knowledge sharing–and many more are not listed. These are but a few of the champions who make a difference in open space stewardship.







City of Burlington

City Planning
Public Works
Water Resources
CEDO
Parks, Recreation and Waterfront
REIB

Homeowners with yards

Other Governmental Partners

VHCB
State of Vermont
Chittenden County
Adjacent Municipalities
CCRPC

Development Community

Community Organizations

Large Land Stewards

The Intervale Center
Vermont Land Trust
University of Vermont
Champlain Housing Trust
Episcopal Diocese of Vermont
WVPD





Plan Process Overview

The Open Space Plan builds on the decades of open space planning and protection in Burlington.

The Open Space Plan reinforces ongoing commitment to conservation, with a renewed roadmap to guide the next chapter of collaborative stewardship and a policy vision for management and access. As Burlington grows, everyone needs fair access to high-quality open spaces while maintaining the ecological health of existing natural areas. The Plan expands on previous plans by:

- Connecting it with other city plans, like the Urban Forestry Plan.
- Working across City departments to make sure the Plan is visionary and feasible.
- Partnering with private owners who conserve land and expand stewardship to more than City-owned land.
- Finding more ways to not just conserve open space but expand it as well.

The Plan was created over a year across three planning phases with many collaborators and broad public input:

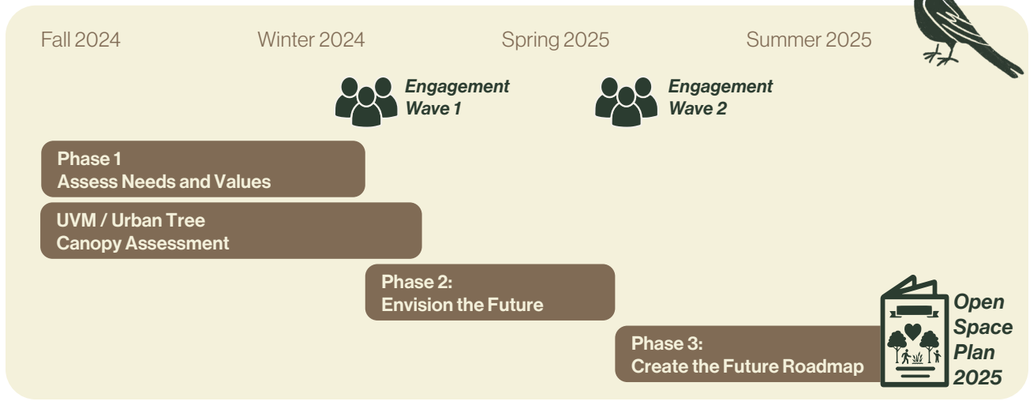
Phase 1: Assess Needs and Values

The first phase centered on understanding the history and current state of Burlington's open spaces. It assessed open space needs and values of the community.

Stakeholder focus groups were held to understand the most prominent issues faced by those whose work centers around open spaces, and the community shared their hopes and concerns for the future at events throughout Winter of 2024/2025.

In tandem, the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab conducted a Tree Canopy Assessment. The assessment included analysis of the city's land cover and the patterns and distribution of tree canopy changes over ten years (from 2014 to 2023). Findings were shared with the public and are incorporated throughout the Open Space Plan.

Project Schedule



Phase 2: Envision the Future

Building on the community's stories and stakeholder input, the second phase envisioned the future and turned feedback into a draft policy vision with implementation steps. The vision was shared back with the community and stakeholders for input in Spring of 2025.

Phase 3: Create the Future Roadmap

Finally, the last phase created the future roadmap–this plan–that is guided by a vision statement and four key goals that reflect the core planning goals expressed by the community and stakeholders alike.







Role of the Comprehensive Plan

The City is issuing a new comprehensive plan that will integrate municipal, mobility, economic development, and parks planning. Some issues raised during the open space planning process span these other realms and, while important to open space, will be investigated in more depth in the comprehensive plan. These include:

- Advance planning around the use of City-owned open spaces for shelter by people experiencing homelessness to ensure ecological health and integrity, public safety, and equitable access, while also planning for equitable access to permanently affordable housing for all Burlington residents.
- Growing public access to nature-based experiences.
- Strategies for improvements in multi-modal access to the Intervale.

Community Input

“Open Space is for the people of Burlington–present and future.”
- 2000 Open Space Protection Plan

The Burlington community has been an integral collaborator throughout crafting this plan update, from the broad vision to the most specific action. In addition to meetings with the Planning Commission, Conservation Board, Parks Commission, and the City Council’s Parks, Arts, and Culture Committee, the Open Space Plan project team hosted 24 events across two waves of engagement in 2025: the first in January and February centered around visioning and open space stories, and the second in May and June focused on the plan framework and policy recommendations. In both waves, the project team shared details about the Plan and process to gain informed feedback from residents. Each wave included in-person events and online engagement to reach a broad audience. Some of these events included Wintervale, Sea Caves skating, farmers markets, and Beach Bites. A complete list follows on the next page.

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.



“Everybody should have access to fresh air and natural spaces!”

“Open spaces help build community.”

24 events across six months



3 school groups engaged



“Education of our youth is key–the entire city is a classroom!”

“I love this community and our commitment to open spaces.”



125 open space stories shared

“Open spaces are free, beautiful, connected places to gather and learn.”



146 hot dogs + **28** veggie dogs served

>20 organizations connected





“Create a community and culture of respect and reciprocity.”

12 stakeholder focus groups



“Green spaces are tied within the fabric of the city.”



>230 online survey respondents

Outreach Events

Wave 1: Visioning and Open Space Stories

Date	Event
November 19, 2024	Stakeholder meetings
November 20, 2024	Stakeholder meetings
January 23, 2025	New North End Plan Kickoff
January 24, 2025	Stakeholder make up session
January 25, 2025	Winter Farmers Market
January 25, 2025	Sea Caves skating event
February 7, 2025	Winterlude
February 12, 2025	BHS City Lake Semester
February 18, 2025	Trusted Community Voices
February 12, 2025	Wintervale
February 25-26, 2025	UVM Davis Center with campus EcoReps
March 1, 2205	Library Book Sale
March 3, 2025	Azizza Malik's 5th Grade Class
March 12, 2025	Sarah Brown's 5th Grade Class



Wave 2: Plan Framework and Recommendations

Date	Event
May 13, 2025	Stakeholder meetings
May 14, 2025	Stakeholder meetings
May 14, 2025	Open Space Open House
June 6, 2025	Ward 6 NPA
June 7, 2025	Twilight Block Party
June 12, 2025	Ward 2 NPA
June 14, 2025	Farmers Market
June 17, 2025	ONE Farmers Market
June 19, 2025	Ward 5 NPA
June 25, 2025	Leddy Park Beach Bites
June 25, 2025	Wards 4 & 7 NPA

Community Perspectives on Open Space Opportunities

When asked about hopes for the future, the community answered:

Importance of Burlington's open spaces

- A Ecosystem Services
- B Human Health and Wellbeing
- C Flooding in Food Growing Spaces

Balancing needs for people and nature

- A Open Space is Integral to a Thriving City
- B Connections to Nature
- C Balance Growth and Open Space Preservation

Providing a variety of experiences

- A Open Spaces Support Social Interaction
- B Bolster the Local Economy and Make Burlington a Destination

Stewardship and climate resilience

- A Connections to Nature
- B Diverse Experiences
- C Mitigating Climate Change

When asked about concerns, the community answered:

Importance of Burlington's open spaces

- A Irregular Quality of Park Spaces
- B Pollution in Open Spaces
- C Flooding in Food Growing Spaces

Balancing needs for people and nature

- A Preserve Open Space While Meeting Housing and Other Needs
- B Maintaining momentum for ongoing care and preservation of open spaces

Providing a variety of experiences

- A Waitlist for Community Gardens
- B Park Rule Breakers
- C Physical Access for Persons with Disabilities

Stewardship and climate resilience

- A Funding for Maintenance, Conservation, and Protection
- B Impacts of Pollution and Aggressive Introduced Species

When asked how they feel and what activities they do when in open spaces, the community answered:

When in Burlington's open spaces, I feel...

Peace, Calm, Happy, Energized, Relaxed, Connected

When in Burlington's open spaces, I like to...

Walk, Swim, Bike, Hang with Friends, Boat, Enjoy the Lake

When in Burlington's open spaces, I am...

Active, Restful, In Community

When I think about Burlington's open spaces, the thing I think about most is...

connecting with nature, wildlife habitat, community character, recreation, clean water and air, growing food, climate resilience

Takeaways from common themes:



Burlington's parks and open spaces are intertwined and support healthy air, water, people, and wildlife.



There are pressures from development and housing demands that need to be **balanced with future open space investments.**



Natural spaces should be **accessible for all and support a range of experiences** and activities.



Healthy open spaces **connect us to nature and support a climate ready future,** so it is our job to protect and maintain them.

History of Open Space Use and Protection

Burlington has a long history of open space use and protection, stretching back to pre-colonial times and continuing to today. While there were times when forests were cleared and pollution was common, over the past decades Burlingtonians have prioritized the importance of nature is to the city.

A Pre-1700s

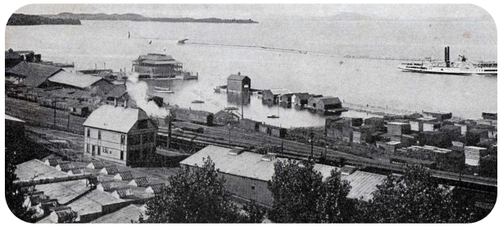


Swanton Corner-Notched points from the John Bridge's Site, Swanton VT, est. BC 7000-6000
Source: The Journal of Vermont Archaeology

Early Inhabitants

Indigenous Groups: For hundreds of years, the Abenaki people have inhabited and stewarded the land in the northeastern US and Canada. In and around modern-day Burlington, they grew beans, corn, and squash in the rich agricultural soil of the Winooski Floodplain.

B 1700s to 1800s



Burlington's Waterfront, 1800s.
Source: University of Vermont

Resource Extraction

In the mid-1700s, colonists arrived and farmed the floodplain to support their communities. Some forests were cleared for new farmland.

In the 1800s, Burlington became a trading hub. More forests were cleared for lumber, farmland, and grazing land. The waterfront was lined with lumber yards, train companies, power generating plants, and water pumping facilities.

C Early 1900s



Logging in Vermont, 1900s.
Source: VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Industrialization and Ecological Decline

In the early 1900s, the Industrial Revolution ramped up across the US, and factories and coal gas plants popped up across Burlington, including the Barge Canal. Farming in the Intervale declined, and some of Intervale's land became dumping grounds for refuse.

D Mid 1900s



Gardening at the Intervale, 1980s.
Source: Vermont Community Garden Network

Environmental Movement

By the 1970s, the environmental movement was in full swing. Oil tanks on the waterfront were phased out and removed as part of a long-term waterfront plan. Conservation efforts began with the Winooski Valley Park District's acquisition of land and lake shoreline. Tommy Thompson's "Gardens for All" began to reclaim some of the farmland that had previously been lost and set up community gardens.

E 1900s and early 2000s



The Urban Reserve, 1990s.
Source: City of Burlington

Codifying Conservation

In the 1990s, residents called for more conservation efforts to protect natural areas in and around the City. The City purchased 40 acres of land now known as the Urban Reserve.

In the early 2000s, Burlington passed the city's first Open Space Protection Plan, becoming a pioneer among US cities to plan for the future of its green spaces. The Plan included the creation of the Conservation Legacy Fund and was closely followed by the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

F 2020s to today!



Burlington City Hall rain garden, 2020.
Source: Burlington Free Press

Planning for Climate and Equity

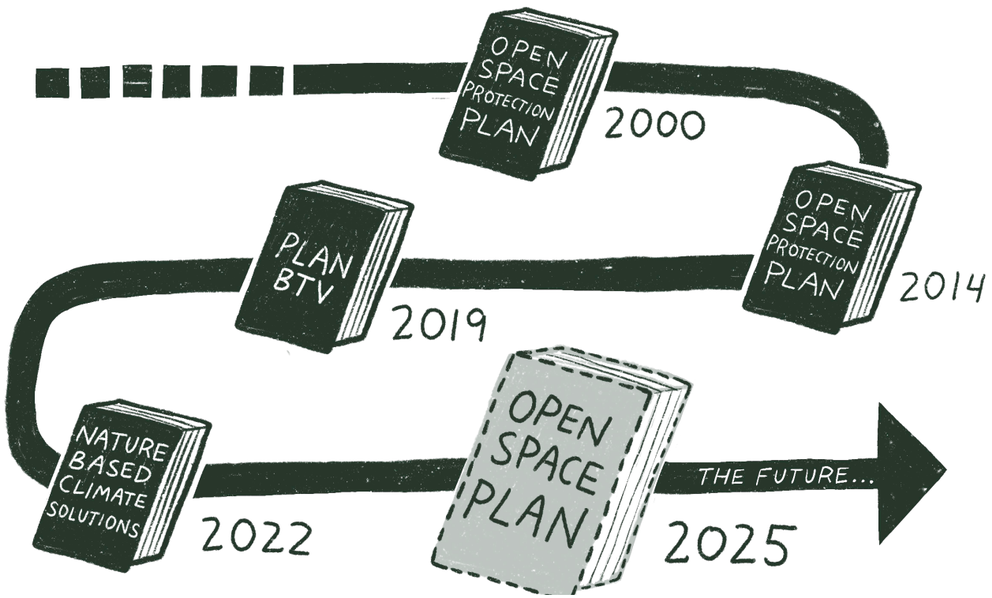
2020s: The City shifts open space planning to focus on equity, accessibility, and fighting climate change with "Nature Based Climate Solutions". Burlington recognizes that a thriving human community is necessary to protect existing natural areas, restore ecosystems, and steward natural resources for a green future.

Legacy of Open Space Planning

Burlington's original Open Space Protection Plan was adopted in 2000.

The Plan grew out of a 1997 City Council Resolution calling for the creation of "a plan to protect important natural areas and open spaces" and had a variety of goals related to identifying, protecting, and preserving the City's natural areas and open spaces. The Plan also created the Conservation Legacy Fund, which is still in use today. It was a visionary plan that grew from a long history of open space stewardship in Burlington and laid a foundation for both Burlington and other cities to protect their futures.

The City's 2014 Open Space Protection Plan Update inventoried open space lands and characterized them with respect to natural areas, urban agriculture, parklands, and green infrastructure. The 2014 Plan also assessed the proximity of residents to existing open space amenities such as community gardens, parks, and the waterfront. The tactical nature and updated goals of the Plan can be used to identify underserved areas of the city and to determine the best places for open space protection and related open space amenities like community gardens and parklands.



Burlington continued to further the goals of the Open Space Protection Plan in 2022 through the adoption of "Nature Based Climate Solutions: An Addendum to the Burlington Open Space Protection Plan". This addendum was written to further the goals identified in earlier plans, including the Open Space Plan and PlanBTV: Burlington's Comprehensive Plan, while specifically identifying nature-based solutions that will combat climate change. It focuses on climate change and equity and is built on the inextricable link "that a thriving human community is necessary if we want to ensure thriving ecosystems."

"Burlington's citizens, non-profits, and government have a proud tradition of protecting what is important to them and what sets Burlington apart - its sense of place, natural environment, open spaces, and recreational opportunities

As needed growth continues, a comprehensive plan to protect the city's most vulnerable natural areas and significant open spaces becomes a necessity."

- 2000 Open Space Protection Plan





Conservation Legacy Fund

In 2002, the City adopted its first Open Space Protection Plan. It was designed to acknowledge and reflect the high value Burlington's citizens saw in the city's diverse natural areas—and it put forward strategies to uphold and improve stewardship of these irreplaceable lands and waters.

One of the central recommendations of this plan was the creation of the Conservation Legacy Fund. This recommendation went before the voters in November 2002. The ballot question read:

> *"Shall the tax rate ceiling in Sec. 99 of the City Charter be amended by increasing it one (1) cent upon the dollar of the property grand list, from 38.88 cents to 39.88 cents, and shall the voters recommend authorizing the appropriation of such increase to be placed in a special revenue account under the name of the Burlington Conservation Legacy Fund, the purpose of which is the purchase and protection of important natural areas and open space."*

The ballot item passed with 70% approval.

This fund was created to:

- **Fund Land Acquisition** and long-term protection of natural areas, open spaces, and greenspaces through acquisition by the City and other interested parties.
- Support **Long-Term Stewardship**, including the development and implementation of management plans, for natural areas and open spaces in the City. Some of these areas were to be permanently managed by the City of Burlington's Conservation Legacy Program as Urban Wilds.
- Develop and support **Conservation Education Programs** administered under the Burlington Conservation Legacy Program.

Since its inception, the Conservation Legacy Fund has achieved many of the goals set out by the original open space plan. These achievements include:

- Creation and funding of a City Land Steward staff position in 2005.
- Creation of a Conservation Field Coordinator position in 2023, with 50% of the funding for the position coming from the fund.
- $1.7 million invested in land acquisitions and easement purchases conserving 236 acres at 10 locations in the City.
- $4.2 million additional dollars raised as matching funds.

In 2022, a Nature-Based Climate Solutions Addendum was added to the Open Space Protection Plan. To address the threat that climate change poses to the health of the city's natural areas and to support the role that ecosystems play in ameliorating the effects of a warming climate, the Addendum identified nature-based goals and strategies aimed at resiliency in a fast-warming world.

To support this work, the Conservation Legacy Fund expanded its purview the same year. A percentage of the Conservation Legacy Fund was made available in 2023 to provide funds for a new annual Conservation Legacy Grant program. The program is competitive and has provided financial support to local climate initiatives including invasive species management, native pollinator habitat restoration, collective gardening, and native tree nurseries. In the first two years of this innovative program, $332,060 were dispersed in support of seven local nature-based climate solution projects.

The Conservation Legacy Fund has been a noteworthy force in protecting natural areas and keeping the city healthy, ecologically rich, and green.

However, unlike other dedicated city funds, the way this fund was laid out means that it does not grow as the city's grand list grows. Its relative worth declines with every year.

Looking ahead, there is a sustained need within Burlington for the Conservation Legacy Fund to continue to fund land acquisition, conservation education and nature-based climate solutions. But the fund also needs to be broadened to support conservation infrastructure within the city's green spaces. Community assets—such as trails, wetland boardwalks, and improved connectivity for enhanced and managed access to our spaces—are needed, and the Conservation Legacy Fund provides a powerful tool and opportunity to meet these needs.



Conservation Legacy Fund Preserved Lands



Derway Cove



Arms Forest



Forest at Appletree Point



Rock Point



Arthur Park



Kieslich Park



Archibald Neighborhood Garden



Growing Open Space and Stewardship

In recent years, the City of Burlington and other partners have continued to expand open space and increase stewardship. Here are a few examples...

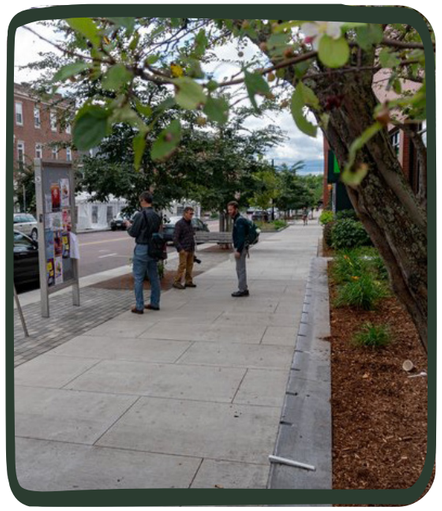
Northbend Orchard on Manhattan Drive

In 2020, residents on Manhattan Drive petitioned the city to plant fruit trees and move boulders to bring more life into a roadside grassy median. It was converted from a space with no ecological or community purpose to a no-mow zone that reestablishes habitat, attracts pollinators, and increases tree canopy.



St. Paul Street Green Infrastructure

As part of the Great Streets Initiative, St. Paul Street saw a major overhaul in 2018 that combined pedestrian-bicyclist initiatives with green stormwater infrastructure. Corner bumpouts made intersections shorter and more visible for pedestrians and widened sidewalks became more comfortable while rain gardens, permeable pavers, and soil cells guide runoff to flow into the stormwater system.





Conservation Legacy Grants

The Conservation Legacy Grant is an annual grant program to grow Nature-Based Climate Solutions in Burlington. Since its inception, grants have been awarded to individuals and groups to complete projects in the city that address strategies and actions identified in the Addendum's Implementation Matrix for at least two of the Addendum's six core principles.





Grow Wild Native Plant Giveaway

Grow Wild–a part of Burlington Wildways–has now run its third annual native plant giveaway in collaboration with the University of Vermont. The program gave away over 1,300 seedlings in 2025. Planting native plants to enhance native pollinator and insect diversity is a nature-based solution that can strengthen the local environment and help mitigate effects of climate change.

Burlington City and Lake Semester

Run out of Burlington High School, the Burlington City and Lake Semester program treats the city as its classroom to "explor[e] the people, places, problems and possibilities of our community." Its curriculum covers a wide breadth of topics. Those pertaining to open space have included native species restoration, climate resilience tree-planting with Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department, and restoring reptile habitat at Delta Park.



North Shore Natural Area

2

Burlington's Open Spaces Today

The city has many types of open spaces, from large parks to backyards. Together, these open spaces create networks that support people and wildlife.

What is Open Space?

“Open space” describes areas that are green and have natural elements, like plants and animals. They are used by people for many reasons, including both active and passive recreation, play, leisure, and growing food. Environmentally, they’re critical for wildlife and for climate resilience. In cities, they provide residents with a connection to nature.

Typically, open spaces in cities are thought of primarily as parks, trails, water bodies, and natural areas. Burlington has an abundance of these that are frequented by residents and visitors alike, from the smallest Smalley Park to the trail-filled and mostly wild Arms Forest. While some cities’ waterfront land is for private use only, much of Burlington’s publicly-accessible open spaces line waterways like Lake Champlain and the Winooski River–evidence of the city historically stewarding open space for public enjoyment and conservation.

There’s more to Open Space than we think...

There are lots of other types of green spaces to care and plan for. Many other open spaces also contribute to Burlington’s open space network, providing home to our city’s wildlife and providing ecosystem services that we all benefit from.

Burlington’s unique landscape includes working lands (such as the Intervale Center and community gardens), private open space, and other green spaces. Smaller spaces, such as lawns, pocket parks, and green infrastructure, can also be important interstitial pieces of the overall open space network.

The ecological and environmental health of our city is not limited to public land. Water flows and wildlife move seamlessly cross parcel boundaries, and 38% of our urban forest sits on private residential parcels. This Plan aims to guide actions by the City of Burlington, while also offering ways other partners and residents can also support open space stewardship.

Burlington like other many communities in the United States, is facing an increase in humans using open spaces as shelter. While this plan is not designed to directly address houselessness, it recognizes the impacts on open space functionality today. This plan will require collaboration with other City plans to get people re-housed.



A Natural Areas

Derway Island, Arms Forest, Rock Point

B Parks

Waterfront Park, Calahan Park, Schifilliti Park

C Trails + Greenways

Ethan Allen Park, Burlington Greenway

D Water Bodies

Lake Champlain, Winooski River, Englesby Brook

E Working Lands

The Intervale Center, Starr Farm Garden

F Private Open Spaces

University of Vermont, Rock Point

G Other Green Spaces

Yards, pocket parks, green infrastructure

Types of Open Space



Burlington is unique in the rich diversity of its open space. While it has those typically found in urban areas–parks and playgrounds–it also has many natural communities of statewide significance in natural areas like Derway Island and water bodies like Lake Champlain and the Winooski River. Burlington's open space network is not complete without areas that are not typically found in an urban space plan: working lands, private open spaces, and other open spaces. Planning for all types of open space is important to ensure a connected network of open spaces and tree canopy.



Parks

Parks are areas used primarily by people for recreation and gathering. They vary greatly in size: some are many acres large, like Leddy Park, while others are a small patch of grass on a street corner, like Dewey Park. Their amenities also vary greatly: they may include benches, water features, playgrounds, ballfields, and skate parks.



Water Bodies

Water bodies include natural or man-made lakes and streams. They form a network of waterways connected to watersheds and the region that serve important ecological functions–including circulating water throughout natural areas and bringing water to wetlands and floodplains. They are also commonly enjoyed recreationally for swimming, kayaking, and other water-based activities.



Natural Areas

Natural areas are lands with outstanding natural resources that function with little maintenance from people. These include forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitats. They may have trails and limited amenities and are generally not intensely managed. In addition to serving ecological functions, they also provide people with direct connections to the natural world. Some natural areas include Derway Island, Arms Forest, Rock Point, and Centennial Woods.



Trails + Greenways

Many natural areas and parks have paths used by people for recreation and mobility. They are paved or unpaved, single or multi-modal, through forests or along the water's edge. The Burlington Greenway is among the most well-known and well-loved multi-use paths in the city, stretching from its entire north-south extent along Lake Champlain. The 127 Bike Path serves a similar function on the eastern edge along the Intervale, and many trails connect between them through open space–including some that are part of Burlington Wildways.



Private Open Spaces

While local governments tend to concentrate open space efforts on public land, there is much privately owned land with green space that can also contribute to the ecological health and even sometimes the recreational experience of the community. Collaboration with landowners and actions by private property owners are critical to supporting the overall health of our city's ecosystems.

Examples: University of Vermont, Rock Point, Burlington Country Club



Working Lands

Working lands are considered lands used by people to grow food, maintain orchards, and raise livestock. They can be for personal or commercial use and span small community gardens to large agricultural plots like the Intervale. Having access to local working lands and their products allows communities to be more self-sustaining, relying less on supply chains for sustenance.



Other Open Spaces

In addition to the previously mentioned types, there are other areas–many small ones–that serve or have the potential to contribute to the open space network throughout the city. They are often overlooked as interstitial spaces but, all together, can contribute positively to open space networks. They can include lawns, pocket parks, green infrastructure, planted medians, school yards, vacant lots, and cemeteries.

Open Space Inventory

This map shows the current inventory of open space in Burlington.

It includes the seven types of open space categorized in this plan with the addition of the tree canopy. Shown together, it becomes clear how green the city is. Though not all this land is publicly accessible, we can get a sense of where we can enjoy natural spaces—much of the green space shown is not in an officially designated park, it could be in your backyard.

Find your favorite open space and see what else is nearby!

55 miles trails, paths, greenways

2620 acres tree canopy

2180 acres grass or shrub

300 acres parks

673 acres natural areas Zones

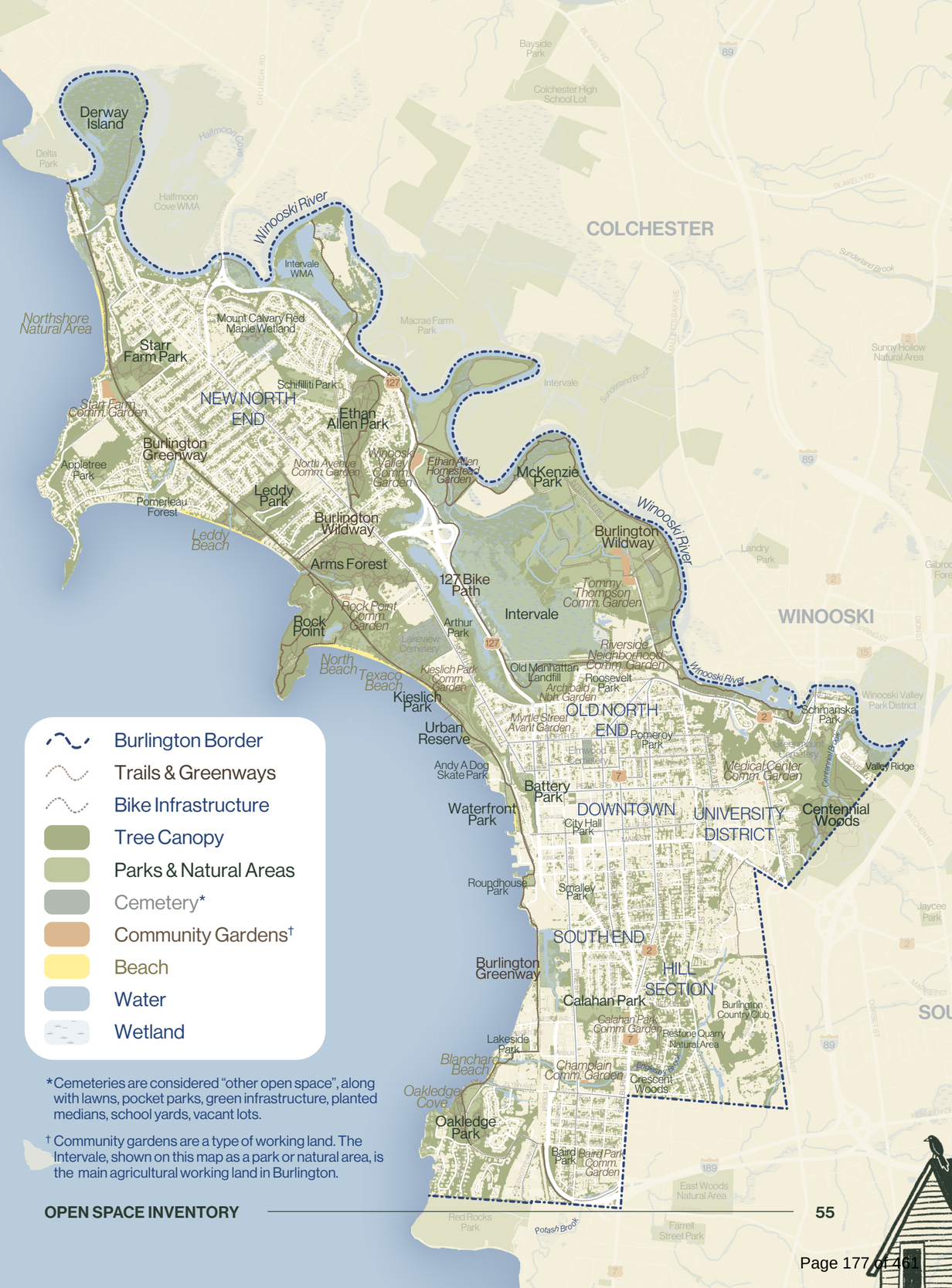
1175 acres Urban Wilds

60 acres cemeteries

50 miles shoreline

380 acres wetlands

18 acres community gardens



*Cemeteries are considered "other open space", along with lawns, pocket parks, green infrastructure, planted medians, school yards, vacant lots.

† Community gardens are a type of working land. The Intervale, shown on this map as a park or natural area, is the main agricultural working land in Burlington.

Burlington's Natural Communities

The 2014 Open Space Protection Plan identified several natural communities that comprise most of the natural and semi-natural lands (about 67 percent) of the City's 6,775 acres of undeveloped land and water. The communities listed below represent the majority of the naturalized land surface in Burlington's natural areas and parks.



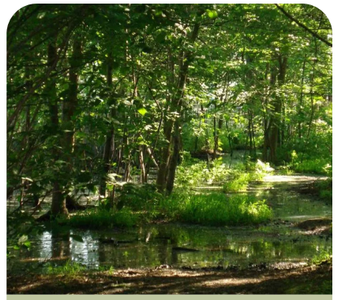
Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest
(Dry Oak-Pine Forest)

Small forests on ridgetops, south to west slopes, with thin soil and rocky outcrops.



Mesic Pine-Oak Sandplain Forest

Small to moderate-sized forests on gentle slopes and level ground in sandy outwash and lakeplain; most extensive upland forest type in City.



Maple-Green Ash Swamp
(Red Maple Swamp)

Small to moderate-sized depressions in landscape; high water table; floods in spring.



Silver Maple-Sensitive/Maple-Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest
(Silver Maple Floodplain Forest)

Moderate-sized to large forests in the floodplain of the Winooski River; most extensive forest type in city.



Alder Swamp

Small depressional areas in level to gently sloping landscapes, including floodplains.



Shallow Emergent Marsh Cattail Marsh
(Emergent Marsh)

Low, permanently inundated areas in floodplains and at edges of lakes and rivers.



Burlington's Natural Communities

Natural Community Types



Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest
(Dry Oak-Pine Forest)

Main Species
- Red oak
- White pine
- Black oak
- Big-tooth aspen
- Hickory

Soil
Farmington extremely rocky loam; Colton and Stetson sand

Major Issues
- Tree regeneration suppression by common buckthorn, Morrow's honeysuckle
- Managing transition from Norway maple and black locust to diverse canopy

Restoration Priorities
- Ensure native tree canopy replacement by controlling structure-altering aggressive introduced species
- Maintain continuous forest canopy cover
- Manage understory shading to support tree seedlings and native shrubs/herbs
- Reduce edge effects by reversing forest fragmentation



Mesic Pine-Oak Sandplain Forest

Main Species
- White pine, oak (red, white, black)
- American beech
- Ironwood
- Eastern hemlock
- Sugar maple
- Red maple
- Black cherry

Soil
Adams and Windsor loamy sand; Hartland very fine sandy loam

Major Issues
- Tree regeneration suppressed by buckthorn (common, glossy), Morrow's honeysuckle, Norway maple
- Managing transition from single-species pine plantations to diverse forest canopy

Restoration Priorities
- Ensure native tree canopy replacement by controlling structure-altering aggressive introduced species
- Maintain continuous forest canopy cover
- Manage understory shading to support tree seedlings and native shrubs/herbs
- Reduce edge effects by reversing forest fragmentation



Maple-Green Ash Swamp
(Red Maple Swamp)

Main Species
- Red maple
- Ash (green, black)
- Oak (black, red)
- Paper birch
- White pine

Soil
Au Gres fine sandy loam (seasonally wet)

Major Issues
- Small size invites aggressive introduced species and over-use
- Alteration of groundwater due to surrounding impervious cover and surface drainage
- Colonization by deep-shade-casting trees and shrubs (e.g, sugar/Norway maple; glossy buckthorn)

Restoration Priorities
- Reduce edge effects by native shrub plantings at margins
- Monitor and manage tree canopy regeneration
- Monitor and manage shrub layer to support native ground layer



Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern Floodplain Forest
Silver Maple-Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest
(Silver Maple Floodplain Forest)

Main Species
- Silver maple
- Box-elder
- Cottonwood
- Green ash

Soil
Limerick silt loam; Winooski very fine sandy loam; Hadley very fine sandy loam—all types are flooded

Major Issues
- Many aggressive introduced community-altering plant species due to frequent flooding
- Edge effects in narrow bands of forest

Restoration Priorities
- Identify most abundant structure-altering species for control
- Focus control on early infestations of these species
- Reduce edge effects by reversing forest fragmentation

Burlington's Natural Communities

Natural Community Types



Alder Swamp

Main Species
- Speckled alder
- Willow
- Quaking aspen
- Reed canary grass
- Sedges
- Bluejoint reed grass

Major Issues
- Reduced plant and pollinator diversity due to local dominance by reed canary grass

Soil
Covington silty clay (wet), others

Restoration Priorities
- Identify and evaluate candidates for restoration where other plant communities are being restored and managed for the long term



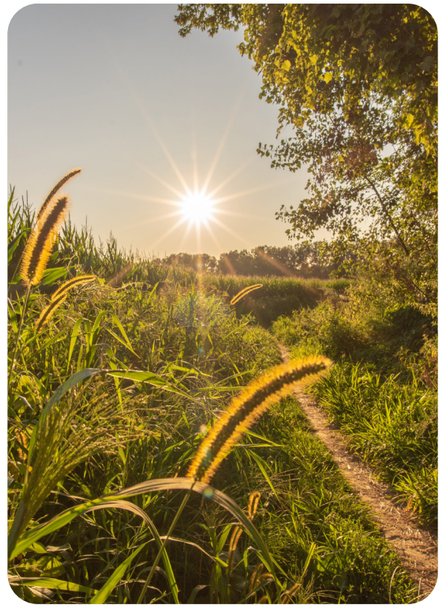
Shallow Emergent Marsh
Cattail Marsh
(Emergent Marsh)

Main Species
- Narrow-leaved cattail
- Giant reed
- Reed canary grass
- Bulrushes
- Sedges

Major Issues
- Dominance by a few plant species
- Low plant and pollinator diversity

Soil
(Unknown)

Restoration Priorities
- Identify and evaluate candidates for restoration where other plant communities are being restored and managed for the long term













Urban Forest Snapshot



The University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab conducted a Tree Canopy Assessment to detect and analyze changes in the city's tree canopy across a ten-year period, from 2014 to 2023. Using LiDAR data and processes developed by the USDA Forest Service, they found that Burlington has 40% tree canopy coverage–relatively stable since 2014 with a 1.6% decrease in ten years.

The change was not consistent across the city's area: some places lost trees (like parts of the New North End, Downtown, and South End) while others gained (like the University District, Intervale, and Rock Point. Tree canopy change was attributed to a number of factors: some losses were individual tree removals on private yards while others were cleared patches for new construction. Growth of existing tree canopy was the biggest contributor to gains.

To aid the city in planning how to maintain or grow tree canopy for the next ten years, the assessment also included analyzing land cover to quantify existing tree canopy, possible tree canopy, and land not suitable for trees. Areas with possible tree canopy could be vegetated areas that do not currently have trees, such as grass or shrub area, or paved areas that could be converted to green, such as bare soil or parking lots. 33% of the city's land area falls into this category–though some, like agricultural land in the Intervale, is not culturally suitable for trees. Combined with local knowledge, this assessment can help the city plan for opportunities to increase tree canopy.

Trees in Burlington

111,912+

Individual trees estimated in 2023

40% tree canopy in 2023

2,630 acres of tree canopy (2023)

Tree canopy is unequally distributed

Change in Tree Canopy (2014-2023)

+228 acres tree canopy **gained**

-337 acres tree canopy **lost**

=

Loss of 109 acres

Absolute Change in Tree Canopy

Net Change in Tree Canopy

That's the equivalent of 18 Battery Parks, 15 Sea Cave skating areas, or 1.5 Ethan Allen Parks!

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM



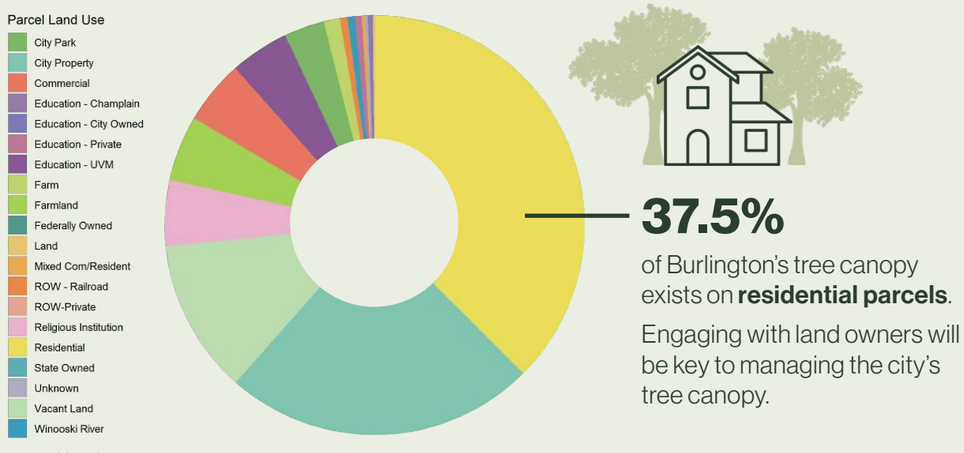
Burlington's urban forest includes a mix of larger patches, smaller patches, and isolated trees. There is no ideal patch size —each patch can be evaluated independently for what it contains and protects.

Larger forests like at Rock Point, Arms Forest, and Ethan Allen Park support a range of local and migrating wildlife.

Urban Forest Snapshot

Urban Forest Today

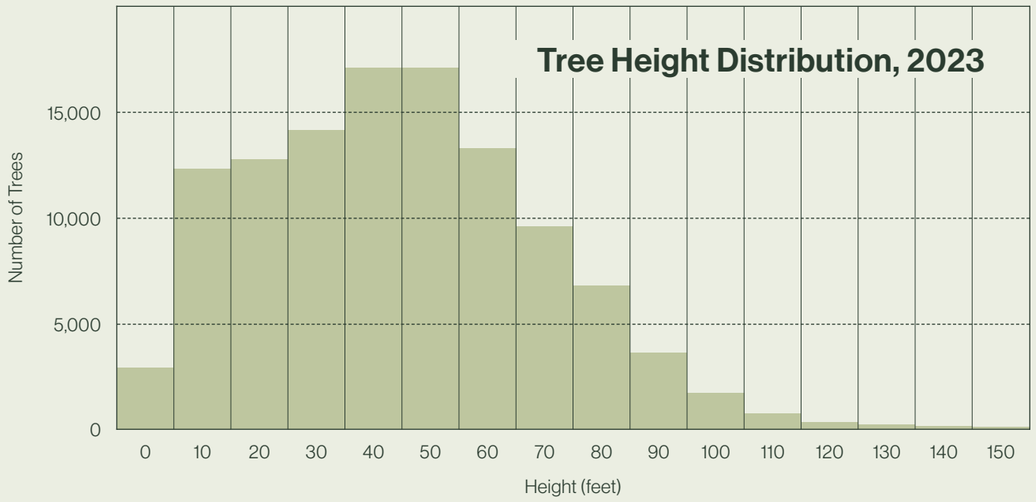
Trees by Land Use



37.5%

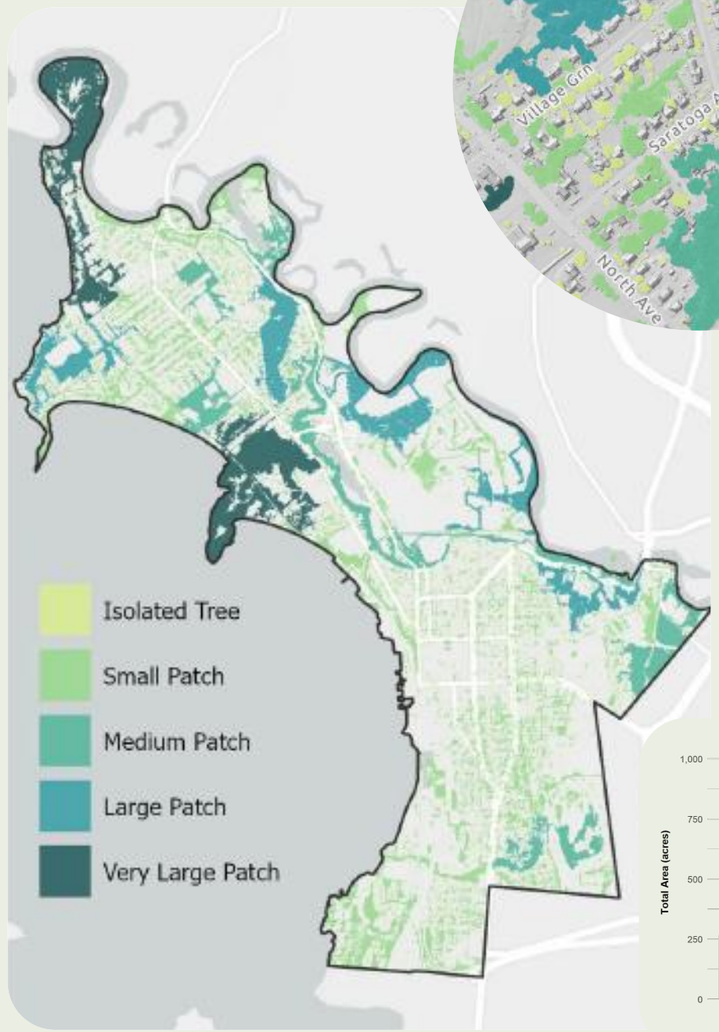
of Burlington's tree canopy exists on **residential parcels**.

Engaging with land owners will be key to managing the city's tree canopy.



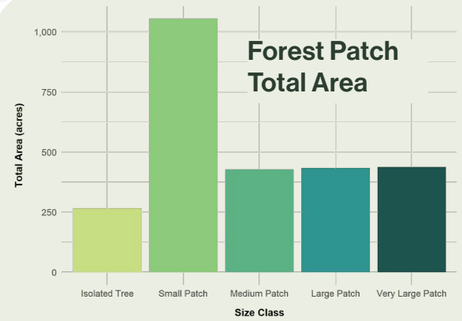
Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM

Forest Patch Sizes





Example close-up of forest patch size classification



Urban Forest Snapshot

Changes in last 10 years

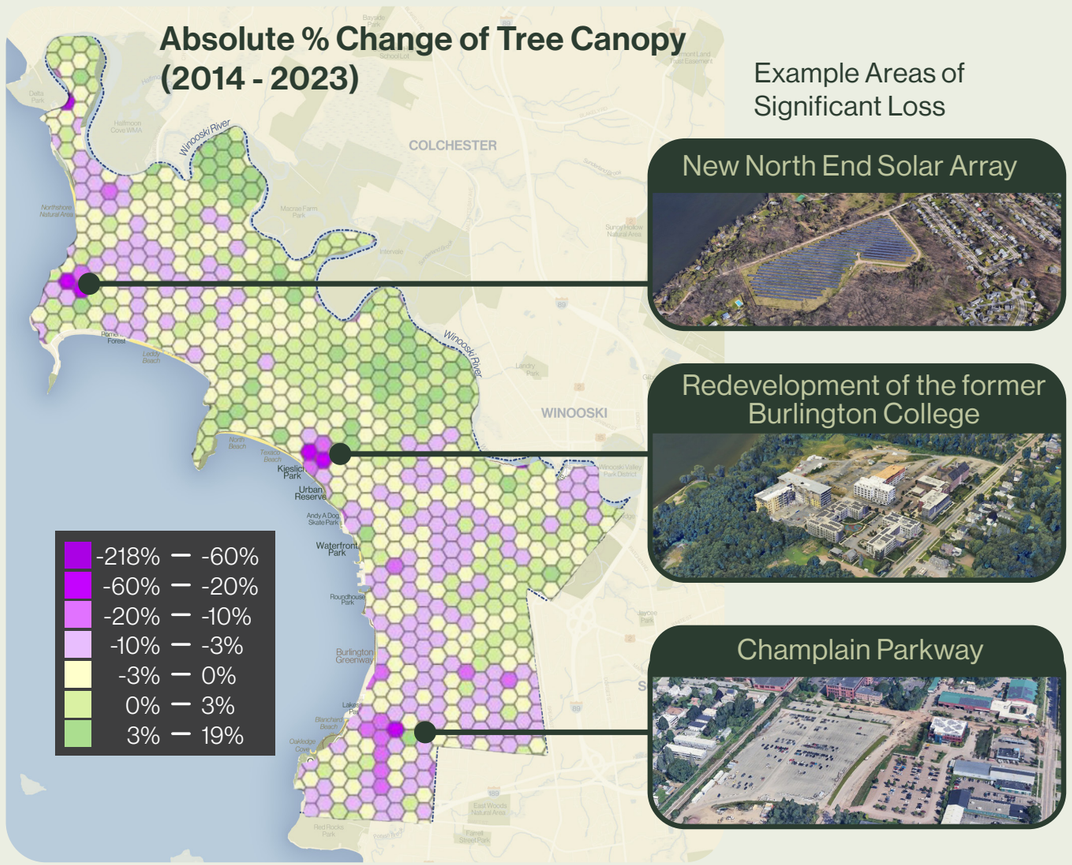
While there is not one singular goal for the urban forest, strategies can involve considering where tree canopy is below the city's average and target those areas to plant new trees.

Losses in tree canopy are outpacing gains, resulting in a net decrease in tree canopy. Burlington has experienced 4% relative loss of tree canopy.

Growth of existing tree canopy is the biggest contributor to Burlington's tree canopy gains.

Changes from 2014-2023

Burlington has experienced a net decrease in tree canopy over the 2014 to 2023 time period, but the story of change is more nuanced, with a mix of loss and gain. All areas of the city experienced both gains and losses of tree canopy, though some areas saw a net increase and others a net decrease. Removal and die off of mature trees resulted in the loss of large patches of tree canopy. Mature trees with large crowns contribute substantially to tree canopy and take decades to grow, so their loss creates large, localized declines in tree canopy. Even though there was evidence of tree loss throughout Burlington, planting efforts, preservation programs, and natural growth helped offset losses and stem decline.



Example Areas of Significant Loss

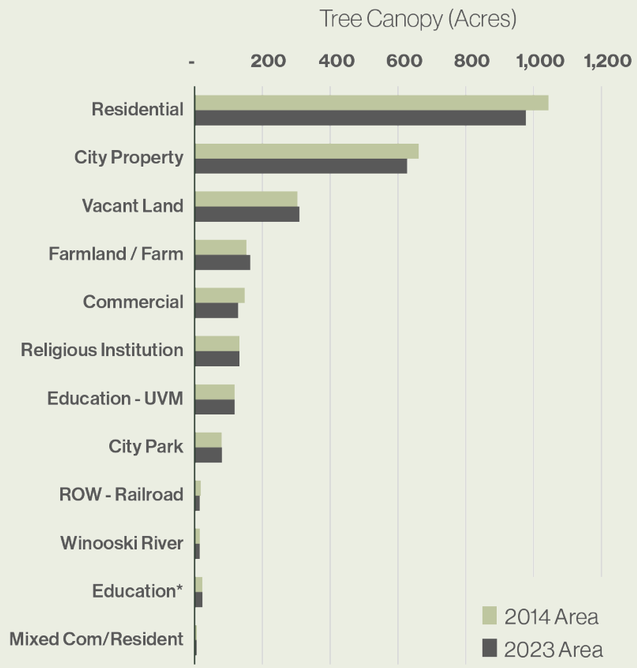
New North End Solar Array

Redevelopment of the former Burlington College

Champlain Parkway

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM

Tree Canopy Change by Land Use



*Includes Private, Champlain, and City-owned

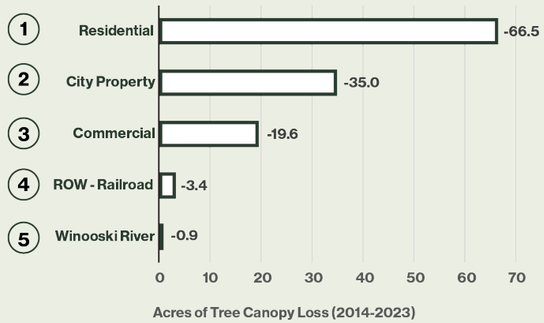
Managing Ash Tree Loss and Planning for a Resilient Urban Canopy

The recent spread of emerald ash borer, which was confirmed in Burlington in July 2024, has led to the removal of ash trees throughout the city. Nearly all ash trees are expected to be affected by the ash borer in the coming years. As ash is the main tree of Burlington's natural areas, this presents a significant challenge for the urban forest and forest blocks both large and small.

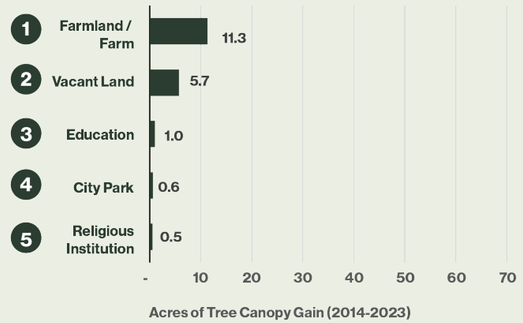
However, in anticipation of this impact, the City initiated an ambitious tree planting program over the past seven years, planting nearly 2,100 new trees across every ward of the city. These plantings were placed in locations with existing ash trees—such as Scarff and Ferguson Avenues, Upper College St., and the Appletree Point neighborhood—in anticipation of canopy loss due to the ash borer.

As more space opens up following ash tree removals, the City will continue to plant a diverse mix of species, aiming to strengthen and sustain a healthier, more resilient urban forest in the future.

Most Tree Canopy Loss



Most Tree Canopy Gain





Oakledge Park

3

Vision and Goals

Building on the original vision from the 2000 Open Space Protection Plan, this chapter reaffirms our city's commitment to stewarding Burlington's open space network and incorporating nature-based climate solutions.

Vision Statement

Burlington is a Nature-Filled City

Healthy open spaces that connect lake to river create a linked network where wildlife thrives. Around every corner, there are a variety of natural experiences that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Community gardens and urban farms burst with local produce. Burlington's open spaces invite all to explore, play, and grow—

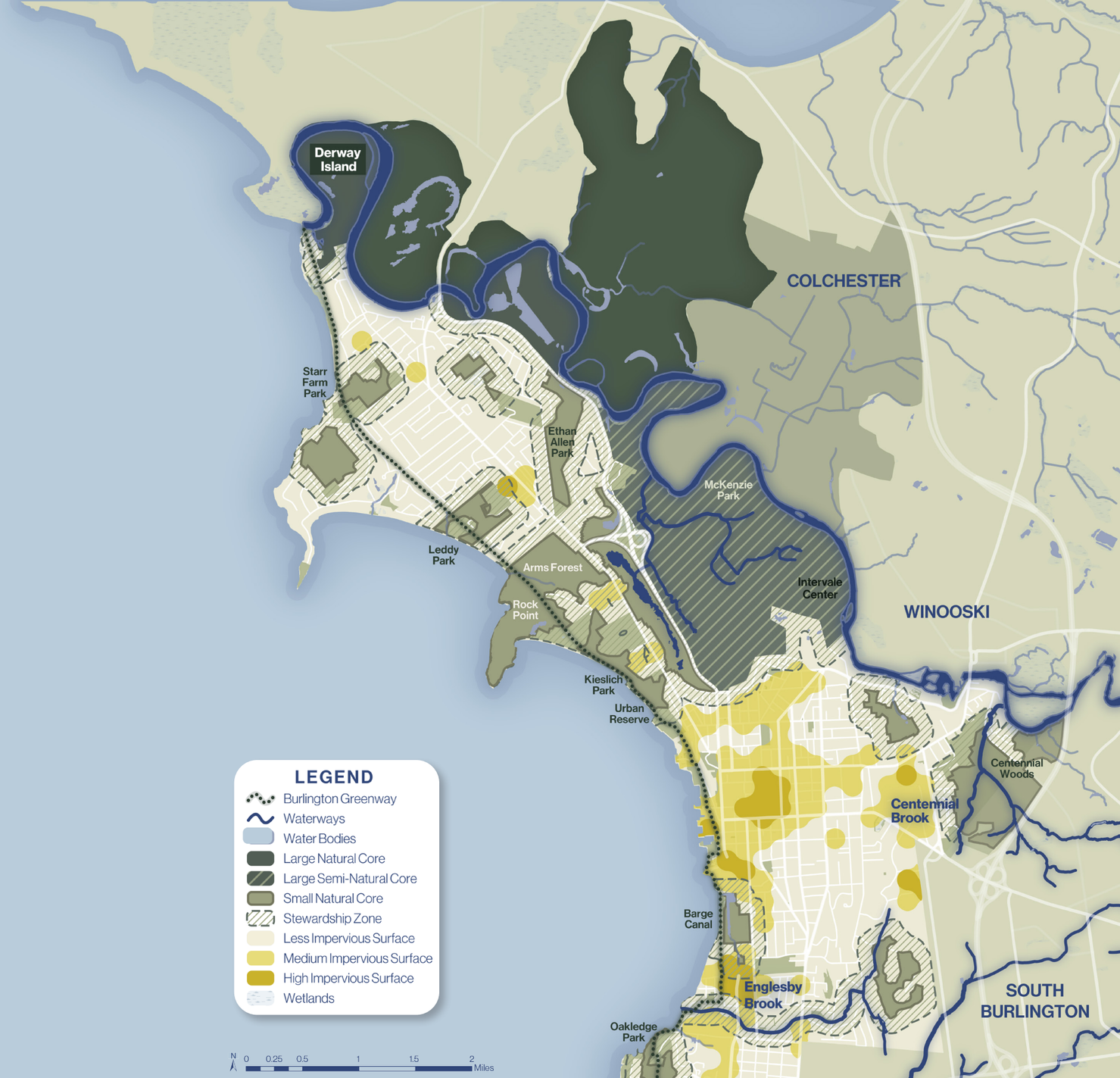
creating a city where people and ecosystems flourish side by side.



Healthy Connected Ecosystems Framework

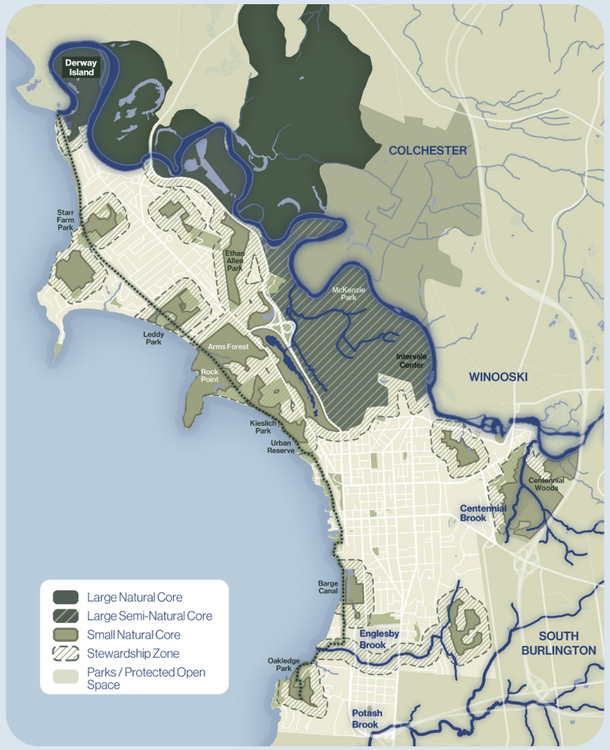
Since the first colonists arrived in Burlington and settled along the shores of what is now Lake Champlain, the city has undergone significant changes to meet the needs of a growing population and shifting industry demands, and the natural ecosystem and wildlife patterns have been impacted by human activity. To reinvest in the city's open spaces, wildlife health, and human connections to nature, the plan outlines a comprehensive, scientifically based ecological framework. The framework's goal is to be widely accessible and actionable by city staff, advocates, and the broader public.

Burlington's healthy ecosystem framework describes the conditions that enable an ecosystem to maintain its structure, function, and ability to recover from change and development. This includes a foundation of protected core natural areas that are large enough and continuous enough to support wildlife that depend upon large natural areas to live. This framework identifies where to prioritize conservation efforts and sustainable resource management to have the greatest impact. It shows where actions in and near open spaces should be considered with a heightened lens for their open space impacts and stewardship opportunities.



Layers of the Healthy Ecosystems Framework

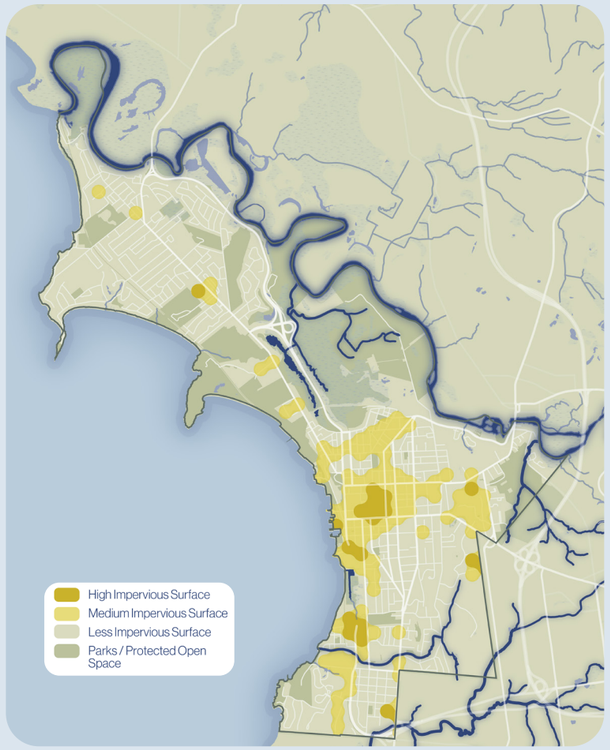
Core Ecological Areas



Water, Wetlands, and Floodplains



Impervious Surface Density



Tree Canopy



** see Urban Forest Snapshot, CONSERVE, and CONNECT sections for descriptions of these layers*

Goals and Strategies Overview

CONSERVE

Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city.

- **CS1** Expand restoration and management city-wide
- **CS2** Support wildlife movement and ecological health
- **CS3** Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs
- **CS4** Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations



CONNECT

Knitting the landscape together through green infrastructure, stewardship, and green design standards.

- **CN1** Grow and celebrate nature-based climate solutions across the city
- **CN2** Cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship
- **CN3** Enhance and protect Burlington's urban forest
- **CN4** Encourage new development to incorporate nature-based principles



EXPERIENCE

Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington.

- **EX1** Increase awareness about Burlington's open spaces
- **EX2** Grow public access to nature-based experiences
- **EX3** Break down barriers to open space access



CULTIVATE

Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs.

- **CL1** Cultivate sustainable and resilient agriculture practices
- **CL2** Expand community gardens
- **CL3** Support the cultivation of alternate food sources



CONSERVE

Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city

Mount Cavalry Red Maple Wetland

CONSERVE Overview

Building on a long legacy of open space protection

Burlington's open space network is special because it includes not just urban parks for people to enjoy, but also large natural spaces that are both locally and regionally significant for wildlife and connected to areas outside the city. Expanding on the 2000 Open Space Protection Plan, this update provides a roadmap for ongoing protection, restoration, and management efforts to be undertaken by the city or large land stewards.

CONSERVE Strategies

- **CS1** Expand restoration and management city-wide
- **CS2** Support wildlife movement and ecological health
- **CS3** Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs
- **CS4** Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations





All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

CONSERVE
Overview

Burlington's ecosystems depend on healthy waters and a network of ecologically rich preserved lands.

All elements of the natural world are connected. While the relationships that people have with water and land differ vastly, their relationship to each other is inextricable. The flow of water brings nourishment to the land–including through the flooding of floodplains–while runoff from and drainage through land replenishes and enriches the water. Together, they form a network of connected habitats that allow wildlife populations to thrive.

Burlington's abundance of waterways has experienced increasing challenges, including aggressive introduced species and flooding. The CONSERVE goal outlines a framework for shared stewardship to support the long-term health of our city's waters and lands, including through partnerships with "Friends of" groups and conservation districts that may provide technical assistance and funding.

Water, Wetlands, and Floodplains

From urban brooks to the Winooski River to Lake Champlain, water is integral to healthy ecosystems and community life in Burlington. The ecological health of these waterways is largely influenced by actions and land use across their full watersheds, but Burlington and its residents can help by reducing pavement, adding more green spaces, and reducing runoff.



Lake Champlain

Lake Champlain's 12 miles of shoreline on Burlington's western edge is lined with open spaces. Much of Burlington's land area drains directly into the Lake, including via Englesby Brook. Though the lakeshore was once full of industrial plants, it has in many areas returned to a more natural state that many wildlife species call home.



Urban Brooks

A number of brooks flow through Burlington, such as Centennial, Englesby, and Potash Brooks, and flow into the two watersheds the city is part of. In some areas they are surrounded by tree canopy and open space while in others they abut private properties. The ecological health of some brooks have been impaired—there are on-going stewardship efforts and opportunities to manage issues like erosion and aggressive introduced species.



Winooski River

With a total length of 90 miles and a watershed spanning 1,080 square miles, the Winooski River starts in the foothills of the Green Mountains and drains into Lake Champlain. It is a critical part of a riparian system that floods its banks–such as the Intervale–and serves as a wildlife corridor.



Wetlands

Wetlands are rich ecosystems that support a wide variety of species across all seasons. Development pressures and lack of understanding of their ecological functions resulted in widespread wetland drainage throughout the 1800s and 1900s. Burlington has 380 acres of protected wetlands.

Core Ecological Lands

Burlington's core ecological lands work together to form a network that supports wildlife, cleans air, and absorbs rainfall. These open spaces vary in size and include a range of landscapes, from forests to fields to semi-natural areas, like the Intervale and Starr Farm.



Derway Island

Large Natural Core

Preserve large areas for ecosystem integrity at scale and support regionally uncommon species.



The Intervale

Large Semi-Natural Core

Preserve large mixed natural, semi-natural, and agriculture landscapes for food production and ecosystem integrity.



Oakledge Park

Small Natural Core

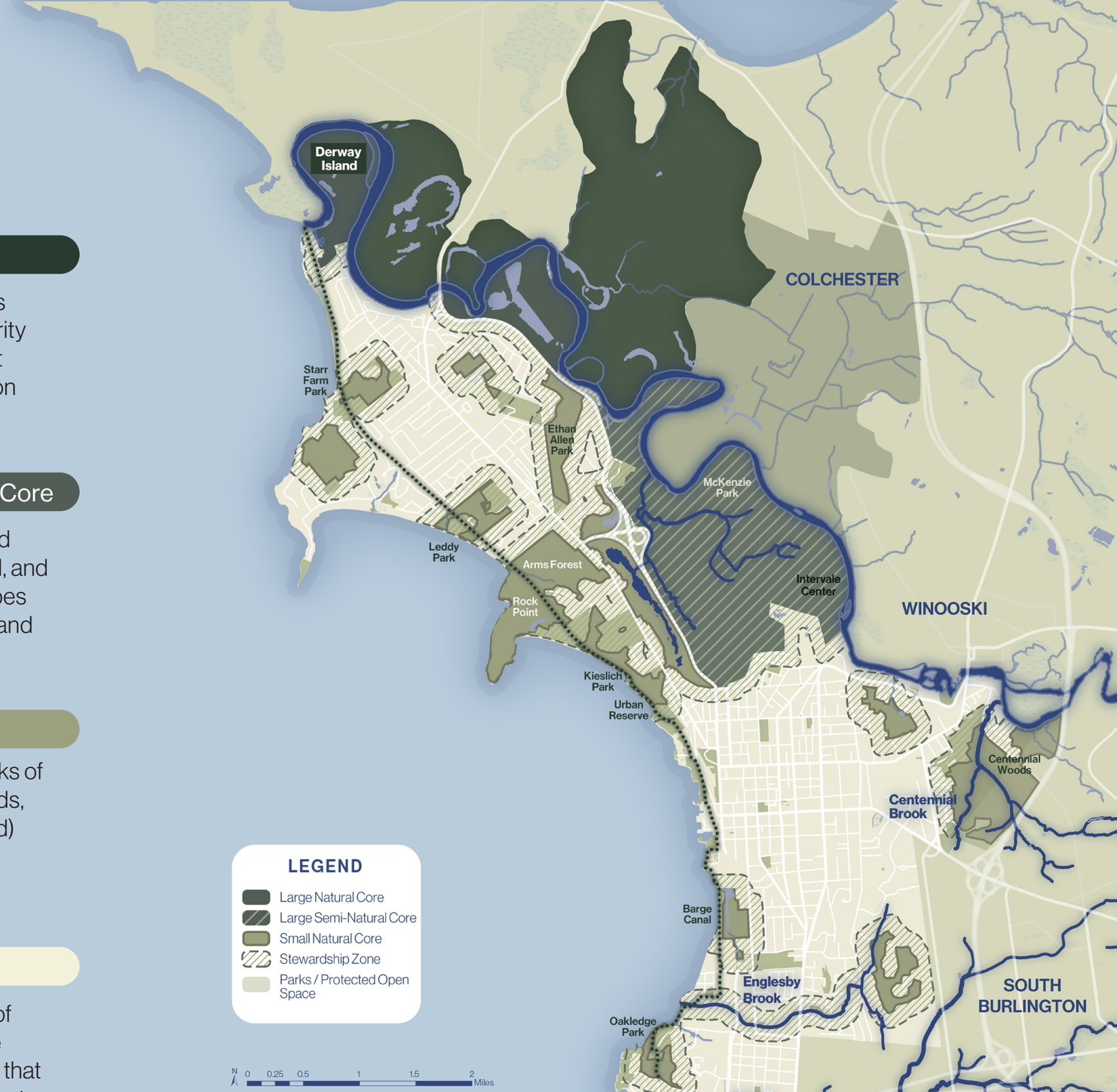
Larger isolated blocks of forest (some wetlands, grassland, brushland) embedded in urban landscape.



Manhattan Dr

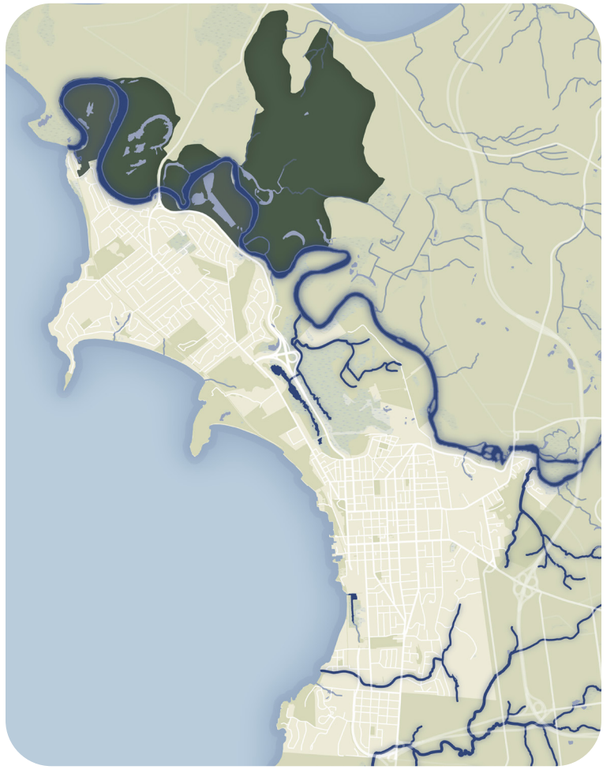
Stewardship Zone

Support neighbors of open spaces to take stewardship actions that reduce the edge effects on nearby core areas.



Large Core Lands

Large Natural Core



PURPOSE
Preserve large areas for ecosystem integrity at scale and support regionally uncommon species.

EXISTING PROTECTIONS
Majority of land in large cores is protected public open space (e.g. Derway Island); floodplain, wetland and natural resource ordinances protect most of remainder.

OPPORTUNITIES
- All combined, over 2000-acre expanse of largely natural land
- Potential habitat for larger or area-sensitive animals (river otter, mink, bobcat)
- Non-public land is largely in state-regulated protected floodplain

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Cross-river collaboration requires working across municipal boundaries
- Challenge of river flooding introducing aggressive introduced plant species
- Edge effects where residences abut natural area



Semi-Natural Agricultural Core



PURPOSE
Preserve large mixed natural, semi-natural, and agriculture landscapes for food production and ecosystem integrity.

EXISTING PROTECTIONS
Almost half in Intervale; some in McKenzie Park and McCrae Farm Park. Floodplain, wetland and natural resource ordinances protect much of remainder.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Some 1700 acres of continuous floodplain, wetlands and uplands in a mosaic of natural and agricultural land
- The Intervale Center is integral to City identity and part of core

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Challenge of cross-river collaboration
- Challenge of river flooding introducing aggressive introduced plant species
- Edge effects where residences and VT 127 abut natural area
- Reducing fragmentation of floodplain forest requires strategic restoration of agricultural land to forest



Small Core Lands

Small Natural/ Semi-Natural Core



PURPOSE
Larger isolated blocks of forest embedded in urban landscape.

EXISTING PROTECTIONS
Some in parks, or protected by natural resource ordinance, or on institutional land with low prospect for development (e.g., Rock Point).

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continuous forest cover and good tree diversity – less canopy underplanting
- Localized aggressive introduced plant invasions (e.g., knotweed, Norway maple) or light/moderate (e.g., buckthorn, honeysuckle) – forest structure less likely to change if addressed now
- Native groundlayer plants – less need for expensive plantings

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

- Non-targeted interventions expending resources and patience
- Opportunities to strengthen ecosystem management
- Opportunity to enhance long-term stewardship integration with daily operations



Inventory Process

In November 2024, the project team visited 19 sites representing a range of ecosystems in Burlington. The purpose of the site visit was to Identify issues affecting ecological integrity, diversity, and resilience in natural and semi-natural lands .

The sites included:

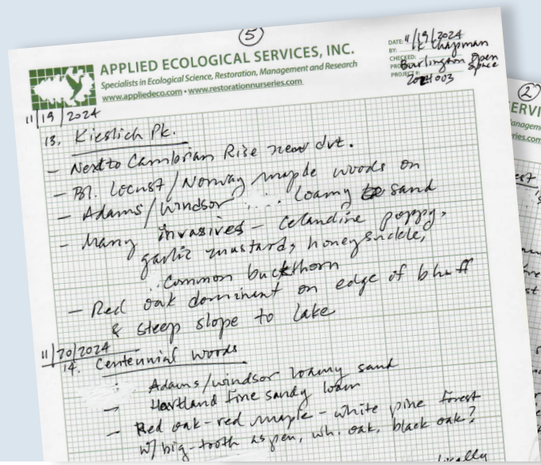
- Large blocks of natural and semi-natural land
- Public parks
- Smaller, interesting natural areas



Sites visited



Example of field notes from site visits



Core Ecological Lands & Water Resources

Why are Lake Champlain, Winooski River, and other water resources not included on the core ecological area maps?

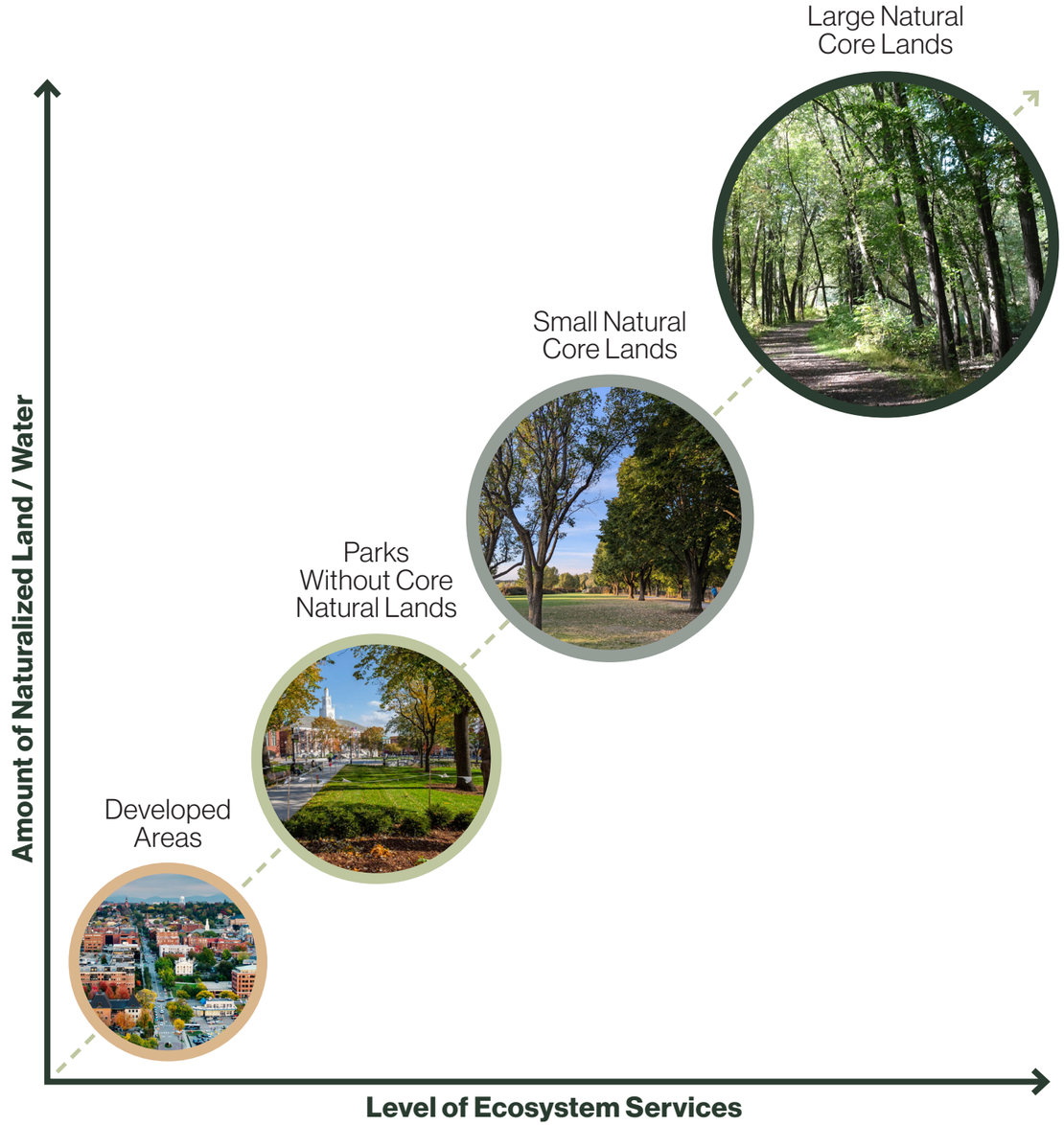
The Open Space Plan focuses on core ecological land areas rather than water bodies, as water constitutes a distinct ecosystem with different management and health considerations. While improving the ecological health of core lands is achievable through targeted management within the area and reducing edge effects in the surrounding 500-600 feet, the management of water bodies is more complex. It requires broader collaboration among multiple property owners across larger areas.

Enhancing the ecological health of water resources depends on watershed-scale action. While this plan does not directly address water bodies, its recommendations—such as expanding tree canopy and promoting green infrastructure—will indirectly benefit local waterways by improving stormwater absorption and filtration. Further study of watershed-scale issues and opportunities could complement the actions outlined in this plan.

Why are some areas of Burlington's parks not shown as core ecological lands?

While all parks provide valuable ecosystem services, such as stormwater absorption and cooling the surrounding area, certain park areas—like parking lots and athletic fields—offer more limited ecological benefits compared to forested or naturalized areas. The core ecological lands map focuses on the most critical places in Burlington for maintaining healthy ecosystems. While parks serve important functions that balance human recreation with ecological needs, not all park areas contribute equally to ecological health.

However, there are opportunities to enhance the ecosystem services in non-core park areas. For example, installing solar shade canopies over parking lots or incorporating green stormwater features along their edges can help reduce heat island effects and improve water quality.



Edge Effects and Stewardship Zones

Development affects nearby natural areas, but we can accommodate growth while strengthening the network of green spaces.



Purpose of Conservation
When thinking of conservation, we take an ecological point of view and envision how to keep the nature we love and avoid damaging it in the future. We think first of the species we'd like our great-grandchildren to see a hundred years from now. These are the common plants, like oaks and pines, and uncommon plants, like orchids and spring wildflowers. Along with these are fungi and soil organisms. Then we turn to generalist wildlife, such as robins, goldfinches, crows, deer, raccoons, foxes, white-footed mice, American toads, garter snakes, bluegills and the fish we usually catch. We also think of habitat specialists and area-sensitive wildlife, like big carnivores and the many warblers and migratory birds that travel thousands of miles to breed here. Lastly, we think of the common and rare insects, many of them pollinators of wildflowers, orchard trees, and crop plants.

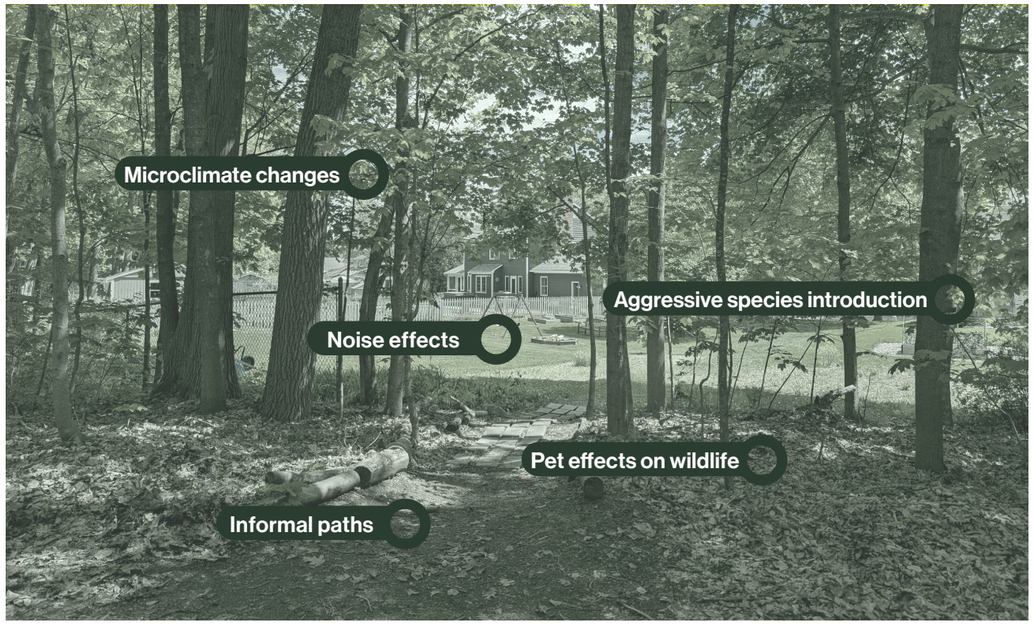
The common plants and wildlife can tolerate and even thrive in cities, towns, and rural lands. They are not the focus of conservation because their populations are usually stable or increasing.

By contrast, uncommon plant and insect species, and wildlife specialists or area-sensitive animals often have declining populations. Many need large and diverse core natural areas to sustain themselves.

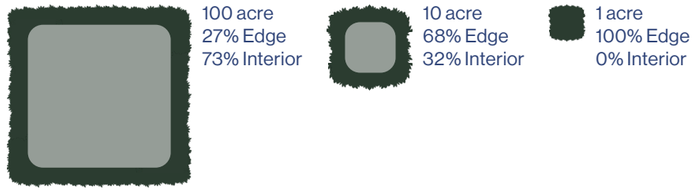
The direct effect on natural areas of conversion to crops and urban or suburban development is well documented. Less obvious are long-term effects from a longer habitat edge compared to the habitat's interior area. Smaller and narrower habitats have more edge than larger, rounder ones.

Edge Effects
Edge effects are damaging influences on core natural areas due to other uses on adjacent lands that penetrate the cores, reducing their suitability for many plant and animal species.

As the length of edge around a natural core grows, interior habitat shrinks. Scientific studies show how far edge effects penetrate into adjacent habitat (see table on next page). For instance, birds and other wildlife can be flushed by people walking on trails up to 150 feet away. Predators like raccoon and house cat will travel several hundred feet into forests and grasslands to prey on bird eggs, nestlings, small mammals and other wildlife. Aggressive introduced plants move from edges into natural areas. Traffic noise, warm and dry air, dust from roads, pesticide drift, and other damaging influences affect nearby natural areas. Management can reduce edge effects. In stewardship zones around natural areas, neighbors can act in ways that lessen edge effects. Where room allows, natural areas can be made more round or protected with native vegetation screens.

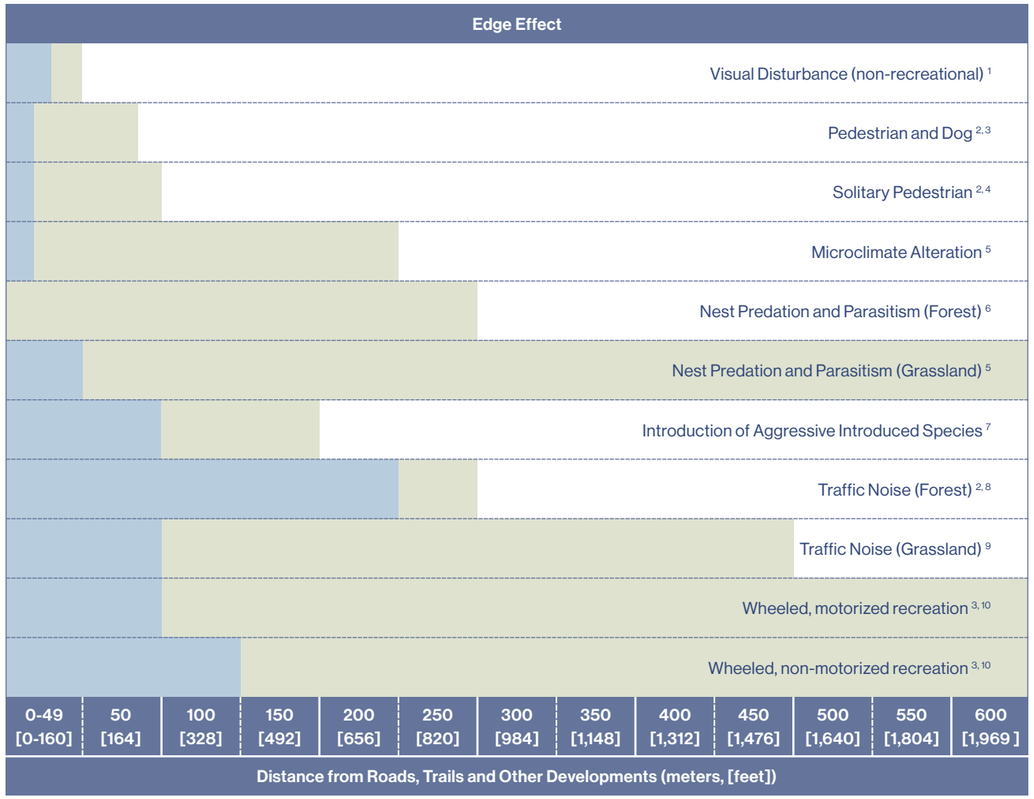


Core/Interior Habitats and Edge Habitats
SOURCE: Bentrup, 2008



Edge Effects and Stewardship Zones

Edge Effect Distances



Distances at which edge effects are in full effect

Range of distances at which edge effects decrease

Distance of Edge Effect Penetration into Adjacent Natural Areas
SOURCE: [1] Fish and Wildlife Service (2006), [2] Miller et al. (2001), [3] Snetsinger and White (2009), [4] Fernandez-Juricic et al. (2005), [5] Environmental Law Institute (2003), [6] Soule (1991), [7] Askins (1995), [8] Reijnen et al. (1995), [9] Reijnen and Foppen (1996), [10] Spahr (1990)

*Unless large natural core near a road with speed limit over 35 mph, then 650 feet or sound barrier recommended

Stewardship Zones: Notify, Educate, Negotiate

Improving Stewardship

The purpose of stewardship zones is to recognize that neighbors of core natural areas play important roles in their health. Stewardship zones are priority areas for providing information and other resources to landowners to increase awareness about how their actions affect the natural function of nearby open spaces and support best practices on their property. These resources may include access to native plantings and possible Conservation Legacy Fund support for neighborhood NBCS efforts.



Backyard Stewardship Zone: 165 feet
Stewardship in this zone reduces most significant negative impacts on natural areas.

- Reduces visual disturbance
- Reduces impacts of pedestrians and pets
- Reduces microclimate alteration
- Reduces introduction of aggressive introduced species
- Reduces traffic noise

Neighborhood Stewardship Zone: 500 feet
Stewardship in this zone further improves health of core natural area.

- Much greater reduction of microclimate alterations, traffic noise, aggressive introduced species introductions, and nest predation

What you can do if you live in a stewardship zone:

- mow your yard less or convert to a wild yard
- grow native plants
- build small-scale green infrastructure
- organize a community garden
- participate in neighborhood-scale nature-based climate solutions

For other tactics related to Stewardship Zones, see actions CN1.2, CN2.3, and CN4.2.

CONSERVE Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Expand Restoration and Management City-wide

Burlington's natural environment is a chief ingredient in the city's character, making it one of the most attractive and inviting small cities in the country. While Burlington enjoys an abundance of open space, totaling almost 50% of its geographic area, the city has been historically striving to take care of these spaces, from protecting nature to cleaning up polluted areas and maintaining parks. The city realizes that when such spaces are disturbed, natural ecosystems eventually degrade. Now, with climate change creating a noticeable impact, it becomes especially important to identify, plan, manage, and restore core open spaces, keeping in mind the needs of the ecosystem and the Burlington community.

In order to expand restoration and management throughout the city, Burlington needs to inventory existing natural areas and climate initiatives, followed by the development and continuous evaluation of restoration and management plans with a focus on climate solutions. The city can establish and expand relations with stewards for improving city-wide management, and work towards community values that go beyond basic nature improvements.

While many of these actions are oriented toward city government, private land stewards have a critical role to play as well. They can employ similar tactics on their land and collaborate with the City to ensure efforts do not stop at parcel boundaries.

ACTIONS

CS1.1 Develop restoration and management plans for core natural areas. Use existing management plans as templates and work with other organizations to ensure alignment across plans. Prioritize plans for ecological significance.

CS1.2 Inventory current initiatives and projects that support Nature Based Climate Solutions, identify gaps, and outline future initiatives/projects to close gaps.

CS1.3 Adjust the City's green infrastructure definition to go beyond stormwater management and to include elements such as the urban forest, natural areas, wetlands, and green corridors.

CS1.4 Establish city- and community-wide values and methods for aggressive introduced species management. Communicate in the communications plan (See EX1.3).

CS1.5 Update Natural Resource Protection District Map for consistency with Open Space Plan's core natural areas.

CS1.6 Continue to restore urban waterways like Potash, Centennial, Englesby Brooks (through partnerships, restoration activities, and regulations like buffer zones).

CS1.7 *See also in CONNECT: CN2.3. Support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.*

STRATEGY 2
Support Wildlife Movement and Ecological Health

Core natural areas enable wildlife movement and support ecological health. Connecting open spaces and supporting natural systems can be strengthened through stewardship actions, both large and small.

This strategy includes actions focused on collecting and sharing data to increase community awareness about ecosystem health. It also includes actions to improve health of ecosystems, especially larger core areas and areas supporting area-sensitive or regionally uncommon plants, animals, and natural communities. The Burlington community showed widespread support for restoration projects to maintain forest health, remove aggressive introduced species, and help sustain the wildlife habitat. Though not explicitly addressed in these actions, the issue of deer inhibiting forest regeneration is one the city will need to monitor in conjunction with their effect on agricultural lands (see CULTIVATE).

ACTIONS

CS2.1 Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.

CS2.2 Increase data collection on Burlington's Wildlife Corridors (e.g. species use, frequency of use, key environmental components) to incorporate in other City processes (e.g. management strategies).

CS2.3 Continue to identify opportunities to improve large forest areas and improve habitat for songbirds and other indicator species.

CS2.4 Create an open-access dashboard tracking key indicators related to wildlife, water quality, and restoration with suggested ways to make progress.



STRATEGY 3
Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs

The Conservation Legacy Fund has been a critical tool in expanding Burlington's protected open spaces to support community goals. Now, as the pace of new protection slows down, to continue to reflect community values of stewardship, there is a need to broaden the use of the Conservation Legacy Fund to include critical maintenance, stewardship, and conservation infrastructure on open space lands.

ACTIONS

CS3.1 Increase the Conservation Legacy Fund.

CS3.2 Review the Conservation Legacy Fund and evaluate expanding the definition of potential fund uses to support conservation goals and values expressed in the Fund's inception (e.g. conservation infrastructure, education, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.).

STRATEGY 4
Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations

Burlington views natural and recreational lands as community assets that support residential quality of life, drinking water quality, food security, and a sense of place and history defined by a unique landscape. With this realization comes the responsibility for nurturing and protecting those assets over the long term. Acquiring land through collaborative strategies for scenic, natural, and recreational purposes is one of the surest ways for any community to secure its most important land assets. Land can also be set aside to build community green spaces as infill development is undertaken.

ACTIONS

CS4.1 Review and update acquisition list and criteria.

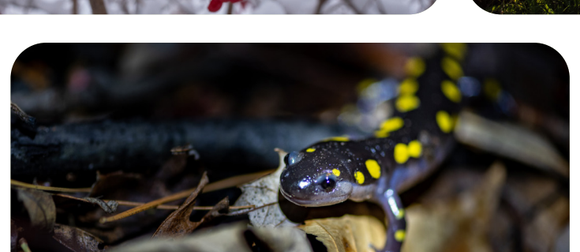
CS4.2 Adapt strategies for land acquisition for conservation for both public and private lands, reflecting the priorities of the new open space plan and upcoming comprehensive plan.

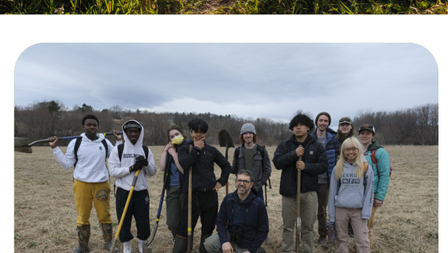












CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 1: Expand Restoration and Management City-wide							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 1.1	Develop restoration and management plans for core natural areas. Use existing management plans as templates and work with other organizations to ensure alignment across plans. Prioritize plans for ecological significance.	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	Qualified ecologists	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.2	Inventory current initiatives and projects that support Nature Based Climate Solutions, identify gaps, and outline future initiatives/projects to close gaps.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, NBCS grantees, Water Resources	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.3	Adjust the City's green infrastructure definition to go beyond stormwater management and to include elements such as the urban forest, natural areas, wetlands, and green corridors.	Conservation Board	Water Resources, DPI, City Planning, WNRCD, "Friends of" groups	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.4	Establish city- and community-wide values and methods for aggressive introduced species management. Communicate in the communications plan (See EX1.3).	Parks Conservation Team and Wildways	State of Vermont, Parks maintenance team, large landowners (e.g. Intervale)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.3
CS 1.5	Update Natural Resource Protection District Map for consistency with Open Space Plan's core natural areas.	City Planning/DPI	Conservation Board, Planning Commission	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.6	Continue to restore urban waterways like Potash, Centennial, Englesby Brooks (through partnerships, restoration activities, and regulations like buffer zones).	Parks Conservation Team	VT DEC, Water Resources, WVPD, BLUE Stormwater	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 1.7	*See also in CONNECT: CN2.3. Support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

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CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 2: Support Wildlife Movement and Ecological Health							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 2.1	Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, VGN, Grow Wild	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.2	Increase data collection on Burlington's Wildlife Corridors (e.g. species use, frequency of use, key environmental components) to incorporate in other City processes (e.g. zoning, neighborhood codes).	Parks Conservation Team	UVM, VT Fish and Wildlife, City Planning, DPI, Conservation Board	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.3	Continue to identify opportunities to improve large forest areas and improve habitat for songbirds and other indicator species.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team	-	YES (ongoing)	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 2.4	Create an open-access dashboard tracking key indicators related to wildlife, water quality, and restoration with suggested ways to make progress.	City Planning (provide data), IT Department (set up dashboard) Parks, Communications (maintain dashboard)	City Planning (Data Analysts), Park Conservation Team, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CS 3: Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 3.1	Increase the Conservation Legacy Fund.	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayor's Office, Director of Financial Operations	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 3.2	Review the Conservation Legacy Fund and evaluate expanding the definition of potential fund uses to support conservation goals and values expressed in the Fund's inception (e.g. conservation infrastructure, education, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.).	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayors Office, Director of Financial Operations)	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CS 4: Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 4.1	Review and update acquisition list and criteria.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 4.2	Adapt strategies for land acquisition for conservation for both public and private lands, reflecting the priorities of the new open space plan and upcoming comprehensive plan.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor, Conservation Board, Parks Commission, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-

CONNECT

A landscape stitched together by stewardship and nature-based development



Derway Cove

CONNECT Overview

Connections are key to thriving natural spaces.

This goal focuses on increasing connectivity between the city's core natural areas, expanding tree canopy and nature pockets throughout Burlington, and identifying how existing and new development can contribute to healthier ecosystems. The benefits of this approach are more connected green networks that work better for local wildlife and reduce the urban heat island effect, creating a cooler, more nature-filled city for Burlingtonians to enjoy.

CONNECT Strategies

- **CN1** Grow and celebrate nature-based climate solutions across the city
- **CN2** Cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship
- **CN3** Enhance and protect Burlington's urban forest
- **CN4** Encourage new development to incorporate nature-based principles



"More valued and tended open spaces, working gardens, safe walkways to appreciate them , and ecologically-aware based public transportation."

"I'd love to see more pocket-park as well as trees and/or planters along busy streets."

"More tree pits/trenches, better established wildlife corridors, more open green space in available spaces, and more green water infrastructure."

Connecting Burlington's green spaces

Expanding green stormwater infrastructure

Converting lawns to habitat

Adding more green to dense areas

Sustainable development that fits with nature

"Encouraging private homeowners to plant habitats in their yards."

"Green infill, reduction of impervious surface."

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

CONNECT Overview

The amount of impervious surface is a key driver of ecological health.

The location and prevalence of impervious surfaces imposes a ceiling on protection, restoration, and stewardship of the natural world, and limits the integration of the natural world into the human-built environment. Open space planning can be constrained by impervious surfaces as they put limits on where naturalization and restoration efforts of the built environment can occur. They also limit the actions the City can effectively take to improve the ecological integrity, resilience, and functioning of the City's open spaces. These actions range from removing aggressive introduced plants, to creating pollinator habitat, to restoring wetlands and forests, to managing stormwater runoff, to creating space for animals that cannot tolerate human intrusion on their habitats.

At 10% impervious cover, negative ecological effects are already present.

10% Impervious Cover



10% impervious

Stream water quality begins to deteriorate. 10% impervious cover can exclude larger mammals, raptors, and area-sensitive species from areas.

20% Impervious Cover



20% impervious

Streams shift to a highly altered urban state. Visible evidence of erosion, algae blooms, and decreased macroinvertebrate diversity.

25% Impervious Cover



25% impervious

Remnant natural areas are small and have no interior habitat. Greatly decreases biodiversity in birds, small mammals, herptiles, and invertebrates.



Open Space Stories

BLUE BTV

Lake Champlain Sea Grant's program BLUE helps residents protect their waterways from pollution right in their yards.

When rainwater flows off impervious surfaces like roofs, driveways, and streets, it can carry dirt, oil, and other pollution into the water. This runoff can cause harmful algae blooms that are often unsafe for people and animals. BLUE helps change that.

Any resident can sign up for a free visit from BLUE. They will do a home inspection, look at how rainwater flows around your yard, and give tips on how to keep that water clean. Tips range from small projects like redirecting your downspouts to bigger ones like installing rain gardens or permeable driveways. Once you complete the project, you are "BLUE-certified" — you are helping make Burlington's waters cleaner!

CONNECT Overview

The intensity of development within an area impacts what strategies are most effective.

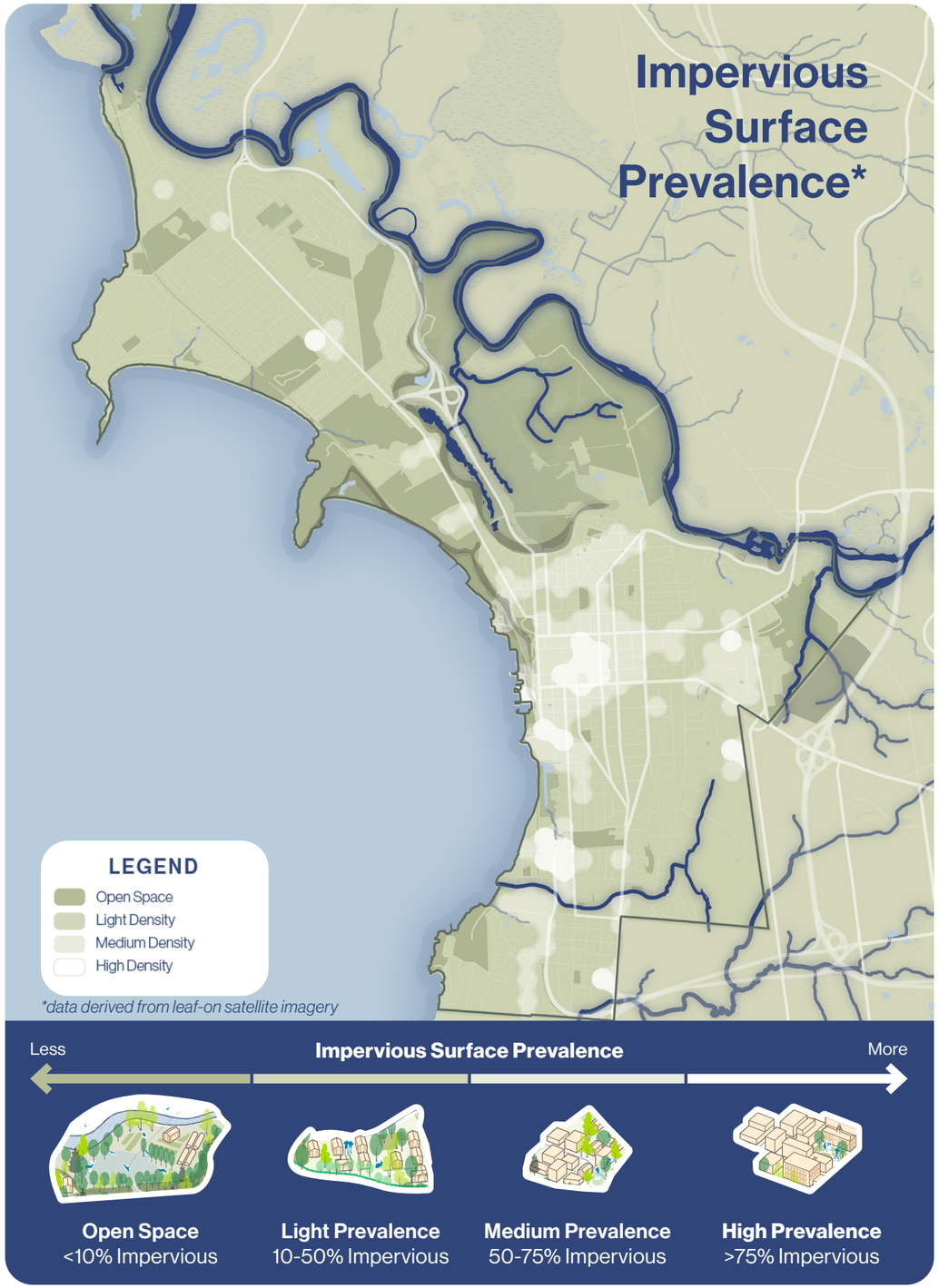
Burlington has a wide variety of neighborhoods, from the dense urban core of Downtown to areas with more open space, like the New North End. The amount of impervious surfaces—such as roads, parking lots, and buildings—greatly influences both the ecological health and future potential of each area. Strategies to enhance green spaces, manage stormwater sustainably, and support biodiversity will differ depending on the density and development of the neighborhood. Across all neighborhoods, these strategies not only connect ecology, but also connect people to green spaces and to each other.

Stewardship Opportunities

- Potential for an activity to protect, restore and steward ecosystems and habitats
- Rating of activities by zone – Feasibility given space, level of effort/cost, and likelihood of success

Strategies marked as **"High"** represent places where improvements can be made successfully with relatively low cost and effort. **"Low"** indicates strategies that will require greater resources and effort for meaningful change.

Impervious Cover	Ecological Stormwater Management	Large Natural Areas	Small Natural Areas	Biodiversity Enhancements
Open Space < 10%	High	High	High	High
Light Prevalence 10 - 50%	High	Low	Medium	High
Medium Prevalence 50 - 75%	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
High Prevalence > 75%	Low	Low	Low	Medium



Key Connections

The map on the opposite page identifies potential key connections for wildlife movement. Arrows on the map identify connections between core natural areas, waterbodies, and contiguous tree canopy. It can be a high-level guide for where additional protected land, tree plantings, and infrastructure to facilitate wildlife movement (culverts under roads for crossing) could be prioritized. It is intended to show high-level connections at a broad scale. The tree canopy data from UVM can also be used to support finer-grained connectivity improvements, like enhancing linear habitat connection across backyards in a neighborhoods to support localized wildlife movement.

Key areas of focus for wildlife movement include:

- **New North End**, loop from Derway Island through Starr Farm, Leddy Park, Arms Forest, Rock Point, Ethan Allen Park, and Mount Calvary Red Maple Wetland
- **Across North Ave, especially near North Ave/127** entrance - the topography in this location is especially favorable for a wildlife and potentially pedestrian underpass
- **Along Winooski River**
- From **Centennial Woods** / Centennial Brook northwest towards Intervale Center
- **South End,** from large patches of tree canopy in the Country Club, along Englesby Brook, towards the Barge Canal, and Oakledge Park towards South Burlington



Types of Connections

Habitat Islands

PURPOSE
Plant small habitat islands across urban landscape to increase plant, insect, bird, and small mammal diversity near people's homes and places of work and play.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Many small areas, such as pocket parks, are available on public and private land
- Public interest in seeing flowering plants, butterflies, birds, pollinators, and other signs of nature living nearby

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Too dispersed, small and diverse to facilitate long-term protection and management by any one entity
- Correct siting of habitat islands to avoid conflicts, ensure establishment and persistence, and minimize management costs



Green Stormwater Facility

PURPOSE
Ecologically-inspired and functioning facilities to manage stormwater runoff; e.g., rain garden, tree trench, roadside planter (e.g., St. Paul green streets), downspout redirection to turf, bioswale, bioinfiltration basin, stormwater wetland, green roof, treatment train, etc.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Future road upgrades and major repair jobs are best opportunity to install GSI to manage road and parking lot runoff
- Other opportunities in City's stormwater management plan

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Typically high cost
- Usually limited space to manage large catchments
- Usually small catchments are managed – high per-gallon cost for pollutant removal (lbs. removed/dollar spent)



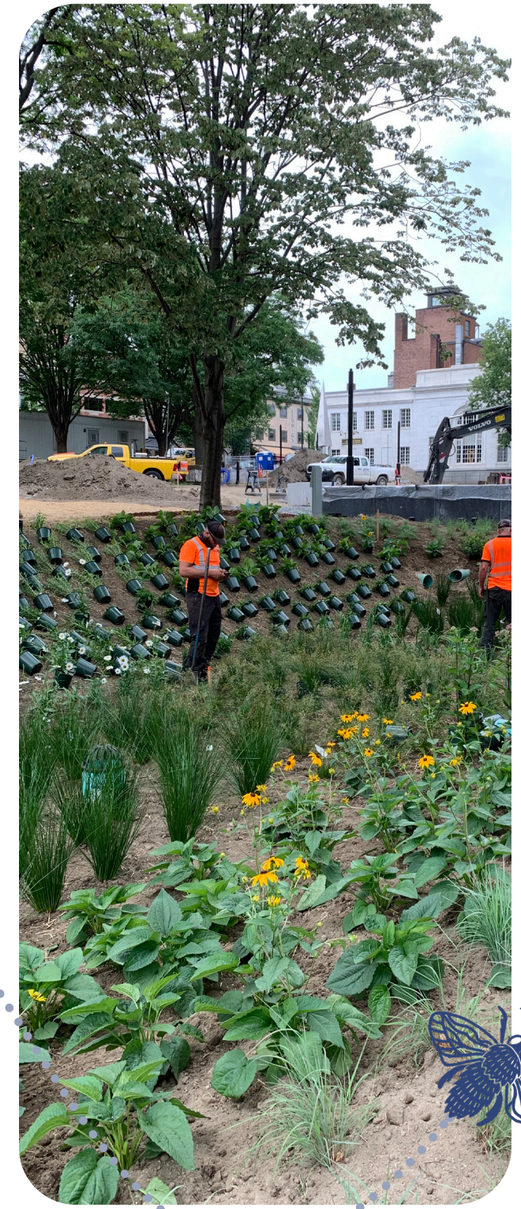
Other Connections

PURPOSE
Understand and support movement of wild animals and native plants through urban landscape.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Neighborhood based NBCS projects, redevelopment projects, wildlife corridor assessments and protocols, pollinators and their habitats.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Feasibility of using non-public lands
- Limited resources for acquisition of fee title, easement, or lease
- No voluntary recognition program exists





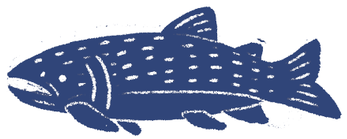
Green Design Standards

Overall

- **A** Develop with native soil, hydrology, and vegetation in mind.
- **B** Protect and maintain healthy and resilient natural areas.
- **C** Understand past and existing conditions to guide restoration and management.
- **D** Create attractive, resilient, and economically feasible plant communities.
- **E** Tell an ecological story that inspires people to restore the natural world.
- **F** Allow people to visit natural areas while protecting ecosystem resilience.
- **G** Document ecological trends by monitoring indicators of health and resilience.

Wildlife

- **A** Protect and restore habitat for rare and uncommon plant and animal species.
- **B** Create the largest, roundest habitats for area-sensitive wildlife species.
- **C** Connect habitat cores to similar nearby habitat.
- **D** Design new reserves to minimize edge effects from adjacent properties.
- **E** Establish stewardship zones to manage edge effects from adjacent developed land.
- **F** Install special habitat features like nest boxes and basking logs.
- **G** Manage nuisance wildlife, such as deer and geese, using appropriate methods.



Soil & Hydrology

- **A** Preserve stable soils and existing natural hydrology.
- **B** Fix eroding lands and degraded hydrology with catchment and watershed management.
- **C** Prevent flooding by preserving natural lands and installing green infrastructure.
- **D** Use ecological stormwater management tools before highly engineered solutions.
- **E** Reduce runoff at its source; use a sequence of natural features to manage runoff.
- **F** Solve soil and hydrological problems in the most cost-effective way.

Vegetation

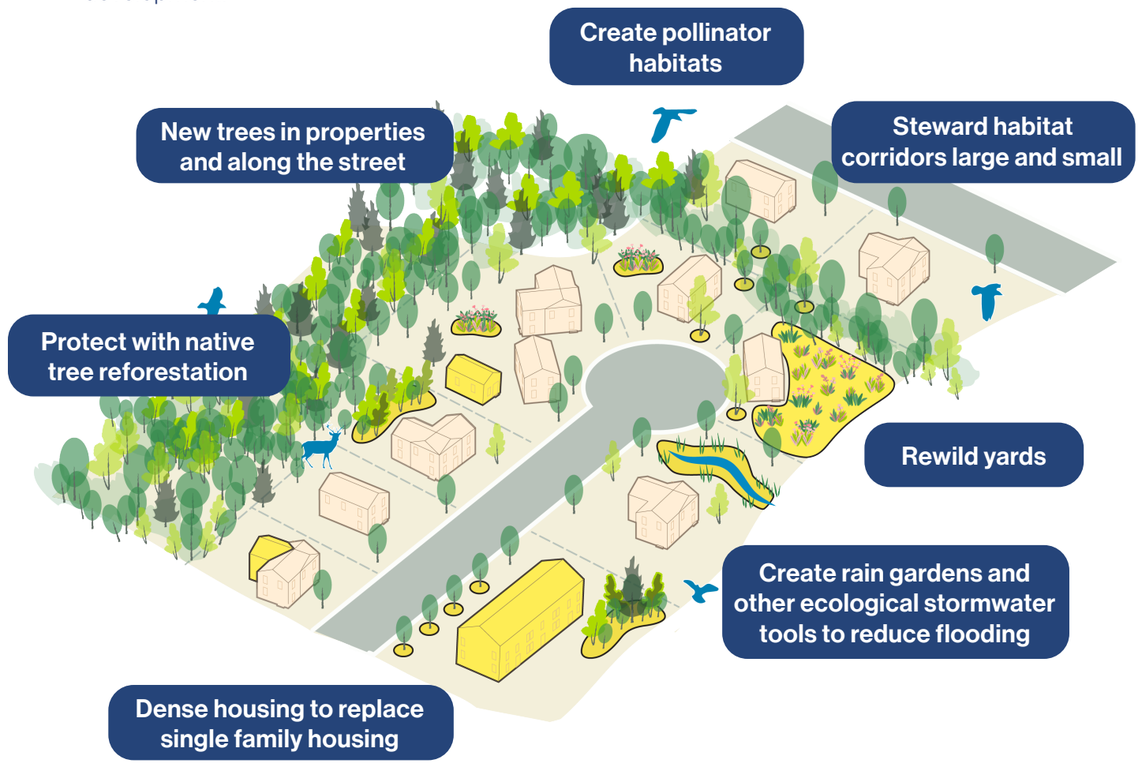
- **A** Protect and restore rare and common native ecological land cover types.
- **B** Encourage diverse native flowering plants across the growing season.
- **C** Control non-native and native plants that disrupt ecosystems and depress biodiversity.
- **D** Establish vegetation that can be managed with the least effort.
- **E** Convert lawns to more productive native habitat where possible.

Human Use

- **A** Identify natural areas with sensitive wildlife that tolerate little human interaction.
- **B** Define management units and access points.
- **C** Detect problems early by monitoring on-trail and off-trail use.
- **D** Recruit organizations, experts and volunteers (such as “Friends Of” groups) to help maintain and monitor natural areas.
- **E** Protect cultural resources, such as Native American artifacts and historical structures.

Nature-Supporting Growth Areas

Development and open space can work in tandem to provide mutual benefits to both nature and people. In the below scenario, a residential neighborhood at the edge of a large forest can grow and change to support new residents through accessory dwelling units, and a new apartment building, while also contributing to the vision and goals outlined in this plan like supporting ecological stormwater infrastructure, forest restoration, pollinator gardens, and redevelopment rather than new development.



CONNECT Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Grow and Celebrate Nature-Based Climate Solutions Across the City

The 2022 Addendum to the Open Space Plan highlighted the connection between a thriving environment and a thriving community. Built on a foundational themes of equity, inclusion, and relationships, NBCS are holistic strategies that protect, restore, and steward the world around us through multidisciplinary collaboration.

While NBCS are deeply integrated throughout this Open Space Plan, this strategy focuses on education and awareness–strengthening existing relationships and building new partnerships to educate on, grow, and track NBCS throughout the city and across many initiatives. This involves not just the city government, but also schools, the public, and private property owners.

ACTIONS

CN1.1 Educate the public on Nature-Based Climate Solutions and their value. (See also EX1.3)

CN1.2 Create and support existing education, recognition, and incentive programs to encourage private property owners to integrate Nature Based Climate Solutions and implement sound ecological practices (e.g. reducing lawn space), especially within Natural Area Stewardship Zones.

- Celebrate and support Grow Wild initiatives to encourage lawn conversions for native spaces to incrementally replace non-native for habitat benefits.
- Use established pockets to disburse throughout neighborhoods.
- Potential programs include adaptation of Green Design Standards, expansion of the BLUE program, and encouragement of "Wild Yards" to convert mowed areas to naturalized open space.

CN1.3 Continue to partner with schools to grow nature-based climate solutions on school grounds.

CN1.4 Create a municipal management plan to track and reduce mowed lawns.

CN1.5 Continue to grow nature-based climate solutions on City property, including but not limited to green stormwater infrastructure.

CN1.6 *See also in CONSERVE: CS2.1. Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*

STRATEGY 2
Cultivate an Ecosystem of Stewardship

From school children to community-based organizations to city leadership, Burlington has a deep sense of care and commitment to stewarding the natural world around them–not just for personal use but for its intrinsic value and environmental health. Burlingtonians across the city are doing meaningful work in many different capacities to educate people to open space, plant pollinator gardens, advocate for resilient waterways, and encourage responsible growing and foraging.

This strategy celebrates the existing communities of care and seeks to support and build on them to facilitate knowledge and resource sharing. Across the community, schools, organizations, and City departments, this strategy streamlines processes and seeks to make valuing open space integral to how everyone operates, particularly through co-education and shared resources.

ACTIONS

CN2.1 Create a database and listserv of open space organizations to support collaboration, resource sharing, etc.

CN2.2 Co-host a recurring open space summit for land stewards, community organizations, and others.

CN2.3 Continue to support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.

CN2.4 Update Urban Wilds definition, including considering expanding beyond city-owned land.

CN2.5 Distribute educational resources about how personal actions can support water quality health in lake, river, and tributaries. (See also EX1.3)

STRATEGY 3
Enhance and Protect Burlington's Urban Forest

Burlington's urban forest offers numerous benefits—from providing shade and wildlife habitat to reducing stormwater runoff and improving air quality. While the city still maintains a robust 40% tree canopy cover, this coverage has declined over the past decade, particularly in areas where more canopy is most needed. Urban forest management should focus not only on protecting existing trees but also on expanding canopy through new plantings.

To support this, tree data must be regularly updated and tracked over time. This includes comprehensively updating the City's Tree Ordinance and conducting regular tree canopy assessments and setting goals. These tools can help identify areas where protection efforts should be strengthened, as well as places suitable for establishing new groves or clusters of trees.

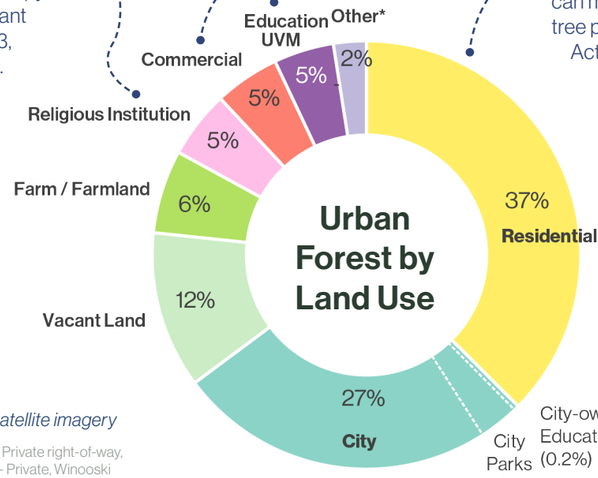
With 37.5% of Burlington's trees located on private property, community engagement will be essential. Public education about alternatives to tree removal and the benefits of tree preservation can help build broader support for a resilient, citywide tree canopy.

ACTIONS

- CN3.1 Comprehensively update the Tree Ordinance.
- CN3.2 Update the urban tree canopy goal and mapping/data analysis every 10 years. Consider developing specific goals for different types of canopy based on their ecological and heat island mitigation value.
- CN3.3 Conduct Pocket Forest Feasibility Study inclusive of existing and potential pocket parks that develops plant lists, identifies potential existing sites, and envisions incentives for establishing pocket forests in new developments, dense neighborhoods, and greenbelts.
- CN3.4 Identify large valuable trees (e.g. specimen trees) in the city that are on public and private land, and consider protection with ideas framed in the policy toolkit from Biophilic Cities network.
- CN3.5 Educate the public on benefits of the urban forest and how to manage it on private property. (See also CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3)

About 10% of the urban forest is on land owned by **religious or educational institutions.** Partnerships could be considered for expanding tree canopy on suitable land. Relevant actions: CN3.1, CN3.3, CN3.4, and CN3.5.

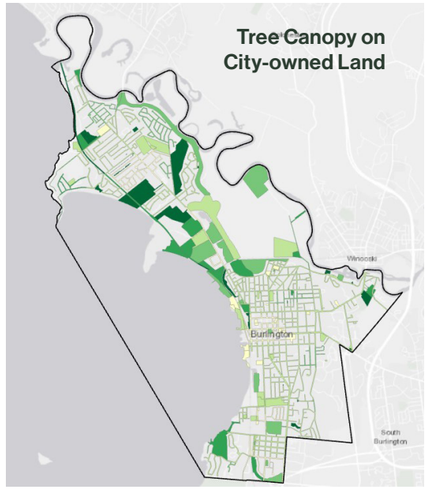
37% of Burlington's urban forest sits on **residential land**, and another 5% is on **commercial land**. Individual actions can make a significant impact, either for tree preservation or tree loss. Relevant Actions: CN3.1, CN3.4, and CN3.5.



27% of the urban forest is on **City-owned land**. The City can directly expand tree canopy on City-owned land and model best practices for urban forest health and maintenance. Relevant actions: CN3.3 and CN3.4.

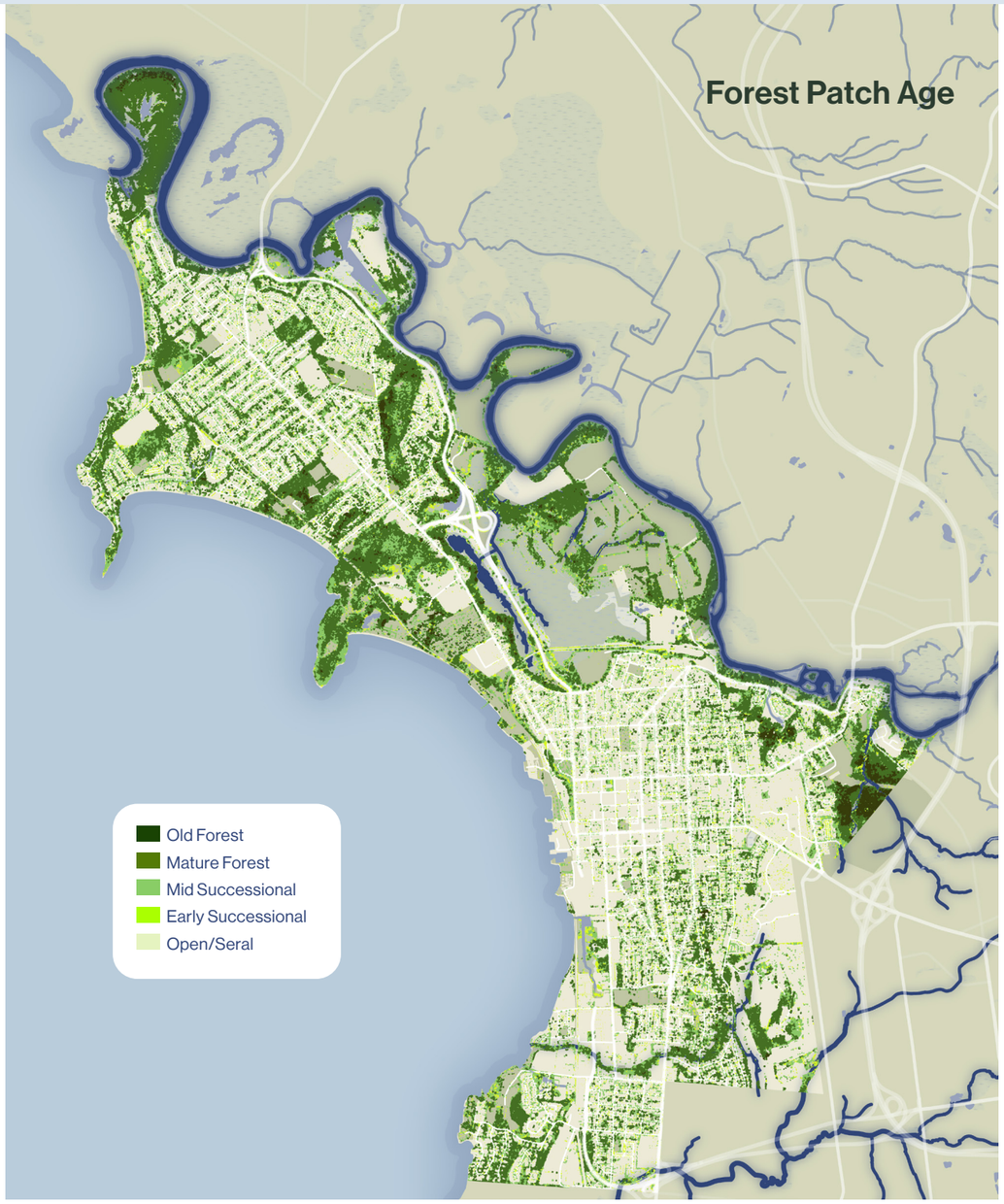
data derived from leaf-on satellite imagery

Other includes following land uses: Private right-of-way, Education - Champlain, Education - Private, Winooski River, State or Federally owned land, Railroad right-of-way, Mixed commercial/residential, or Unknown





Existing Tree Canopy %
- 0-15%
- 15-30%
- 30-50%
- 50-70%
- 70-100%



Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM

Managing for Biodiversity and Resilience with Canopy Assessment Data

UVM's Tree Canopy Assessment provides a valuable dataset that can inform urban forest management decisions across Burlington. For example, data on patch age helps distinguish mature forest areas from those in earlier successional stages.

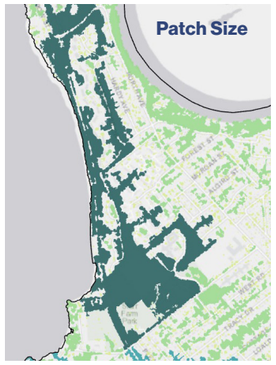
Combined with information about patch shape, this data highlights which forest patches contribute most to a resilient and healthy urban forest network. Smaller or irregularly shaped patches with high edge-to-area ratios are more vulnerable to biodiversity loss over time—a process known as "species relaxation." In contrast, larger, "rounder" forest patches tend to support greater species diversity and are more resistant to aggressive introduced species.

These insights can help guide where to prioritize management actions that build long-term forest resilience and where to maintain different habitat types. Not every area should be managed toward mature forest conditions. Open landscapes and grasslands remain important for supporting species like bluebirds. The open areas and grasslands in the Intervale, for example, could be managed to stay open, supporting edge-requiring species like butterflies and other insects.

Both of these forest patches are identified as very large patches, but due to their age and shape, they have varying levels of long-term resilience to species loss.

Very Large Patch
Large Patch
Medium Patch
Small Patch
Isolated Tree
Old Forest
Mature Forest
Mid Successional
Early Successional
Open/Seral

Small and/or irregularly shaped patches are more vulnerable to biodiversity loss and spread of aggressive introduced species.





Starr Farm Park, North Shore Natural Area, and nearby areas in New North End

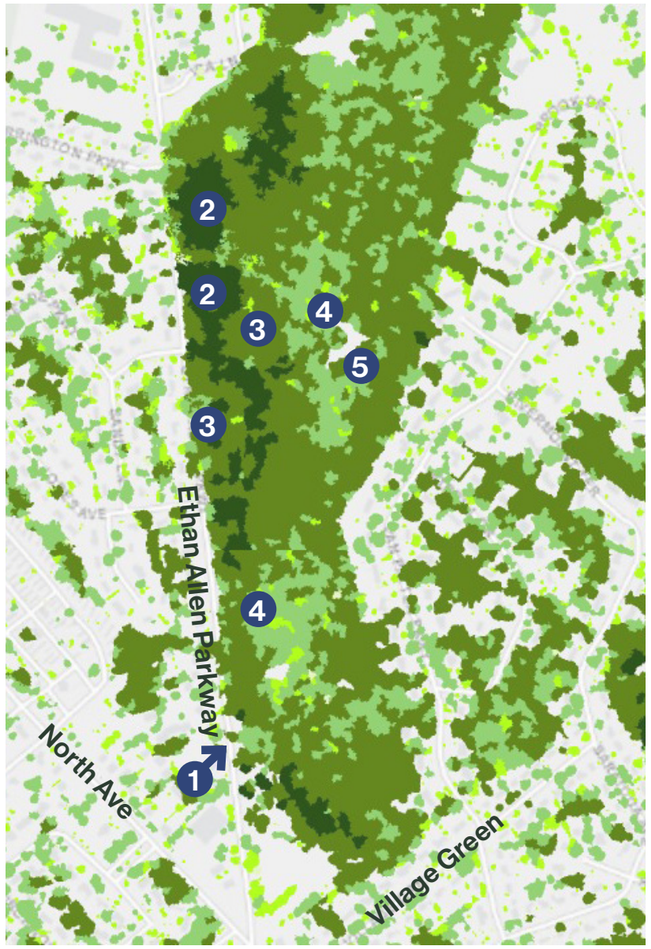
Large, round areas of old and mature forest are more resilient to biodiversity loss.





Arms Forest and Rock Point

Example of using data for management and planting decisions



Ethan Allen Park

General management prioritization principles, with example locations indicated on map of Ethan Allen Park:

1. Areas of old and mature forest that have more edge area could be made more resilient by adding tree canopy where possible to increase the interior areas of these patches.
2. Prioritize aggressive introduced species control in large old and mature forest patches.
3. Also prioritize aggressive introduced species control in mid-successional areas near old/ mature forests to reduce spread of species into older forest areas.
4. Manage mid-successional, especially areas near large old/ mature forests to guide them to the desired mature state. Foresters can help assess current conditions and guide species composition through selective thinning that favors desired canopy species (e.g. oak, hickory, walnut, white pine).
5. Identify open patches that are not needed for recreation or other uses (e.g., picnics, sports fields). These areas can be prioritized for tree planting to reduce the spread of aggressive introduced species.



Leddy Park

Leddy Park shows an example of a park that is balancing a lot of varied needs for both people and wildlife: from recreation, to parking, to habitat / biodiversity. To enhance urban forest health, biodiversity, and resilience, the City could consider relocating parking or recreational uses within Leddy Park to create more interior forest habitat, while still preserving the diversity of uses. When relocating uses, consider shifting to less mature forest areas. For example, shifting the southern parking lot southeast towards the edge of the park could allow replanting on the northwestern end to create a larger area of contiguous forest.

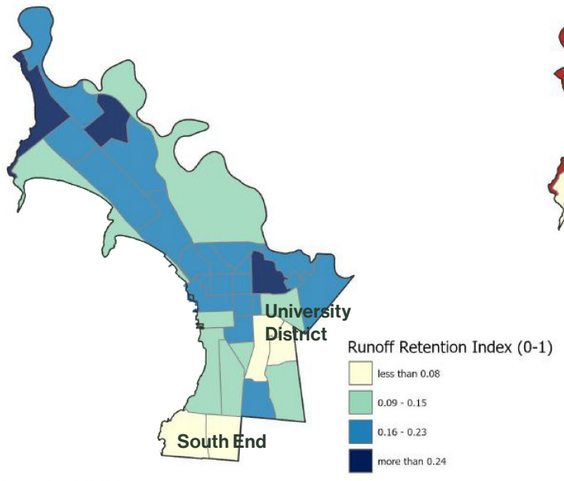
CONNECT Strategies

Using Tree Canopy Assessment to Support Planting and other benefits

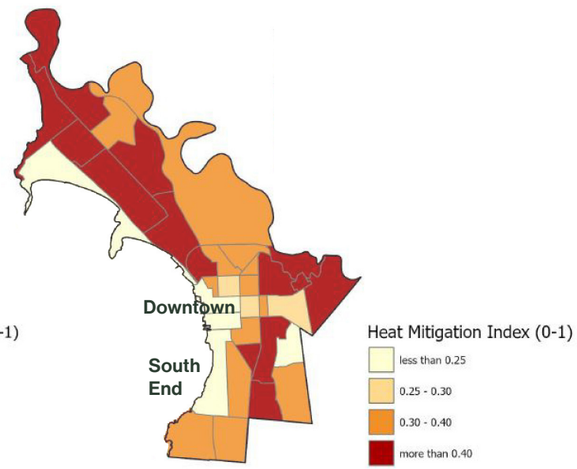
UVM's Tree Canopy Assessment identified high-level opportunities for reforestation as well as where the city's urban forest is absorbing stormwater and cooling adjacent areas.

By planting just one new tree, Burlington can remove enough CO_2 to offset 13 miles of car travel and absorb six bathtubs of stormwater!

Stormwater Absorption



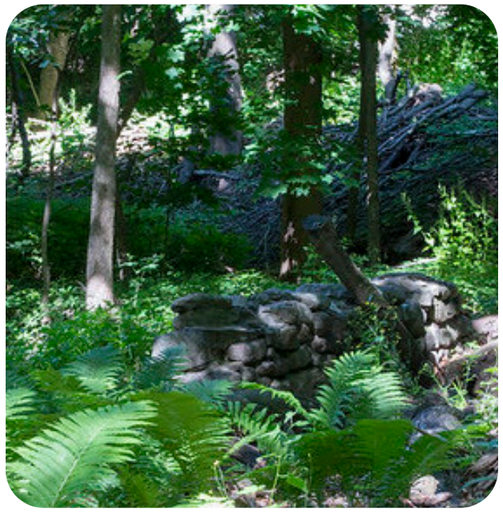
Urban Cooling Benefits



Maps by UVM

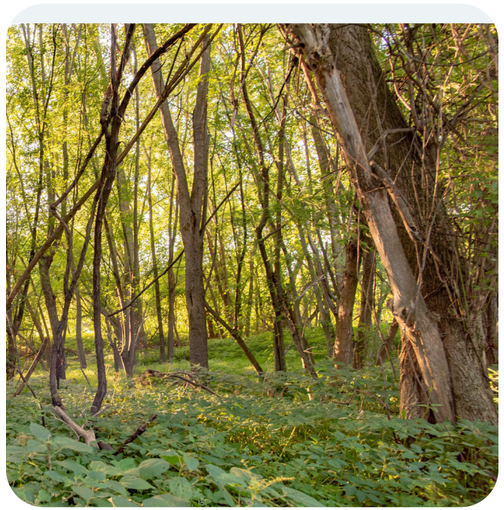
"Areas with low runoff retention may benefit from increased tree plantings due to the capacity of vegetation acting as riparian buffers filtering runoff and absorbing precipitation into the soil."
- UVM Urban Tree Canopy Assessment

Areas with lower heat island mitigation today (e.g. light yellow areas above) could be priorities for more tree planting focused on enhancing urban cooling.









STRATEGY 4
Encourage New Development to Incorporate Nature-Based Principles

Though conservation and development have historically been pitted against each other, the two can work together in mutually beneficial ways. Cities like Burlington that both deeply value open space and sorely need to expand their housing stock can build dense development that also increases ecologically healthy green areas with practices like Low Impact Design and Conservation Development.

This strategy capitalizes on widespread desires across the community to incorporate nature-based principles in development. On the new development side, creating green design standards and development review resources will help foster environmentally-beneficial building. On the existing development side, providing educational resources to owners and occupants within Stewardship Zones will help those closest to natural areas support their ecological health. Green design standards can guide both new and existing development to incorporate principles and engage in tactics like reducing impervious surface, improving drainage, building green stormwater infrastructure, and creating pollinator habitats.

ACTIONS

- CN4.1 Develop Green Design Standards for new developments and redevelopments.
- CN4.2 Provide educational resources for owners and occupants in Stewardship Zones to support ecological health of nearby natural areas.
- CN4.3 Create development review resources to support review bodies in evaluating sustainable/ ecological nature-based approaches to development and open space impacts of new development.



Open Space Stories

BEE a Good Steward

Vermont is home to about 350 different species of native bees, and Burlington is an important statewide hotspot for native bees!

The sandy soils on the lakeshore and river delta and diversified organic agriculture in the floodplain provide prime nesting and feeding grounds for bees, contributing to a high diversity of bee species. While the most famous bee is the non-native honey bee, bees native to Vermont come in all shapes, colors, and sizes. We rely on native bees and pollinators to pollinate our crops, gardens, plants and trees.

Many of these trees and plants won't regenerate without bees and other pollinators. While people rely on urban forests and plants to slow storm water, clean the air, and keep the lake clean, native bees and pollinators rely on native plants for nutrients and habitat. Growing and planting natives around the city helps both us and bees steward healthy connected habitats.

That's why Vermont's open spaces and our ability to continue stewarding them are so important: native plants and habitats are critical for these bees and pollinators survival. In return the city gains many valuable services from native plants and trees that our native bees and other pollinators rely on.

This new Open Space plan will build on past city plans and establish a policy vision for open space inventory, management, access, and preservation going into the future.

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 1: Grow and Celebrate Nature-Based Climate Solutions Across the City							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 1.1	Educate the public on Nature-Based Climate Solutions and their value. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.2	Create and support existing education, recognition, and incentive programs to encourage private property owners to integrate Nature Based Climate Solutions and implement sound ecological practices (e.g. reducing lawn space), especially within Natural Area Stewardship Zones. • Celebrate and support Grow Wild initiatives to encourage lawn conversions for native spaces to incrementally replace non-native for habitat benefits. • Use established pockets to disburse throughout neighborhoods. • Potential programs include adaptation of Green Design Standards, expansion of the BLUE program, and encouragement of "Wild Yards" to convert mowed areas to naturalized open space.	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Wildways, GROW wild, BLUE program, Parks Communications	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 1.3	Continue to partner with schools to grow nature-based climate solutions on school grounds.	Burlington School District	Burlington Wildways, Parks Conservation Team, Shelburne Farms	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.4	Create a municipal management plan to track and reduce mowed lawns.	Parks	Parks Ground Maintenance, Parks Conservation Team, Water Resources	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.5	Continue to grow nature-based climate solutions on City property, including but not limited to green stormwater infrastructure.	Parks	Water Resources	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.6	*See also in CONSERVE: CS2.1. Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 2: Cultivate an Ecosystem of Stewardship							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 2.1	Create a database and listserv of open space organizations to support collaboration, resource sharing, etc.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, Conservation Board	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.2	Co-host a recurring open space summit for land stewards, community organizations, and others.	Wildways, Mayor's Office	VCGN, Audubon, UVM, Wildways partners (e.g. Intervale, WVPD, Rock Point, Parks)	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.3	Continue to support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Communications, WNRCD, Friends of the Winooski, Watersheds United Vermont, etc.	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 2.4	Update Urban Wilds definition, including considering expanding beyond city-owned land.	Conservation Board	Wildways, Large landowners, Parks Conservation Team, DPI	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.5	Distribute educational resources about how personal actions can support water quality health in lake, river, and tributaries. (See also EX1.3)	Lake Champlain Sea Grant (BLUE program)	Water Resources, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 3: Enhance and Protect Burlington's Urban Forest							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 3.1	Comprehensively update the Tree Ordinance.	Parks, City Arborist	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Arborist, Parks Conservation Team, Planning, Planning Commission, DPI	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.2	Update the urban tree canopy goal and mapping/ data analysis every 10 years. Consider developing specific goals for different types of canopy based on their ecological and heat island mitigation value.	Parks, City Planning, Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis, or similar provider	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CN 3.3	Conduct Pocket Forest Feasibility Study inclusive of existing and potential pocket parks that develops plant lists, identifies potential existing sites, and envisions incentives for establishing pocket forests in new developments, dense neighborhoods, and greenbelts.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Planning, City Planning	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 3.4	Identify large valuable trees (e.g. specimen trees) in the city that are on public and private land, and consider protection with ideas framed in the policy toolkit from Biophilic Cities network.	Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, City Arborist, Branch Out Burlington	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.5	Educate the public on benefits of the urban forest and how to manage it on private property. (See also CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3

CN 4: Encourage New Development to Incorporate Nature-Based Principles							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 4.1	Develop Green Design Standards for new developments and redevelopments.	DPI, City Planning	Conservation Board, Planning Commission, Water Resources, land owners, landscape architects (?)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.2	Provide educational resources for owners and occupants in Stewardship Zones to support ecological health of nearby natural areas.	Parks Conservation Team and Parks Communications	Grow Wild, Parks Planning, Lake Champlain Sea Grant	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.3	Create development review resources to support review bodies in evaluating sustainable/ecological nature-based approaches to development and open space impacts of new development.	DPI	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-



Rena Caulkins Trail, Intervale

EXPERIENCE Overview

Fostering diverse outdoor experiences for everyone

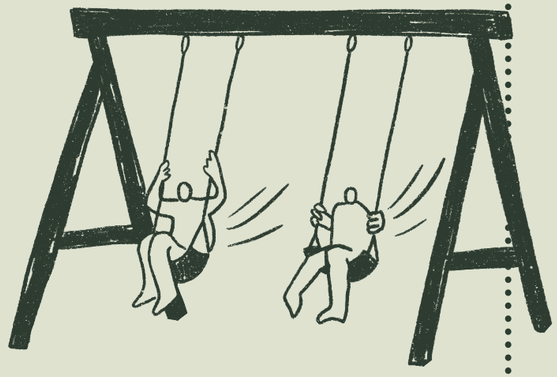
Burlington's Open Space Plan is not just about land–it's about how people use and enjoy them. As reflected in the first wave of engagement, Burlingtonians' outdoor experiences are as diverse as the open spaces themselves. This goal focuses on preserving and enhancing experiences in nature while breaking down barriers to access. It also considers the different types of nature experiences people have–everyday experiences and wild ones–and how to educate people about them while growing opportunities to engage with a variety of open spaces.

EXPERIENCE Strategies

EX1 Increase awareness about Burlington's open spaces

EX2 Grow public access and accessibility to nature-based experiences

EX3 Break down barriers to open space access



"To preserve and maintain the ones we have, and to add smaller open spaces even in the most urban parts of the city if possible"

"Keep them open and plan more areas to provide shade and enjoyment of nature."

Preserving and enhancing wild nature experiences

Increasing visitor stewardship of open spaces

"Connectivity for animals, climate solutions, youth engagement, educational purposes, community gathering spaces."

Expanding universal access to nature experiences

"Increase accessibility to them and encourage more people to get out into them."

"To continue to have spaces that are open and welcoming to all, that respect nature and the land and build community."

Expanding the open space network

"More community spaces to connect with each other and the natural world."

Growing everyday nature experiences

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

EXPERIENCE Overview



Connecting with nature can take many forms, from everyday nature moments to big woods experiences.

Standing at the edge of Rock Point and gazing out at Lake Champlain, without a building in sight. Pausing along a neighborhood walk to admire a neighbor's pollinator garden and breathe the evening air. Biking on the Burlington Greenway and passing picnickers, skateboarders, and kayakers at different points. These are just a few of the wide range of outdoor experiences that Burlington offers in everyday life and in close-to-home adventures.

Burlington's experiences are rich because of the variety of open space types and their diverse ownership and management practices. Some open spaces are managed intensively by people while others are left more wild. Some spaces lend themselves to passive recreation while others are more active. Some spaces can only be used in certain ways while others have many potential uses. Burlington is lucky to have this multifaceted array of open spaces.

Spectrum of Nature Experiences

Big Woods / Wild Nature Experiences



Hiking in Rock Point and marveling at the Champlain Thrust Fault or bird watching in Arms Forest

Nature and Park Experiences



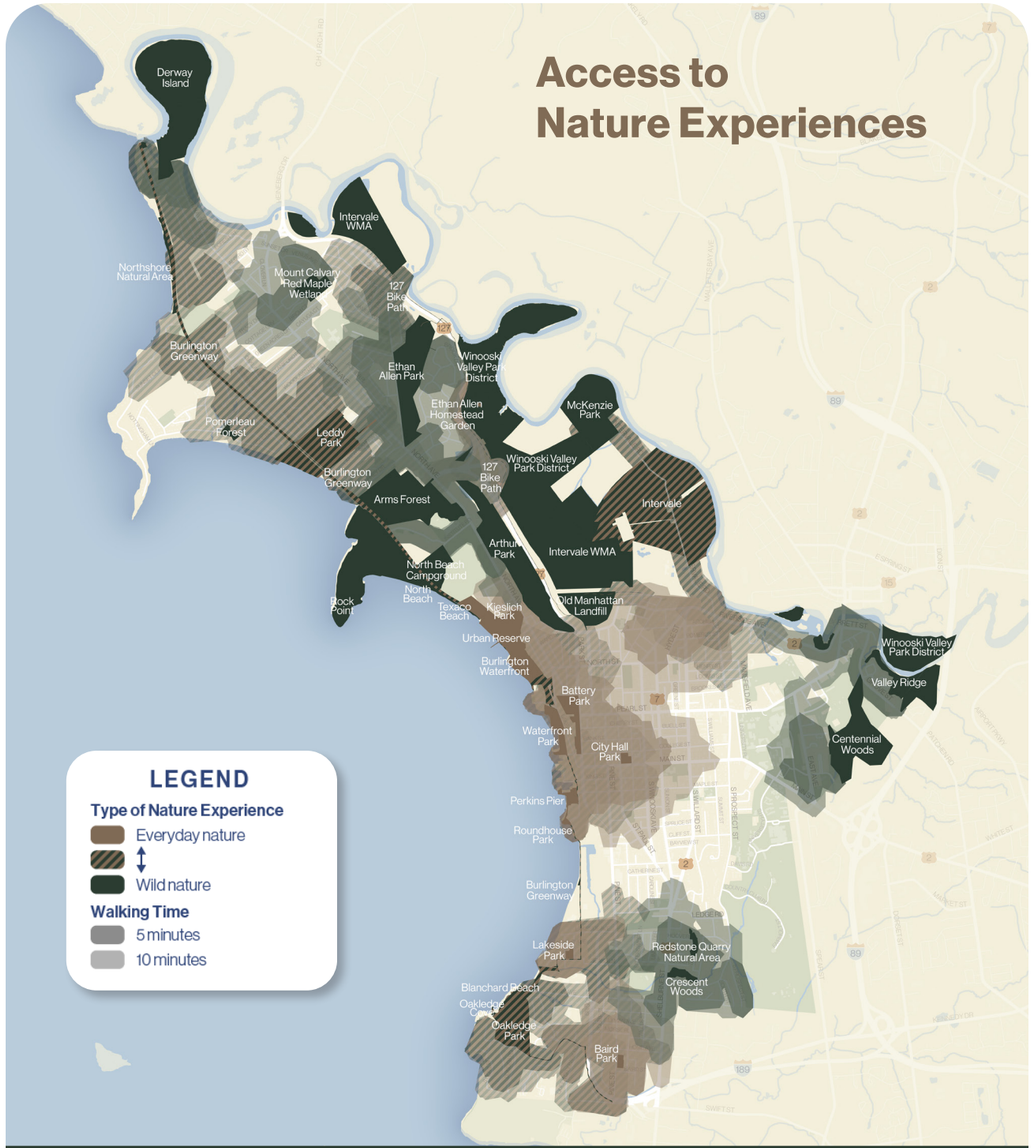
Enjoying the waterfront in Oakledge Park or bicycling along the Burlington Greenway

Everyday Nature Experiences



Glimpses of Lake Champlain while walking Downtown or watching a bee buzz around a pollinator garden





Nature Experiences

	% area within.... 5 walk	10 walk
Everyday Nature	11%	21%
↕	23%	39%
Big Woods / Wild Nature	13%	25%

This map categorizes open spaces by whether they foster everyday nature or wild nature experiences. It shows the surrounding area that is within a 5-minute or 10-minute walk.



EXPERIENCE Strategies



STRATEGY 1
Increase Awareness About Burlington's Open Spaces

Half of Burlington's land area is covered by open spaces, but knowledge about and access to these spaces are not well known. While many people–residents and visitors alike–frequent Burlington's parks and recreate freely–from hiking to swimming to picnicking to relaxing–there is a wealth of knowledge and events that can be readily shared. Some center on history and learning while others foster connections and shared experiences.

This strategy aims to connect more people to more experiences through education and communication. By increasing awareness of the natural world and ways to engage with it, more people may become part of an ever-growing community of open space champions.

ACTIONS

- EX1.1 Collaborate to create educational tools on Burlington's natural history and stewardship story with associated places to visit.
- EX1.2 Create a central calendar that crowdsources events and volunteer efforts around the City. (See also EX1.3)
- EX1.3 Create a comprehensive open space communications and education plan to share recommendations of the open space plan. (See also EX1.2)



STRATEGY 2
Grow Public Access to Nature-Based Experiences

Burlington offers a wide variety of nature experiences, from a morning walk in the park to a weekend rafting escapade. From an afternoon watching bees and birds in a pollinator garden to a thrilling mountain biking adventure through the woods. It's not everyday that those big experiences happen–and they're not necessarily possible for or desired by everyone. Everyone should be able to experience nature every day–and it's much easier in Burlington, where nearly the entire city is within a 10-minute walk from an open space.

This strategy focuses on making those everyday nature experiences more commonplace and integrated into daily routines. It includes increasing opportunities throughout the city, partially in partnership with private and institutional landowners. Public access to private land is already happening in places like Rock Point and can be expanded to even more areas.

The upcoming Comprehensive Plan will continue to address these issues.

ACTIONS

- EX2.1 Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines.
- EX2.2 Continue to partner to expand public access to nature experiences. Partnerships could include, for example, private and institutional landowners, organizations, and visionaries that promote nature-based work.





STRATEGY 3
Break Down Barriers to Open Space Access

Everyone in Burlington is within a 10-minute walk from an open space, but not all open spaces are created equal. Not only do they differ in size, nature, and types of experiences offered, they also differ in accessibility. Accessibility can refer to physical accessibility ("How easy is it for me to get to an open space by foot, bike, or car?") or cultural accessibility ("Once I get to this open space, how welcoming and comfortable of an environment is it for me? For my family?").

This strategy seeks to tackle both barriers while considering the health of important natural areas. Acknowledging that there are cultural differences in enjoying open spaces, inclusive and accessible strategies need to be employed to engage marginalized communities and integrate cultural preferences. Physical access is a priority as well, particularly by different modes, and needs to be balanced with ecological sensitivities. The Conservation Legacy Fund can be strategically used to help support improved access and accessibility through conservation infrastructure, including focusing on universal design throughout.

ACTIONS

EX3.1 Evaluate opportunities for universal access in natural areas where appropriate and considering ecological sensitivity. (See also EX3.3)

EX3.2 Improve equitable transportation access to natural areas and seek out alternative funding mechanisms.

EX3.3 Regularly engage communities who face barriers to accessing or enjoying open space to identify additional actions to increase use and where to prioritize improvements. (See also EX3.1)

EX3.4 Plan for and integrate different cultural preferences in the use of public outdoor spaces.

EX3.5 Incorporate language access in educational campaigns.

Stakeholder and public feedback included some challenges that are being accomplished outside of the Open Space Plan, including cat and dog regulations, food safety, and border management. This plan acknowledges these challenges and supports related actions in other plans.

The upcoming Comprehensive Plan will include specific strategies for improvements in multi-modal access to the Intervale.



Open Space Stories

Wildways

The Burlington Wildways partnership works together to address some of the most pressing needs for conservation, climate resilience, and equitable nature access in Burlington's urban context.

Wildways was formed by a city council resolution in 2017 to collectively steward these areas and make sure that Burlington residents know about, care about, and have access to them. With the many threats posed by a warming climate, they promote nature connection and many forms of stewardship to help save and increase biodiversity and protect ecological functions in the city. They have piloted some groundbreaking approaches, such as the school-based tree nursery program; the Wildways Stewards program that uses citizens to maintain trails, help manage non-native species and do restoration work; and the Grow Wild native plant initiative. They also host an annual City Nature Celebration.



EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 1: Increase Awareness About Burlington's Open Spaces							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 1.1	Collaborate to create and translate educational tools on Burlington's natural history and stewardship story with associated places to visit.	Parks Conservation Team	REIB, Crows Path, Master Naturalist, UVM, Shelburne Farms, ECHO, WVPD, Vermont Folklife, UVM Spatial Analysis, Generator	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 1.2	Create a central calendar that crowdsources events and volunteer efforts around the City. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Communications (with LoveBurlington)	Wildways, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3
EX 1.3	Create a comprehensive open space communications and education plan to share recommendations of the open space plan. (See also EX1.2)	Parks Communications	City Planning, Park Planning, Wildways	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.2

EX 2: Grow Public Access to Nature-Based Experiences							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 2.1	Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines.	Parks Conservation Team, Parks Planning	DPW, Parks Communications, Neighborhoods/ individual landowners	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
EX 2.2	Continue to partner to expand public access to nature experiences. Partnerships could include, for example, private and institutional landowners, organizations, and visionaries that promote nature-based work.	Parks	UVM, Rock Point, Intervale Center, other large landowners	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

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EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 3: Break Down Barriers to Open Space Access							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 3.1	Evaluate opportunities for universal access in natural areas where appropriate and considering ecological sensitivity. (See also EX3.3)	Parks Planning	BACA	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	EX 3.3
EX 3.2	Improve equitable transportation access to natural areas and seek out alternative funding mechanisms.	Parks Planning	DPW, CCRPC	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	
EX 3.3	Regularly engage communities who face barriers to accessing or enjoying open space to identify additional actions to increase use and where to prioritize improvements. (See also EX3.1)	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB, BACA	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways, Trusted Community Voices	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 3.1
EX 3.4	Plan for and integrate different cultural preferences in the use of public outdoor spaces.	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 3.5	Incorporate language access in educational campaigns.	Parks Communications, REIB	Trusted Community Voices	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-



CULTIVATE

Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs

The Archibald Neighborhood Garden

CULTIVATE Overview

“Growing Local” connects us to our food and can create more sustainable food systems

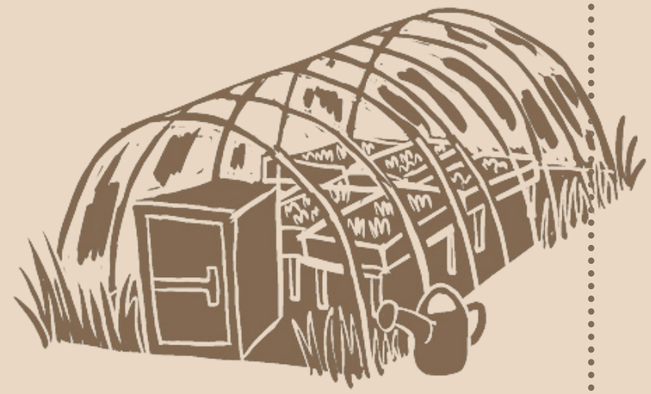
Local food systems are integral to the fabric of open space and life in Burlington, from home gardens to the community garden to the Intervale Center. More growing space is needed to meet the community’s demand, and the food system is susceptible to challenges like climate change.

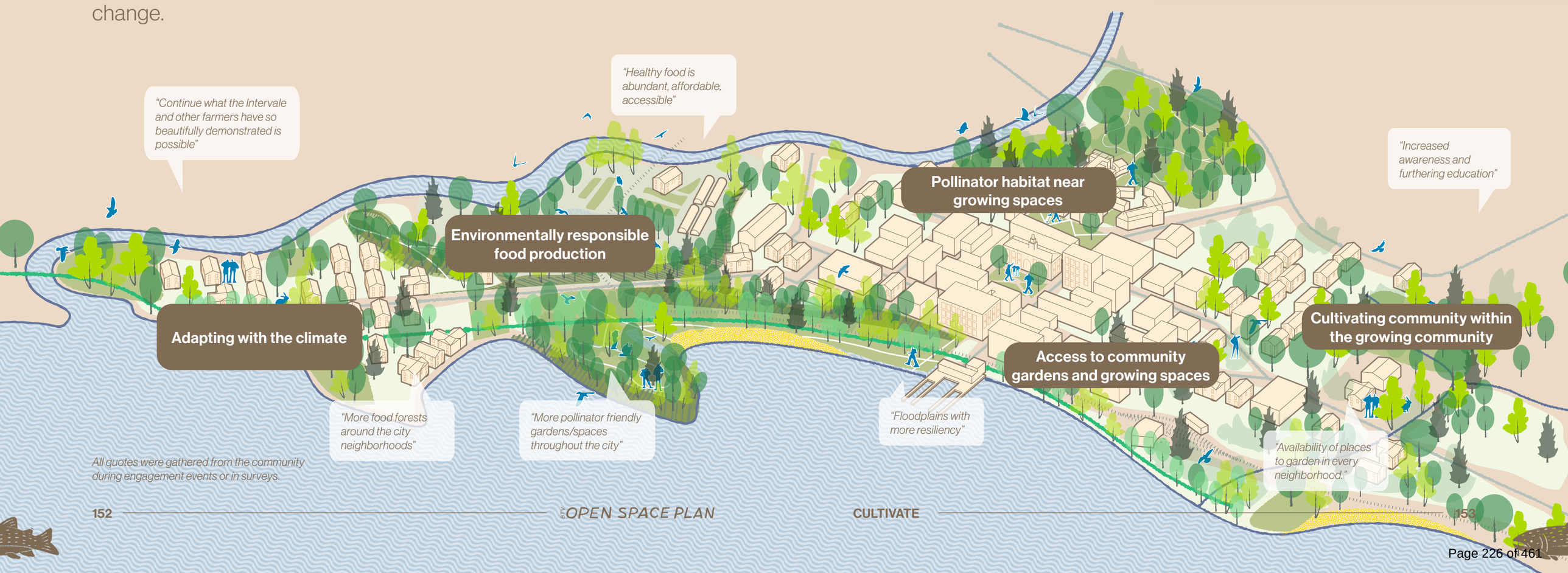
CULTIVATE Strategies

CL1 Cultivate sustainable and resilient agriculture practices

CL2 Expand community gardens and access for new community members

CL3 Support the cultivation of alternate food sources





All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

CULTIVATE Overview

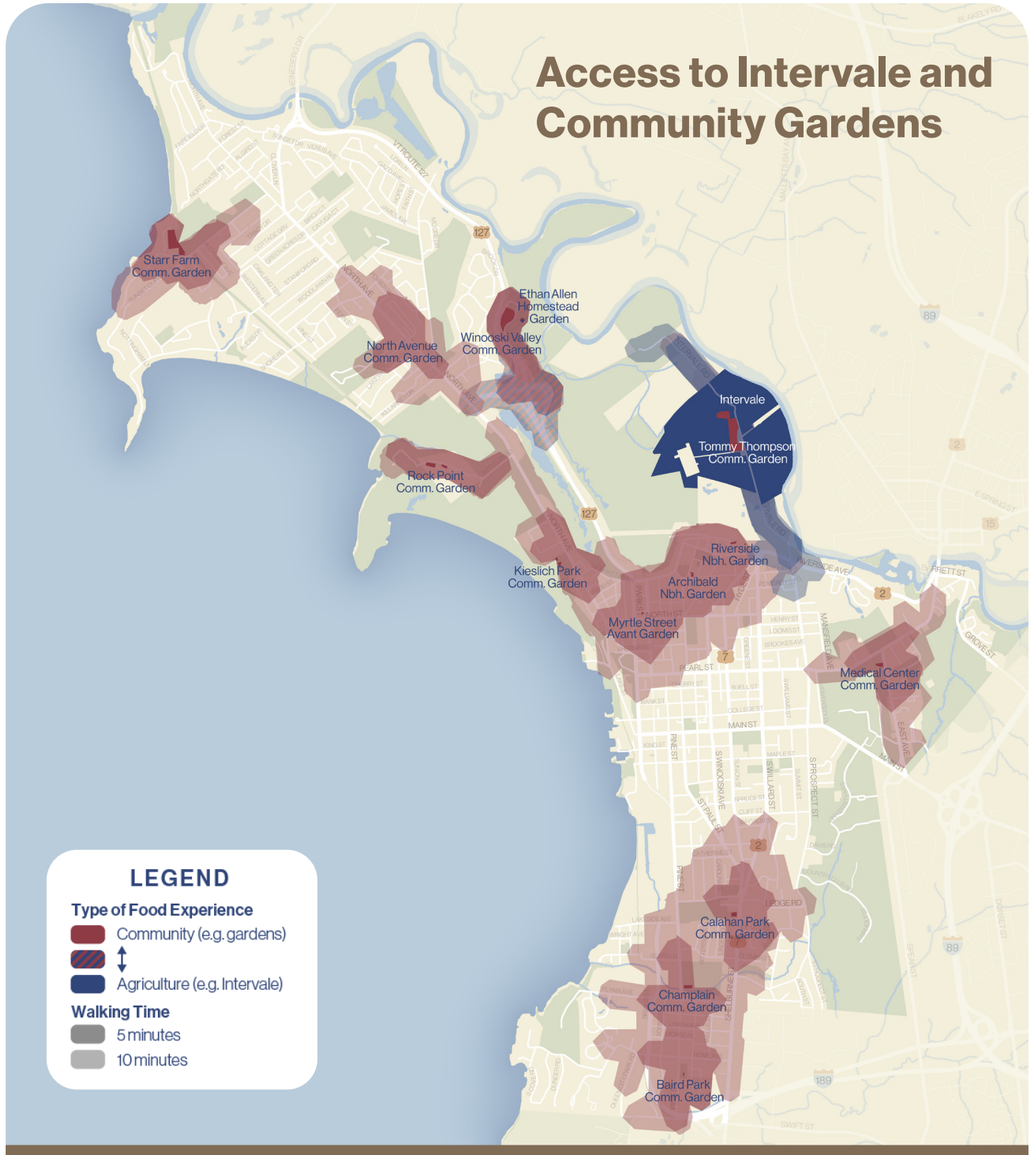


Exposure to varied food experiences can strengthen local food resilience

In Burlington, food growing spaces hold deep cultural significance as symbols of community resilience, heritage, and connection to the land. For many of Burlington's immigrant communities, these spaces exemplify traditional agricultural practices, provide space for intergenerational knowledge sharing, and encourage food sovereignty. Similarly, community gardens often reclaim space for marginalized communities, nurturing identity, pride, and care. These spaces connect people closer to nature and collective health, making them vital to cultural continuity and social cohesion.

Many food procuring methods are practiced in Burlington, like regenerative agriculture, community gardening, and foraging. Exposure to them is a way to increase food experiences and strengthen local food resilience. This could lead the community to expand community gardens, promote sustainable urban agriculture, and encourage alternative food sources like food forests and foraging. There are also many opportunities to propagate growing throughout the community at-large. Community knowledge-sharing is critical to expanding and enriching the ways we cultivate, make, and source food.

Together, these efforts diversify how food is grown and accessed locally, thereby reducing reliance on commercial growing methods and improving food security. Take a look at the map to see the many food experiences are available to Burlington residents today.



Food Experiences

	% area within.... 5 walk	10 walk
Community	14%	30%
Agriculture	1%	2%
	2%	3%

Community gardens are distributed across Burlington, although there are gaps in Downtown and in the New North End. The Intervale Center is located near the mid-point of Burlington, but access is largely car-dependent.

CULTIVATE Overview

Steward Ecological Health to Sustain Long-Term Food Production

While providing access to more food experiences is important to increase awareness and encourage future stewardship of food growing spaces, the quality of those food growing and cultivating spaces is also critical. This plan identifies several strategies to ensure that Burlington also considers soil health, climate resilience, and sustainable land stewardship as part of its cultivation goals. This focus will ensure that both traditional and alternative food systems can thrive in the face of environmental challenges, such as flooding and temperature fluctuations, aggressive introduced species, and habitat pressure.



CULTIVATE Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Cultivate Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture Practices

Community-based urban agriculture and stewardship is an integral part of Burlington's open spaces. Since the creation of the first community garden, there has been a thoughtful balance between open space and food production needs throughout the city. This system is under threat, however, from climate change, aggressive introduced species, and deer overpopulation. Flooding especially has been and will continue to be a major issue as weather patterns become more unpredictable.

This strategy endeavors to address these major issues in order to ensure that urban agriculture can thrive for many generations to come. Sustainable and resilient food growing contributes to ecological benefits, such as reduction in food miles and reduced carbon footprint, that are all part of the city's climate strategies. Underlying it is also a focus on soils: as soils are the core resource to farming, understanding them and how to maintain their health is critical to ensuring they remain fertile and retain growing potential.

ACTIONS

CL1.1 Continue to plan for resilient agriculture strategies in the Intervale as climate and flood risks increase.

CL1.2 Develop and implement deer management strategies, and track progress.

CL1.3 Work with other agencies to educate and share resources on soil health information and remediation, aiming to create a resource similar to Dig Safe to emphasize safe soils for safe food.

CL1.4 Conduct a holistic inventory of available lands in City (both public and private) available for potential food production.

STRATEGY 2
Expand Community Gardens

There are currently 14 community gardens managed by the Burlington Area Community Gardens (BACG) program with plots ranging from 100 square-feet to 750 square-feet. The program not only connects people with plots of land but also encourages community partnerships through community days and knowledge sharing. They foster a close relationship with food and provide food security.

While these gardens are well-loved, demand historically has been and continues to be much higher than supply. There is a great need for more community gardening space, especially as the city continues to grow. This strategy seeks to identify partnerships that can identify where community gardens can be expanded and to set and track goals for expansion. It also emphasizes that education for private land owners is critical to expanding growing opportunities on both private land and in neighborhood community gardens.

ACTIONS

CL2.1 Partner with community and other groups to explore new spaces for community gardens and community agriculture (especially in areas with less vehicle access, higher percentage of low-income residents, and less access to grocery stores).

CL2.2 Track garden plots per capita to establish baseline conditions and evaluate unmet demand. Set and track mid-term and long-term goals for community garden spaces.

CL2.3 Address the need for more community gardens with actions like:

- Conduct city land asset study for community garden opportunities.
- Document and review process for plot distribution
- Proactively .work with neighborhoods to identify potential community garden spaces and support with the Conservation Legacy Fund.
- Encourage and direct expansion of capacity at existing sites with elements like new raised beds and support infrastructure.
- Consider out-of-the-box opportunities, such as rooftop gardens, and innovative practices, such as vertical garden opportunities.

CL2.4 Incentivize creation of community gardens with new and redevelopment through green design standards.

STRATEGY 3
Support the Cultivation of Alternate Food Sources

Gardening is not the only method for sourcing food outside of a commercial environment: the natural world is full of edible plants. Alternative food sources like food forests and the practice of foraging for wild food sources have gradually spread in recent years, partially as a sustainable activity and partially as a safeguard against food insecurity. The Intervale Center, for example, began the first phase of the Agroforestery Riparian Buffer Project in 2024 to "demonstrate the feasibility of a large scale implementation of agroforestry while satisfying the need to enhance the riparian buffer along the Winooski River." This effort can both grow perennial food producing plants and support climate resilience by protecting growing lands and creating additional habitats for birds and beneficial insects.

There sometimes is, however, a conflict between the desire or need for foraging and conservation goals. This strategy not only acknowledges foraging as a viable method but also encourages sustainable foraging practices. Food forests can be planned for and educational resources can be shared to ensure responsible cultivation of foraging practices. These strategies will need to consider the legal environment around community food sources on public property.

ACTIONS

CL3.1 Plan for food forests, including consideration of tree choices to allow for more community food production. (See also CL3.2)

CL3.2 Work with the public to facilitate responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging communities. (See also CL3.1)

CL3.3 Create an inventory of potential food forest spaces and feasibility study.

CL3.4 *See also in CS2.1 CONSERVE: Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*



Open Space Stories

New Farms for New Americans

What began in 2008 as a workforce development program under the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV) has evolved into a community-based gardening and agriculture program for refugees and immigrants.

Each year, NFNA connects around 100 participants with plots of land in the Intervale and Ethan Allen Homestead for subsistence farming–for consumption or for sale–and offers education and training on adapting farming practices to Vermont's climate.

This program not only helps farmers grow culturally significant crops like snake gourd, African eggplants, and daikon but also increases food security, fosters cross-cultural communities, and contributes to local climate resilience.



CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 1: Cultivate Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture Practices							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 1.1	Continue to plan for resilient agriculture strategies in the Intervale as climate and flood risks increase.	Intervale Center	Farmers, UVM AgroEcology, Parks Conservation Team, VT Garden Network, CEDO (with NRCS)	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 1.2	Develop and implement deer management strategies, and track progress.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 1.3	Work with other agencies to educate and share resources on soil health information and remediation, aiming to create a resource similar to Dig Safe to emphasize safe soils for safe food.	NRCS, CEDO	NRCS, Conservation Districts, UVM Extension Service	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 1.4	Conduct a holistic inventory of available lands in City (both public and private) available for potential food production.	Parks Conservation Team	Innovation & Technology	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2: Expand Community Gardens							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 2.1	Partner with community and other groups to explore new spaces for community gardens and community agriculture (especially in areas with less vehicle access, higher percentage of low-income residents, and less access to grocery stores).	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	Vermont Garden Network	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 2.2	Track garden plots per capita to establish baseline conditions and evaluate unmet demand. Set and track mid-term and long-term goals for community garden spaces.	Parks Conservation Team	Community gardeners, Vermont Garden Network	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2.3	Address the need for more community gardens with actions like: • Conduct city land asset study for community garden opportunities. • Document and review process for plot distribution • Proactively work with neighborhoods to identify potential community garden spaces and support with the Conservation Legacy Fund. • Encourage and direct expansion of capacity at existing sites with elements like new raised beds and support infrastructure. • Consider out-of-the-box opportunities, such as rooftop gardens, and innovative practices, such as vertical garden opportunities.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 2.4	Incentivize creation of community gardens with new and redevelopment through green design standards.	DPI	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 3: Support the Cultivation of Alternate Food Sources							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 3.1	Plan for food forests, including consideration of tree choices to allow for more community food production. (See also CL3.2)	Park Planning or Conservation Team	Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	CL3.2
CL 3.2	Work with the public to facilitate responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging communities. (See also CL3.1)	Intervale Center	WVPD, Parks Communications and Conservation Teams, Rock Point, UVM	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	CL3.1
CL 3.3	Create an inventory of potential food forest spaces and conduct a feasibility study.	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	Innovation & Technology	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 3.4	*See also in CS2.1 CONSERVE: Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-



Arms Forest

4

Way Ahead

Implementing the Open Space Plan will be a team effort. This chapter looks at opportunities to work together—and dream big!—for the future of our open spaces.

How can I contribute?

The Open Space Plan is a roadmap to guide the City of Burlington and its many partners and collaborators as they work together to invest in a thriving open space system for future generations.

While the City is the primary author of this document, and many of the actions will be led by the City, the City cannot implement this plan alone. It will require the investment of everyone in Burlington to make this plan a success. Below are Burlington's open space stewards and key actions that each group will need to champion.

Large Land Stewards

- Contribute to **monitoring of important restoration and wildlife indicators** including aggressive, introduced species, and water quality - *See Strategies CS 1.1, 1.6, 2.2, 2.4, and CL1.2*
- Help **expand public access to nature experiences** - *See Strategy EX 2.2*
- **Alleviate the impacts of climate change** by managing stormwater on-site, expanding tree canopy, and reducing impervious surfaces - *See Strategies CN 1.5 and CN 3.2*



Community Organizations

- **Expand access to food cultivation and pollinator-friendly and native gardens** throughout the city through advocacy and City partnerships - *See Strategies CL 3.1 and CS 2.1*
- **Join a consortium of like-minded organizations** and share resources and best practices - *See Strategy CN 2.1*
- **Participate in recurring summits and sustained communications** to strengthen collaboration and increase awareness of city and community initiatives. - *See Strategy CN 2.2*



Development Community

- Lean into **sustainable/ ecological nature-based approaches to development** - *See Strategy CN 4.3*
- **Contribute to the development of Green Design Standards** for new developments and redevelopments to ensure standards balance fiscal realities with aspirations for sustainable building - *See Strategy CN 4.1*



Governmental Partners

- Collaborate across agencies to **identify opportunities for nature-based solutions** in all city, county, and state projects - *See Strategy CS 1.6*
- **Engage seniors and youth** in expanding awareness of nature-based climate solutions - *See Strategy CN 1.2, CN 1.3, and CN 1.5*
- **Retain citywide Nature-based Climate Solutions positions** like the Land Steward and Nature-Based Climate Solutions Field Coordinator



Homeowners with Yards

- Consult with the BLUE program to **add a rain garden or other green infrastructure** to absorb rainfall - *See Strategy CL 3.3*
- Consider replacing non-native plants with native lawn alternatives to **grow not mow** and contribute to a healthier lake, native ecology, and people! - *See Strategies CN 1.2 and CN 1.4*
- **Retain mature trees and plant new trees** to help grow the city's tree canopy and clean our air- *See Strategy CN 3.2 and CN 3.2*



Everybody!

- **Get out into your open spaces, trails, and forests** - *See Strategy EX 1.2, 2.1, and 2.2*
- Learn how to **responsibly forage for food** in forests and other open spaces - *See Strategy CL 3.2*
- **Volunteer** with the city or local community steward - *See Strategy EX 1.2*
- **Learn more about your open spaces** and **spread the word** to neighbors *See Strategy CS 2.4*
- **Participate** in processes to improve open spaces - *See Strategy EX 1.3*



Wild Ideas

Throughout the Open Space Plan process, Burlington residents, land stewards, and other stakeholders shared some out-of-the-box ideas to help guide future investment in and enjoyment of Burlington's open space network and urban wildlife.

Below are a few of Burlington's big ideas! Many of these are tactics or projects that align with the goals and strategies of the plan, and if the funding opportunities and community visions align - these ideas will go a long way in transforming Burlington into a nature-filled city.



Comprehensive Plan Corner

As the City prepares to embark on a new comprehensive plan, there are a few recommendations within the Open Space Plan that will be important to carry forward into the future comprehensive planning.

CS 4.1 Review and update acquisition list and criteria.

EX 2.1 Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines and without driving.

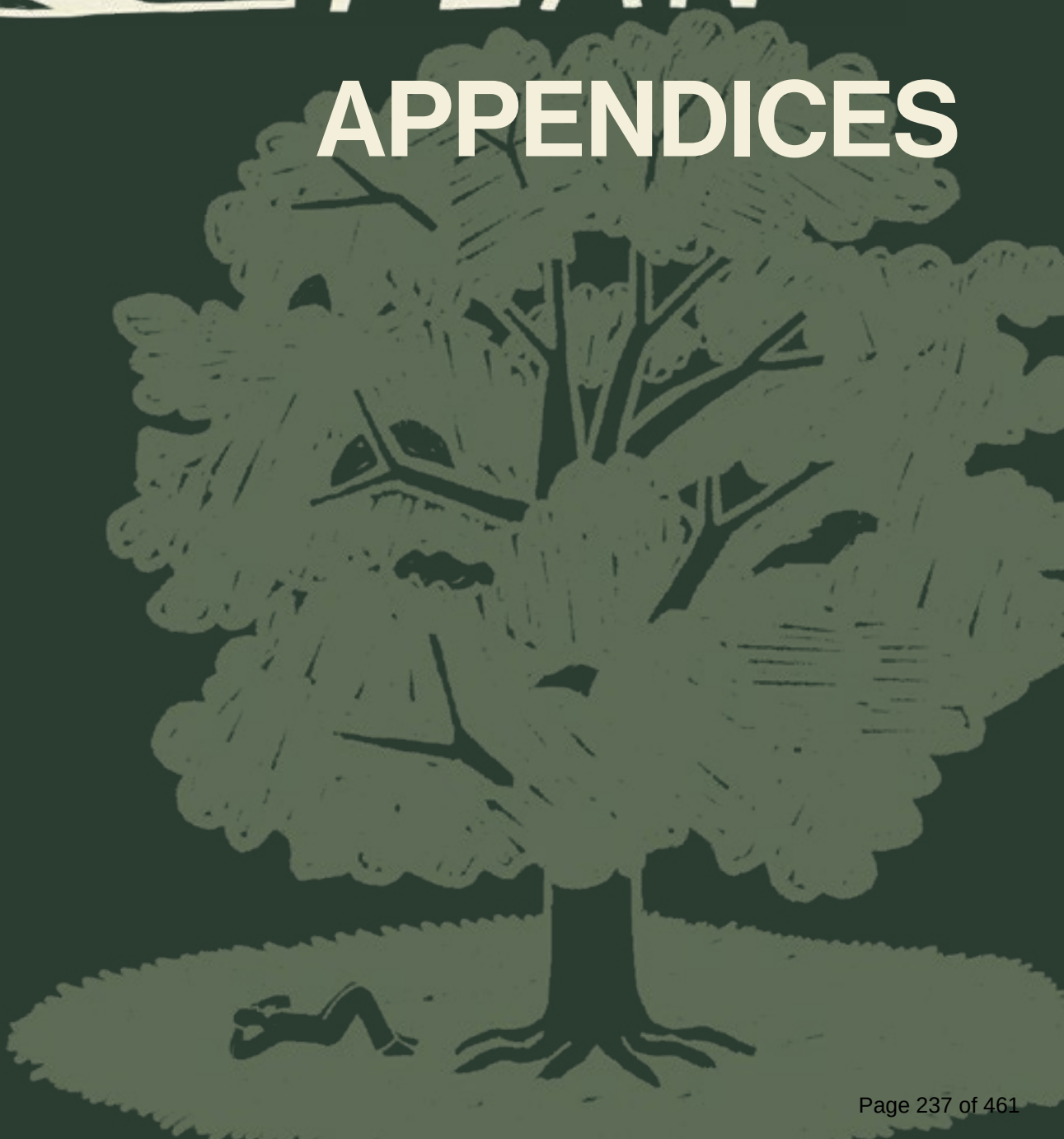
Additional Considerations Improve multi-modal access to the Intervale in conjunction with existing plans; include adequate funding to ensure creation of critical access.

Advance planning around the use of City-owned open spaces for shelter by people experiencing homelessness to ensure ecological health and integrity, public safety, and equitable access, while also planning for equitable access to permanently affordable housing for all Burlington residents.



BURLINGTON OPEN SPACE PLAN

APPENDICES



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- CONNECT
- EXPERIENCE
- CULTIVATE

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APPENDIX A:
Open Space Map Sections


LEGEND
Burlington Border
Trail or Greenway
Bike Infrastructure
Tree Canopy
Parks & Natural Areas
Community Garden
Beach
Water
Wetland
Derway Island
Delta Park
Halfmoon Cove
Halfmoon Cove WMA
CHURCH RD
Winooski River
Intervale WMA
Northshore Natural Area
Mount Calvary Red Maple Wetland
Macrae Farm Park
Starr Farm Park
Schifilliti Park
NEW NORTH END
127
Starr Farm Comm. Garden
Ethan Allen Park
Burlington Greenway
Appletree Park
North Avenue Comm. Garden
Winooski Valley Comm. Garden
Ethan Allen Homestead Garden
Leddy Park
Pomerleau Forest
Burlington Wildway
Leddy Beach
Arms Forest
127 Bike Path
Rock Point Comm. Garden
Rock Point
Arthur Park
Lakeview Cemetery
North Beach
Texaco Beach
Kieslich Park Comm. Garden
N
A2
0
0.25
0.5
1
Miles


LEGEND
Burlington Border
Trail or Greenway
Bike Infrastructure
Tree Canopy
Parks & Natural Areas
Community Garden
Beach
Water
Wetland
WMA
Macrae Farm Park
Intervale
Schifilliti Park
Ethan Allen Park
North Avenue Comm. Garden
Winooski Valley Comm. Garden
Ethan Allen Homestead Garden
McKenzie Park
Winooski River
Burlington Wildway
Arms Forest
127 Bike Path
Tommy Thompson Comm. Garden
Rock Point Comm. Garden
Rock Point
Arthur Park
Lakeview Cemetery
Riverside Neighborhood Comm. Garden
North Beach
Texaco Beach
Kieslich Park Comm. Garden
Old Manhattan Landfill
Roosevelt Park
Archibald Nbh. Garden
Kieslich Park
Myrtle Street Avant Garden
OLD NORTH END
Urban Reserve
Pomeroy Park
Elmwood Cemetery
Andy A Dog Skate Park
Battery Park
Waterfront Park
DOWNTOWN
City Hall Park
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT
Roundhouse Park
Smalley Park
N
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles


Path
Thompson Comm. Garden
Intervale
WINOOSKI
Arthur Park
Lakeview Cemetery
Riverside Neighborhood Comm. Garden
Kieslich Park Comm. Garden
Old Manhattan Landfill
Roosevelt Park
Archibald Nbh. Garden
Winooski River
Kieslich Park
OLD NORTH END
Pomeroy Park
Myrtle Street Avant Garden
Urban Reserve
Schmanska Park
Winooski Valley Park District
Greenmount Cemetery
Centennial Brook
Valley Ridge
Andy A Dog Skate Park
Elmwood Cemetery
Medical Center Comm. Garden
Battery Park
Waterfront Park
DOWNTOWN
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT
Centennial Woods
City Hall Park
Roundhouse Park
Smalley Park
SOUTH END
Burlington Greenway
HILL SECTION
Calahan Park
Burlington Country Club
Calahan Park Comm. Garden
Restone Quarry Natural Area
Lakeside Park
Blanchard Beach
Champlain Comm. Garden
Englesby Brook
Crescent Woods
Oakledge Cove
Oakledge Park
Baird Park
Baird Park Comm. Garden
East Woods Natural Area
Red Rocks Park
Potash Brook
Farrell Street Park
LEGEND
Burlington Border
Trail or Greenway
Bike Infrastructure
Tree Canopy
Parks & Natural Areas
Community Garden
Beach
Water
Wetland
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Miles
A4

APPENDIX B:
University of Vermont
Spatial Analysis Lab
Tree Canopy Assessment

2014–2023



Tree Canopy Assessment

Burlington, VT

PREPARED BY:

The University of Vermont

PREPARED FOR:

City of Burlington

February 2025

THE NEED FOR GREEN

Trees provide essential ecosystem services in Burlington, like reducing stormwater runoff, cooling the pavement in the summer and providing wildlife habitat. Trees are an indispensable part of the region's infrastructure. Research shows that these green assets can improve social cohesion, reduce crime, and raise property values. A healthy and robust tree canopy is crucial to building a more livable and prosperous town.

As with any community, Burlington faces a host of environmental challenges while seeking to balance development and conservation. A healthy and robust tree canopy is crucial for maintaining this balance, providing the city's residents with a resource that will impact the health and well-being of generations to come.

TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT

For decades governments have mapped and monitored their infrastructure to support effective management practices. Traditionally, that mapping has primarily focused on gray infrastructure, including features such as roads and buildings. Left out of this mapping has been an accounting of the green infrastructure.

The Tree Canopy Assessment protocols were developed by the USDA Forest Service to help communities better understand their green infrastructure through tree canopy mapping and analytics. Tree canopy is the layer of leaves, branches, and stems that provide tree coverage of the ground when viewed from above. A Tree Canopy Assessment can provide vital information to help governments and residents chart a greener future by helping them understand the tree canopy they have, how it has changed, and where there is room to plant trees. Tree Canopy Assessments have been carried out for over 100 communities in North America. This study assessed tree canopy for Burlington over the 2014 - 2023 period.



TREE CANOPY BY THE NUMBERS

Burlington is losing tree canopy. Tree canopy change was computed by mapping the no change, gains, and losses in tree canopy from 2014 - 2023.

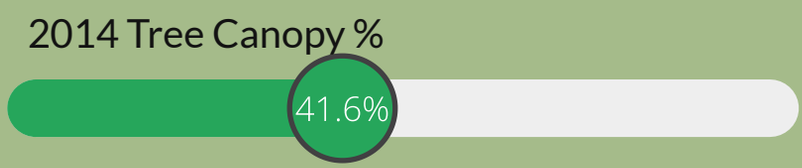
40%
2023 EXISTING TREE CANOPY

2,620
2023 EXISTING TREE CANOPY ACRES

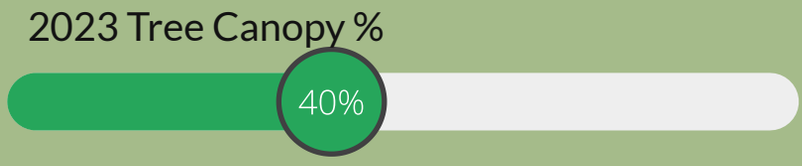
-109
2014 - 2023 ACRES CHANGE

-1.6%
2014 - 2023 ABSOLUTE CHANGE

Change in tree canopy from 2014 - 2023



-1.6%
Absolute change in tree canopy



-4%
Relative change in tree canopy

228
Acres of Gain

337
Acres of Loss

Burlington was estimated to have 111,912 individual trees in 2023.

Losses in tree canopy are outpacing gains, resulting in a net decrease in tree canopy.

Growth of existing tree canopy is the biggest contributor to tree canopy gains.

FINDINGS

Despite net tree canopy losses, local gains in tree canopy coverage were possible thanks to preservation and planting initiatives.

Tree canopy loss is neither evenly distributed nor similar. It varies from removal of individual trees in backyards to clearing of patches of trees for new construction.

Burlington can improve environmental equity by prioritizing tree plantings in neighborhoods most susceptible to environmental risk.

To enhance urban resilience, Burlington can improve access to trees and the benefits that they provide.

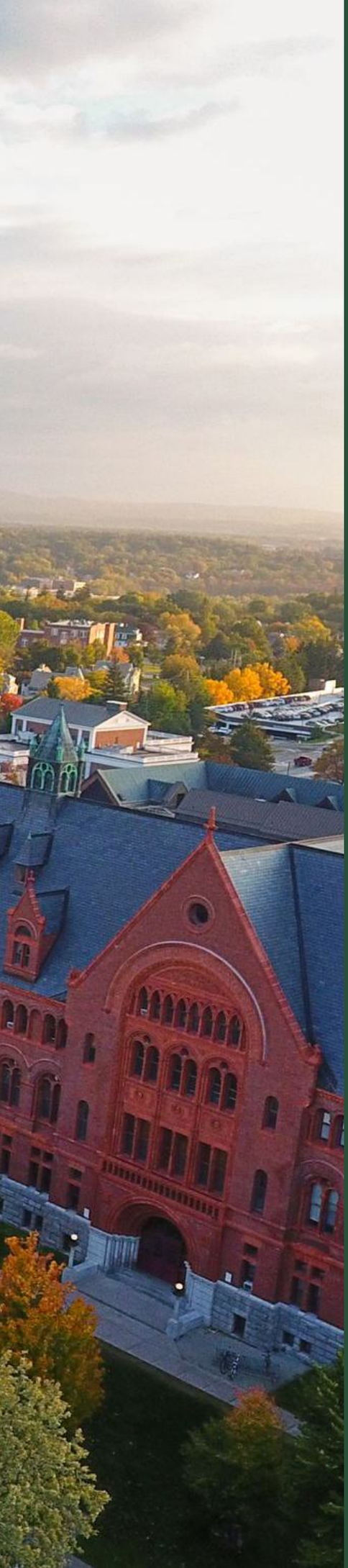
Growth of existing tree canopy is the biggest contributor to Burlington's tree canopy gains.

Land use history, urban forestry initiatives, natural processes, and landowner decisions, all play a role in influencing the current state of tree canopy in the city.

37.5% of Burlington's tree canopy exists on residential parcels. Engaging with land owners will be key to managing the city's tree canopy.

33% of Burlington's land area is covered by grass or shrub area that could theoretically be used to plant more trees and increase canopy cover.





RECOMMENDATIONS

Preserving existing tree canopy is the most effective means for securing future tree canopy, as loss is an event but gain is a process.

Planting new trees in areas where tree canopy is low or in locations where there has been tree canopy removed will also help the city grow canopy.

Having trees with a broad age distribution and a variety of species will ensure that a robust and healthy tree canopy is possible over time.

Community education is crucial if tree canopy is to be maintained over time. Residents that are knowledgeable about the value of trees will help the city stay green for years to come.

Integrate the tree canopy change assessment data into planning decisions at all levels of government from individual park improvements, to comprehensive planning and zoning initiatives, to citywide ordinances.

Reassess the tree canopy at 3-5 year intervals to monitor change and make strategic management decisions.

Tree canopy assessments require high-quality, high-resolution data. Continue to invest in LiDAR and imagery to support these assessments and other mapping needs.

Field data collection efforts should be used to compliment this assessment as information on tree species, size, and health can only be obtained through on-the-ground inventories.

THE TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This project employed the USDA Forest Service's Urban Tree Canopy assessment protocols and made use of federal, state, and local investments in geospatial data. Tree canopy assessments should be completed at regular intervals, every 3-5 years.



Remotely sensed data forms the foundation of the tree canopy assessment. We use high-resolution aerial imagery and LiDAR to map tree canopy and other land cover features.

The land cover data consist of tree canopy, grass/shrub, bare soil, water, buildings, roads/railroads, and other impervious features.

The land cover data are summarized by various geographical units, ranging from the property parcel to the watershed to the municipal boundary.



The report (this document) summarizes the project methods, results, and findings.

The presentation, given to partners and stakeholders in the region, provides the opportunity to ask questions about the assessment.

The tree canopy metrics data analytics provide basic summary statistics in addition to inferences on the relationship between tree canopy and other variables.

These summaries, in the form of tree canopy metrics, are an exhaustive geospatial database that enables the Existing and Possible Tree Canopy to be analyzed.

The Importance of Good Data

This assessment would not have been possible without Burlington's investment in high-quality geospatial data, particularly LiDAR. These investments pay dividends for a variety of uses, from stormwater management to solar potential mapping. This LiDAR will help Burlington advance risk management plans by creating the tree centroids needed to run a risk analysis. Good data supports good governance.

MAPPING THE TREE CANOPY FROM ABOVE

Tree canopy assessments rely on remotely sensed data in the form of aerial imagery and light detection and ranging (LiDAR) data. These datasets, which have been acquired by various governmental agencies in the region, are the foundational information for tree canopy mapping. Imagery provides information that enables features to be distinguished by their spectral (color) properties. As trees and shrubs can appear spectrally similar, or obscured by shadow, LiDAR, which consists of 3D height information, enhances the accuracy of the mapping. Tree canopy mapping is performed using a scientifically rigorous process that integrates cutting-edge automated feature extraction technologies with detailed manual reviews and editing. This combination of sensor and mapping technologies enabled the city's tree canopy to be mapped in greater detail and with better accuracy than ever before. From a single street tree along a roadside to a patch of trees in a park, every tree in Burlington was accounted for.

Tree Canopy Mapping

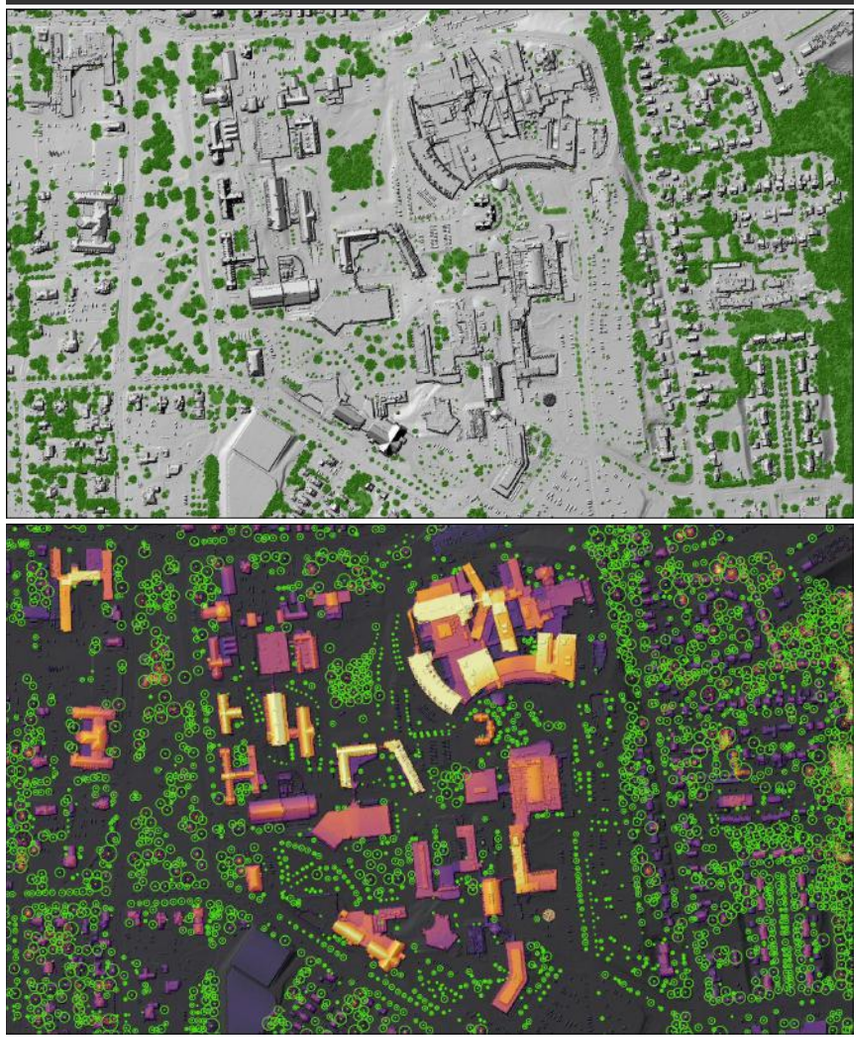


Figure 1. Locations of individual trees and their crowns (top) that were derived from the 2023 LiDAR (bottom).

The high-resolution land cover that forms the foundation of this project was generated from the most recent LiDAR, which was acquired in 2023. Compared to national tree canopy datasets, which map at a resolution of 30-meters, this project generated maps that were over 1,000 times more detailed and better account for all of the city's tree canopy.

Land Cover Mapping



Figure 2. High-resolution land cover developed for this project.

TREE COUNT

111,912+ Individual Trees

Burlington has over 111,912 individual trees, an estimate that was derived from the 2023 LiDAR data.

Tree Crowns & Centroids

Trees, particularly individual ones located in parks, on streets, on college greens, and on residential lands, require attention, care, and maintenance to thrive. In addition to quantifying the town's tree canopy acreage and percent coverage, this study produced an estimate of the number of individual trees in Burlington. This analysis was performed using the 2023 LiDAR data. While not a replacement for field-based inventories, LiDAR provides a unique advantage in that all of Burlington's trees can be counted. With Burlington having an estimated over 111,912 trees, it is important that tree maintenance remains a high priority for land managers. Tree maintenance and care activities will ensure that these critical green infrastructure assets thrive in a challenging urban environment.



Figure 3. Tree centroids (dots) and tree crowns (circles) mapped from the 2023 LiDAR. Tree mapping from LiDAR involves finding relative high points for each tree, then tracing down until a height inflection point is reached, marking the edge of the crown. This approach to individual tree mapping is most accurate where there is a clear differentiation in tree crowns and is less accurate in forested stands where crowns may overlap.

EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental Equity & Urban Resilience

Like many cities in the United States, Burlington faces environmental risks and challenges relating to the urban environment. Trees, when properly cared for, can serve as a solution to create a sustainable and more resilient Burlington. However, resiliency requires preparedness to overcome shocks to Burlington and the community, and a crucial component of Burlington resilience are its residents.

Thus, to enhance urban resilience, we recommend Burlington targets neighborhoods lacking access to tree canopy cover, and for tree planting prioritization to be further informed by the distribution of demographic groups that are typically more susceptible to environmental risks. These include historically marginalized populations like racial and ethnic minorities and residents living in poverty.

In Burlington, distributions of census blocks with greater presence of Non-White residents and little tree canopy cover closely resemble the distributions of census blocks with greater presence of poverty and little tree canopy. It is likely that these demographics, which are typically interrelated, are also more exposed to environmental challenges due to a lack of trees available to provide important benefits that mitigate them.

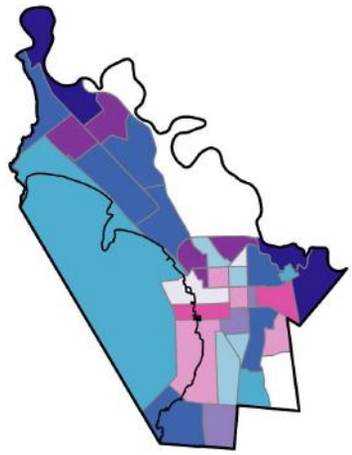
SUCEPTIBILITY AND INEQUITY

-

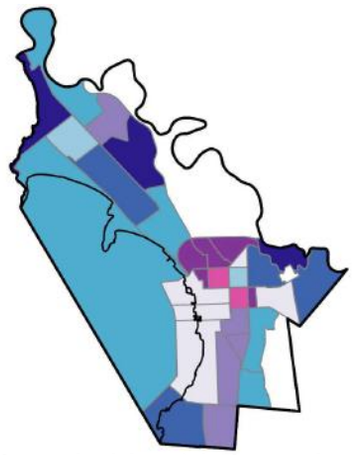
VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHICS* ARE AT GREATER RISK AGAINST ISSUES THAT IMPACT CITIES

*Other demographics at risk besides those illustrated include:

- Hispanic population
- Individuals that had strokes
- Children younger than 5
- Adults older than 65
- Individuals exposed through daily commuted (walking or public transportation)
- Individuals living in areas with hazard risk like sewage overflows



% Non-White (2020 ACS)



% Households with Annual Income < $25,000 (2020 ACS)

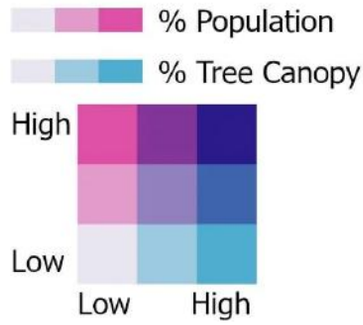


Figure 4: These maps show percent existing tree canopy cover in relation to two demographic groups that are highly interrelated and typically within the most susceptible groups against environmental challenges. Shades of pink indicate tree canopy percentage by block group, with the darkest shade indicating higher percentages. Meanwhile, shades of blue indicate percentage of residents within each of the demographic groups, with the darkest shade indicating higher percentages.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Environmental Stressors & Neighborhood Prioritization

With an increase in severe storms and extreme weather across the country, flooding and rising temperatures are two environmental challenges that impact the city of Burlington. Using both the Urban Flood Risk Mitigation and the Urban Cooling modules of the Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Tradeoffs (InVEST) tool, we were able to identify census block groups that are more at risk of flooding and high temperatures with current tree canopy.

The maps below can be used to determine tree planting allocation to strengthen community resilience against flooding and rising temperatures.

Mitigation Capacity by Local Vegetation

Flooding is of great concern for Burlignton. Trees can be critical in bank stabilization, water quality protection, and absorbing water during high precipitation events. Surface runoff retention **(a)**, as mapped with the Urban Flood Risk Mitigation module of the InVEST tool, represents the capacity for the current vegetation and soil to retain water during rain events. Areas with low runoff retention may benefit from increased tree plantings due to the capacity of vegetation acting as riparian buffers filtering runoff and absorbing precipitation into the soil. The heat island effect has a considerable impact on cities, and rising temperatures can result in fatalities (particularly among the elderly and those with cardiovascular diseases). The capacity of local vegetation to mitigate rising temperatures **(b)** varies throughout Burlington's urban landscape.

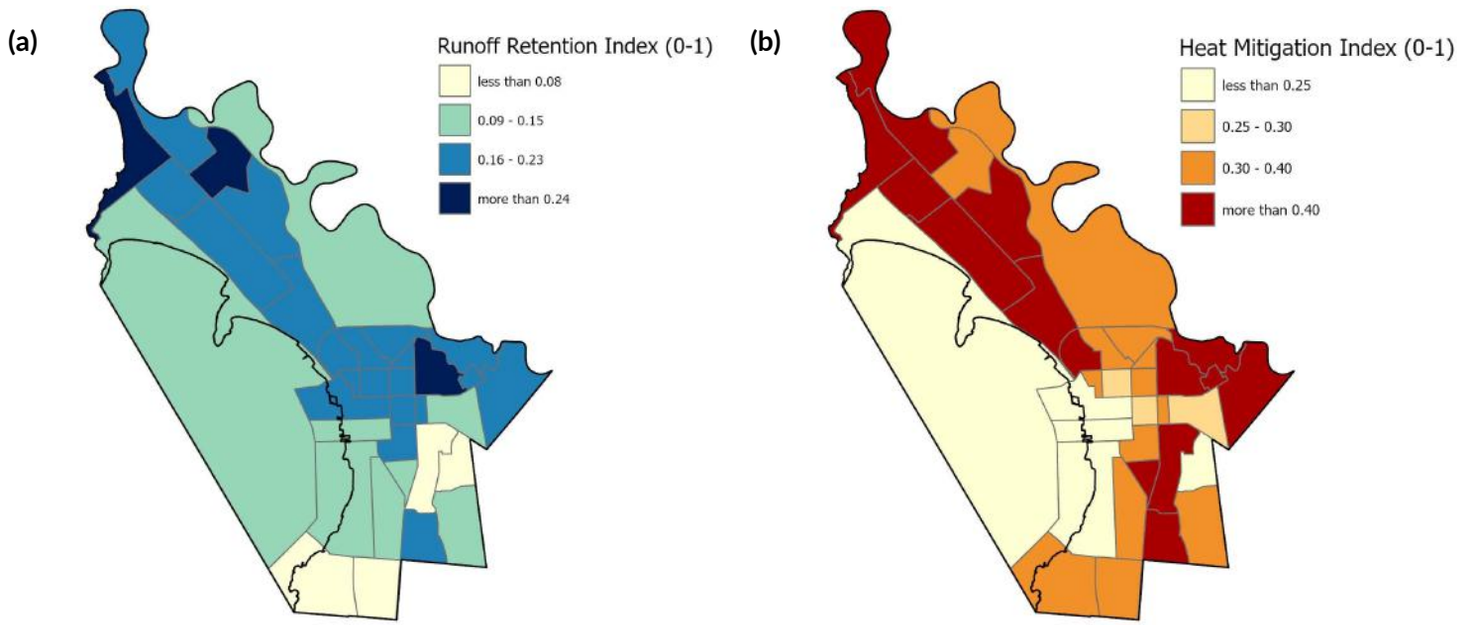


*Figure 5: **(a)** The runoff retention index indicates retention of surface runoff as mapped. The map ranges from zero (indicating low retention of runoff) to one (indicating high retention of runoff). **(b)** The heat mitigation index ranges from zero (low mitigation capacity) to one (high mitigation capacity) and was modeled with InVEST.*

LANDCOVER

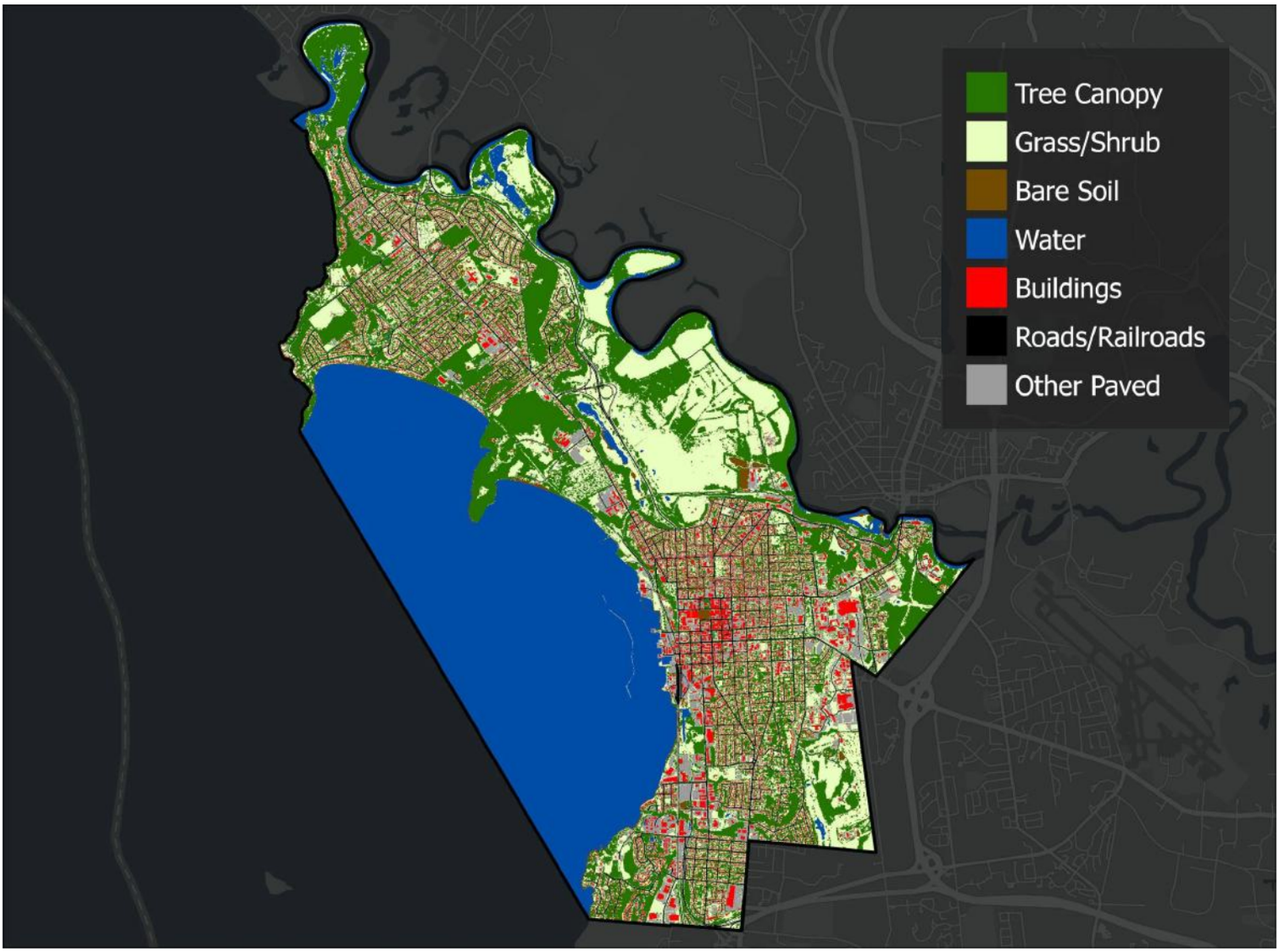


Figure 6. The new 2023 landcover for Burlington *was used in this assessment to quantify existing tree canopy, possible tree canopy - vegetated, possible tree canopy - impervious, and not suitable. The following terminology is used throughout this report.*

Key Terms

Existing Tree Canopy - The amount of tree canopy present when viewed from above using aerial or satellite imagery.

Possible Tree Canopy - **Vegetated:** Grass or shrub area that is theoretically available for **the** establishment of tree canopy.

Possible Tree Canopy - **Impervious:** Asphalt, **concrete** or bare soil surfaces, excluding roads and buildings, that are theoretically available for the establishment of tree canopy

Not Suitable - Areas where it is highly unlikely that new tree canopy could be established (primarily buildings and roads).

Measuring Tree Canopy Change

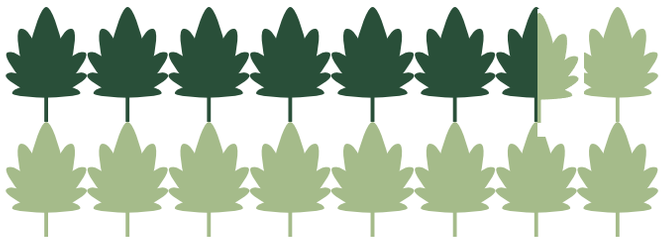
Area Change - the change in the **area of** tree canopy between the two time periods.

Relative % Change - the magnitude of change in tree canopy based on the amount of tree canopy in 2014.

Absolute % Change - the percentage point change between the two time periods.

TREE CANOPY METRICS

40% *of Burlington's land is covered by tree canopy*



Tree canopy and tree canopy change were summarized at various geographical units of analysis, ranging from tax parcels to watersheds. These tree canopy metrics provide information on the area of Existing and Possible Tree Canopy for each geographical unit.

Existing Tree Canopy

Cities commonly have uneven distribution of tree canopy, a pattern that applies to Burlington. There are some 10-acre hexagons with less than 5% tree canopy and others with nearly 100% tree canopy (Figure 7). This unequal distribution can be traced back to Burlington's history of development patterns and open space planning. Those residents who live and work in more treed areas (darker green hexagons) benefit disproportionately from the ecosystem services that trees provide. Conversely, the more urbanized regions of the Burlington have lower amounts of tree canopy and therefore receive fewer ecosystem services from trees.

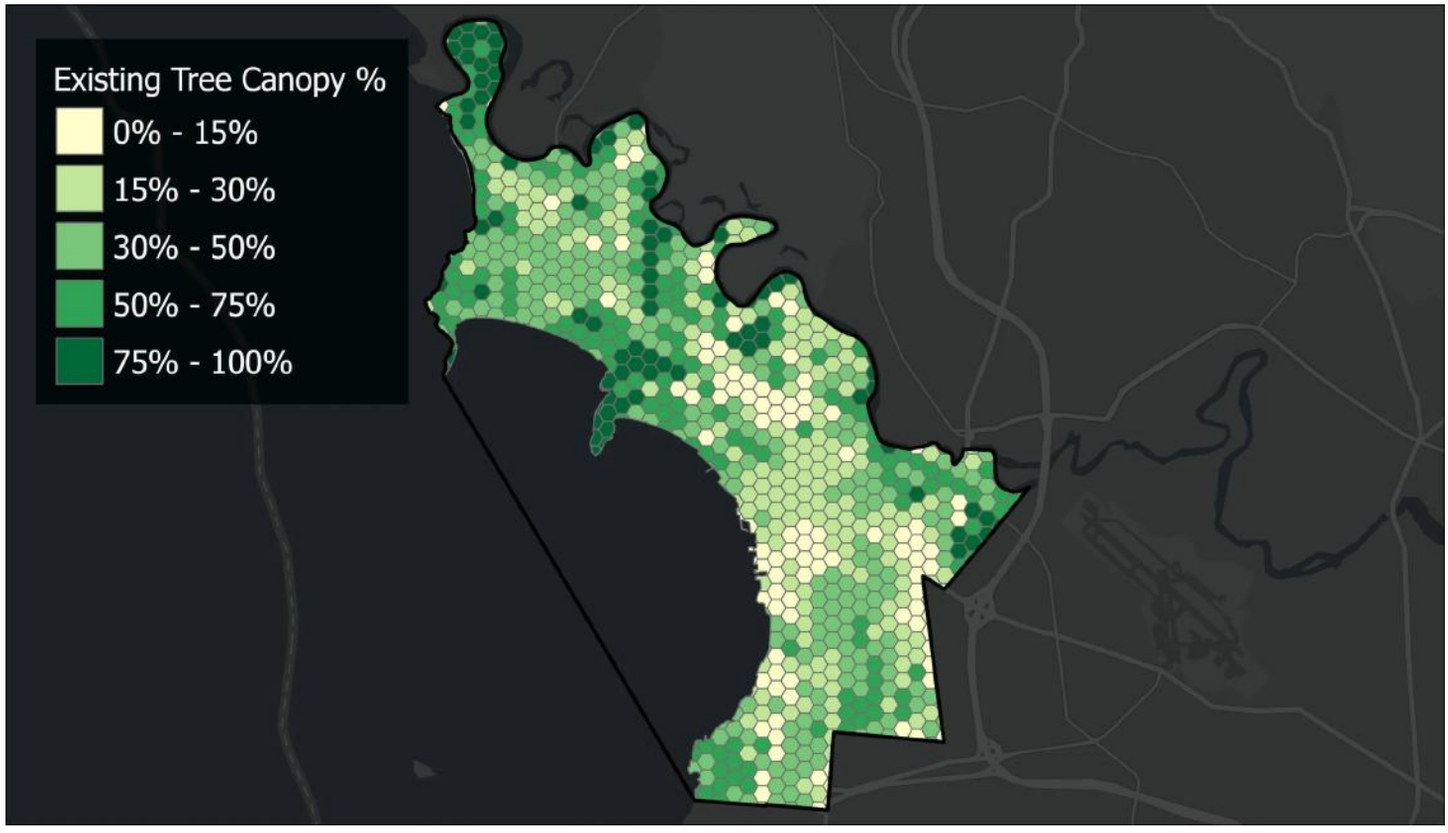


Figure 7. Existing tree canopy percentage for 2023 conditions summarized using 10-acre hexagons. For each of the hexagons, the percent tree canopy was calculated by dividing the amount of tree canopy by the land area, which excludes water. Using hexagons as the unit of analysis provides a standard mechanism for visualizing the distribution of tree canopy without the constraints of other geographies that have unequal area (e.g., zip codes).

Possible New Tree Canopy

There is available space in Burlington to plant more trees. In this assessment, any areas with no trees, buildings, roads, or bodies of water are considered Possible-Vegetation and represent locations in which trees could theoretically be established without having to remove hard surfaces. Many factors go into deciding where a tree can be planted with the necessary conditions to flourish, including land use, landscape conditions, social attitudes towards trees, and financial considerations. Examples include golf courses and recreational fields. While there is open space to plant trees, there is a direct conflict in use; thus, the Possible-Vegetation category should serve as a guide for further field analysis, not a prescription of where to plant trees. With 2,181 acres of land (comprising 33% of the the city's land area) falling into the Possible-Vegetation category, there remain significant opportunities for planting trees and preserving canopy that will improve the city's total tree canopy in the long term.

In Burlington's most densely urbanized areas, significantly increasing the tree canopy will be difficult; nevertheless, it remains vitally important to strive for canopy gains. In the Burlington's residential areas, healthy natural regeneration of the existing tree canopy and planting new trees will be important. There is often a "plant and forget" cycle in residential areas, where trees are generally planted when homes are built, without the follow-up to replace trees as they decline to establish the next generation of canopy.

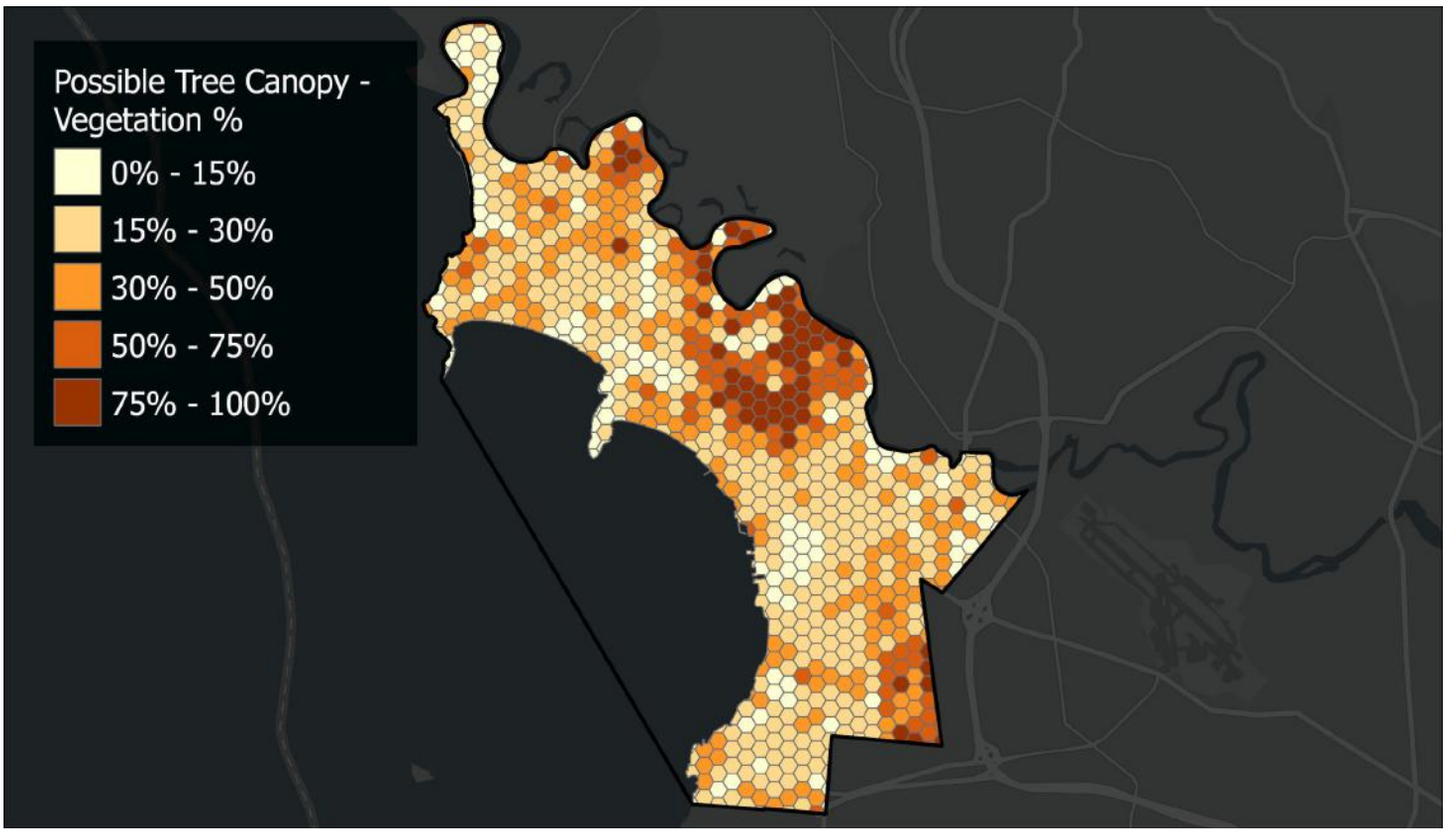


Figure 8. Possible Tree Canopy consisting of non-treed vegetated surfaces summarized by 10-acre hexagons. These vegetated surfaces that are not currently covered by tree canopy represent areas where it is biophysically feasible to establish new tree canopy. It may be financially challenging or socially undesirable to establish new tree canopy on much of this land. Examples include golf courses, recreational and agricultural fields. Maps of the Possible Tree Canopy can assist in strategic planning, but decisions on where to plant trees should be made based on field verification. Surface, underground, and above surface factors ranging from sidewalks to utilities can affect the suitability of a site for tree canopy planting.

Canopy Change Distribution — Absolute % Change

Burlington has experienced a net decrease in tree canopy over the 2014 to 2023 time period, but the story of change is more nuanced, with a mix of loss and gain. All areas of the city experienced both gains and losses of tree canopy, though some areas saw a net increase and others a net decrease. Removal and die off of mature trees resulted in the loss of large patches of tree canopy. Mature trees with large crowns contribute substantially to tree canopy and take decades to grow, so their loss creates large, localized declines in tree canopy. Even though there was evidence of tree loss throughout the Burlington, planting efforts, preservation programs, and natural growth helped offset losses and stem decline. Canopy begets canopy as almost all trees gain canopy on an annual basis. Trees, when properly cared for, can mitigate environmental risks challenges relating to the urban environment such as flooding, air quality, and urban heat island. This makes tree canopy an important part of a the city's infrastructure.

The trajectory of Burlington's tree canopy in the future is uncertain. There are both environmental and anthropogenic risks facing canopy cover. Invasive species could pose a serious threat if not identified and controlled early. Natural events such as storms can have a mixed impact on the canopy. In conserved areas, tree canopy will return through natural growth, but in urbanized areas, trees lost to storms will need to be replanted. Climate change may cause trees to grow more quickly but could also result in inhospitable conditions for native species. Anthropogenic factors include preservation and conservation efforts and the strength of tree ordinances. Managing these risks will be key to achieving sustained canopy growth.

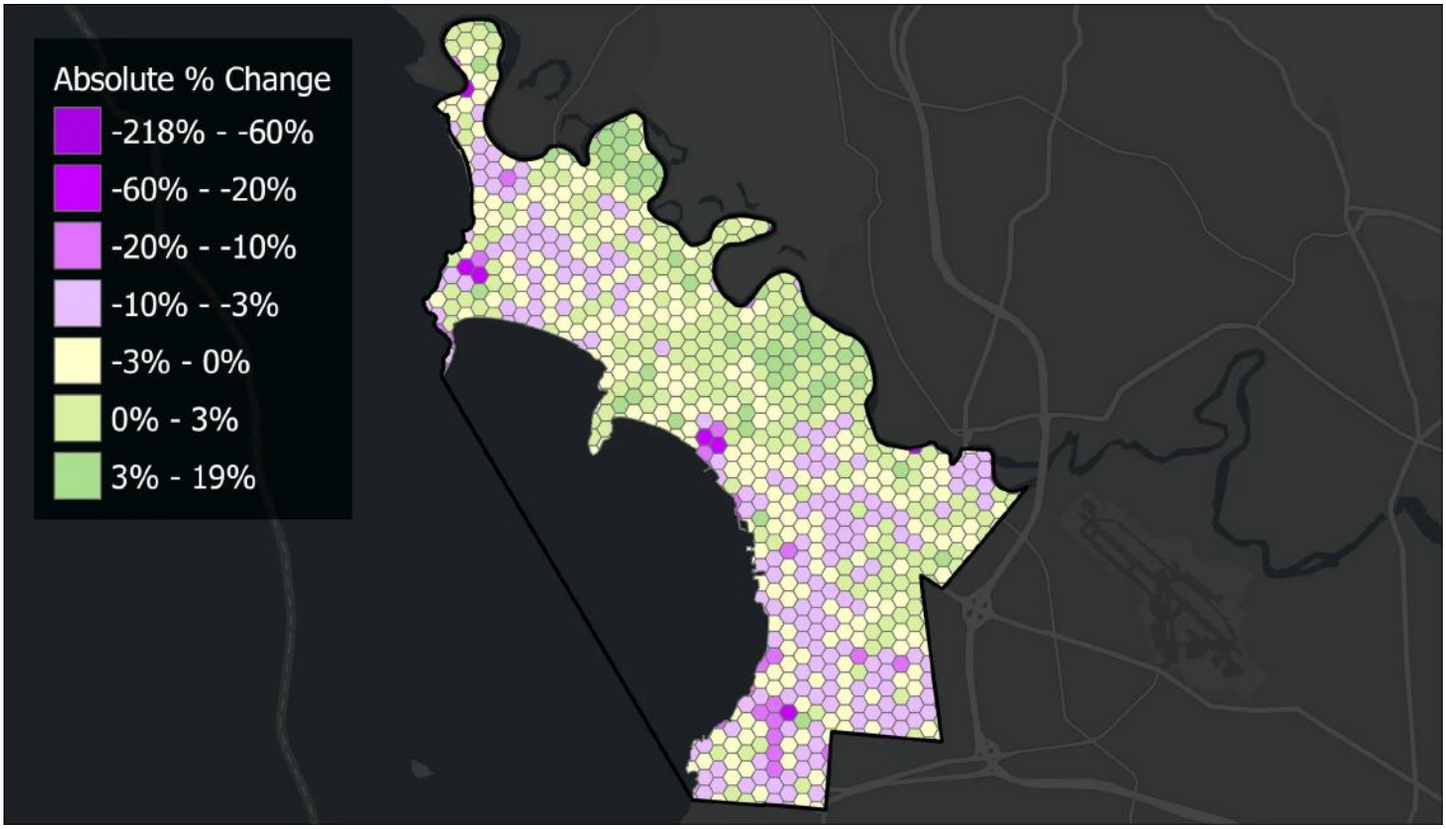


Figure 9: Tree canopy change summarized by 10-acre hexagons. Darker greens indicate greater gain, while darker purple reflects higher amounts of loss.

Canopy Change Distribution - Relative % Change

The magnitude of tree canopy change across Burlington can be measured by the relative tree canopy change over the 2014 - 2023 period. The relative change is calculated by taking the tree canopy area in 2014, subtracting the tree canopy area in 2023, then dividing this number by the area of tree canopy in 2014. Areas with the greatest change indicate that the canopy is markedly different in 2023 as compared to 2014. In some of the commercial and urbanized areas with little tree canopy in 2014, the growth of street trees resulted in a sizeable relative gain. Conversely, the removal of trees as a result of construction in sparsely treed areas resulted in substantial relative reductions in tree canopy.

The greatest relative gains in tree canopy were in locations where new plantings were carried out on areas with little tree canopy to begin with. Just as forest patches provide valuable ecosystem services, such as wildlife habitat, so do individual trees. In areas with low tree canopy, an individual tree can have an outsized impact, through ecosystem services such as providing a refuge from the sun while watching a baseball game, shading cars in a parking lot or helping to reduce homeowner air conditioning costs. Though growing conditions in Right of Way (ROW) areas can be tough, they are a tool to increase canopy in low coverage, often impervious surface dominated areas. Natural growth can provide gains in areas with robust canopy, but in areas with low canopy, such as commercial spaces, tree plantings are an important part a long-term plan to increase tree canopy and resulting ecosystem services.

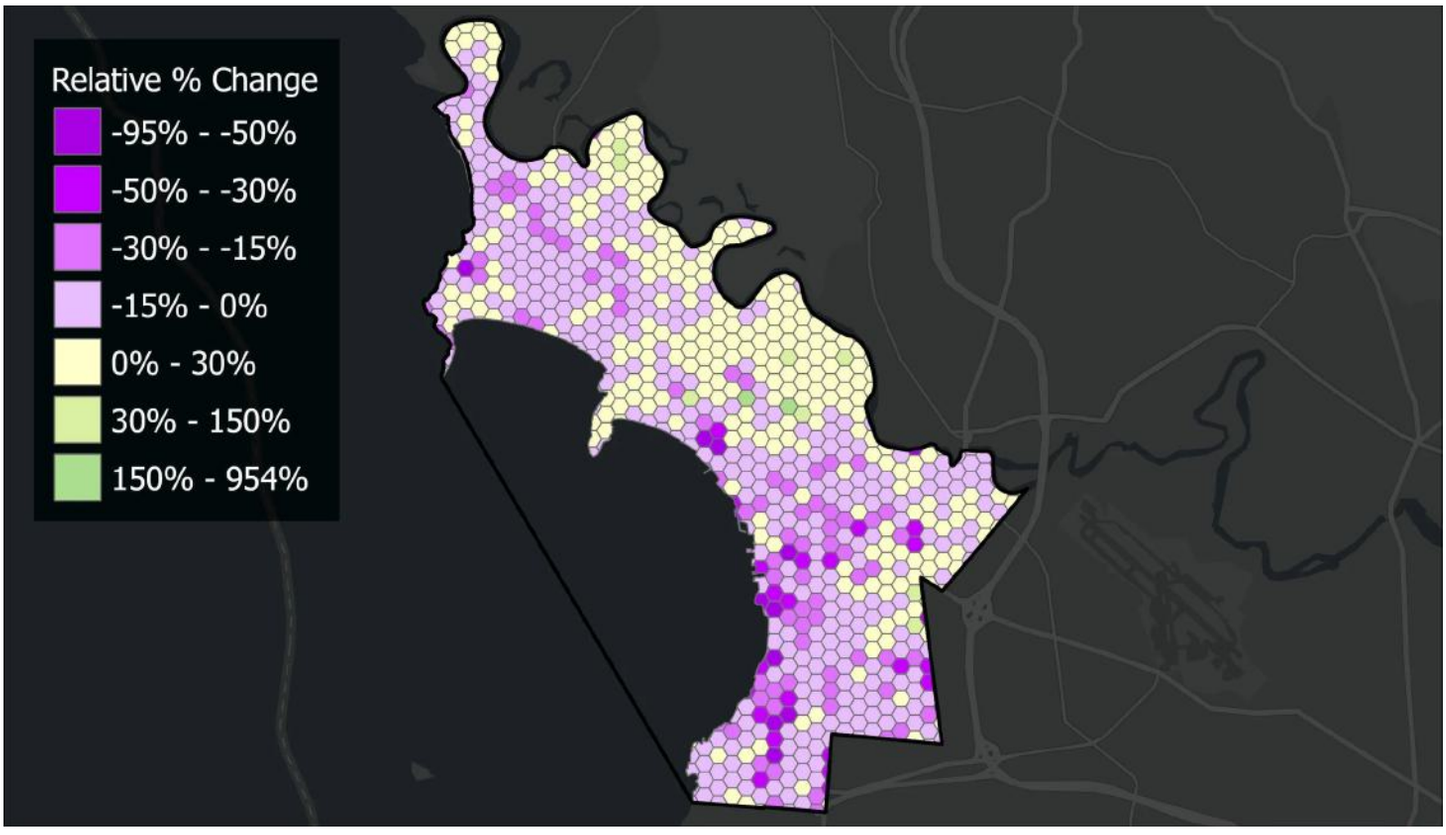


Figure 10: Tree canopy change metrics summarized by 10-acre hexagons. Relative tree canopy is calculated by using the formula (2014-2023)/2023. Colors are categorized by data quantiles. Darker greens indicate greater relative gain, while darker purple reflects a higher magnitude of loss.

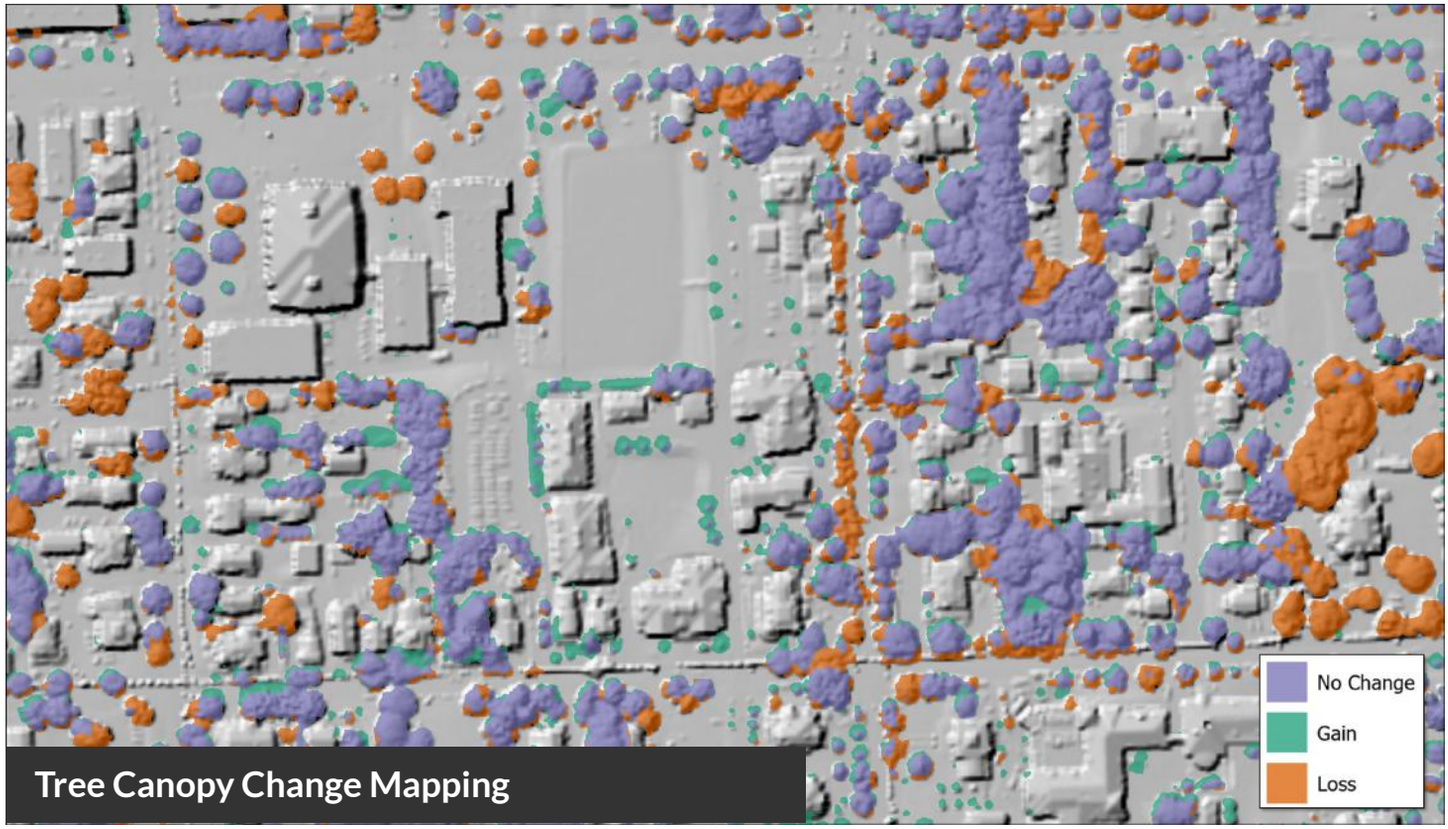


Figure 11: Tree canopy change mapping for the area surrounding S Willard St overlaid on 2014 LiDAR. This area experienced a mix of gain and loss.

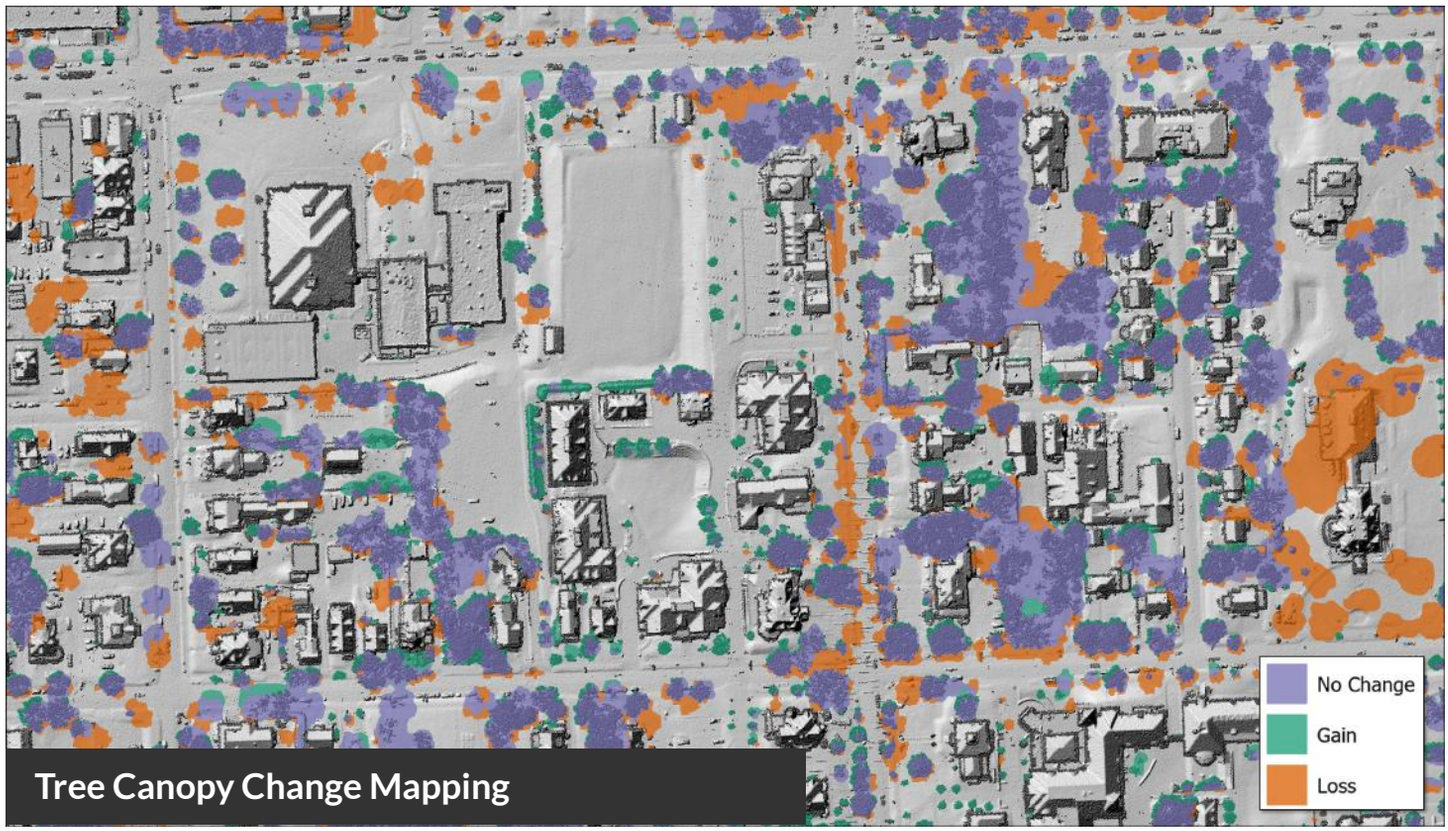


Figure 12: Tree canopy change for the same area above but overlaid on the 2023 LiDAR. The areas of gain appear rough now that tree canopy is present, and the areas of loss appear smooth due to the absence of tree canopy.

PATTERNS OF CHANGE

Numerous factors contribute to the wide range of tree canopy change patterns of Burlington. These include zoning, land use history, urban density, and landowner decisions. The examples that follow illustrate how these factors influence canopy change. Examining patterns and processes over the past decade can provide insights into how the canopy may change in the future.

Natural Succession Drives Growth

Growth of already existing canopy was the largest driver of Burlington's tree canopy gains. Tree planting and natural succession are slow but important processes for increasing urban tree canopy.

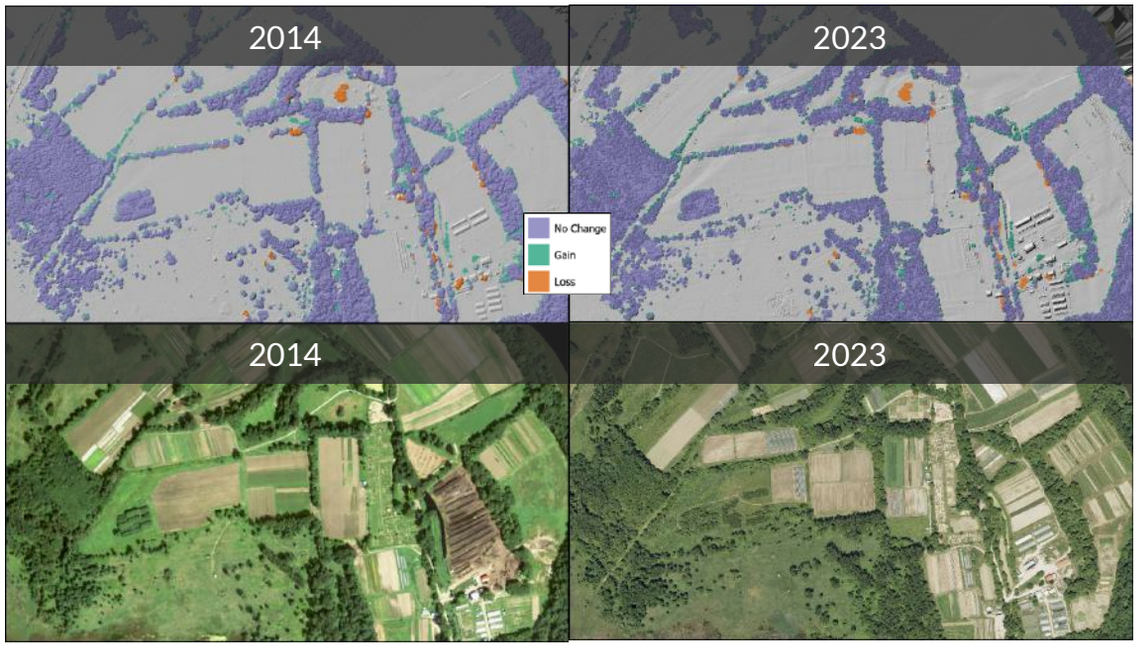


Figure 13. Natural growth in the Burlington Intervale created a net increase in tree canopy in the area.

Tree canopy gain

Agricultural Area

Natural Sucession

Natural Areas Provide Ecosystem Services

Forested areas provide important wildlife habitat, pollution mitigation, and outdoor recreation opportunites.

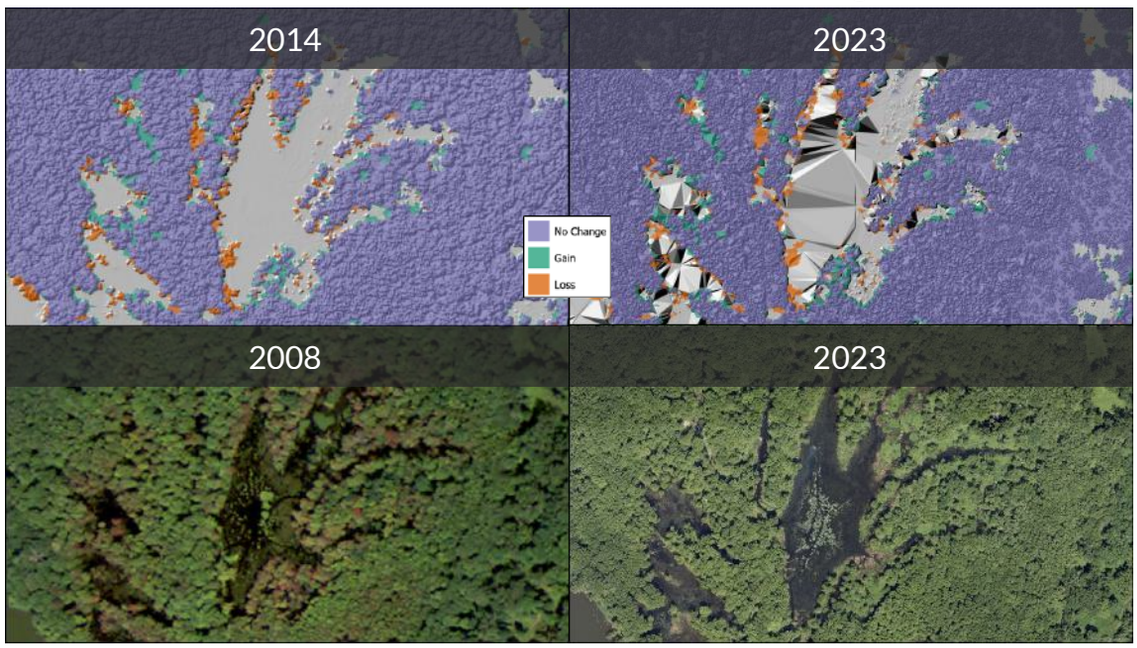


Figure 14. In the Derway Island Nature Preserve natural processes like storms result in downed branches and trees, which are quickly filled in with canopy from surrounding trees.

Stable Canopy

Protected Area

Wildlife Habitat

Residents are Key

Trees continue to grow and contribute canopy in established neighborhoods, but age, disease, invasive species, storms, and changing landowner preferences all contribute to removals. As a result, losses may outpace gains over time if replacement trees are not planted.

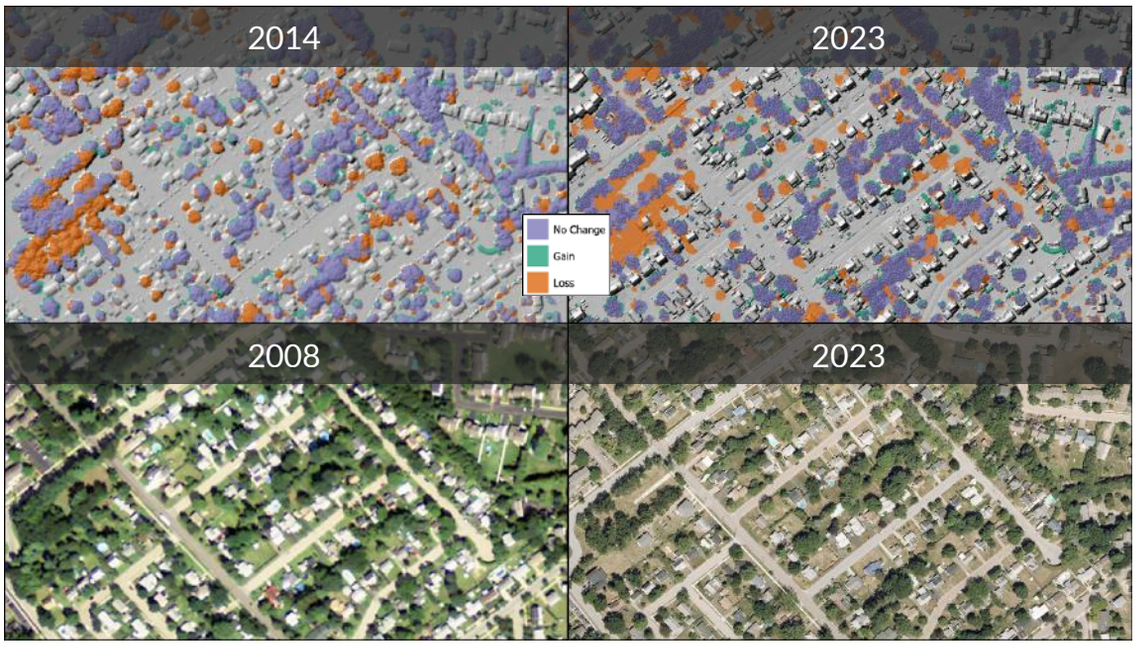


Figure 15. Natural growth of existing tree canopy helped to mitigate losses in this residential area off North Ave

Mix of Loss and Gains

Neighborhood

Widespread Tree Removal

Construction Associated with Tree Canopy Losses

Redevelopment is a natural part of a city's lifecycle and often needed to revitalize communities, create opportunities, and enhance quality of life for residents. But care should be taken to balance development needs with the essential ecosystem services that urban forest patches provide. Trees are often removed to provide space for new construction but new tree planting can help offset losses.

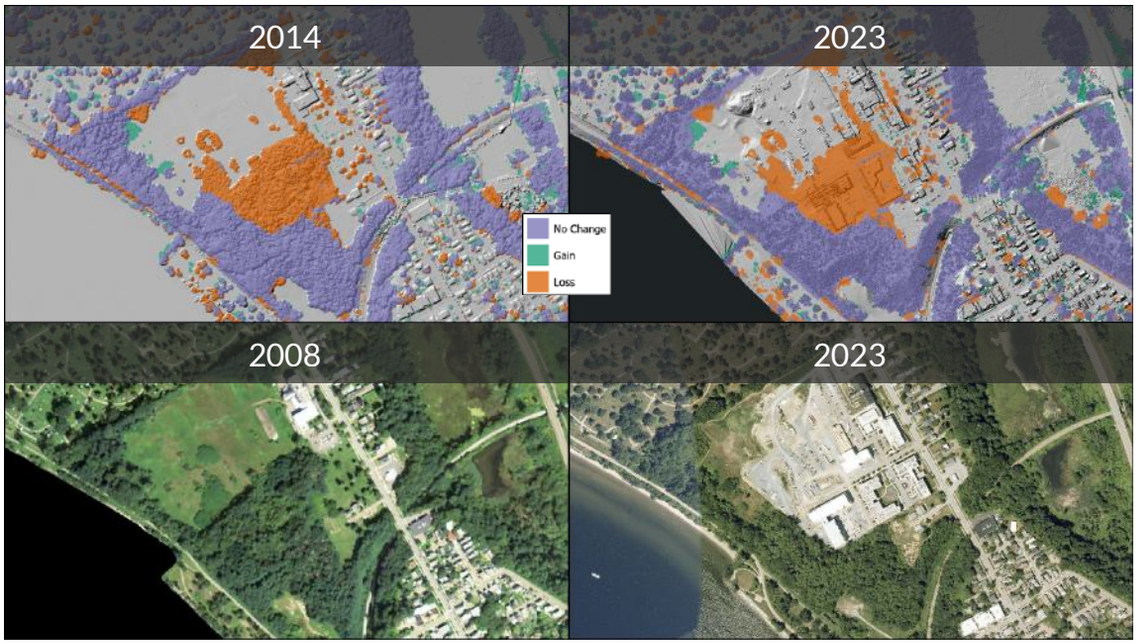


Figure 16. Construction for the redevelopment of the former Burlington College into housing, resulted in tree canopy loss.

Forest Patch Loss

Multi-Family Residential Area

New Construction

Wards

The city's official geographic boundaries are a useful way to summarize tree canopy and draw comparisons between parts of the city and allow communities to make informed decisions about their tree canopy. The differences in canopy between Burlington's wards is the result of land use history and changes to the built environment. Areas with large parks and open space or those that have lower density development tend to have more canopy, while areas that are more dense with commercial or industrial use tend to have less tree canopy. Ward 4 had the highest tree canopy coverage at 53% followed by Ward 1 at 47% and Ward 7 at 46% . Ward 3, which contains the downtown area, had the lowest tree canopy coverage at 17. Ward 7 had the largest area of tree canopy with 784 acres, representing 30% of the city's total tree canopy area. Each ward experienced both gain and loss of tree canopy within their boundaries, but overall losses outpaced gains in all but one of the city's wards. Only Ward 2, saw a net increase, gaining 6 acres of tree canopy between 2014 and 2023. Ward 5 saw the largest declines, losing 38 acres of tree canopy, followed by Ward 4 which lost 26 acres.

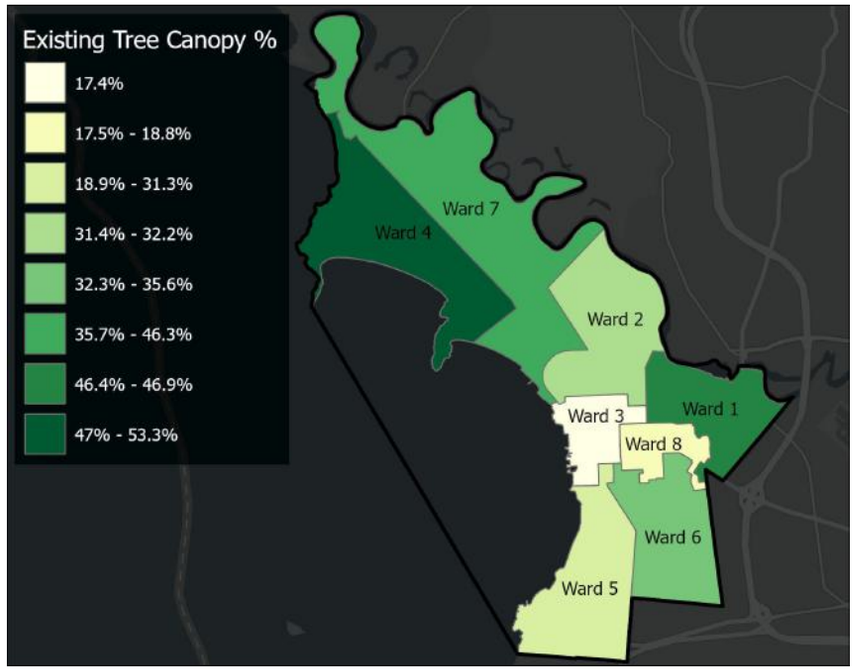


Figure 17: Existing tree canopy percentage for 2023 conditions summarized by Ward.

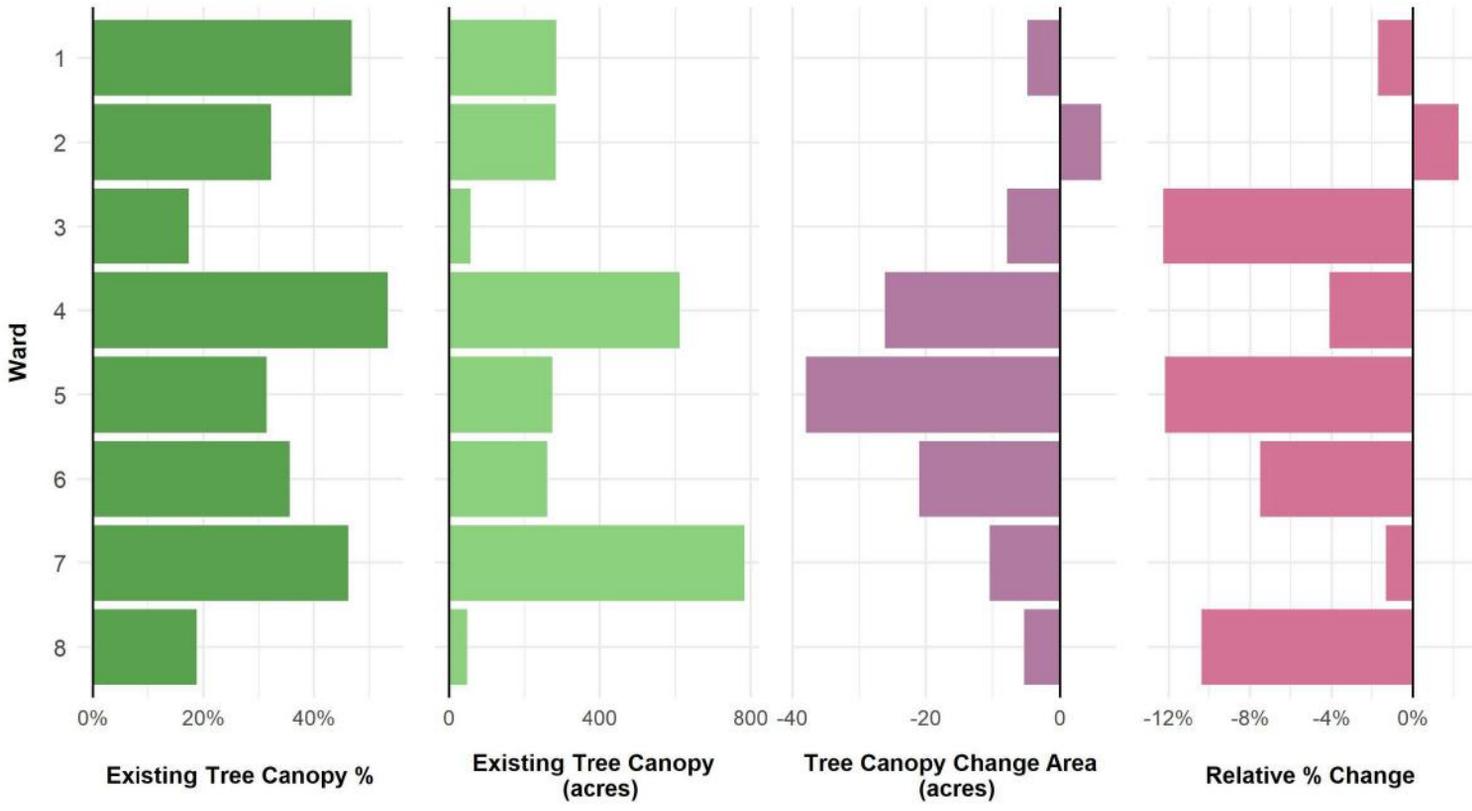


Figure 18: Tree canopy and change metrics summarized by Ward.

Parcel Land Use

Land use is how humans make use of the land including the economic and cultural activities (e.g., agricultural, residential, and commercial) practiced in the city. Land use is not to be mistaken by land cover which refers to landscape features, such as trees, buildings, water and other classes mapped as part of this study. Understanding the location and land-use types that tree canopy falls into is important information for coordination and planning purposes. Tree canopy cover was calculated in terms of percent of the land area within each district (Figure 20) to understand the proportion of canopy coverage for each, and as a percent of city-wide total tree canopy area (Figure 19) to determine contribution to Burlington's overall tree canopy.

The largest share (978 acres or 37.5%) of Burlington's tree canopy falls within residential parcels. Residential parcels also saw the largest decrease in tree canopy over the T1-T2 period with a net loss of 66.5 acres. The next largest share, 627 acres or 24% of the city's tree canopy exists on city property parcels. This land use saw the second largest losses with a decrease of 35 acres of tree canopy. The largest gains in tree canopy was seen on farmland parcels which saw a net increase of 9.7 acres of tree canopy.

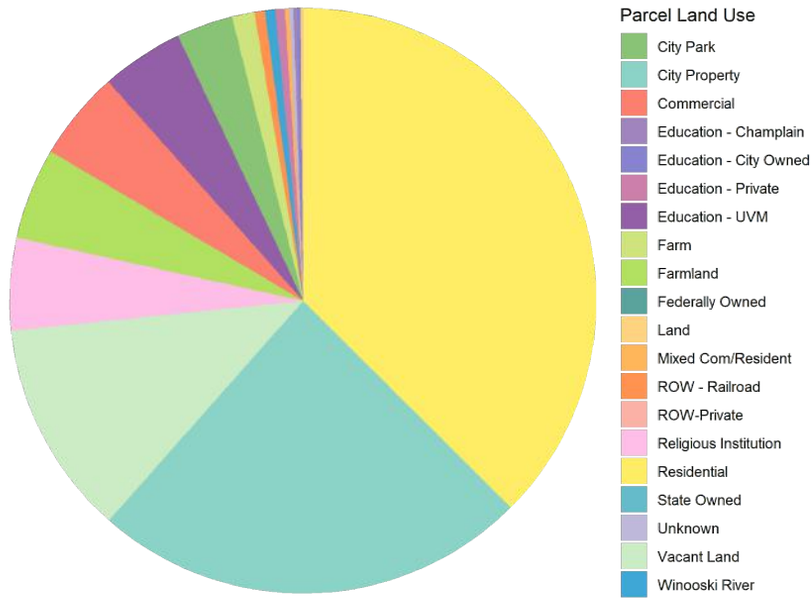


Figure 19: Burlington Tree Canopy Distribution by parcel land use.

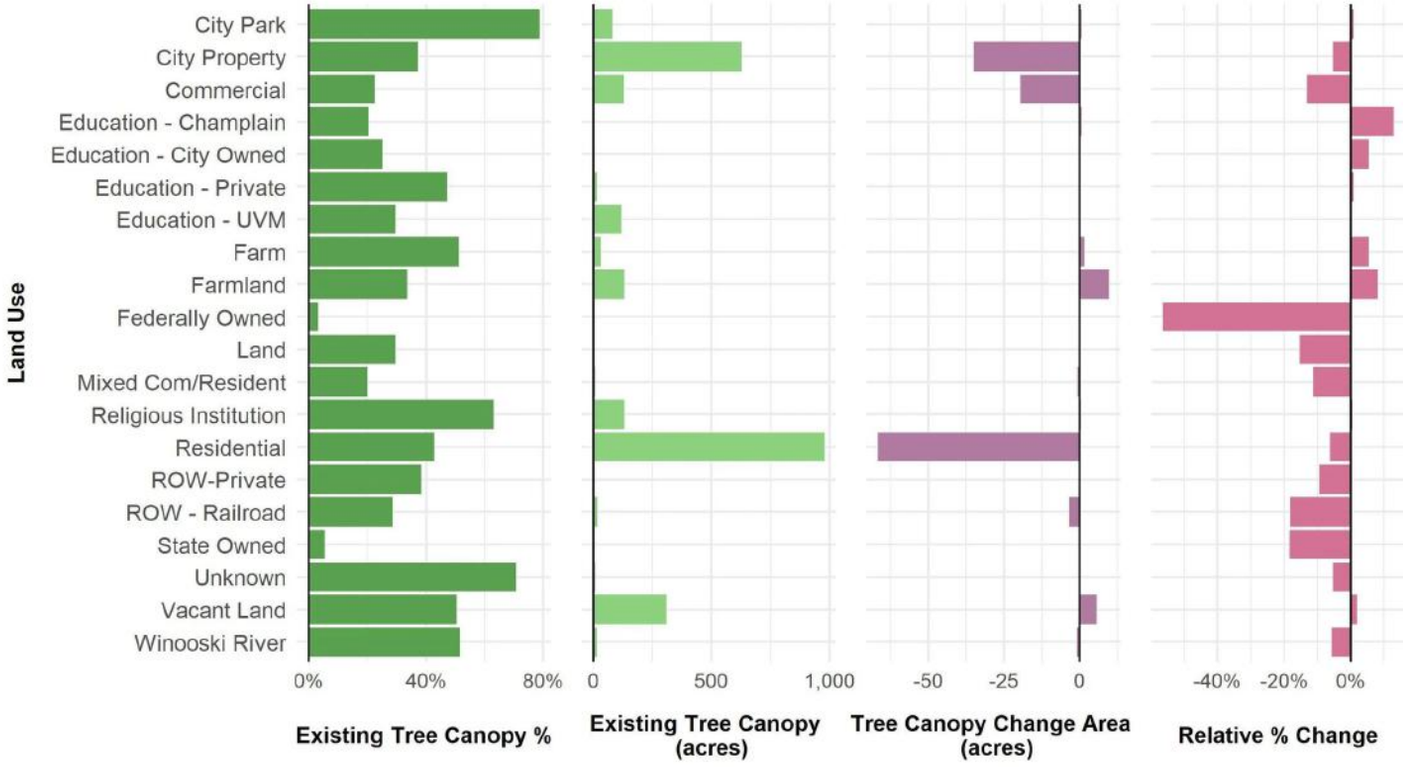


Figure 20: Tree canopy and change metrics summarized by parcel land use.

Watersheds

Watersheds represent areas in which water moves and drains in order to reach streams, lakes, and other waterbodies. Burlington's tree canopy is an important factor in managing the health of the city's three watersheds. The land use within a watershed can have large impacts on its health, including water quality and flood risk. Maintaining robust tree canopy can mitigate problems associated with impervious surfaces within a watershed by managing stormwater runoff, filtering pollution, and stabilizing the banks of streams and rivers. Existing tree canopy coverage within each watershed ranged from 37.5% in Burlington Direct Land Drainage, to 42% in the Tributaries to Lower Winooski watershed, to 50% in Shelburne Bay Direct Drainage. In the Burlington Direct Land Drainage watershed, 106 acres of tree canopy were lost between 2014 and 2023. The Shelburne Bay Direct Drainage watershed lost 12 acres, though this resulted in a higher magnitude of loss with a relative percent change of -8.3%. The Tributaries to Lower Winooski watershed is the only one to see a net increase in tree canopy, with an 11 acre increase over the 2014-2023 time period.

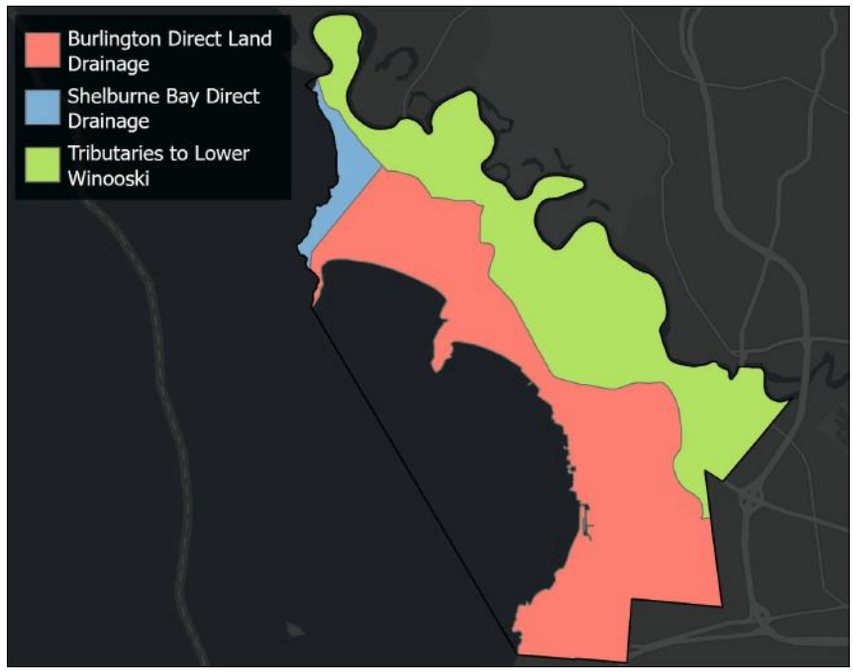


Figure 21: Burlington watersheds by which tree canopy metrics were summarized.

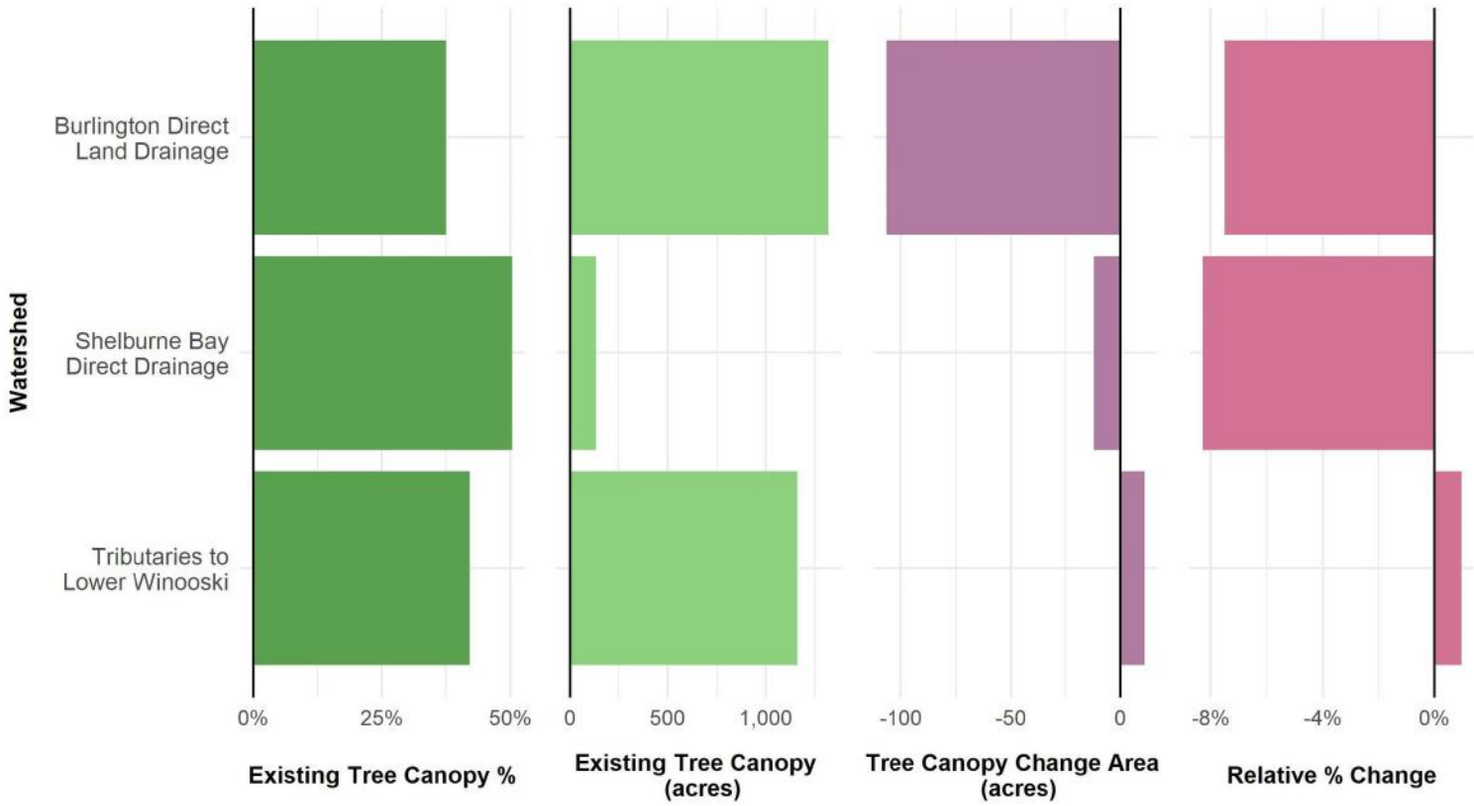


Figure 22: Tree canopy and change metrics summarized by watershed.

TREE HEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

Tree height is a useful proxy for tree age. Diverse height structure indicates a healthy and varied tree age distribution. Even-aged urban tree canopy results when trees were planted around the same time and can lead to a sudden and widespread loss in canopy when many mature trees reach the end of their lifespan at the same time. Age diversity supports a more resilient canopy over time, ensuring that that not all trees reach maturity at the same time.

In Burlington, the most prevalent height of trees is 40-50 feet, with the number of trees in each height class dropping dramatically as the height of trees increases past 60ft tall (Figure 23). There are few trees greater than 110ft tall, which can be expected in an urbanized area.

Mature trees have greater capacity to offer ecosystem services to urban residents. Loss of taller, more mature trees results in loss of those benefits and potential impacts to the overall canopy cover. It will be important to preserve trees in the 50-80 foot height range, while planting a variety of new trees to continue the lifecycle. Proper care and monitoring will help to develop the next generation of trees that reach maturity and balance the distribution. Having trees with a broad age distribution, as well as a variety of species, will ensure that a robust and healthy tree canopy is possible over time. Specific information on individual trees is collected via on-the-ground field inventories and was not captured in this assessment.

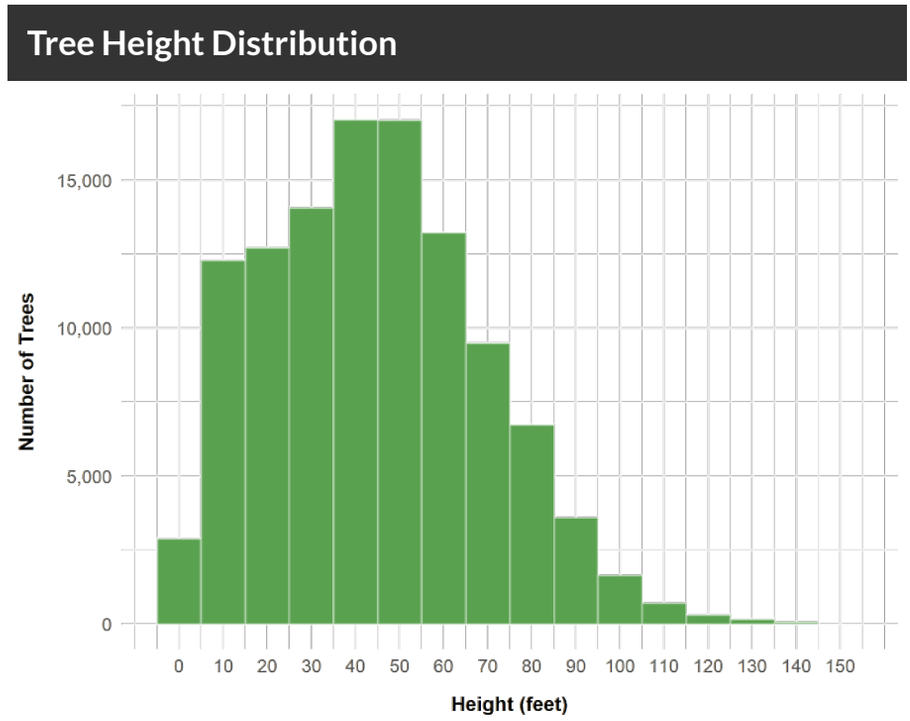


Figure 23: Histogram of the tree canopy height displaying the number of trees in each 10-foor bin.

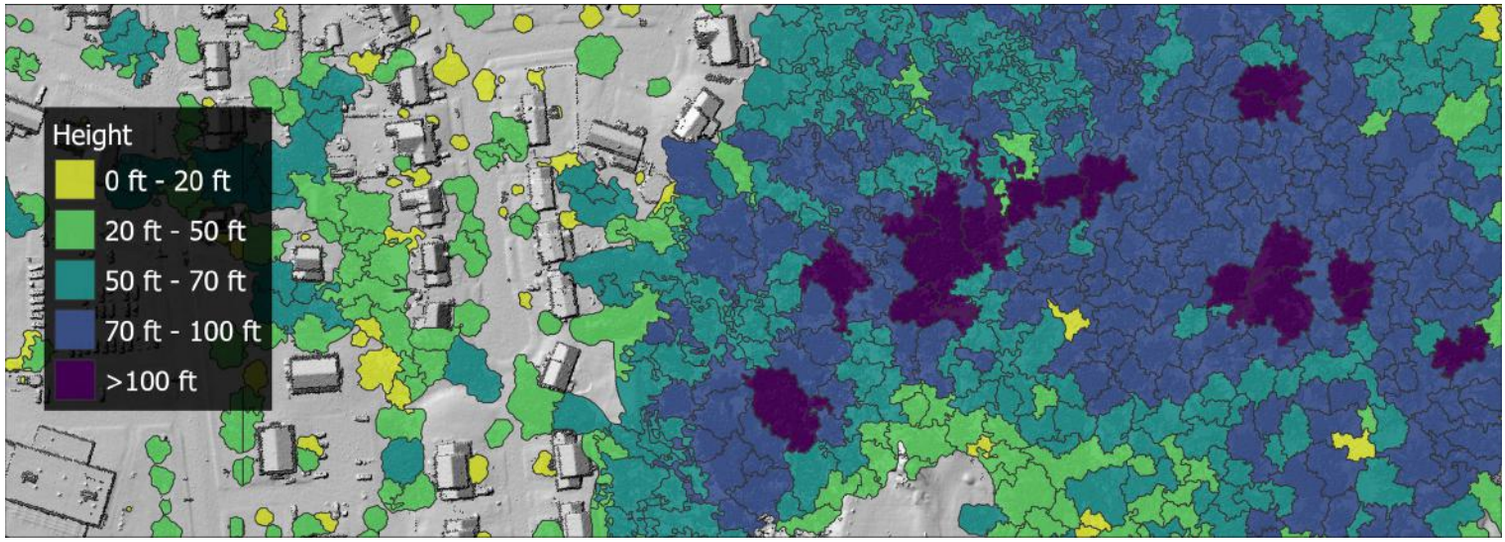


Figure 24: Example of the height classification with darker green representing taller canopy. Burlington's tree canopy was segmented into polygons approximating individual trees. Each of these polygons was then attributed with the height from the 2023 LiDAR.

FOREST PATCH SIZE

Along with the size, distribution, and diversity of urban forests, structure is another key factor to consider in management decisions. Urban forests are made up of patches of tree canopy interspersed throughout the landscape. This project used an algorithm to divide Burlington's tree canopy into five forest patch classes based on their morphology.

Forest patches, large and small, serve important roles in urban landscapes. Small patches and individual trees can provide access to natural areas and associated benefits in urban settings and can serve as stepping stones for wildlife traveling between larger forest patches. It is critical to maintain large patches of forest since they are necessary for certain ecosystem services that smaller patches cannot provide. In addition to producing outsized benefits like pollution mitigation and cooling, large forest patches can accommodate species with larger home ranges and species that rely on interior forest. This supports biodiversity by providing habitat for a wider variety of species than small patches alone can support.

Forest Patch Size Classes



Figure 25: Overview of Burlington forest patches by size (left). Example close-up of forest patch size classification (right). Forest patches are groups of trees surrounded by other, non-forested, land cover types.

Forest Patch Total Area

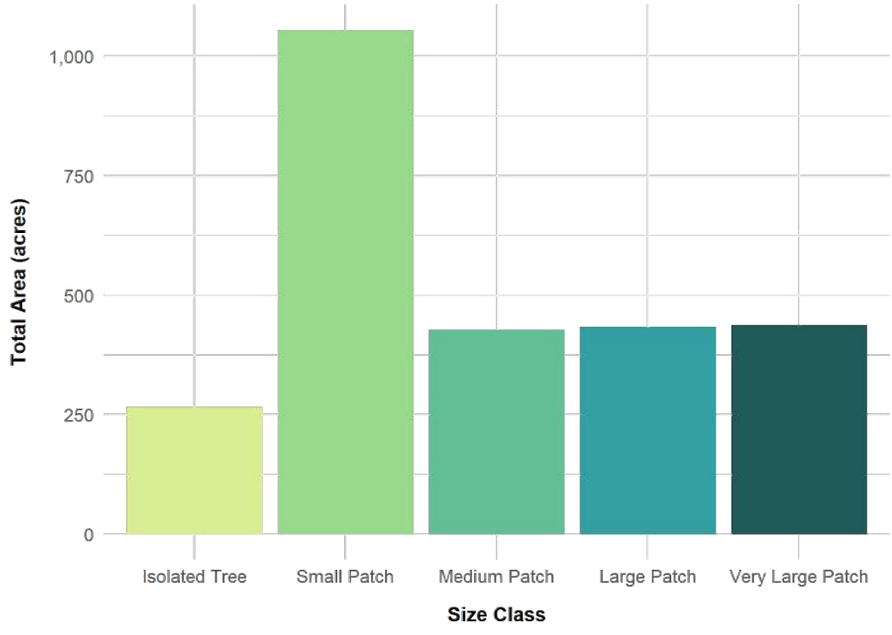
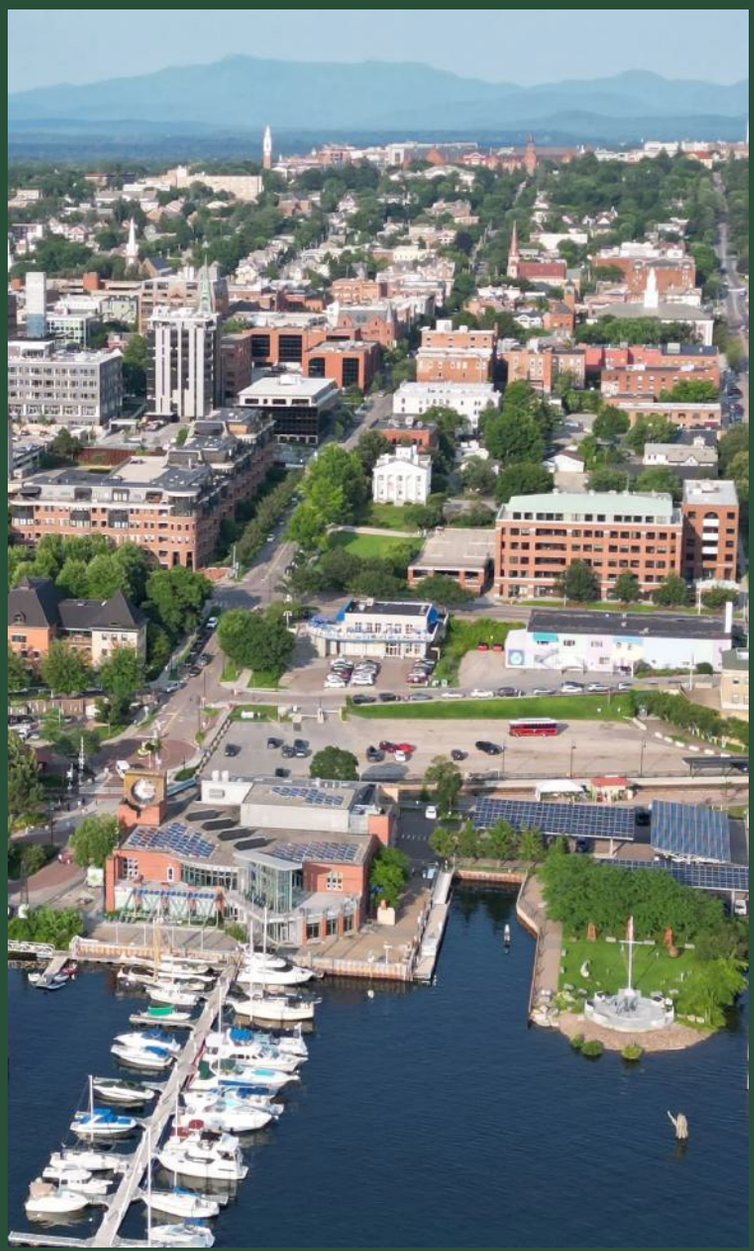


Figure 26: Total area of each forest patch size class.

The largest share of Burlington's tree canopy exists in small patches, with the total area of that size class adding up to 1,055 acres (Figure 26). Very large patches (438 acres), large patches (433 acres), and medium patch (427 acres) total areas were relatively consistent, though their locations in Burlington are concentrated in the northern portion of the city (Figure 25). Isolated trees made up the smallest total area of the five size categories covering a total of 266 acres throughout the city.

This assessment was carried out by the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Lab in collaboration with Burlington, Vermont. The methods and tools used for this assessment were developed in partnership with the USDA Forest Service. The source data used for the mapping came from the City of Burlington, the State of Vermont, and the USDA. The project was funded by the City of Burlington Additional support for this project was provided by the Gund Institute for Environment at the University of Vermont. Computations were performed on the Vermont Advanced Computing Core supported in part by NSF award No. OAC-1827314.



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University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Lab

APPENDIX C:
Glossary of Key Terms

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
aggressive introduced species	A non-native species that spreads or reproduces rapidly, with detrimental effects on its environment, particulary at the expense of native species.
agroforestry	The intentional integration of trees and shrubs into crop and animal farming systems to create environmental, economic, and social benefits.
Comprehensive Plan	The City's primary land use plan that addresses topics such as housing, transportation, conservation, preservation, economic development, flood hazards, and energy. It is updated every 8 years as required by Vermont statute.
Conservation Legacy Fund	A dedicated fund created in 2004 following adoption of the original Open Space Protection Plan that provides financial support for conservation land acquisition, stewardship, and conservation education wthin the City of Burlington.
edge effect	Occurs where two differing habitat types meet, such as where yards or grassy fields and forests meet. While edges can be biodiverse because they include elements of both habitat types, there are often detrimental factors for the forest such as increased light, heat, pollution, predators and aggressive introduced species from the highly managed yard/field.
food forest	A diverse planting of edible plants that attempts to mimic the ecosystems and patterns found in nature.
foraging	The practice of collecting wild food, typically in natural areas, consisting of edible plants, fruit, mushrooms, and nuts.
green design standards	Guidelines for development that address both buildings and the land surrounding them that address things like resource conservation, energy and water efficiency, sustainability, connectivity and functionality of green spaces and the built environment, and environmental quality indoors and out.
green infrastructure	An adaptable term used to describe an array of practices, products, and technologies that use natural systems—or engineered sytems that mimic natural processes—to enhance overall environmental quality and provide utility services such as stormwater management, air pollution mitigation, carbon sequestration, and cooling to mitigate urban heat island effects.
greenbelt	The strip of vegetation, typically grass and street trees, between the street curb and sidewalk.

Term	Definition
grow not mow	Typically conversion of manicured green spaces, like lawns, to their natural state. It goes beyond simply not mowing and includes replacement of nonnative vegetation with native plant species. See also "rewild."
infill	Development on vacant or moderately developed land within an existing urban areas. It typically provides additional development density served by existing utilities and other infrastructure. Infill will be guided by green design standards as Burlington continues to grow its housing stock.
LiDAR	Stands for Light Detection and Ranging, LiDAR is a remote sensing technology that uses laser pulses from aircraft to measure ground characteristics like lawns, forests, water, pavement, and buildings.
native plant habitat	An area with vegetation consisting largely of plants and insects that are endemic to the area.
nature-based climate solutions (NBCS)	Tools and strategies that keep and grow out the capacity of natural systems to provide needed climate resilience through storm water absorption, urban cooling, carbon sequestration, flood mitagation and air filtration.
pocket forest	A small patch of woodland surrounded by built environment or unwooded green space.
pocket park	A small, ususally public, green space within an otherwise dense urban environment.
pollinator habitats	Areas of native plants and trees that provide resources for pollinators such as bees, butterflys and other pollinating insects.
rewild	The conversion of developed or manicured green space areas to its natural state, inclusive of native plants.
stewardship zone	Priority areas, typically around core natural areas, for providing information and other resources to landowners and residents to increase awareness about how their actions affect the natural function of nearby open spaces and support best practices on their property.
urban forest	The complete collection of wooded areas, small to large, across all property types (public, private, & institutional) in the city.
urban heat island	The phenomenon where urbanized areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas, particularly in summer. The phenomenon is caused by materials in the built environment (such as concrete, pavement, brick) and relative lack of vegetation.

APPENDIX D:
List of Partners

List of Partners

Abbreviation/Acronym	Organization
CEDO	Community and Economic Development Office
REIB	Racial Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
WVPD	Winooski Valley Park District
UVM	University of Vermont
VHCB	Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
CCRPC	Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
BHS	Burlington High School
NPA	Neighborhood Planning Assemblies
DPI	Department of Permitting and Inspections
WNRCD	Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
VT DEC	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
BLUE	Burlington's Residential Stormwater Management Program
VGN	Vermont Garden Network
ECHO	ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain
BCA	Burlington City Arts
BPRW	Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront
BACG	Burlington Area Community Garden
AALV	Associations of Africans Living in Vermont
NFNA	New Farms for New Americans

APPENDIX E:
Implementation Matrices

CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 1: Expand Restoration and Management City-wide							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 1.1	Develop restoration and management plans for core natural areas. Use existing management plans as templates and work with other organizations to ensure alignment across plans. Prioritize plans for ecological significance.	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	Qualified ecologists	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.2	Inventory current initiatives and projects that support Nature Based Climate Solutions, identify gaps, and outline future initiatives/projects to close gaps.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, NBCS grantees, Water Resources	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.3	Adjust the City's green infrastructure definition to go beyond stormwater management and to include elements such as the urban forest, natural areas, wetlands, and green corridors.	Conservation Board	Water Resources, DPI, City Planning, NRCD, "Friends of" groups	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.4	Establish city- and community-wide values and methods for aggressive introduced species management. Communicate in the communications plan (See EX1.3).	Parks Conservation Team and Wildways	State of Vermont, Parks maintenance team, large landowners (e.g. Intervale)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.3
CS 1.5	Update Natural Resource Protection District Map for consistency with Open Space Plan's core natural areas.	City Planning/DPI	Conservation Board, Planning Commission	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.6	Continue to restore urban waterways like Potash, Centennial, Englesby Brooks (through partnerships, restoration activities, and regulations like buffer zones).	Parks Conservation Team	VT DEC, Water Resources, WVPD, BLUE Stormwater	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 1.7	*See also in CONNECT: CN2.3. Support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 2: Support Wildlife Movement and Ecological Health							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 2.1	Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, VGN, Grow Wild	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.2	Increase data collection on Burlington's Wildlife Corridors (e.g. species use, frequency of use, key environmental components) to incorporate in other City processes (e.g. zoning, neighborhood codes).	Parks Conservation Team	UVM, VT Fish and Wildlife, City Planning, DPI, Conservation Board	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.3	Continue to identify opportunities to improve large forest areas and improve habitat for songbirds and other indicator species.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team	-	YES (ongoing)	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 2.4	Create an open-access dashboard tracking key indicators related to wildlife, water quality, and restoration with suggested ways to make progress.	City Planning (provide data), IT Department (set up dashboard) Parks, Communications (maintain dashboard)	City Planning (Data Analysts), Park Conservation Team, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CS 3: Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 3.1	Increase the Conservation Legacy Fund.	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayor's Office, Director of Financial Operations	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 3.2	Review the Conservation Legacy Fund and evaluate expanding the definition of potential fund uses to support conservation goals and values expressed in the Fund's inception (e.g. conservation infrastructure, education, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.).	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayors Office, Director of Financial Operations)	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CS 4: Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 4.1	Review and update acquisition list and criteria.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 4.2	Adapt strategies for land acquisition for conservation for both public and private lands, reflecting the priorities of the new open space plan and upcoming comprehensive plan.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor, Conservation Board, Parks Commission, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 1: Grow and Celebrate Nature-Based Climate Solutions Across the City							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 1.1	Educate the public on Nature-Based Climate Solutions and their value. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.2	Create and support existing education, recognition, and incentive programs to encourage private property owners to integrate Nature Based Climate Solutions and implement sound ecological practices (e.g. reducing lawn space), especially within Natural Area Stewardship Zones. • Celebrate and support Grow Wild initiatives to encourage lawn conversions for native spaces to incrementally replace non-native for habitat benefits. • Use established pockets to disburse throughout neighborhoods. • Potential programs include adaptation of Green Design Standards, expansion of the BLUE program, and encouragement of "Wild Yards" to convert mowed areas to naturalized open space.	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Wildways, GROW wild, BLUE program, Parks Communications	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 1.3	Continue to partner with schools to grow nature-based climate solutions on school grounds.	Burlington School District	Burlington Wildways, Parks Conservation Team, Shelburne Farms	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.4	Create a municipal management plan to track and reduce mowed lawns.	Parks	Parks Ground Maintenance, Parks Conservation Team, Water Resources	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.5	Continue to grow nature-based climate solutions on City property, including but not limited to green stormwater infrastructure.	Parks	Water Resources	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.6	*See also in CONSERVE: CS2.1. Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 2: Cultivate an Ecosystem of Stewardship							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 2.1	Create a database and listserv of open space organizations to support collaboration, resource sharing, etc.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, Conservation Board	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.2	Co-host a recurring open space summit for land stewards, community organizations, and others.	Wildways, Mayor's Office	VCGN, Audubon, UVM, Wildways partners (e.g. Intervale, WVPD, Rock Point, Parks)	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.3	Continue to support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Communications, WNRCD, Friends of the Winooski, Watersheds United Vermont, etc.	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 2.4	Update Urban Wilds definition, including considering expanding beyond city-owned land.	Conservation Board	Wildways, Large landowners, Parks Conservation Team, DPI	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.5	Distribute educational resources about how personal actions can support water quality health in lake, river, and tributaries. (See also EX1.3)	Lake Champlain Sea Grant (BLUE program)	Water Resources, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 3: Enhance and Protect Burlington's Urban Forest							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 3.1	Comprehensively update the Tree Ordinance.	Parks, City Arborist	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Arborist, Parks Conservation Team, Planning, Planning Commission, DPI	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.2	Update the urban tree canopy goal and mapping/ data analysis every 10 years. Consider developing specific goals for different types of canopy based on their ecological and heat island mitigation value.	Parks, City Planning, Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis, or similar provider	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CN 3.3	Conduct Pocket Forest Feasibility Study inclusive of existing and potential pocket parks that develops plant lists, identifies potential existing sites, and envisions incentives for establishing pocket forests in new developments, dense neighborhoods, and greenbelts.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Planning, City Planning	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 3.4	Identify large valuable trees (e.g. specimen trees) in the city that are on public and private land, and consider protection with ideas framed in the policy toolkit from Biophilic Cities network.	Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, City Arborist, Branch Out Burlington	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.5	Educate the public on benefits of the urban forest and how to manage it on private property. (See also CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3

CN 4: Encourage New Development to Incorporate Nature-Based Principles							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 4.1	Develop Green Design Standards for new developments and redevelopments.	DPI, City Planning	Conservation Board, Planning Commission, Water Resources, land owners, landscape architects (?)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.2	Provide educational resources for owners and occupants in Stewardship Zones to support ecological health of nearby natural areas.	Parks Conservation Team and Parks Communications	Grow Wild, Parks Planning, Lake Champlain Sea Grant	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.3	Create development review resources to support review bodies in evaluating sustainable/ecological nature-based approaches to development and open space impacts of new development.	DPI	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 1: Increase Awareness About Burlington's Open Spaces							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 1.1	Collaborate to create and translate educational tools on Burlington's natural history and stewardship story with associated places to visit.	Parks Conservation Team	REIB, Crows Path, Master Naturalist, UVM, Shelburne Farms, ECHO, WVPD, Vermont Folklife, UVM Spatial Analysis, Generator	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 1.2	Create a central calendar that crowdsources events and volunteer efforts around the City. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Communications (with LoveBurlington)	Wildways, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3
EX 1.3	Create a comprehensive open space communications and education plan to share recommendations of the open space plan. (See also EX1.2)	Parks Communications	City Planning, Park Planning, Wildways	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.2

EX 2: Grow Public Access to Nature-Based Experiences							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 2.1	Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines.	Parks Conservation Team, Parks Planning	DPW, Parks Communications, Neighborhoods/ individual landowners	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
EX 2.2	Continue to partner to expand public access to nature experiences. Partnerships could include, for example, private and institutional landowners, organizations, and visionaries that promote nature-based work.	Parks	UVM, Rock Point, Intervale Center, other large landowners	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 3: Break Down Barriers to Open Space Access							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 3.1	Evaluate opportunities for universal access in natural areas where appropriate and considering ecological sensitivity. (See also EX3.3)	Parks Planning	BACA	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	EX 3.3
EX 3.2	Improve equitable transportation access to natural areas and seek out alternative funding mechanisms.	Parks Planning	DPW, CCRPC	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	
EX 3.3	Regularly engage communities who face barriers to accessing or enjoying open space to identify additional actions to increase use and where to prioritize improvements. (See also EX3.1)	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB, BACA	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways, Trusted Community Voices	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 3.1
EX 3.4	Plan for and integrate different cultural preferences in the use of public outdoor spaces.	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 3.5	Incorporate language access in educational campaigns.	Parks Communications, REIB	Trusted Community Voices	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 1: Cultivate Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture Practices							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 1.1	Continue to plan for resilient agriculture strategies in the Intervale as climate and flood risks increase.	Intervale Center	Farmers, UVM AgroEcology, Parks Conservation Team, VT Garden Network, CEDO (with NRCS)	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 1.2	Develop and implement deer management strategies, and track progress.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 1.3	Work with other agencies to educate and share resources on soil health information and remediation, aiming to create a resource similar to Dig Safe to emphasize safe soils for safe food.	NRCS, CEDO	NRCS, Conservation Districts, UVM Extension Service	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 1.4	Conduct a holistic inventory of available lands in City (both public and private) available for potential food production.	Parks Conservation Team	Innovation & Technology	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2: Expand Community Gardens							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 2.1	Partner with community and other groups to explore new spaces for community gardens and community agriculture (especially in areas with less vehicle access, higher percentage of low-income residents, and less access to grocery stores).	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	Vermont Garden Network	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 2.2	Track garden plots per capita to establish baseline conditions and evaluate unmet demand. Set and track mid-term and long-term goals for community garden spaces.	Parks Conservation Team	Community gardeners, Vermont Garden Network	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2.3	Address the need for more community gardens with actions like: • Conduct city land asset study for community garden opportunities. • Document and review process for plot distribution • Proactively work with neighborhoods to identify potential community garden spaces and support with the Conservation Legacy Fund. • Encourage and direct expansion of capacity at existing sites with elements like new raised beds and support infrastructure. • Consider out-of-the-box opportunities, such as rooftop gardens, and innovative practices, such as vertical garden opportunities.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 2.4	Incentivize creation of community gardens with new and redevelopment through green design standards.	DPI	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 3: Support the Cultivation of Alternate Food Sources							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 3.1	Plan for food forests, including consideration of tree choices to allow for more community food production. (See also CL3.2)	Park Planning or Conservation Team	Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	CL3.2
CL 3.2	Work with the public to facilitate responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging communities. (See also CL3.1)	Intervale Center	WVPD, Parks Communications and Conservation Teams, Rock Point, UVM	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	CL3.1
CL 3.3	Create an inventory of potential food forest spaces and conduct a feasibility study.	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	Innovation & Technology	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 3.4	*See also in CS2.1 CONSERVE: Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX F:
Natural Communities Classification

Natural Communities Classification

Natural Community Group	Natural Community Types
Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest	White Pine-Red Oak-Black Oak/White Pine NH Forest
	Mesic Maple Ash-Hickory/NH Limestone Forest Variant*
	Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak Forest/Rich NH Forest
	Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak/Rich NH Forest
	Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak/Transition Hardwood Limestone
Mesic Pine-Oak Sandplain Forest	Hemlock NH/NH Forest*
	Hemlock-NH Forest/Hemlock-White Pine NH Forest
	Hemlock/Hemlock White Pine
	NH Forest/Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak Forest
	NH Forest/Mesic Red Oak
	NH Forest/Rich NH Forest*
	Valley Clayplain/NH Forest
	Valley Clayplain*
Maple-Green Ash Swamp	Red Maple-Black Ash Swamp/Calcareous Red Maple-Tamarack Swamp*
	Red Maple-Black Ash Swamp/Lowland Spruce Fir Forest*
	Red Maple-Black Ash/Alder Swamp*
	Red Maple-Black Ash/Spruce-Fir-Tamarack
	Valley Clayplain/Red Maple-Black Ash
	Wet Clayplain Forest*
Silver Maple-Sensitive/Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest	Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern/Alluvial Shrub Swamp
	Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern/River Mud Shore
	Silver Maple-Ostrich Fern
Alder Swamp	Alder Swamp/Sedge Meadow
Shallow Emergent/Cattail Marsh	Fresh Water Marsh
Water	Water
Disturbed Land (Not A Natural Community)	Borrow Pit
	Fill Land
	Gravel Pit
Soils & Landforms (Not A Natural Community)	Alluvial Land*
	Muck and Peat
	Terrace escarpments, silty and clayey*
	Limit of detailed soil survey

**under-represented natural communities in available data*

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Department: Permitting & Inspections Submitter: Scott Gustin

Title/Subject: Open Space Plan

	Approval:	Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	Click or tap to enter a date.
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Concurrent	Click or tap to enter a date.

This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials, and sent with the final submission. Please do not indicate that a signoff was received until it has actually been obtained.

Signoffs Received

Signoff Needed	Received	Date Received	Note
Department Head	Yes	1/5/2026	Bill Ward
Mayor's Office informed and approved memo	Yes	1/7/2026	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission, if required	Yes	11/13/2025	Planning Commission (Conservation & Parks previously)
City Attorney's Office has approved contract and/or legal documents, -Identify attorney in note	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office has approved memo and motion(s) or resolution(s) -Identify attorney in note	Yes	1/7/2026	Atty. Sturtevant
CAO has reviewed budget, financing, and memo	Yes	1/6/2026	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action -Identify HR Manager in note	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if an IT-related investment/purchase	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Materials Included

	Included?	Note
Final Memo Attached?	Yes	Memo
Contract Attached, if applicable?	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.
Additional Materials, if necessary	Yes	Weblink to Plan and Appendix
Draft Resolution or Motion?	Yes	In the memo
If for submission to Council, are sponsors identified?	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.

Burlington Conservation Board
311 North Avenue
Burlington, VT 05408
http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/dpi
Telephone: (802) 865-7188

Rebecca Roman, Chair
Ryan Crehan, Vice Chair
Zoe Richards
Don Meals
Ryan Crehan
Ethan Ely
Dale Azaria
Kelly Farrell
Evan Horne
Alan Reichard

TO:	Burlington City Council Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak
FROM:	Burlington Conservation Board Scott Gustin, AICP, DPI Principal Planner
DATE:	January 12, 2026
RE:	New Open Space Plan

Following more than a year of collaboration and outreach, the Burlington Conservation Board is pleased to present the new Open Space Plan for a second, and final, public hearing with the City Council.

This plan is the result of extensive work including dozens of community outreach and engagement events, assessments, visioning, and writing. The effort to rewrite the city's Open Space Plan has been a collaborative effort between the core city team, UVM's Spatial Analysis Lab, and Agency Landscape & Planning. The Conservation Board, Parks Commission, and Planning Commission have also engaged in the planning process. Conservation, Parks, and Planning Commission have all voted to approve the plan and forward it to City Council for adoption.

This new plan builds on the legacy of the original Open Space Protection Plan adopted some 25 years ago and sets the vision for Open Space in Burlington for years to come. This new plan is founded on four primary components:

- Conserve
  Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city
- Connect
  A landscape stitched together by stewardship and green design standards for development
- Experience
  Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington
- Cultivate
  Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs

This new Open Space Plan builds on the conservation legacy of the original plan and creates a vision for collaborative, community wide efforts to retain and strengthen our green network as we continue to grow, to provide for diverse outdoor experiences for all, and to ensure sustainable and accessible local food systems.

The Open Space Plan is incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan. The first of two required public hearings occurred December 15, 2025. We are seeking City Council approval of this plan tonight. Ultimately, the plan will be included in the Comprehensive Plan when that document is updated and adopted.

City Council Motion
Waive the reading and approve the new Open Space Plan for adoption by City Council.

FINAL VERSION
December 10, 2025



BURLINGTON OPEN SPACE PLAN





"WHILE IT INITIALLY TAKES EFFORT TO NOTICE SOMETHING NEW, OVER TIME A CHANGE HAPPENS THAT IS IRREVERSIBLE. REDWOODS, OAKS, AND BLACKBERRY SHRUBS WILL NEVER BE "A BUNCH OF GREEN." A TOWHEE WILL NEVER SIMPLY BE "A BIRD" TO ME AGAIN, EVEN IF I WANTED IT TO BE. AND IT FOLLOWS THAT THIS PLACE CAN NO LONGER BE ANY PLACE."

– JENNY ODELL,
HOW TO DO NOTHING



Message from the Mayor

December 2025

Dear Neighbors,

I am proud of our city's new Open Space Plan—a roadmap for preserving and enhancing the natural areas, parks, and green spaces that make our community vibrant and livable.

Burlington has long been recognized for its commitment to environmental stewardship, and this plan builds on that legacy by identifying opportunities to protect critical habitats, expand recreational access, and strengthen connections between our neighborhoods and the outdoors.

Our open spaces are more than scenic landscapes—they are vital to our health, well-being, and resilience in the face of climate change. By investing in their protection and thoughtful management, we are ensuring that current and future generations can enjoy the beauty, diversity, and ecology that define Burlington.

I want to thank our residents, partners, and local organizations whose input and dedication helped shape this plan. Together, we can continue to cultivate a city where nature and community thrive side by side.

Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

Mayor of Burlington, Vermont



Letter from the Open Space Plan Team

Welcome to Burlington's 2025 Open Space Plan!

This plan is the result of dozens of community outreach and engagement events, stakeholder sessions, and the input and participation of hundreds of community members. It builds on the legacy of the original Open Space Protection Plan adopted 25 years ago and sets the vision for Open Space in Burlington for years to come.

Burlington has a wealth of green spaces spanning the expansive working lands of the Intervale to the wooded urban wilds such as Arthur Park and Arms Forest to the small pockets of green within our downtown. These open spaces are integral to the fabric of our community and provide spaces for wildlife, food production, and social connections.

The original 2000 Open Space Protection Plan created our first open space inventory and served as the foundation for regulatory protection of significant natural areas such as the Lake Champlain shoreline, our urban wilds, and even more developed riparian corridors such as along Englesby Brook. Just as significantly, the original plan provided the basis for establishing the Conservation Legacy Fund. This fund has helped conserve 236 acres of land across 10 different parcels. The original plan has served our community well over the past 25 years.

A lot has changed in 25 years. The city has grown, the climate crisis has intensified, and our concepts of what open spaces should be and do have evolved. Protection of our open space network remains paramount, but we also seek more functionality with things like urban orchards and secure local food production, carbon sequestration, and neighborhood cooling with a robust urban tree canopy.

This new Open Space Plan builds on the conservation legacy of the original plan and creates a vision for collaborative, community wide efforts to retain and strengthen our green network as we continue to grow, to provide for diverse outdoor experiences for all, and to ensure sustainable and accessible local food systems.

In sum, this Open Space Plan reflects the community's vision for open space into the future. It is a vision that we will realize together.

Sincerely yours,

- Dan Cahill, City Land Steward
- Scott Gustin, Principal Planner
- Sarah Morgan, Principal Planner
- Zoe Richards, Conservation Board Representative
- Sophie Sauvé, Parks Planning Division Director
- Juliet Shen, Marketing & Communications Manager



Acknowledgments

Core City Team
- Dan Cahill, City Land Steward
- Scott Gustin, Principal Planner
- Sarah Morgan, Principal Planner
- Zoe Richards, Conservation Board Representative
- Sophie Sauvé, Parks Planning Division Director
- Juliet Shen, Marketing & Communications Manager

Conservation Board
- Rebecca Roman
- Ryan Crehan
- Dale Azaria
- Ethan Ely
- Kelly Farrell
- Evan Horne
- Don Meals
- Zoe Richards

Parks Commission
- Nate Lantieri
- Ryan Bergmann
- Kirsten Boehm
- Halle Davis
- Robert Etter
- Harley Johnson
- Katie Flanagan Mobley

Planning Commission
- Andy Montroll
- Alex Friend
- Michael Gaughan
- Erhard Mahnke
- Erin Malone
- Ryan Nick
- Julia Randall

City Council
- Ben Traverse
- Mark Barlow
- Gene Bergman
- Becca Brown McKnight
- Marek Broderick
- Sarah Carpenter
- Melo Grant
- Joe Kane
- Evan Litwin
- Carter Neubieser
- Allie Schachter
- Ranjit “Buddy” Singh

Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

Consultant Teams
- Agency Landscape + Planning
- Chapman EcoLandscape
- UVM Spatial Analysis Lab
- Christine Tyler Hill

Funding provided by the Conservation Legacy Fund

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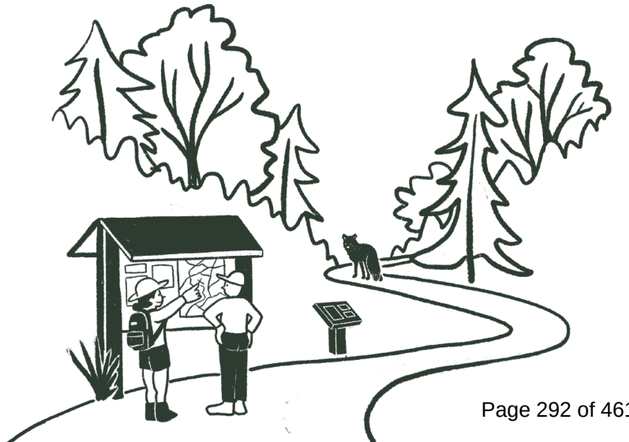


Plan Summary

Nestled on the shores of Lake Champlain at the confluence with the winding Winooski River, Burlington sits at a regionally significant location.

Open spaces are at the heart of what makes Burlington special — enabling high quality of life for the community, supporting the city's economy, growing local food, providing home to local and migrating wildlife, and keeping the city cool in a changing climate.



Burlington's open spaces do more than provide spaces for recreation and wildlife habitats!

They also help to absorb stormwater and reduce the impacts of flooding, help cool the city, grow food, sequester carbon, and clean the water and air.

Burlington's Open Space Plan establishes a framework for conserving, managing, and expanding open space across the city.

As Burlington continues to grow, the plan works to protect vital natural environments and open space and ensure they are an integral part of a livable, resilient city. This plan builds on the plans that have come before it and aims to align closely with other planning initiatives, including the upcoming comprehensive plan, to create synergy across city departments.

The plan frames the open space system as an healthy network that supports climate resilience, biodiversity, equitable access, and high quality of life. During the plan process, several key findings and opportunities were identified:

The City is well served by open space with opportunities to expand access and connect natural resources.

Burlington already contains a substantial share of open space, nearly half of its land area falls under some open- or green-space designation.

However, some neighborhoods have abundant access to parks and nature areas, while others have limited access. Many open areas are also disconnected from one another. The plan underscores the importance of wildlife corridors, riparian buffers, greenbelts, and connected trails as essential to ecological health and public use.

City population growth should be balanced with thoughtful conservation policies.

With increasing development pressure, especially in infill and densification areas, there is heightened tension between protecting open land and meeting housing, infrastructure, and economic goals. As part of the plan's engagement process, residents raised concerns about losing natural areas, water quality, wildlife habitat, and floodplain functions. Public feedback frequently emphasized the need to balance growth with conservation and employ green design standards.

We need to plan for increasing climate, ecological, and stormwater demands today!

The plan reaffirms that nature-based solutions like forest and tree canopy management, wetland protection, and urban greening, will play an important role in Burlington's climate resilience strategy.

Many open spaces double as stormwater buffers, floodplains, or carbon sinks. Managing these places that provide multiple benefits is critical in adapting to increasing rainfall, heat, and ecological stress.

This plan is an opportunity to coordinate the many stewards and landowners who contribute to the open space network.

The plan identifies the need for stronger coordination across city departments, clearer roles and funding, and tools to help implement the plan's actions. It emphasizes that conservation cannot rely only on the City and on city regulations, but must take advantage of existing landowners, partners, and engaged stewards.

The Community's vision is at the center of this plan.

The planning process has intentionally reached out and welcomed ideas and worries from the many diverse residents who make up Burlington's community. A recurring theme is that residents value both access to nature (walking, recreation) and preserving "wild" spaces—especially as the city grows.

Plan at a Glance

Nestled on the shores of Lake Champlain at the confluence with the winding Winooski River, Burlington sits at a regionally significant location. Open spaces are at the heart of what makes Burlington special — enabling high quality of life for our community, supporting our city's economy, growing local food, providing home to local and migrating wildlife, and keeping us cool in a changing climate.

The Open Space Plan provides a roadmap for how to continue to protect the city's open space and urban forest network through a collaborative stewardship approach. Balancing the need to grow with healthy ecosystems is possible with thoughtful planning and collaboration.

VISION

SEE PAGES 56 - 65

Burlington is a Nature-Filled City

with healthy open spaces where wildlife thrive in forests, streams, and the lake; where people enjoy nature's various offerings and eat what their gardens and farms grow; and **where people and ecosystems flourish together.**



GOALS

STRATEGIES

SEE PAGES 66 - 141



GOAL ONE

CONSERVE

Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city

- Expand restoration and management city-wide
- Support wildlife movement and ecological health
- Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs
- Collaborate to protect open space for future generations



GOAL TWO

CONNECT

Knitting the landscape together through green infrastructure, stewardship, and green design standards

- Grow and celebrate nature-based climate solutions
- Cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship
- Enhance and protect Burlington's urban forest
- Encourage new development to incorporate nature-based principles



GOAL THREE

EXPERIENCE

Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington

- Increase awareness about Burlington's open spaces
- Grow public access to nature-based experiences
- Break down barriers to open space access



GOAL FOUR

CULTIVATE

Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs

- Cultivate sustainable and resilient agriculture practices
- Expand community gardens
- Support the cultivation of alternate food sources

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The open space plan is a collaborative roadmap to stewarding the future of our city's open spaces.

While the focus is on actions the City of Burlington can take, it also offers strategies we all can take to expand stewardship.

The implementation roadmap identifies:

- Implementation Lead
- Key Partners
- Implementation Timeframe





Arms Forest

1

Introduction

Burlington wouldn't be Burlington without its open spaces. This plan provides a vision and roadmap for protecting them together now and in the future.

Plan Purpose

The Open Space Plan is a roadmap to guide the City of Burlington and its residents, partners, and collaborators as they work together to grow and steward Burlington's open spaces now and in the future.

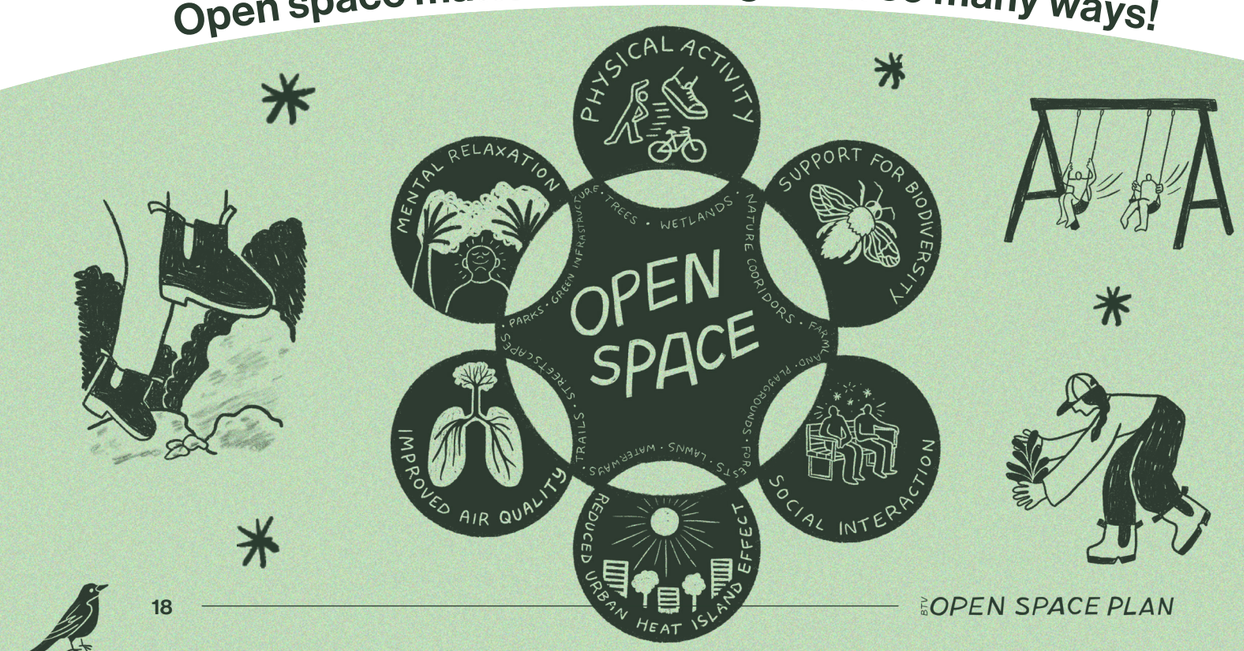
Burlington is a place where open spaces, water, and the built environment are intertwined in a symbiotic relationship that helps to make Burlington the unique place that is it. The conservation of open space and waterways enhances the quality of life for residents and allows for the continued preservation, restoration, and functioning of the natural systems of which we are a part.

The city benefits from an abundance of open space totaling almost 50% of its geographic area and is naturally bound by Lake Champlain and the Winooski River. The city's environmental ethic has pushed for preservation, adaptation, and access to its diverse open spaces.

As Burlington continues to intensify in density to accommodate its increasing population, the City aims to continue its long-standing commitment to providing equitable access to quality open spaces and stewarding the health of the city's ecosystems.

Burlington's Open Space Plan takes an interdisciplinary approach to documenting the City's open spaces, updating open space goals, and identifying specific resource targets and timelines through a robust community-focused engagement process. Ultimately, this plan is created to ensure that both the community—those who live, work, and recreate here—and the wildlife and flora will continue to thrive for generations to come.

Open space matters to Burlington in so many ways!







WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

"Open space" encompasses all the green, outdoor spaces in the city that are important for its ecological health and people's mental health. It includes natural areas, agricultural lands, parks, greenbelts, rain gardens, pocket parks, and trees, as well as school grounds, campuses, and private yards.

Open spaces are used by people for many reasons, including recreation, play, leisure, and growing food. Environmentally, they're critical for wildlife and for climate resilience. They also provide residents with a connection to nature. Open spaces include publicly accessible green spaces owned by the City of Burlington, as well as privately owned open spaces. They vary in character, size, and distribution throughout the city. Together, our open spaces create an important network for people, nature, and our city.

Within the city there are...





WORKING LANDS

50 miles of shoreline

Scenic Views

380 acres of wetlands



WATERS + WETLANDS

14 community gardens

Everyday Nature Experiences

50% of the city's land area is open space



PARKS



FORESTS

50+ parks and urban wild areas

40% tree canopy



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Natural Communities

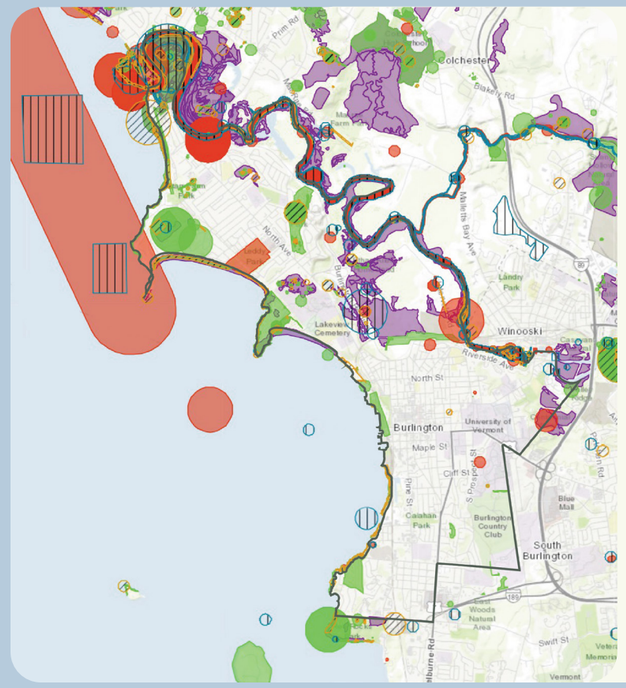


LAWNS + AUXILIARY GREEN SPACES

Why does Open Space matter?

Burlington's open spaces play a critical role in regional ecosystems.

At the confluence of the Winooski River Basin and Lake Champlain, Burlington is home to not only 44,000 residents, but also a rich diversity of plants and wildlife species. The City includes plants, animals, and natural communities that are uncommon in Vermont, as well as species classified as rare, threatened, and endangered by the State. Many of these significant natural communities are found along Burlington's waterways, from the shores of Lake Champlain to the Winooski River corridor.



VT Uncommon Species

- Plant
- Animal
- Natural Community

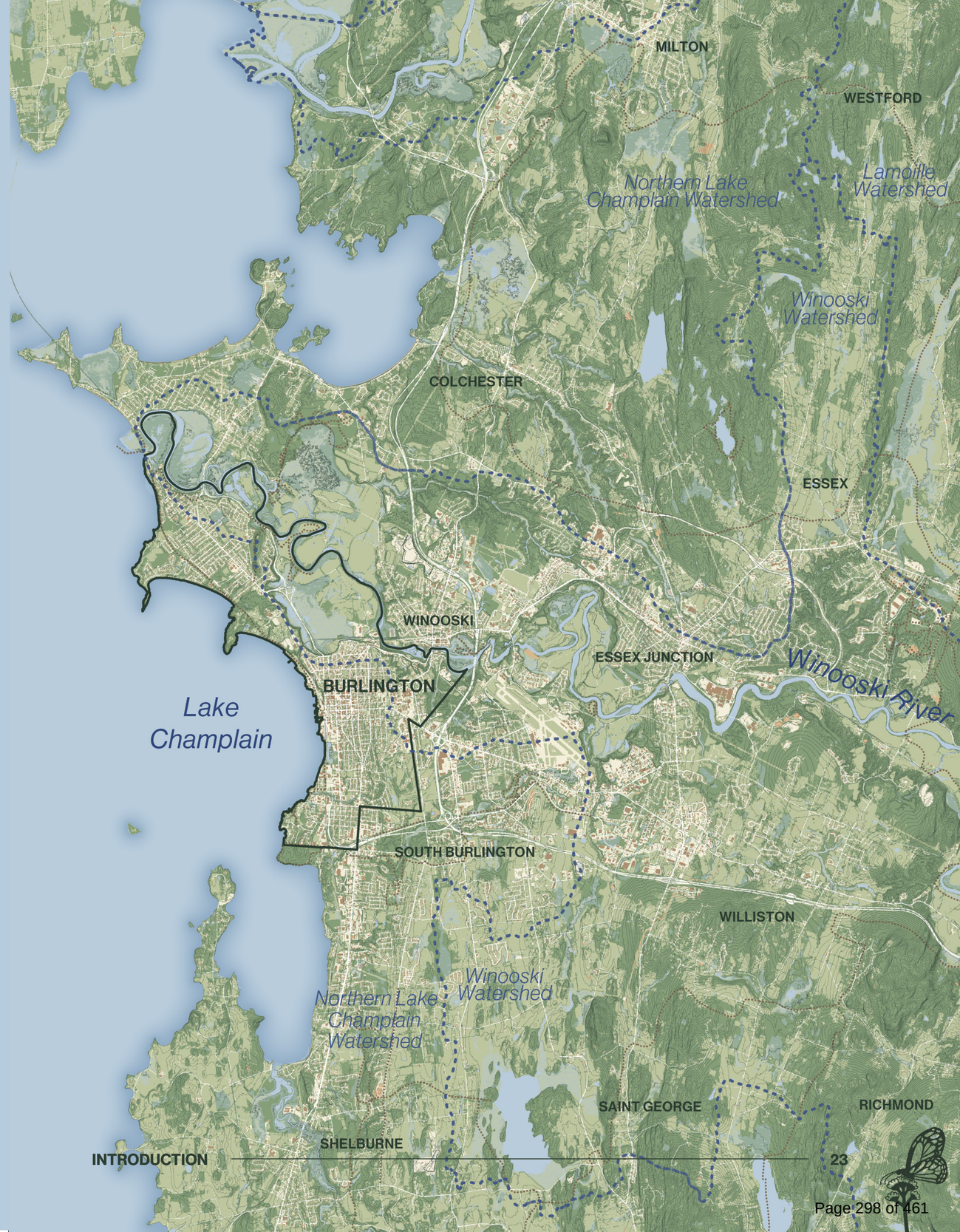
VT Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

- RTE Animal
- RTE Plant

VT Significant Natural Communities

- VT Significant Natural Communities

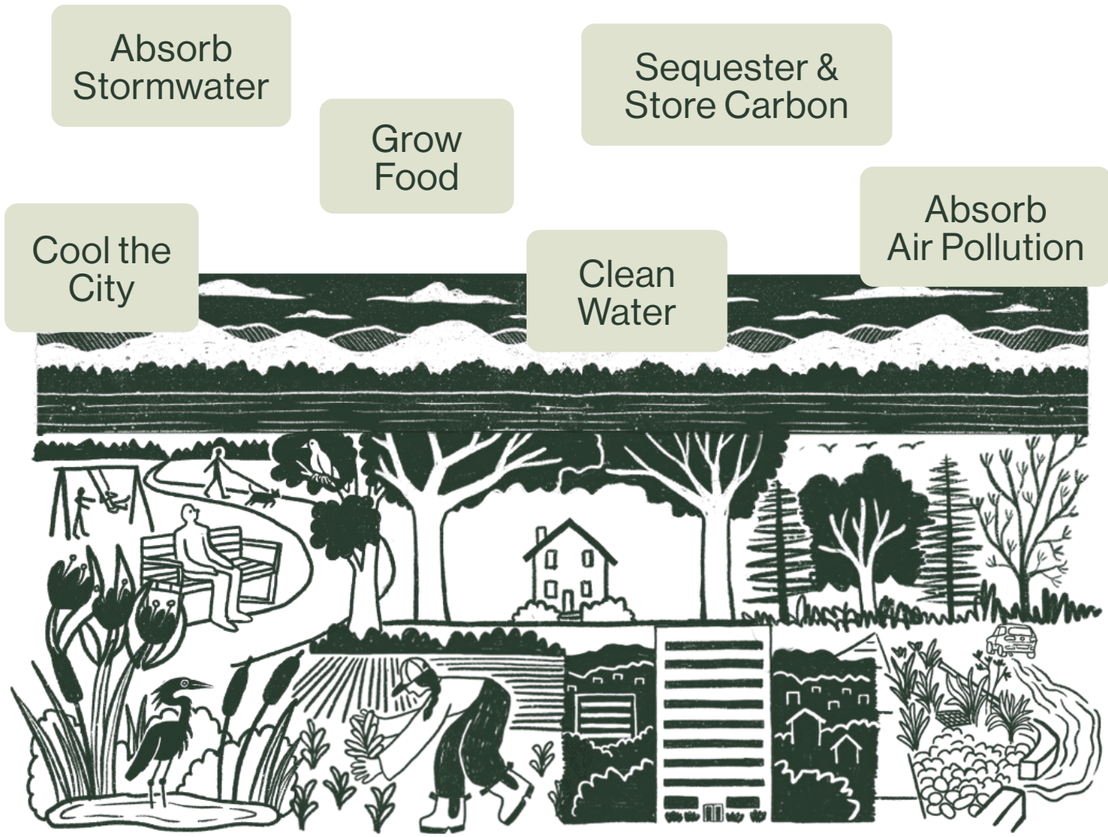
VT Natural Resources Atlas



Why does Open Space matter?

Burlington's open spaces act as natural infrastructure for the city.

The city's green spaces are just as important for its function as roads and hard infrastructure, like pipes and power lines. Like other kinds of infrastructure, they keep the city running and thriving. You might not think of a tree as a piece of infrastructure, but it and the other green spaces in our city provide important services like cleaning water, absorbing pollution, and keeping our city cool.



Ecosystem Services



Open spaces are increasingly important as our climate changes.

Burlington is the 4th fastest warming city in the US.

Burlington's tree canopy and green spaces act as natural air conditioning, keeping our city cool. A shaded house can keep a home's temperature cooler in the summer and with the right tree, can let in more light and heat during the winter. The cooling power of trees is just one example of how they keep our city livable and healthy for all of us. These superpowers will be even more critical as our climate changes. We need our tree canopy and open spaces now more than ever.

Why does Open Space matter?

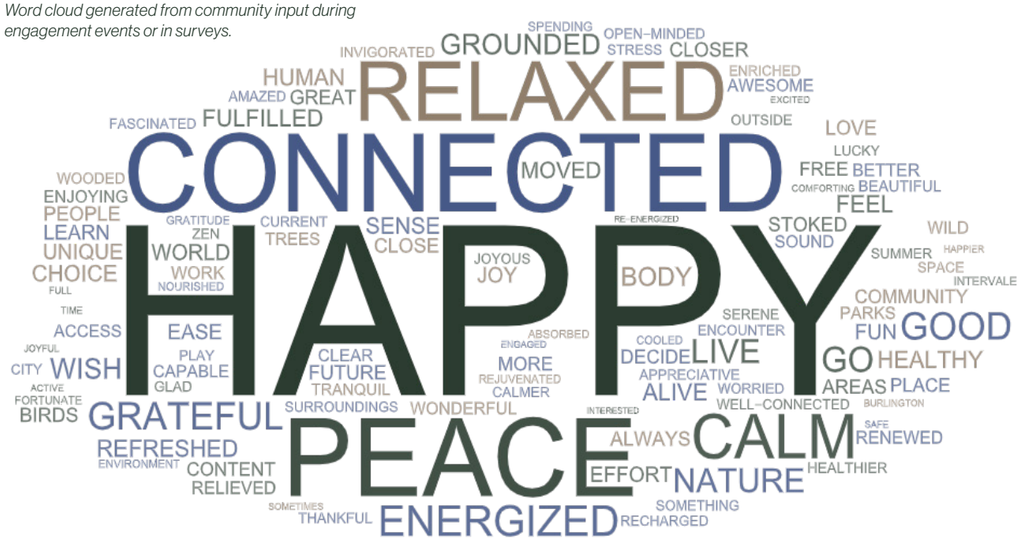
Supporting Human Health and Wellbeing

From providing places for being active to quiet spots to relax and recharge, open spaces help keep us healthy. They also provide spaces for us to gather, strengthening our community. Public parks offer free spaces to recreate, and research shows that access to parks results in healthcare savings.



Being in Burlington's open spaces make you feel...

Word cloud generated from community input during engagement events or in surveys.



Supporting Our City's Economy

Open spaces also contribute to our local economy. From direct employment of city staff who care for parks, to saving our city money with the ecosystem services open spaces provide, like reducing local flooding. They also play an important role in our city's economy by driving tourism and supporting outdoor recreation businesses.

Local Jobs * **Spending by Locals** * **Spending by Visitors** * **Local Businesses**



Ecosystem of Stewardship



We're all partners in the future of Burlington's open spaces.

While this document is primarily a roadmap for the City of Burlington, by working together, we can expand our collective impact. Continuing to steward, protect, and enhance our open spaces depends on all of us. Many of these organizations are regularly collaborating on open space initiatives and knowledge sharing–and many more are not listed. These are but a few of the champions who make a difference in open space stewardship.







City of Burlington

City Planning
Public Works
Water Resources
CEDO
Parks, Recreation and Waterfront
REIB

Homeowners with yards

Other Governmental Partners

VHCB
State of Vermont
Chittenden County
Adjacent Municipalities
CCRPC

Development Community

Community Organizations

Large Land Stewards

The Intervale Center
Vermont Land Trust
University of Vermont
Champlain Housing Trust
Episcopal Diocese of Vermont
WVPD





Plan Process Overview

The Open Space Plan builds on the decades of open space planning and protection in Burlington.

The Open Space Plan reinforces ongoing commitment to conservation, with a renewed roadmap to guide the next chapter of collaborative stewardship and a policy vision for management and access. As Burlington grows, everyone needs fair access to high-quality open spaces while maintaining the ecological health of existing natural areas. The Plan expands on previous plans by:

- Connecting it with other city plans, like the Urban Forestry Plan.
- Working across City departments to make sure the Plan is visionary and feasible.
- Partnering with private owners who conserve land and expand stewardship to more than City-owned land.
- Finding more ways to not just conserve open space but expand it as well.

The Plan was created over a year across three planning phases with many collaborators and broad public input:

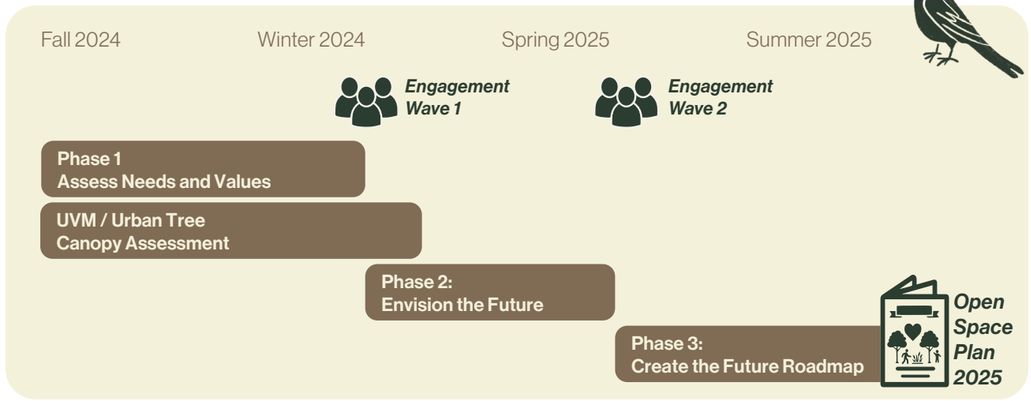
Phase 1: Assess Needs and Values

The first phase centered on understanding the history and current state of Burlington's open spaces. It assessed open space needs and values of the community.

Stakeholder focus groups were held to understand the most prominent issues faced by those whose work centers around open spaces, and the community shared their hopes and concerns for the future at events throughout Winter of 2024/2025.

In tandem, the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab conducted a Tree Canopy Assessment. The assessment included analysis of the city's land cover and the patterns and distribution of tree canopy changes over ten years (from 2014 to 2023). Findings were shared with the public and are incorporated throughout the Open Space Plan.

Project Schedule



Phase 2: Envision the Future

Building on the community's stories and stakeholder input, the second phase envisioned the future and turned feedback into a draft policy vision with implementation steps. The vision was shared back with the community and stakeholders for input in Spring of 2025.

Phase 3: Create the Future Roadmap

Finally, the last phase created the future roadmap–this plan–that is guided by a vision statement and four key goals that reflect the core planning goals expressed by the community and stakeholders alike.







Role of the Comprehensive Plan

The City is issuing a new comprehensive plan that will integrate municipal, mobility, economic development, and parks planning. Some issues raised during the open space planning process span these other realms and, while important to open space, will be investigated in more depth in the comprehensive plan. These include:

- Advance planning around the use of City-owned open spaces for shelter by people experiencing homelessness to ensure ecological health and integrity, public safety, and equitable access, while also planning for equitable access to permanently affordable housing for all Burlington residents.
- Growing public access to nature-based experiences.
- Strategies for improvements in multi-modal access to the Intervale.

Community Input

“Open Space is for the people of Burlington–present and future.”
- 2000 Open Space Protection Plan

The Burlington community has been an integral collaborator throughout crafting this plan update, from the broad vision to the most specific action. In addition to meetings with the Planning Commission, Conservation Board, Parks Commission, and the City Council’s Parks, Arts, and Culture Committee, the Open Space Plan project team hosted 24 events across two waves of engagement in 2025: the first in January and February centered around visioning and open space stories, and the second in May and June focused on the plan framework and policy recommendations. In both waves, the project team shared details about the Plan and process to gain informed feedback from residents. Each wave included in-person events and online engagement to reach a broad audience. Some of these events included Wintervale, Sea Caves skating, farmers markets, and Beach Bites. A complete list follows on the next page.

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.



“Everybody should have access to fresh air and natural spaces!”

“Open spaces help build community.”

24 events across six months



3 school groups engaged



“Education of our youth is key–the entire city is a classroom!”

“I love this community and our commitment to open spaces.”



125 open space stories shared

“Open spaces are free, beautiful, connected places to gather and learn.”



146 hot dogs + **28** veggie dogs served

>20 organizations connected





“Create a community and culture of respect and reciprocity.”

12 stakeholder focus groups



“Green spaces are tied within the fabric of the city.”



>230 online survey respondents

Outreach Events

Wave 1: Visioning and Open Space Stories

Date	Event
November 19, 2024	Stakeholder meetings
November 20, 2024	Stakeholder meetings
January 23, 2025	New North End Plan Kickoff
January 24, 2025	Stakeholder make up session
January 25, 2025	Winter Farmers Market
January 25, 2025	Sea Caves skating event
February 7, 2025	Winterlude
February 12, 2025	BHS City Lake Semester
February 18, 2025	Trusted Community Voices
February 12, 2025	Wintervale
February 25-26, 2025	UVM Davis Center with campus EcoReps
March 1, 2205	Library Book Sale
March 3, 2025	Azizza Malik's 5th Grade Class
March 12, 2025	Sarah Brown's 5th Grade Class



Wave 2: Plan Framework and Recommendations

Date	Event
May 13, 2025	Stakeholder meetings
May 14, 2025	Stakeholder meetings
May 14, 2025	Open Space Open House
June 6, 2025	Ward 6 NPA
June 7, 2025	Twilight Block Party
June 12, 2025	Ward 2 NPA
June 14, 2025	Farmers Market
June 17, 2025	ONE Farmers Market
June 19, 2025	Ward 5 NPA
June 25, 2025	Leddy Park Beach Bites
June 25, 2025	Wards 4 & 7 NPA

Community Perspectives on Open Space Opportunities

When asked about hopes for the future, the community answered:

Importance of Burlington's open spaces

- A Ecosystem Services
- B Human Health and Wellbeing
- C Flooding in Food Growing Spaces

Balancing needs for people and nature

- A Open Space is Integral to a Thriving City
- B Connections to Nature
- C Balance Growth and Open Space Preservation

Providing a variety of experiences

- A Open Spaces Support Social Interaction
- B Bolster the Local Economy and Make Burlington a Destination

Stewardship and climate resilience

- A Connections to Nature
- B Diverse Experiences
- C Mitigating Climate Change

When asked about concerns, the community answered:

Importance of Burlington's open spaces

- A Irregular Quality of Park Spaces
- B Pollution in Open Spaces
- C Flooding in Food Growing Spaces

Balancing needs for people and nature

- A Preserve Open Space While Meeting Housing and Other Needs
- B Maintaining momentum for ongoing care and preservation of open spaces

Providing a variety of experiences

- A Waitlist for Community Gardens
- B Park Rule Breakers
- C Physical Access for Persons with Disabilities

Stewardship and climate resilience

- A Funding for Maintenance, Conservation, and Protection
- B Impacts of Pollution and Aggressive Introduced Species

When asked how they feel and what activities they do when in open spaces, the community answered:

When in Burlington's open spaces, I feel...

Peace, Calm, Happy, Energized, Relaxed, Connected

When in Burlington's open spaces, I like to...

Walk, Swim, Bike, Hang with Friends, Boat, Enjoy the Lake

When in Burlington's open spaces, I am...

Active, Restful, In Community

When I think about Burlington's open spaces, the thing I think about most is...

connecting with nature, wildlife habitat, community character, recreation, clean water and air, growing food, climate resilience

Takeaways from common themes:



Burlington's parks and open spaces are intertwined and support healthy air, water, people, and wildlife.



There are pressures from development and housing demands that need to be **balanced with future open space investments.**



Natural spaces should be **accessible for all and support a range of experiences** and activities.



Healthy open spaces **connect us to nature and support a climate ready future,** so it is our job to protect and maintain them.

History of Open Space Use and Protection

Burlington has a long history of open space use and protection, stretching back to pre-colonial times and continuing to today. While there were times when forests were cleared and pollution was common, over the past decades Burlingtonians have prioritized the importance of nature is to the city.

A Pre-1700s

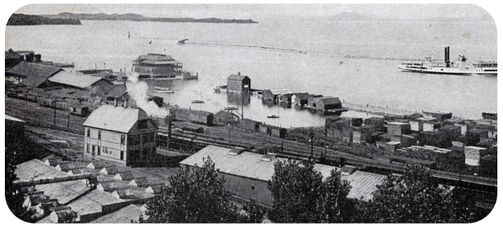


Swanton Corner-Notched points from the John Bridge's Site, Swanton VT, est. BC 7000-6000
Source: The Journal of Vermont Archaeology

Early Inhabitants

Indigenous Groups: For hundreds of years, the Abenaki people have inhabited and stewarded the land in the northeastern US and Canada. In and around modern-day Burlington, they grew beans, corn, and squash in the rich agricultural soil of the Winooski Floodplain.

B 1700s to 1800s



Burlington's Waterfront, 1800s.
Source: University of Vermont

Resource Extraction

In the mid-1700s, colonists arrived and farmed the floodplain to support their communities. Some forests were cleared for new farmland.

In the 1800s, Burlington became a trading hub. More forests were cleared for lumber, farmland, and grazing land. The waterfront was lined with lumber yards, train companies, power generating plants, and water pumping facilities.

C Early 1900s



Logging in Vermont, 1900s.
Source: VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Industrialization and Ecological Decline

In the early 1900s, the Industrial Revolution ramped up across the US, and factories and coal gas plants popped up across Burlington, including the Barge Canal. Farming in the Intervale declined, and some of Intervale's land became dumping grounds for refuse.

D Mid 1900s



Gardening at the Intervale, 1980s.
Source: Vermont Community Garden Network

Environmental Movement

By the 1970s, the environmental movement was in full swing. Oil tanks on the waterfront were phased out and removed as part of a long-term waterfront plan. Conservation efforts began with the Winooski Valley Park District's acquisition of land and lake shoreline. Tommy Thompson's "Gardens for All" began to reclaim some of the farmland that had previously been lost and set up community gardens.

E 1900s and early 2000s



The Urban Reserve, 1990s.
Source: City of Burlington

Codifying Conservation

In the 1990s, residents called for more conservation efforts to protect natural areas in and around the City. The City purchased 40 acres of land now known as the Urban Reserve.

In the early 2000s, Burlington passed the city's first Open Space Protection Plan, becoming a pioneer among US cities to plan for the future of its green spaces. The Plan included the creation of the Conservation Legacy Fund and was closely followed by the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

F 2020s to today!



Burlington City Hall rain garden, 2020.
Source: Burlington Free Press

Planning for Climate and Equity

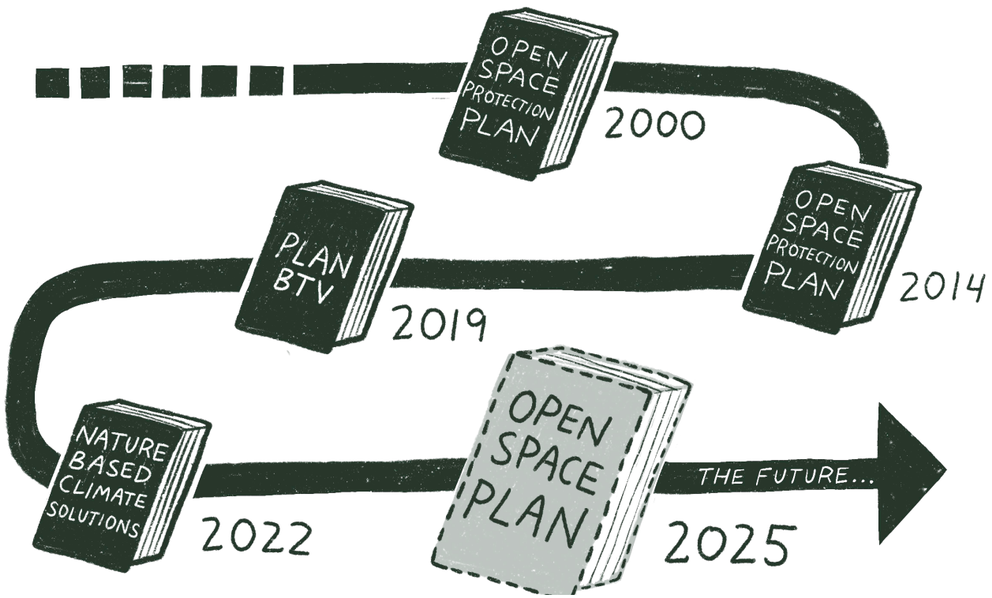
2020s: The City shifts open space planning to focus on equity, accessibility, and fighting climate change with "Nature Based Climate Solutions". Burlington recognizes that a thriving human community is necessary to protect existing natural areas, restore ecosystems, and steward natural resources for a green future.

Legacy of Open Space Planning

Burlington's original Open Space Protection Plan was adopted in 2000.

The Plan grew out of a 1997 City Council Resolution calling for the creation of "a plan to protect important natural areas and open spaces" and had a variety of goals related to identifying, protecting, and preserving the City's natural areas and open spaces. The Plan also created the Conservation Legacy Fund, which is still in use today. It was a visionary plan that grew from a long history of open space stewardship in Burlington and laid a foundation for both Burlington and other cities to protect their futures.

The City's 2014 Open Space Protection Plan Update inventoried open space lands and characterized them with respect to natural areas, urban agriculture, parklands, and green infrastructure. The 2014 Plan also assessed the proximity of residents to existing open space amenities such as community gardens, parks, and the waterfront. The tactical nature and updated goals of the Plan can be used to identify underserved areas of the city and to determine the best places for open space protection and related open space amenities like community gardens and parklands.



Burlington continued to further the goals of the Open Space Protection Plan in 2022 through the adoption of "Nature Based Climate Solutions: An Addendum to the Burlington Open Space Protection Plan". This addendum was written to further the goals identified in earlier plans, including the Open Space Plan and PlanBTV: Burlington's Comprehensive Plan, while specifically identifying nature-based solutions that will combat climate change. It focuses on climate change and equity and is built on the inextricable link "that a thriving human community is necessary if we want to ensure thriving ecosystems."

"Burlington's citizens, non-profits, and government have a proud tradition of protecting what is important to them and what sets Burlington apart - its sense of place, natural environment, open spaces, and recreational opportunities

As needed growth continues, a comprehensive plan to protect the city's most vulnerable natural areas and significant open spaces becomes a necessity."

- 2000 Open Space Protection Plan





Conservation Legacy Fund

In 2002, the City adopted its first Open Space Protection Plan. It was designed to acknowledge and reflect the high value Burlington's citizens saw in the city's diverse natural areas—and it put forward strategies to uphold and improve stewardship of these irreplaceable lands and waters.

One of the central recommendations of this plan was the creation of the Conservation Legacy Fund. This recommendation went before the voters in November 2002. The ballot question read:

> *"Shall the tax rate ceiling in Sec. 99 of the City Charter be amended by increasing it one (1) cent upon the dollar of the property grand list, from 38.88 cents to 39.88 cents, and shall the voters recommend authorizing the appropriation of such increase to be placed in a special revenue account under the name of the Burlington Conservation Legacy Fund, the purpose of which is the purchase and protection of important natural areas and open space."*

The ballot item passed with 70% approval.

This fund was created to:

- **Fund Land Acquisition** and long-term protection of natural areas, open spaces, and greenspaces through acquisition by the City and other interested parties.
- Support **Long-Term Stewardship**, including the development and implementation of management plans, for natural areas and open spaces in the City. Some of these areas were to be permanently managed by the City of Burlington's Conservation Legacy Program as Urban Wilds.
- Develop and support **Conservation Education Programs** administered under the Burlington Conservation Legacy Program.

Since its inception, the Conservation Legacy Fund has achieved many of the goals set out by the original open space plan. These achievements include:

- Creation and funding of a City Land Steward staff position in 2005.
- Creation of a Conservation Field Coordinator position in 2023, with 50% of the funding for the position coming from the fund.
- $1.7 million invested in land acquisitions and easement purchases conserving 236 acres at 10 locations in the City.
- $4.2 million additional dollars raised as matching funds.

In 2022, a Nature-Based Climate Solutions Addendum was added to the Open Space Protection Plan. To address the threat that climate change poses to the health of the city's natural areas and to support the role that ecosystems play in ameliorating the effects of a warming climate, the Addendum identified nature-based goals and strategies aimed at resiliency in a fast-warming world.

To support this work, the Conservation Legacy Fund expanded its purview the same year. A percentage of the Conservation Legacy Fund was made available in 2023 to provide funds for a new annual Conservation Legacy Grant program. The program is competitive and has provided financial support to local climate initiatives including invasive species management, native pollinator habitat restoration, collective gardening, and native tree nurseries. In the first two years of this innovative program, $332,060 were dispersed in support of seven local nature-based climate solution projects.

The Conservation Legacy Fund has been a noteworthy force in protecting natural areas and keeping the city healthy, ecologically rich, and green.

However, unlike other dedicated city funds, the way this fund was laid out means that it does not grow as the city's grand list grows. Its relative worth declines with every year.

Looking ahead, there is a sustained need within Burlington for the Conservation Legacy Fund to continue to fund land acquisition, conservation education and nature-based climate solutions. But the fund also needs to be broadened to support conservation infrastructure within the city's green spaces. Community assets—such as trails, wetland boardwalks, and improved connectivity for enhanced and managed access to our spaces—are needed, and the Conservation Legacy Fund provides a powerful tool and opportunity to meet these needs.



Conservation Legacy Fund Preserved Lands



Derway Cove



Arms Forest



Forest at Appletree Point



Rock Point



Arthur Park



Kieslich Park



Archibald Neighborhood Garden



Growing Open Space and Stewardship

In recent years, the City of Burlington and other partners have continued to expand open space and increase stewardship. Here are a few examples...

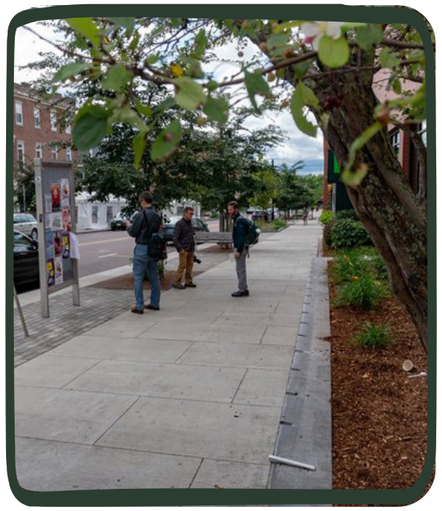
Northbend Orchard on Manhattan Drive

In 2020, residents on Manhattan Drive petitioned the city to plant fruit trees and move boulders to bring more life into a roadside grassy median. It was converted from a space with no ecological or community purpose to a no-mow zone that reestablishes habitat, attracts pollinators, and increases tree canopy.



St. Paul Street Green Infrastructure

As part of the Great Streets Initiative, St. Paul Street saw a major overhaul in 2018 that combined pedestrian-bicyclist initiatives with green stormwater infrastructure. Corner bumpouts made intersections shorter and more visible for pedestrians and widened sidewalks became more comfortable while rain gardens, permeable pavers, and soil cells guide runoff to flow into the stormwater system.





Conservation Legacy Grants

The Conservation Legacy Grant is an annual grant program to grow Nature-Based Climate Solutions in Burlington. Since its inception, grants have been awarded to individuals and groups to complete projects in the city that address strategies and actions identified in the Addendum's Implementation Matrix for at least two of the Addendum's six core principles.





Grow Wild Native Plant Giveaway

Grow Wild–a part of Burlington Wildways–has now run its third annual native plant giveaway in collaboration with the University of Vermont. The program gave away over 1,300 seedlings in 2025. Planting native plants to enhance native pollinator and insect diversity is a nature-based solution that can strengthen the local environment and help mitigate effects of climate change.

Burlington City and Lake Semester

Run out of Burlington High School, the Burlington City and Lake Semester program treats the city as its classroom to "explor[e] the people, places, problems and possibilities of our community." Its curriculum covers a wide breadth of topics. Those pertaining to open space have included native species restoration, climate resilience tree-planting with Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department, and restoring reptile habitat at Delta Park.



North Shore Natural Area

2

Burlington's Open Spaces Today

The city has many types of open spaces, from large parks to backyards. Together, these open spaces create networks that support people and wildlife.

What is Open Space?

“Open space” describes areas that are green and have natural elements, like plants and animals. They are used by people for many reasons, including both active and passive recreation, play, leisure, and growing food. Environmentally, they’re critical for wildlife and for climate resilience. In cities, they provide residents with a connection to nature.

Typically, open spaces in cities are thought of primarily as parks, trails, water bodies, and natural areas. Burlington has an abundance of these that are frequented by residents and visitors alike, from the smallest Smalley Park to the trail-filled and mostly wild Arms Forest. While some cities’ waterfront land is for private use only, much of Burlington’s publicly-accessible open spaces line waterways like Lake Champlain and the Winooski River–evidence of the city historically stewarding open space for public enjoyment and conservation.

There’s more to Open Space than we think...

There are lots of other types of green spaces to care and plan for. Many other open spaces also contribute to Burlington’s open space network, providing home to our city’s wildlife and providing ecosystem services that we all benefit from.

Burlington’s unique landscape includes working lands (such as the Intervale Center and community gardens), private open space, and other green spaces. Smaller spaces, such as lawns, pocket parks, and green infrastructure, can also be important interstitial pieces of the overall open space network.

The ecological and environmental health of our city is not limited to public land. Water flows and wildlife move seamlessly cross parcel boundaries, and 38% of our urban forest sits on private residential parcels. This Plan aims to guide actions by the City of Burlington, while also offering ways other partners and residents can also support open space stewardship.

Burlington like other many communities in the United States, is facing an increase in humans using open spaces as shelter. While this plan is not designed to directly address houselessness, it recognizes the impacts on open space functionality today. This plan will require collaboration with other City plans to get people re-housed.



A Natural Areas

Derway Island, Arms Forest, Rock Point

B Parks

Waterfront Park, Calahan Park, Schifilliti Park

C Trails + Greenways

Ethan Allen Park, Burlington Greenway

D Water Bodies

Lake Champlain, Winooski River, Englesby Brook

E Working Lands

The Intervale Center, Starr Farm Garden

F Private Open Spaces

University of Vermont, Rock Point

G Other Green Spaces

Yards, pocket parks, green infrastructure

Types of Open Space



Burlington is unique in the rich diversity of its open space. While it has those typically found in urban areas–parks and playgrounds–it also has many natural communities of statewide significance in natural areas like Derway Island and water bodies like Lake Champlain and the Winooski River. Burlington's open space network is not complete without areas that are not typically found in an urban space plan: working lands, private open spaces, and other open spaces. Planning for all types of open space is important to ensure a connected network of open spaces and tree canopy.



Parks

Parks are areas used primarily by people for recreation and gathering. They vary greatly in size: some are many acres large, like Leddy Park, while others are a small patch of grass on a street corner, like Dewey Park. Their amenities also vary greatly: they may include benches, water features, playgrounds, ballfields, and skate parks.



Water Bodies

Water bodies include natural or man-made lakes and streams. They form a network of waterways connected to watersheds and the region that serve important ecological functions–including circulating water throughout natural areas and bringing water to wetlands and floodplains. They are also commonly enjoyed recreationally for swimming, kayaking, and other water-based activities.



Natural Areas

Natural areas are lands with outstanding natural resources that function with little maintenance from people. These include forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitats. They may have trails and limited amenities and are generally not intensely managed. In addition to serving ecological functions, they also provide people with direct connections to the natural world. Some natural areas include Derway Island, Arms Forest, Rock Point, and Centennial Woods.



Trails + Greenways

Many natural areas and parks have paths used by people for recreation and mobility. They are paved or unpaved, single or multi-modal, through forests or along the water's edge. The Burlington Greenway is among the most well-known and well-loved multi-use paths in the city, stretching from its entire north-south extent along Lake Champlain. The 127 Bike Path serves a similar function on the eastern edge along the Intervale, and many trails connect between them through open space–including some that are part of Burlington Wildways.



Private Open Spaces

While local governments tend to concentrate open space efforts on public land, there is much privately owned land with green space that can also contribute to the ecological health and even sometimes the recreational experience of the community. Collaboration with landowners and actions by private property owners are critical to supporting the overall health of our city's ecosystems.

Examples: University of Vermont, Rock Point, Burlington Country Club



Working Lands

Working lands are considered lands used by people to grow food, maintain orchards, and raise livestock. They can be for personal or commercial use and span small community gardens to large agricultural plots like the Intervale. Having access to local working lands and their products allows communities to be more self-sustaining, relying less on supply chains for sustenance.



Other Open Spaces

In addition to the previously mentioned types, there are other areas–many small ones–that serve or have the potential to contribute to the open space network throughout the city. They are often overlooked as interstitial spaces but, all together, can contribute positively to open space networks. They can include lawns, pocket parks, green infrastructure, planted medians, school yards, vacant lots, and cemeteries.

Open Space Inventory

This map shows the current inventory of open space in Burlington.

It includes the seven types of open space categorized in this plan with the addition of the tree canopy. Shown together, it becomes clear how green the city is. Though not all this land is publicly accessible, we can get a sense of where we can enjoy natural spaces—much of the green space shown is not in an officially designated park, it could be in your backyard.

Find your favorite open space and see what else is nearby!

55 miles trails, paths, greenways

2620 acres tree canopy

2180 acres grass or shrub

300 acres parks

673 acres natural areas Zones

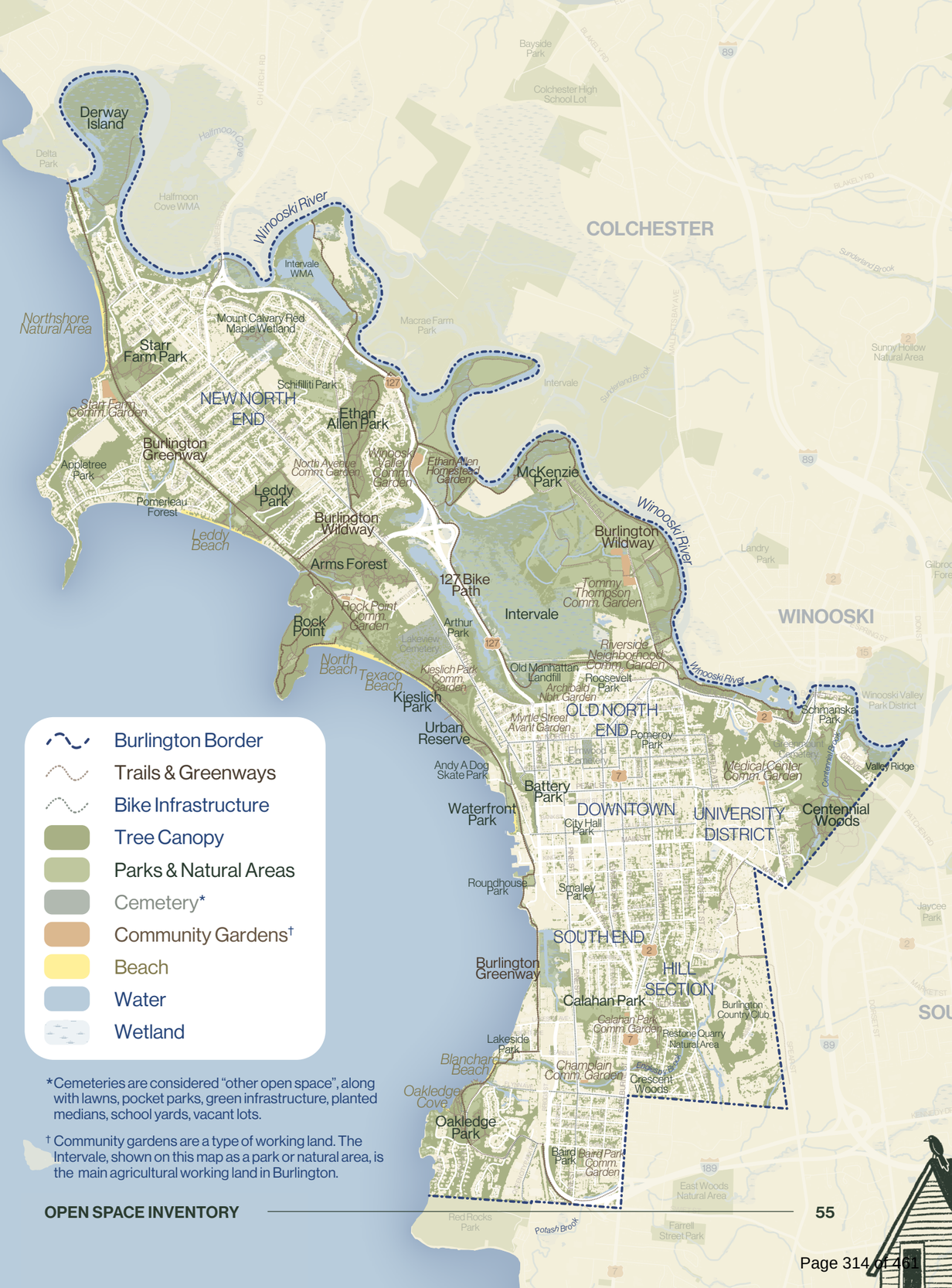
1175 acres Urban Wilds

60 acres cemeteries

50 miles shoreline

380 acres wetlands

18 acres community gardens



*Cemeteries are considered "other open space", along with lawns, pocket parks, green infrastructure, planted medians, school yards, vacant lots.

† Community gardens are a type of working land. The Intervale, shown on this map as a park or natural area, is the main agricultural working land in Burlington.

Burlington's Natural Communities

The 2014 Open Space Protection Plan identified several natural communities that comprise most of the natural and semi-natural lands (about 67 percent) of the City's 6,775 acres of undeveloped land and water. The communities listed below represent the majority of the naturalized land surface in Burlington's natural areas and parks.



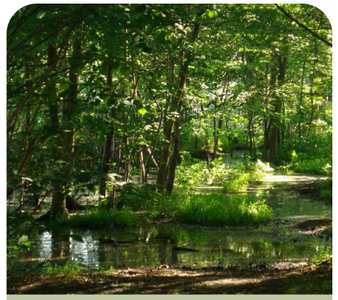
Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest
(Dry Oak-Pine Forest)

Small forests on ridgetops, south to west slopes, with thin soil and rocky outcrops.



Mesic Pine-Oak Sandplain Forest

Small to moderate-sized forests on gentle slopes and level ground in sandy outwash and lakeplain; most extensive upland forest type in City.



Maple-Green Ash Swamp
(Red Maple Swamp)

Small to moderate-sized depressions in landscape; high water table; floods in spring.



Silver Maple-Sensitive/Maple-Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest
(Silver Maple Floodplain Forest)

Moderate-sized to large forests in the floodplain of the Winooski River; most extensive forest type in city.



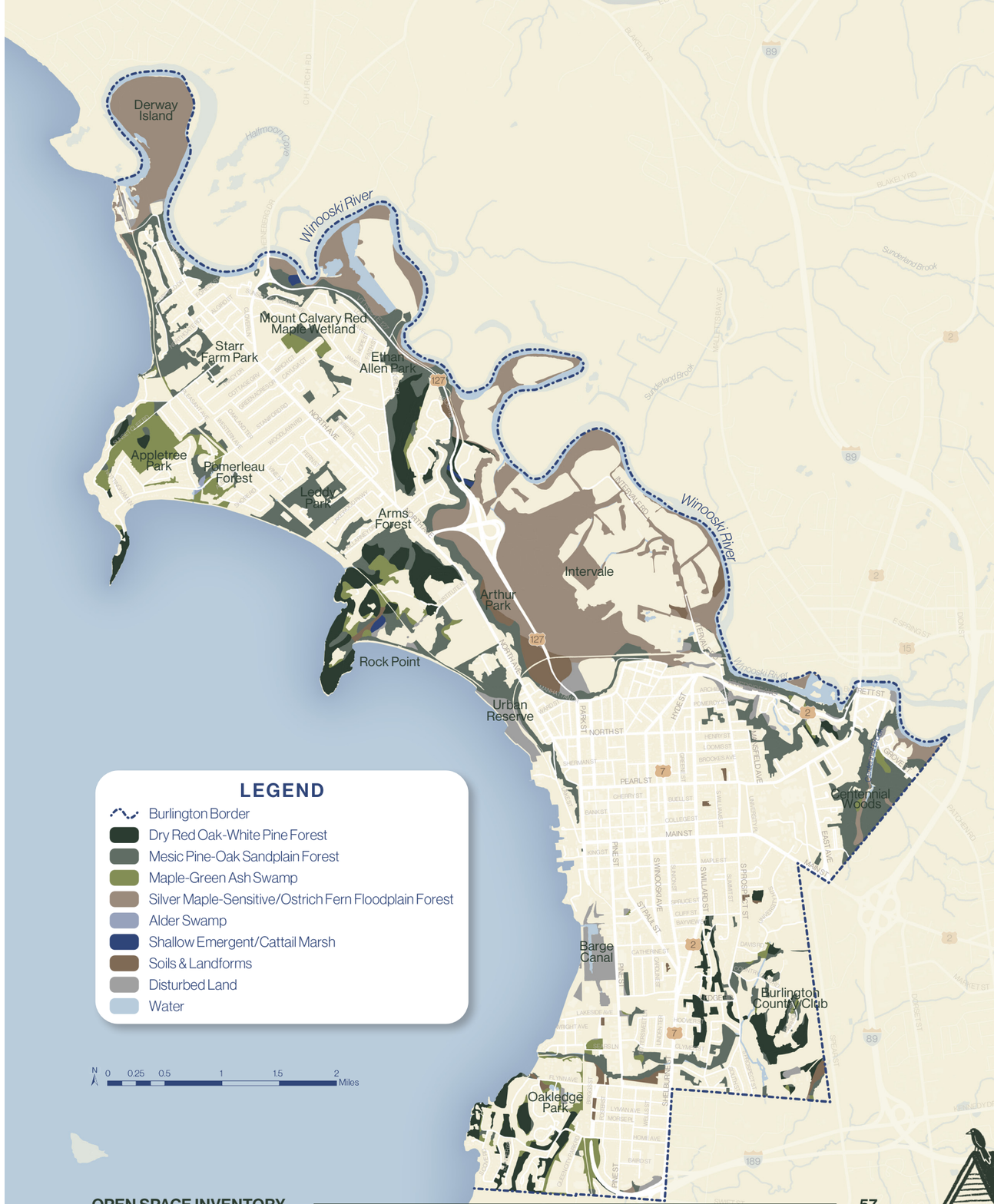
Alder Swamp

Small depressional areas in level to gently sloping landscapes, including floodplains.



Shallow Emergent Marsh Cattail Marsh
(Emergent Marsh)

Low, permanently inundated areas in floodplains and at edges of lakes and rivers.



Burlington's Natural Communities

Natural Community Types



Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest
(Dry Oak-Pine Forest)

Main Species
- Red oak
- White pine
- Black oak
- Big-tooth aspen
- Hickory

Soil
Farmington extremely rocky loam; Colton and Stetson sand

Major Issues
- Tree regeneration suppression by common buckthorn, Morrow's honeysuckle
- Managing transition from Norway maple and black locust to diverse canopy

Restoration Priorities
- Ensure native tree canopy replacement by controlling structure-altering aggressive introduced species
- Maintain continuous forest canopy cover
- Manage understory shading to support tree seedlings and native shrubs/herbs
- Reduce edge effects by reversing forest fragmentation



Mesic Pine-Oak Sandplain Forest

Main Species
- White pine, oak (red, white, black)
- American beech
- Ironwood
- Eastern hemlock
- Sugar maple
- Red maple
- Black cherry

Soil
Adams and Windsor loamy sand; Hartland very fine sandy loam

Major Issues
- Tree regeneration suppressed by buckthorn (common, glossy), Morrow's honeysuckle, Norway maple
- Managing transition from single-species pine plantations to diverse forest canopy

Restoration Priorities
- Ensure native tree canopy replacement by controlling structure-altering aggressive introduced species
- Maintain continuous forest canopy cover
- Manage understory shading to support tree seedlings and native shrubs/herbs
- Reduce edge effects by reversing forest fragmentation



Maple-Green Ash Swamp
(Red Maple Swamp)

Main Species
- Red maple
- Ash (green, black)
- Oak (black, red)
- Paper birch
- White pine

Soil
Au Gres fine sandy loam (seasonally wet)

Major Issues
- Small size invites aggressive introduced species and over-use
- Alteration of groundwater due to surrounding impervious cover and surface drainage
- Colonization by deep-shade-casting trees and shrubs (e.g, sugar/Norway maple; glossy buckthorn)

Restoration Priorities
- Reduce edge effects by native shrub plantings at margins
- Monitor and manage tree canopy regeneration
- Monitor and manage shrub layer to support native ground layer



Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern Floodplain Forest
Silver Maple-Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest
(Silver Maple Floodplain Forest)

Main Species
- Silver maple
- Box-elder
- Cottonwood
- Green ash

Soil
Limerick silt loam; Winooski very fine sandy loam; Hadley very fine sandy loam—all types are flooded

Major Issues
- Many aggressive introduced community-altering plant species due to frequent flooding
- Edge effects in narrow bands of forest

Restoration Priorities
- Identify most abundant structure-altering species for control
- Focus control on early infestations of these species
- Reduce edge effects by reversing forest fragmentation

Burlington's Natural Communities

Natural Community Types



Alder Swamp

Main Species
- Speckled alder
- Willow
- Quaking aspen
- Reed canary grass
- Sedges
- Bluejoint reed grass

Major Issues
- Reduced plant and pollinator diversity due to local dominance by reed canary grass

Soil
Covington silty clay (wet), others

Restoration Priorities
- Identify and evaluate candidates for restoration where other plant communities are being restored and managed for the long term



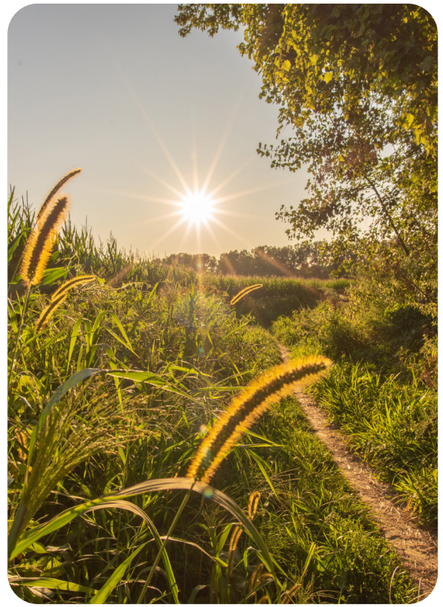
Shallow Emergent Marsh
Cattail Marsh
(Emergent Marsh)

Main Species
- Narrow-leaved cattail
- Giant reed
- Reed canary grass
- Bulrushes
- Sedges

Major Issues
- Dominance by a few plant species
- Low plant and pollinator diversity

Soil
(Unknown)

Restoration Priorities
- Identify and evaluate candidates for restoration where other plant communities are being restored and managed for the long term













Urban Forest Snapshot



The University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab conducted a Tree Canopy Assessment to detect and analyze changes in the city's tree canopy across a ten-year period, from 2014 to 2023. Using LiDAR data and processes developed by the USDA Forest Service, they found that Burlington has 40% tree canopy coverage–relatively stable since 2014 with a 1.6% decrease in ten years.

The change was not consistent across the city's area: some places lost trees (like parts of the New North End, Downtown, and South End) while others gained (like the University District, Intervale, and Rock Point. Tree canopy change was attributed to a number of factors: some losses were individual tree removals on private yards while others were cleared patches for new construction. Growth of existing tree canopy was the biggest contributor to gains.

To aid the city in planning how to maintain or grow tree canopy for the next ten years, the assessment also included analyzing land cover to quantify existing tree canopy, possible tree canopy, and land not suitable for trees. Areas with possible tree canopy could be vegetated areas that do not currently have trees, such as grass or shrub area, or paved areas that could be converted to green, such as bare soil or parking lots. 33% of the city's land area falls into this category–though some, like agricultural land in the Intervale, is not culturally suitable for trees. Combined with local knowledge, this assessment can help the city plan for opportunities to increase tree canopy.

Trees in Burlington

111,912+

Individual trees estimated in 2023

40% tree canopy in 2023

2,630 acres of tree canopy (2023)

Tree canopy is unequally distributed

Change in Tree Canopy (2014-2023)

+228 acres tree canopy **gained**

-337 acres tree canopy **lost**

Absolute Change in Tree Canopy

=

Loss of 109 acres

Net Change in Tree Canopy

That's the equivalent of 18 Battery Parks, 15 Sea Cave skating areas, or 1.5 Ethan Allen Parks!

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM



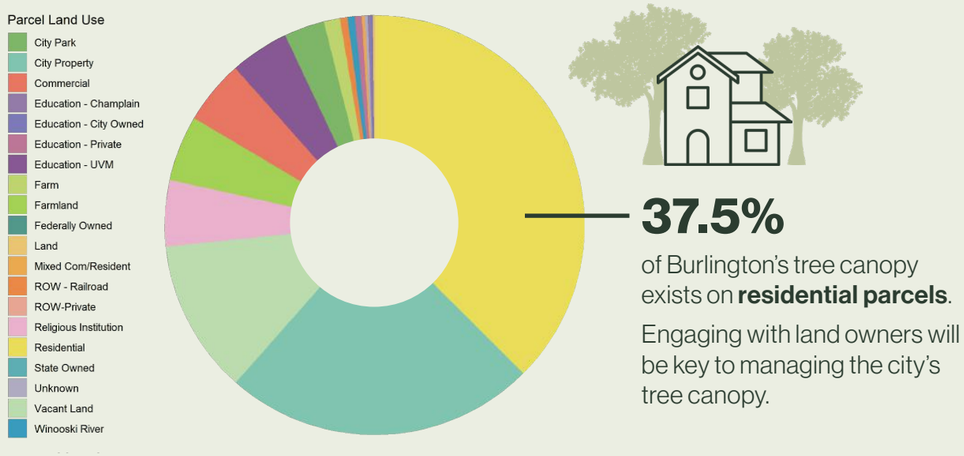
Burlington's urban forest includes a mix of larger patches, smaller patches, and isolated trees. There is no ideal patch size —each patch can be evaluated independently for what it contains and protects.

Larger forests like at Rock Point, Arms Forest, and Ethan Allen Park support a range of local and migrating wildlife.

Urban Forest Snapshot

Urban Forest Today

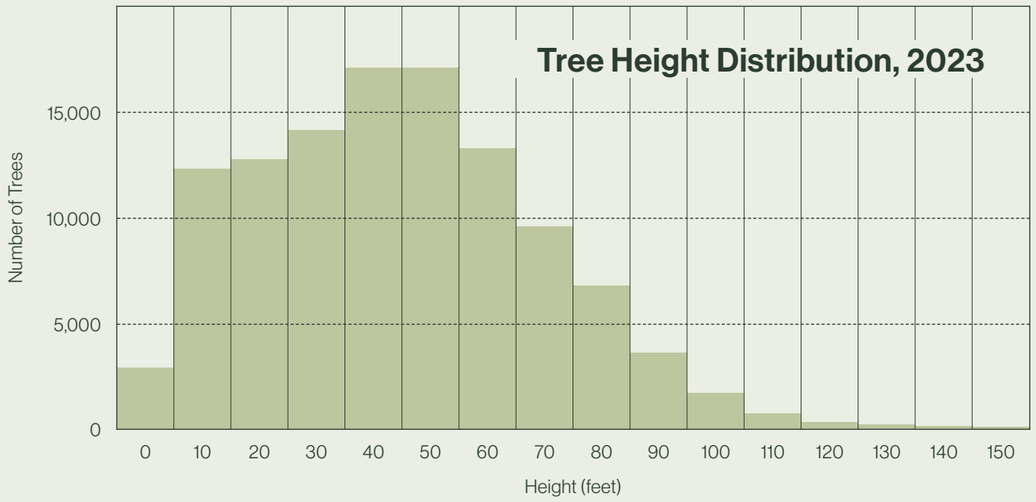
Trees by Land Use



37.5%

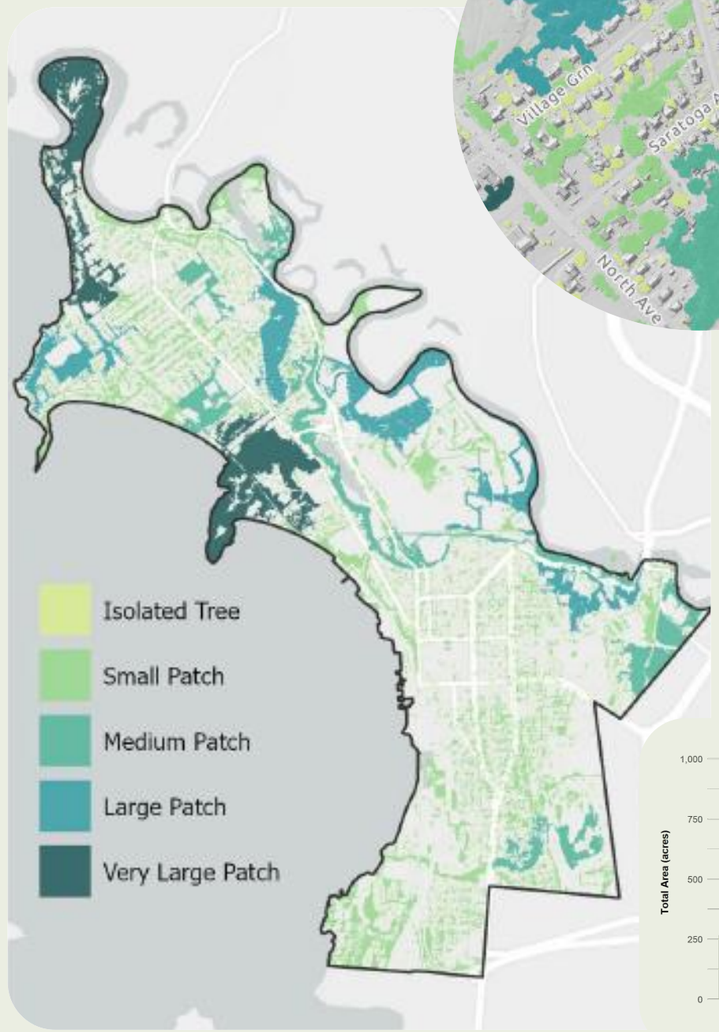
of Burlington's tree canopy exists on **residential parcels**.

Engaging with land owners will be key to managing the city's tree canopy.



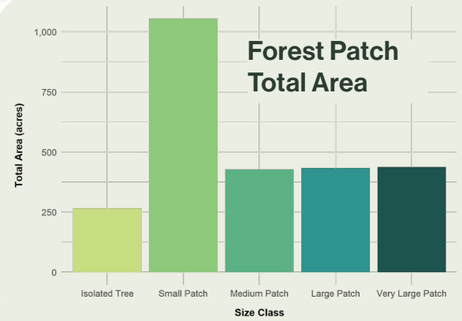
Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM

Forest Patch Sizes





Example close-up of forest patch size classification



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Urban Forest Snapshot

Changes in last 10 years

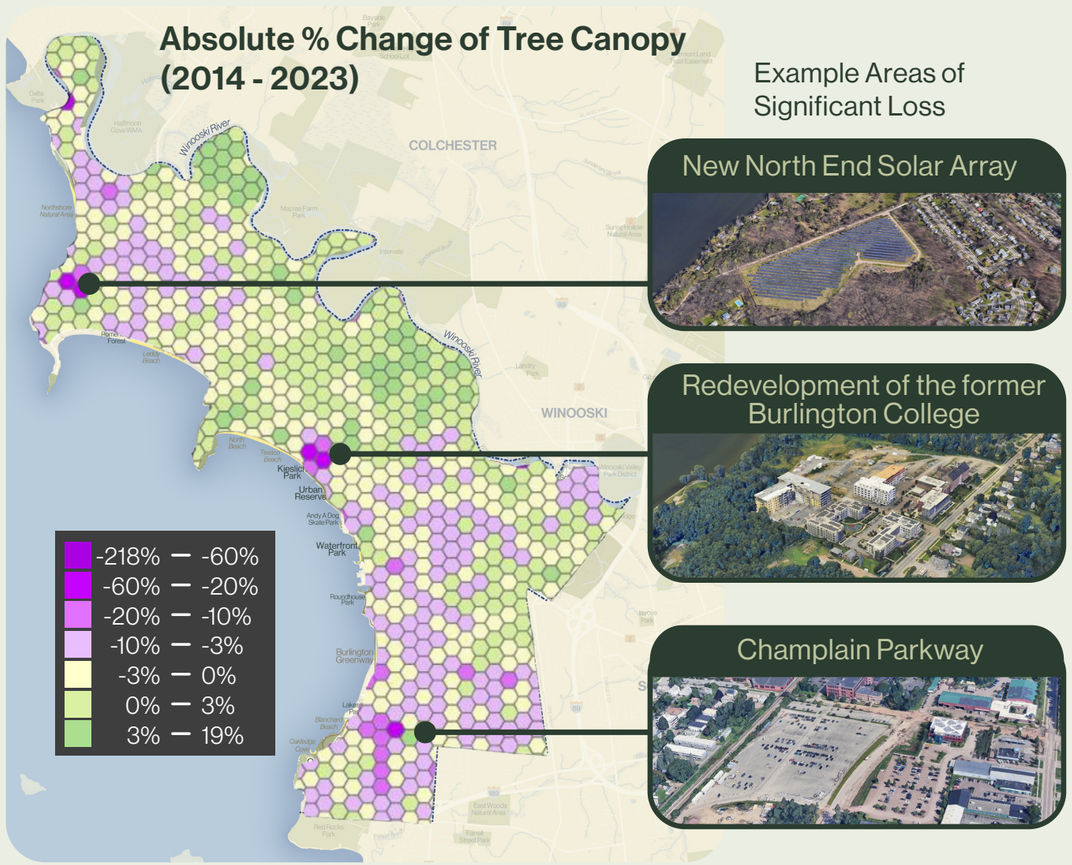
While there is not one singular goal for the urban forest, strategies can involve considering where tree canopy is below the city's average and target those areas to plant new trees.

Losses in tree canopy are outpacing gains, resulting in a net decrease in tree canopy. Burlington has experienced 4% relative loss of tree canopy.

Growth of existing tree canopy is the biggest contributor to Burlington's tree canopy gains.

Changes from 2014-2023

Burlington has experienced a net decrease in tree canopy over the 2014 to 2023 time period, but the story of change is more nuanced, with a mix of loss and gain. All areas of the city experienced both gains and losses of tree canopy, though some areas saw a net increase and others a net decrease. Removal and die off of mature trees resulted in the loss of large patches of tree canopy. Mature trees with large crowns contribute substantially to tree canopy and take decades to grow, so their loss creates large, localized declines in tree canopy. Even though there was evidence of tree loss throughout Burlington, planting efforts, preservation programs, and natural growth helped offset losses and stem decline.



Example Areas of Significant Loss

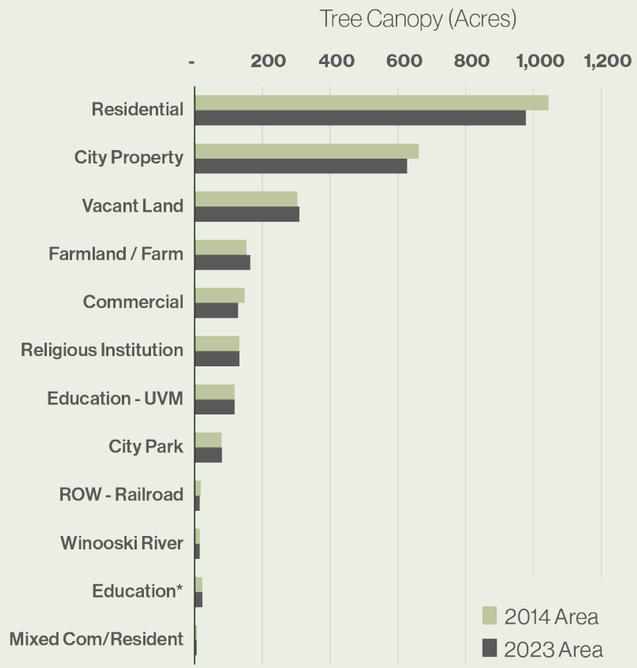
New North End Solar Array

Redevelopment of the former Burlington College

Champlain Parkway

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM

Tree Canopy Change by Land Use



*Includes Private, Champlain, and City-owned

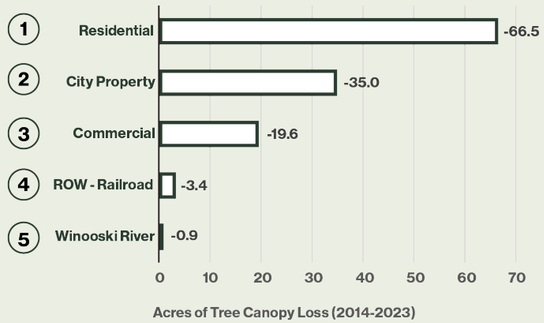
Managing Ash Tree Loss and Planning for a Resilient Urban Canopy

The recent spread of emerald ash borer, which was confirmed in Burlington in July 2024, has led to the removal of ash trees throughout the city. Nearly all ash trees are expected to be affected by the ash borer in the coming years. As ash is the main tree of Burlington's natural areas, this presents a significant challenge for the urban forest and forest blocks both large and small.

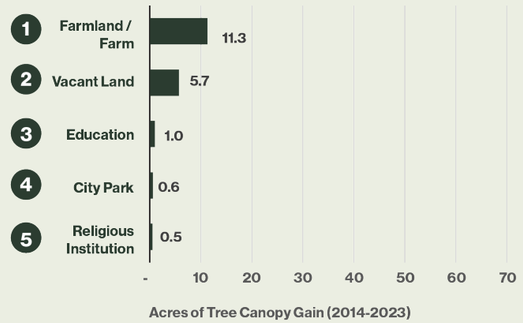
However, in anticipation of this impact, the City initiated an ambitious tree planting program over the past seven years, planting nearly 2,100 new trees across every ward of the city. These plantings were placed in locations with existing ash trees—such as Scarff and Ferguson Avenues, Upper College St., and the Appletree Point neighborhood—in anticipation of canopy loss due to the ash borer.

As more space opens up following ash tree removals, the City will continue to plant a diverse mix of species, aiming to strengthen and sustain a healthier, more resilient urban forest in the future.

Most Tree Canopy Loss



Most Tree Canopy Gain





Oakledge Park

3

Vision and Goals

Building on the original vision from the 2000 Open Space Protection Plan, this chapter reaffirms our city's commitment to stewarding Burlington's open space network and incorporating nature-based climate solutions.

Vision Statement

Burlington is a Nature-Filled City

Healthy open spaces that connect lake to river create a linked network where wildlife thrives. Around every corner, there are a variety of natural experiences that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Community gardens and urban farms burst with local produce. Burlington's open spaces invite all to explore, play, and grow—

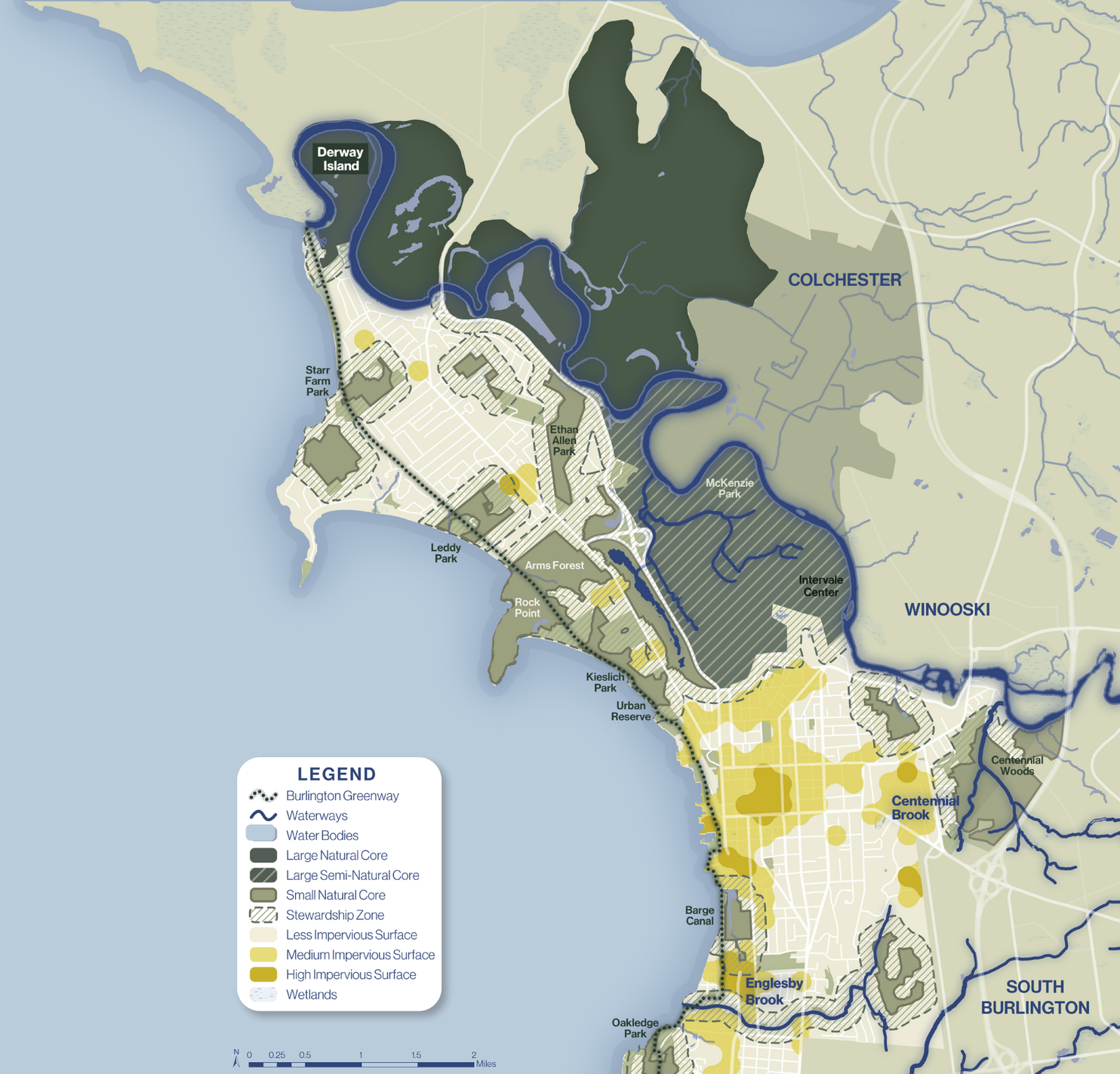
creating a city where people and ecosystems flourish side by side.



Healthy Connected Ecosystems Framework

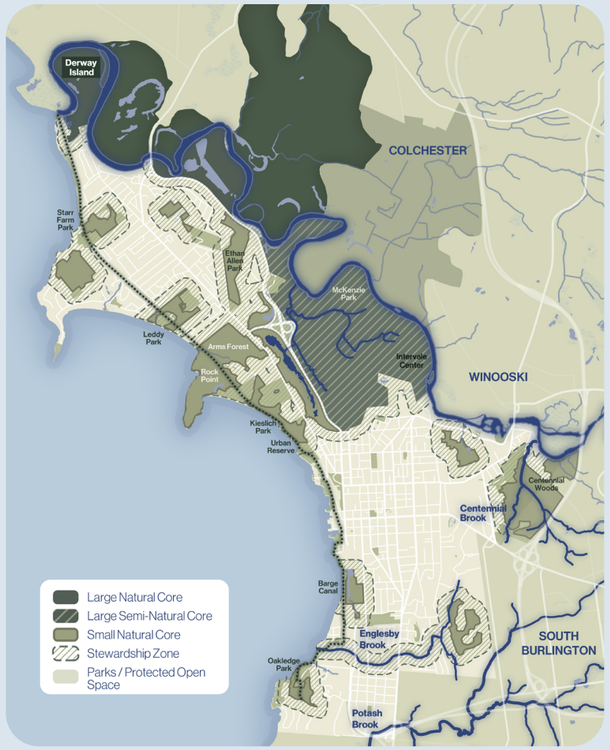
Since the first colonists arrived in Burlington and settled along the shores of what is now Lake Champlain, the city has undergone significant changes to meet the needs of a growing population and shifting industry demands, and the natural ecosystem and wildlife patterns have been impacted by human activity. To reinvest in the city's open spaces, wildlife health, and human connections to nature, the plan outlines a comprehensive, scientifically based ecological framework. The framework's goal is to be widely accessible and actionable by city staff, advocates, and the broader public.

Burlington's healthy ecosystem framework describes the conditions that enable an ecosystem to maintain its structure, function, and ability to recover from change and development. This includes a foundation of protected core natural areas that are large enough and continuous enough to support wildlife that depend upon large natural areas to live. This framework identifies where to prioritize conservation efforts and sustainable resource management to have the greatest impact. It shows where actions in and near open spaces should be considered with a heightened lens for their open space impacts and stewardship opportunities.



Layers of the Healthy Ecosystems Framework

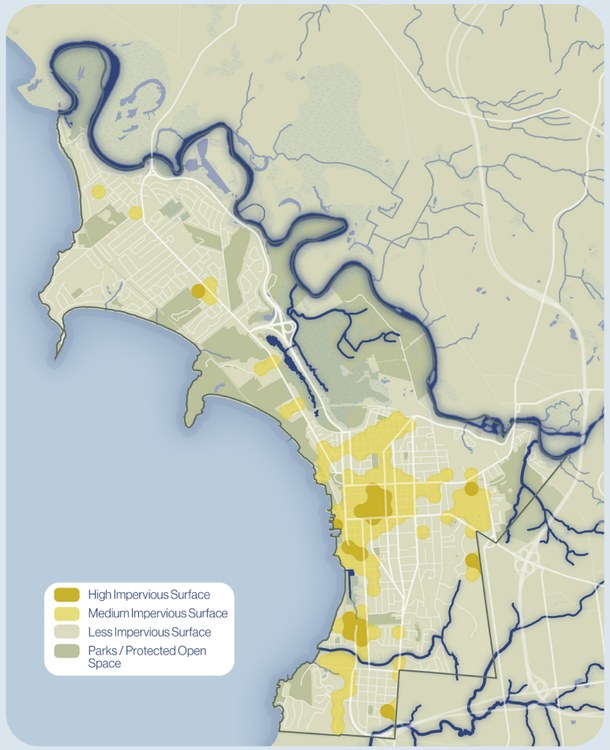
Core Ecological Areas



Water, Wetlands, and Floodplains



Impervious Surface Density



Tree Canopy



** see Urban Forest Snapshot, CONSERVE, and CONNECT sections for descriptions of these layers*

Goals and Strategies Overview

CONSERVE

Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city.

CS1 Expand restoration and management city-wide

CS2 Support wildlife movement and ecological health

CS3 Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs

CS4 Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations



CONNECT

Knitting the landscape together through green infrastructure, stewardship, and green design standards.

CN1 Grow and celebrate nature-based climate solutions across the city

CN2 Cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship

CN3 Enhance and protect Burlington's urban forest

CN4 Encourage new development to incorporate nature-based principles



EXPERIENCE

Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington.

EX1 Increase awareness about Burlington's open spaces

EX2 Grow public access to nature-based experiences

EX3 Break down barriers to open space access



CULTIVATE

Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs.

CL1 Cultivate sustainable and resilient agriculture practices

CL2 Expand community gardens

CL3 Support the cultivation of alternate food sources



CONSERVE

Stewarding Burlington's network of protected lands to support healthy ecosystems and a healthy city

Mount Cavalry Red Maple Wetland

CONSERVE Overview

Building on a long legacy of open space protection

Burlington's open space network is special because it includes not just urban parks for people to enjoy, but also large natural spaces that are both locally and regionally significant for wildlife and connected to areas outside the city. Expanding on the 2000 Open Space Protection Plan, this update provides a roadmap for ongoing protection, restoration, and management efforts to be undertaken by the city or large land stewards.

CONSERVE Strategies

- **CS1** Expand restoration and management city-wide
- **CS2** Support wildlife movement and ecological health
- **CS3** Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs
- **CS4** Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations



"Invasive species management and planting native species."

"Educating citizens and encouraging local volunteering and personal stewardship."

"Preserving and protecting ecosystems, restoration of impaired ecosystems, community involvement in natural areas/local ecosystem."

"Focuses in preservation, maintenance and resiliency in the face of climate escalated weather events."

"Restoration projects to maintain forest health, remove invasive species, increase water quality, help wildlife habitat by increasing corridors etc."

Protecting more open spaces

Connections linking open space and natural areas

Restoring wildlife habitat and expanding biodiversity

Improving water quality

Stewardship of core natural areas

"Keeping kids connected to their place so that they become informed citizens who want to make good decisions about conservation in the future."

"Balancing the human benefits with of these spaces with the ecosystem health."

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

CONSERVE
Overview

Burlington's ecosystems depend on healthy waters and a network of ecologically rich preserved lands.

All elements of the natural world are connected. While the relationships that people have with water and land differ vastly, their relationship to each other is inextricable. The flow of water brings nourishment to the land–including through the flooding of floodplains–while runoff from and drainage through land replenishes and enriches the water. Together, they form a network of connected habitats that allow wildlife populations to thrive.

Burlington's abundance of waterways has experienced increasing challenges, including aggressive introduced species and flooding. The CONSERVE goal outlines a framework for shared stewardship to support the long-term health of our city's waters and lands, including through partnerships with "Friends of" groups and conservation districts that may provide technical assistance and funding.

Water, Wetlands, and Floodplains

From urban brooks to the Winooski River to Lake Champlain, water is integral to healthy ecosystems and community life in Burlington. The ecological health of these waterways is largely influenced by actions and land use across their full watersheds, but Burlington and its residents can help by reducing pavement, adding more green spaces, and reducing runoff.



Lake Champlain

Lake Champlain's 12 miles of shoreline on Burlington's western edge is lined with open spaces. Much of Burlington's land area drains directly into the Lake, including via Englesby Brook. Though the lakeshore was once full of industrial plants, it has in many areas returned to a more natural state that many wildlife species call home.



Urban Brooks

A number of brooks flow through Burlington, such as Centennial, Englesby, and Potash Brooks, and flow into the two watersheds the city is part of. In some areas they are surrounded by tree canopy and open space while in others they abut private properties. The ecological health of some brooks have been impaired—there are on-going stewardship efforts and opportunities to manage issues like erosion and aggressive introduced species.



Winooski River

With a total length of 90 miles and a watershed spanning 1,080 square miles, the Winooski River starts in the foothills of the Green Mountains and drains into Lake Champlain. It is a critical part of a riparian system that floods its banks–such as the Intervale–and serves as a wildlife corridor.



Wetlands

Wetlands are rich ecosystems that support a wide variety of species across all seasons. Development pressures and lack of understanding of their ecological functions resulted in widespread wetland drainage throughout the 1800s and 1900s. Burlington has 380 acres of protected wetlands.

Core Ecological Lands

Burlington's core ecological lands work together to form a network that supports wildlife, cleans air, and absorbs rainfall. These open spaces vary in size and include a range of landscapes, from forests to fields to semi-natural areas, like the Intervale and Starr Farm.



Derway Island

Large Natural Core

Preserve large areas for ecosystem integrity at scale and support regionally uncommon species.



The Intervale

Large Semi-Natural Core

Preserve large mixed natural, semi-natural, and agriculture landscapes for food production and ecosystem integrity.



Oakledge Park

Small Natural Core

Larger isolated blocks of forest (some wetlands, grassland, brushland) embedded in urban landscape.



Manhattan Dr

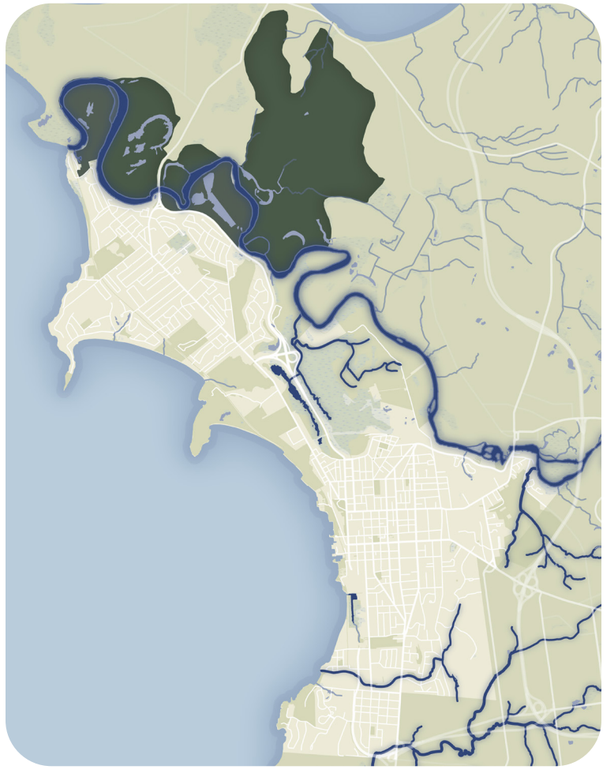
Stewardship Zone

Support neighbors of open spaces to take stewardship actions that reduce the edge effects on nearby core areas.



Large Core Lands

Large Natural Core



PURPOSE
Preserve large areas for ecosystem integrity at scale and support regionally uncommon species.

EXISTING PROTECTIONS
Majority of land in large cores is protected public open space (e.g. Derway Island); floodplain, wetland and natural resource ordinances protect most of remainder.

OPPORTUNITIES
- All combined, over 2000-acre expanse of largely natural land
- Potential habitat for larger or area-sensitive animals (river otter, mink, bobcat)
- Non-public land is largely in state-regulated protected floodplain

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Cross-river collaboration requires working across municipal boundaries
- Challenge of river flooding introducing aggressive introduced plant species
- Edge effects where residences abut natural area



Semi-Natural Agricultural Core



PURPOSE
Preserve large mixed natural, semi-natural, and agriculture landscapes for food production and ecosystem integrity.

EXISTING PROTECTIONS
Almost half in Intervale; some in McKenzie Park and McCrae Farm Park. Floodplain, wetland and natural resource ordinances protect much of remainder.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Some 1700 acres of continuous floodplain, wetlands and uplands in a mosaic of natural and agricultural land
- The Intervale Center is integral to City identity and part of core

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Challenge of cross-river collaboration
- Challenge of river flooding introducing aggressive introduced plant species
- Edge effects where residences and VT 127 abut natural area
- Reducing fragmentation of floodplain forest requires strategic restoration of agricultural land to forest



Small Core Lands

Small Natural/ Semi-Natural Core



PURPOSE
Larger isolated blocks of forest embedded in urban landscape.

EXISTING PROTECTIONS
Some in parks, or protected by natural resource ordinance, or on institutional land with low prospect for development (e.g., Rock Point).

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continuous forest cover and good tree diversity – less canopy underplanting
- Localized aggressive introduced plant invasions (e.g., knotweed, Norway maple) or light/moderate (e.g., buckthorn, honeysuckle) – forest structure less likely to change if addressed now
- Native groundlayer plants – less need for expensive plantings

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

- Non-targeted interventions expending resources and patience
- Opportunities to strengthen ecosystem management
- Opportunity to enhance long-term stewardship integration with daily operations



Inventory Process

In November 2024, the project team visited 19 sites representing a range of ecosystems in Burlington. The purpose of the site visit was to Identify issues affecting ecological integrity, diversity, and resilience in natural and semi-natural lands .

The sites included:

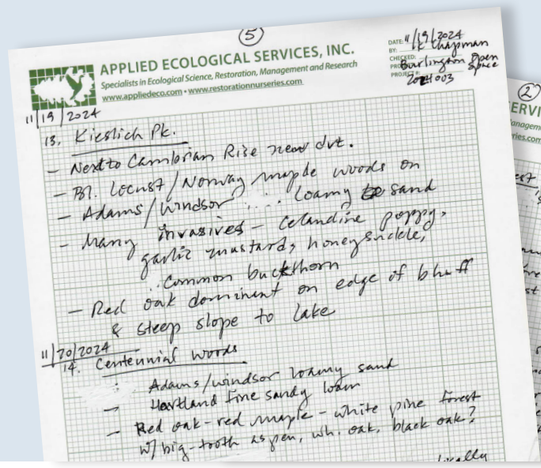
- Large blocks of natural and semi-natural land
- Public parks
- Smaller, interesting natural areas



Sites visited



Example of field notes from site visits



Core Ecological Lands & Water Resources

Why are Lake Champlain, Winooski River, and other water resources not included on the core ecological area maps?

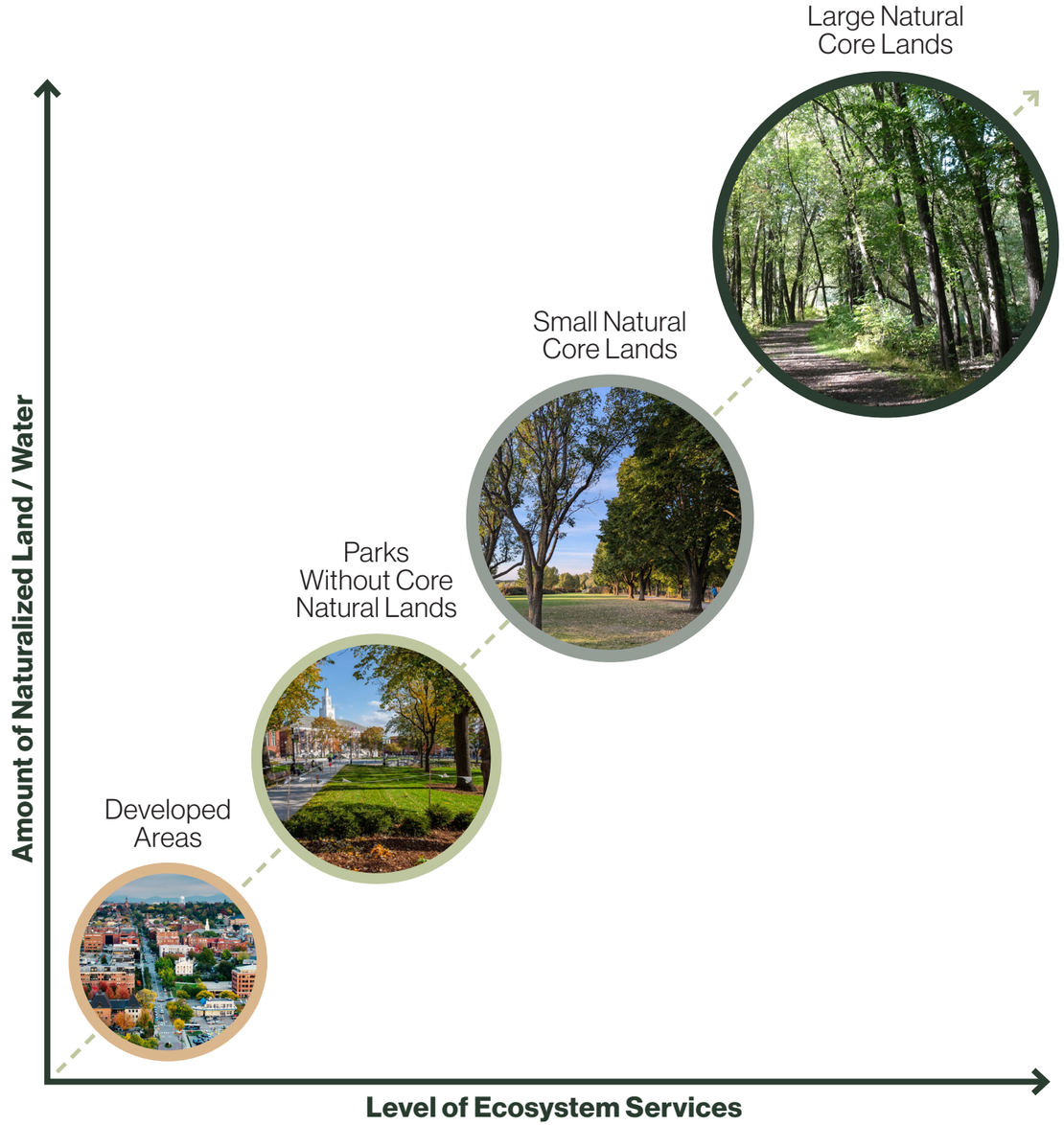
The Open Space Plan focuses on core ecological land areas rather than water bodies, as water constitutes a distinct ecosystem with different management and health considerations. While improving the ecological health of core lands is achievable through targeted management within the area and reducing edge effects in the surrounding 500-600 feet, the management of water bodies is more complex. It requires broader collaboration among multiple property owners across larger areas.

Enhancing the ecological health of water resources depends on watershed-scale action. While this plan does not directly address water bodies, its recommendations—such as expanding tree canopy and promoting green infrastructure—will indirectly benefit local waterways by improving stormwater absorption and filtration. Further study of watershed-scale issues and opportunities could complement the actions outlined in this plan.

Why are some areas of Burlington's parks not shown as core ecological lands?

While all parks provide valuable ecosystem services, such as stormwater absorption and cooling the surrounding area, certain park areas—like parking lots and athletic fields—offer more limited ecological benefits compared to forested or naturalized areas. The core ecological lands map focuses on the most critical places in Burlington for maintaining healthy ecosystems. While parks serve important functions that balance human recreation with ecological needs, not all park areas contribute equally to ecological health.

However, there are opportunities to enhance the ecosystem services in non-core park areas. For example, installing solar shade canopies over parking lots or incorporating green stormwater features along their edges can help reduce heat island effects and improve water quality.



Edge Effects and Stewardship Zones

Development affects nearby natural areas, but we can accommodate growth while strengthening the network of green spaces.



Purpose of Conservation
When thinking of conservation, we take an ecological point of view and envision how to keep the nature we love and avoid damaging it in the future. We think first of the species we'd like our great-grandchildren to see a hundred years from now. These are the common plants, like oaks and pines, and uncommon plants, like orchids and spring wildflowers. Along with these are fungi and soil organisms. Then we turn to generalist wildlife, such as robins, goldfinches, crows, deer, raccoons, foxes, white-footed mice, American toads, garter snakes, bluegills and the fish we usually catch. We also think of habitat specialists and area-sensitive wildlife, like big carnivores and the many warblers and migratory birds that travel thousands of miles to breed here. Lastly, we think of the common and rare insects, many of them pollinators of wildflowers, orchard trees, and crop plants.

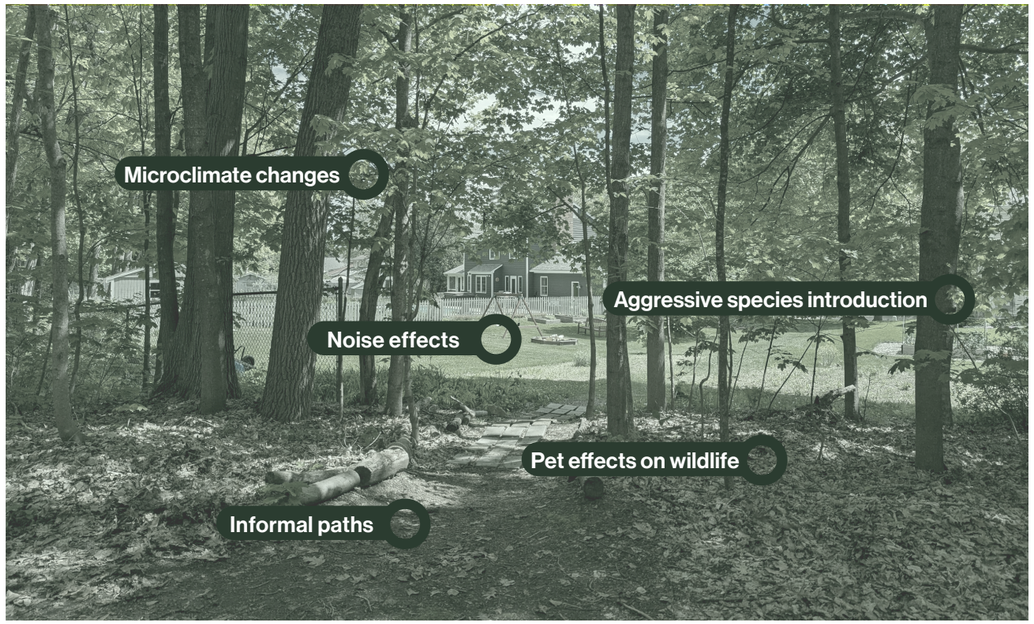
The common plants and wildlife can tolerate and even thrive in cities, towns, and rural lands. They are not the focus of conservation because their populations are usually stable or increasing.

By contrast, uncommon plant and insect species, and wildlife specialists or area-sensitive animals often have declining populations. Many need large and diverse core natural areas to sustain themselves.

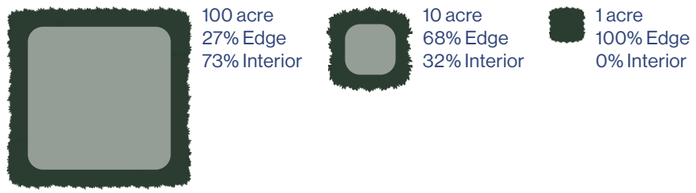
The direct effect on natural areas of conversion to crops and urban or suburban development is well documented. Less obvious are long-term effects from a longer habitat edge compared to the habitat's interior area. Smaller and narrower habitats have more edge than larger, rounder ones.

Edge Effects
Edge effects are damaging influences on core natural areas due to other uses on adjacent lands that penetrate the cores, reducing their suitability for many plant and animal species.

As the length of edge around a natural core grows, interior habitat shrinks. Scientific studies show how far edge effects penetrate into adjacent habitat (see table on next page). For instance, birds and other wildlife can be flushed by people walking on trails up to 150 feet away. Predators like raccoon and house cat will travel several hundred feet into forests and grasslands to prey on bird eggs, nestlings, small mammals and other wildlife. Aggressive introduced plants move from edges into natural areas. Traffic noise, warm and dry air, dust from roads, pesticide drift, and other damaging influences affect nearby natural areas. Management can reduce edge effects. In stewardship zones around natural areas, neighbors can act in ways that lessen edge effects. Where room allows, natural areas can be made more round or protected with native vegetation screens.

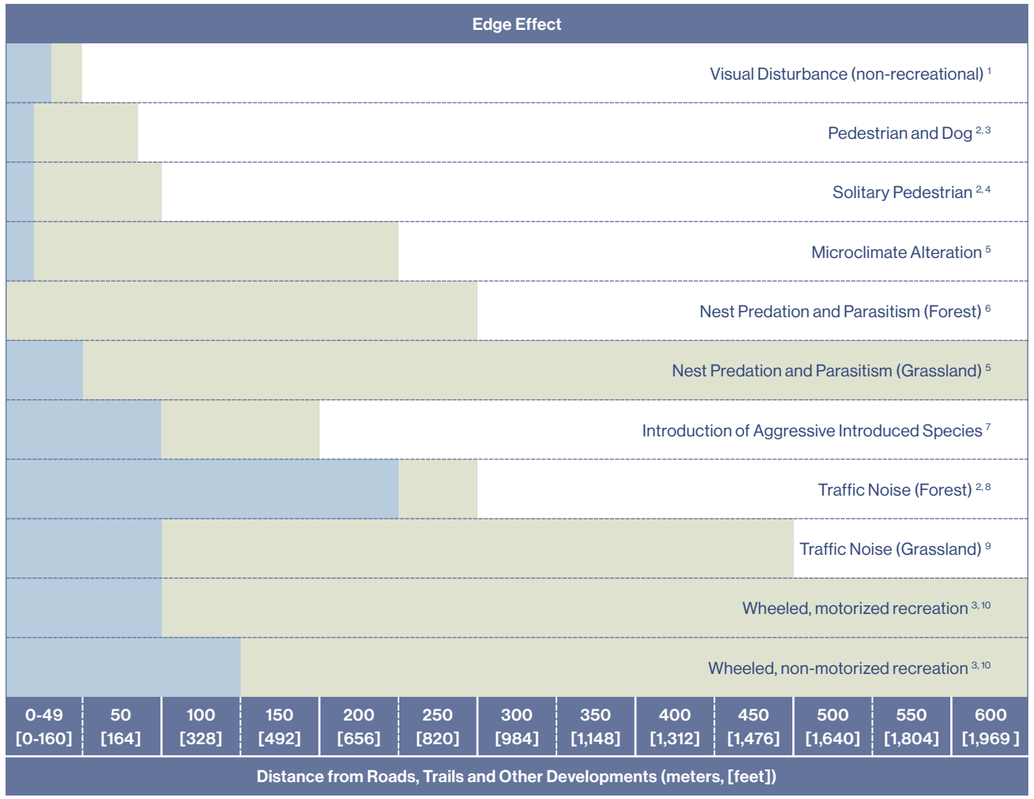


Core/Interior Habitats and Edge Habitats
SOURCE: Bentrup, 2008



Edge Effects and Stewardship Zones

Edge Effect Distances



Distances at which edge effects are in full effect

Range of distances at which edge effects decrease

Distance of Edge Effect Penetration into Adjacent Natural Areas
SOURCE: [1] Fish and Wildlife Service (2006), [2] Miller et al. (2001), [3] Snetsinger and White (2009), [4] Fernandez-Juricic et al. (2005), [5] Environmental Law Institute (2003), [6] Soule (1991), [7] Askins (1995), [8] Reijnen et al. (1995), [9] Reijnen and Foppen (1996), [10] Spahr (1990)

*Unless large natural core near a road with speed limit over 35 mph, then 650 feet or sound barrier recommended

Stewardship Zones: Notify, Educate, Negotiate

Improving Stewardship

The purpose of stewardship zones is to recognize that neighbors of core natural areas play important roles in their health. Stewardship zones are priority areas for providing information and other resources to landowners to increase awareness about how their actions affect the natural function of nearby open spaces and support best practices on their property. These resources may include access to native plantings and possible Conservation Legacy Fund support for neighborhood NBCS efforts.

Backyard Stewardship Zone: 165 feet

Stewardship in this zone reduces most significant negative impacts on natural areas.

- Reduces visual disturbance
- Reduces impacts of pedestrians and pets
- Reduces microclimate alteration
- Reduces introduction of aggressive introduced species
- Reduces traffic noise

Neighborhood Stewardship Zone: 500 feet

Stewardship in this zone further improves health of core natural area.

- Much greater reduction of microclimate alterations, traffic noise, aggressive introduced species introductions, and nest predation



What you can do if you live in a stewardship zone:

- mow your yard less or convert to a wild yard
- grow native plants
- build small-scale green infrastructure
- organize a community garden
- participate in neighborhood-scale nature-based climate solutions

For other tactics related to Stewardship Zones, see actions CN1.2, CN2.3, and CN4.2.

CONSERVE Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Expand Restoration and Management City-wide

Burlington's natural environment is a chief ingredient in the city's character, making it one of the most attractive and inviting small cities in the country. While Burlington enjoys an abundance of open space, totaling almost 50% of its geographic area, the city has been historically striving to take care of these spaces, from protecting nature to cleaning up polluted areas and maintaining parks. The city realizes that when such spaces are disturbed, natural ecosystems eventually degrade. Now, with climate change creating a noticeable impact, it becomes especially important to identify, plan, manage, and restore core open spaces, keeping in mind the needs of the ecosystem and the Burlington community.

In order to expand restoration and management throughout the city, Burlington needs to inventory existing natural areas and climate initiatives, followed by the development and continuous evaluation of restoration and management plans with a focus on climate solutions. The city can establish and expand relations with stewards for improving city-wide management, and work towards community values that go beyond basic nature improvements.

While many of these actions are oriented toward city government, private land stewards have a critical role to play as well. They can employ similar tactics on their land and collaborate with the City to ensure efforts do not stop at parcel boundaries.

ACTIONS

CS1.1 Develop restoration and management plans for core natural areas. Use existing management plans as templates and work with other organizations to ensure alignment across plans. Prioritize plans for ecological significance.

CS1.2 Inventory current initiatives and projects that support Nature Based Climate Solutions, identify gaps, and outline future initiatives/projects to close gaps.

CS1.3 Adjust the City's green infrastructure definition to go beyond stormwater management and to include elements such as the urban forest, natural areas, wetlands, and green corridors.

CS1.4 Establish city- and community-wide values and methods for aggressive introduced species management. Communicate in the communications plan (See EX1.3).

CS1.5 Update Natural Resource Protection District Map for consistency with Open Space Plan's core natural areas.

CS1.6 Continue to restore urban waterways like Potash, Centennial, Englesby Brooks (through partnerships, restoration activities, and regulations like buffer zones).

CS1.7 *See also in CONNECT: CN2.3. Support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.*

STRATEGY 2
Support Wildlife Movement and Ecological Health

Core natural areas enable wildlife movement and support ecological health. Connecting open spaces and supporting natural systems can be strengthened through stewardship actions, both large and small.

This strategy includes actions focused on collecting and sharing data to increase community awareness about ecosystem health. It also includes actions to improve health of ecosystems, especially larger core areas and areas supporting area-sensitive or regionally uncommon plants, animals, and natural communities. The Burlington community showed widespread support for restoration projects to maintain forest health, remove aggressive introduced species, and help sustain the wildlife habitat. Though not explicitly addressed in these actions, the issue of deer inhibiting forest regeneration is one the city will need to monitor in conjunction with their effect on agricultural lands (see CULTIVATE).

ACTIONS

CS2.1 Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.

CS2.2 Increase data collection on Burlington's Wildlife Corridors (e.g. species use, frequency of use, key environmental components) to incorporate in other City processes (e.g. management strategies).

CS2.3 Continue to identify opportunities to improve large forest areas and improve habitat for songbirds and other indicator species.

CS2.4 Create an open-access dashboard tracking key indicators related to wildlife, water quality, and restoration with suggested ways to make progress.



CONSERVE Strategies

STRATEGY 3
Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs

The Conservation Legacy Fund has been a critical tool in expanding Burlington's protected open spaces to support community goals. Now, as the pace of new protection slows down, to continue to reflect community values of stewardship, there is a need to broaden the use of the Conservation Legacy Fund to include critical maintenance, stewardship, and conservation infrastructure on open space lands.

ACTIONS

CS3.1 Increase the Conservation Legacy Fund.

CS3.2 Review the Conservation Legacy Fund and evaluate expanding the definition of potential fund uses to support conservation goals and values expressed in the Fund's inception (e.g. conservation infrastructure, education, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.).

STRATEGY 4
Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations

Burlington views natural and recreational lands as community assets that support residential quality of life, drinking water quality, food security, and a sense of place and history defined by a unique landscape. With this realization comes the responsibility for nurturing and protecting those assets over the long term. Acquiring land through collaborative strategies for scenic, natural, and recreational purposes is one of the surest ways for any community to secure its most important land assets. Land can also be set aside to build community green spaces as infill development is undertaken.

ACTIONS

CS4.1 Review and update acquisition list and criteria.

CS4.2 Adapt strategies for land acquisition for conservation for both public and private lands, reflecting the priorities of the new open space plan and upcoming comprehensive plan.













CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 1: Expand Restoration and Management City-wide							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 1.1	Develop restoration and management plans for core natural areas. Use existing management plans as templates and work with other organizations to ensure alignment across plans. Prioritize plans for ecological significance.	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	Qualified ecologists	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.2	Inventory current initiatives and projects that support Nature Based Climate Solutions, identify gaps, and outline future initiatives/projects to close gaps.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, NBCS grantees, Water Resources	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.3	Adjust the City's green infrastructure definition to go beyond stormwater management and to include elements such as the urban forest, natural areas, wetlands, and green corridors.	Conservation Board	Water Resources, DPI, City Planning, WNRCD, "Friends of" groups	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.4	Establish city- and community-wide values and methods for aggressive introduced species management. Communicate in the communications plan (See EX1.3).	Parks Conservation Team and Wildways	State of Vermont, Parks maintenance team, large landowners (e.g. Intervale)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.3
CS 1.5	Update Natural Resource Protection District Map for consistency with Open Space Plan's core natural areas.	City Planning/DPI	Conservation Board, Planning Commission	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.6	Continue to restore urban waterways like Potash, Centennial, Englesby Brooks (through partnerships, restoration activities, and regulations like buffer zones).	Parks Conservation Team	VT DEC, Water Resources, WVPD, BLUE Stormwater	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 1.7	*See also in CONNECT: CN2.3. Support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 2: Support Wildlife Movement and Ecological Health							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 2.1	Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, VGN, Grow Wild	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.2	Increase data collection on Burlington's Wildlife Corridors (e.g. species use, frequency of use, key environmental components) to incorporate in other City processes (e.g. zoning, neighborhood codes).	Parks Conservation Team	UVM, VT Fish and Wildlife, City Planning, DPI, Conservation Board	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.3	Continue to identify opportunities to improve large forest areas and improve habitat for songbirds and other indicator species.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team	-	YES (ongoing)	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 2.4	Create an open-access dashboard tracking key indicators related to wildlife, water quality, and restoration with suggested ways to make progress.	City Planning (provide data), IT Department (set up dashboard) Parks, Communications (maintain dashboard)	City Planning (Data Analysts), Park Conservation Team, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CS 3: Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 3.1	Increase the Conservation Legacy Fund.	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayor's Office, Director of Financial Operations	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 3.2	Review the Conservation Legacy Fund and evaluate expanding the definition of potential fund uses to support conservation goals and values expressed in the Fund's inception (e.g. conservation infrastructure, education, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.).	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayors Office, Director of Financial Operations)	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CS 4: Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 4.1	Review and update acquisition list and criteria.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 4.2	Adapt strategies for land acquisition for conservation for both public and private lands, reflecting the priorities of the new open space plan and upcoming comprehensive plan.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor, Conservation Board, Parks Commission, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-

CONNECT

A landscape stitched together by stewardship and nature-based development



Derway Cove

CONNECT Overview

Connections are key to thriving natural spaces.

This goal focuses on increasing connectivity between the city's core natural areas, expanding tree canopy and nature pockets throughout Burlington, and identifying how existing and new development can contribute to healthier ecosystems. The benefits of this approach are more connected green networks that work better for local wildlife and reduce the urban heat island effect, creating a cooler, more nature-filled city for Burlingtonians to enjoy.

CONNECT Strategies

- **CN1** Grow and celebrate nature-based climate solutions across the city
- **CN2** Cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship
- **CN3** Enhance and protect Burlington's urban forest
- **CN4** Encourage new development to incorporate nature-based principles



"More valued and tended open spaces, working gardens, safe walkways to appreciate them , and ecologically-aware based public transportation."

"I'd love to see more pocket-park as well as trees and/or planters along busy streets."

"More tree pits/trenches, better established wildlife corridors, more open green space in available spaces, and more green water infrastructure."

Connecting Burlington's green spaces

Expanding green stormwater infrastructure

Converting lawns to habitat

Adding more green to dense areas

Sustainable development that fits with nature

"Encouraging private homeowners to plant habitats in their yards."

"Green infill, reduction of impervious surface."

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

The amount of impervious surface is a key driver of ecological health.

The location and prevalence of impervious surfaces imposes a ceiling on protection, restoration, and stewardship of the natural world, and limits the integration of the natural world into the human-built environment. Open space planning can be constrained by impervious surfaces as they put limits on where naturalization and restoration efforts of the built environment can occur. They also limit the actions the City can effectively take to improve the ecological integrity, resilience, and functioning of the City's open spaces. These actions range from removing aggressive introduced plants, to creating pollinator habitat, to restoring wetlands and forests, to managing stormwater runoff, to creating space for animals that cannot tolerate human intrusion on their habitats.

At 10% impervious cover, negative ecological effects are already present.

10% Impervious Cover



10% impervious

Stream water quality begins to deteriorate. 10% impervious cover can exclude larger mammals, raptors, and area-sensitive species from areas.

20% Impervious Cover



20% impervious

Streams shift to a highly altered urban state. Visible evidence of erosion, algae blooms, and decreased macroinvertebrate diversity.

25% Impervious Cover



25% impervious

Remnant natural areas are small and have no interior habitat. Greatly decreases biodiversity in birds, small mammals, herptiles, and invertebrates.



Open Space Stories

BLUE BTV

Lake Champlain Sea Grant's program BLUE helps residents protect their waterways from pollution right in their yards.

When rainwater flows off impervious surfaces like roofs, driveways, and streets, it can carry dirt, oil, and other pollution into the water. This runoff can cause harmful algae blooms that are often unsafe for people and animals. BLUE helps change that.

Any resident can sign up for a free visit from BLUE. They will do a home inspection, look at how rainwater flows around your yard, and give tips on how to keep that water clean. Tips range from small projects like redirecting your downspouts to bigger ones like installing rain gardens or permeable driveways. Once you complete the project, you are "BLUE-certified"— you are helping make Burlington's waters cleaner!

CONNECT Overview

The intensity of development within an area impacts what strategies are most effective.

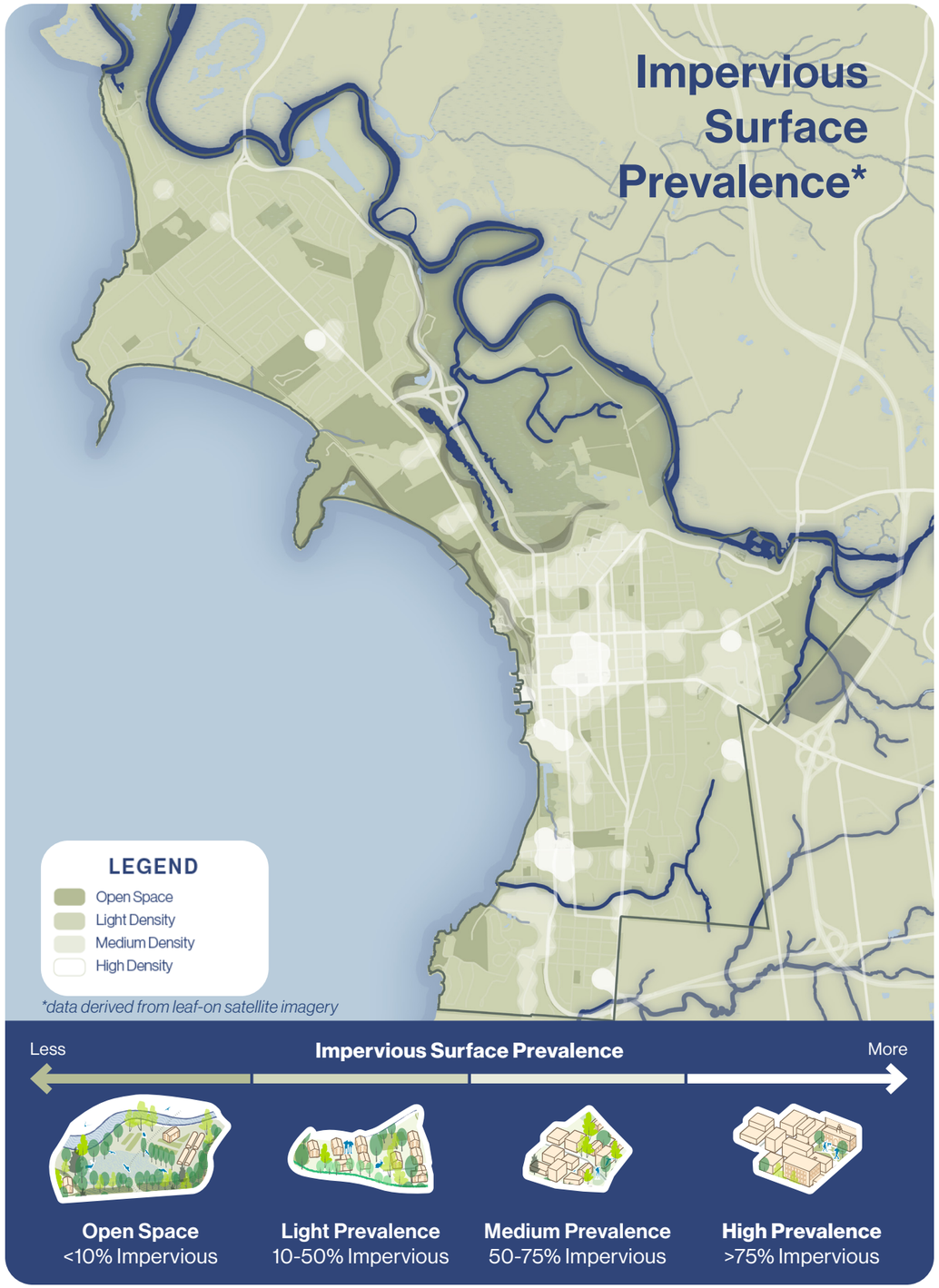
Burlington has a wide variety of neighborhoods, from the dense urban core of Downtown to areas with more open space, like the New North End. The amount of impervious surfaces—such as roads, parking lots, and buildings—greatly influences both the ecological health and future potential of each area. Strategies to enhance green spaces, manage stormwater sustainably, and support biodiversity will differ depending on the density and development of the neighborhood. Across all neighborhoods, these strategies not only connect ecology, but also connect people to green spaces and to each other.

Stewardship Opportunities

- Potential for an activity to protect, restore and steward ecosystems and habitats
- Rating of activities by zone – Feasibility given space, level of effort/cost, and likelihood of success

Strategies marked as **"High"** represent places where improvements can be made successfully with relatively low cost and effort. **"Low"** indicates strategies that will require greater resources and effort for meaningful change.

Impervious Cover	Ecological Stormwater Management	Large Natural Areas	Small Natural Areas	Biodiversity Enhancements
Open Space < 10%	High	High	High	High
Light Prevalence 10 - 50%	High	Low	Medium	High
Medium Prevalence 50 - 75%	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
High Prevalence > 75%	Low	Low	Low	Medium



Key Connections

The map on the opposite page identifies potential key connections for wildlife movement. Arrows on the map identify connections between core natural areas, waterbodies, and contiguous tree canopy. It can be a high-level guide for where additional protected land, tree plantings, and infrastructure to facilitate wildlife movement (culverts under roads for crossing) could be prioritized. It is intended to show high-level connections at a broad scale. The tree canopy data from UVM can also be used to support finer-grained connectivity improvements, like enhancing linear habitat connection across backyards in a neighborhoods to support localized wildlife movement.

Key areas of focus for wildlife movement include:

- **New North End**, loop from Derway Island through Starr Farm, Leddy Park, Arms Forest, Rock Point, Ethan Allen Park, and Mount Calvary Red Maple Wetland
- **Across North Ave, especially near North Ave/127** entrance - the topography in this location is especially favorable for a wildlife and potentially pedestrian underpass
- **Along Winooski River**
- From **Centennial Woods** / Centennial Brook northwest towards Intervale Center
- **South End,** from large patches of tree canopy in the Country Club, along Englesby Brook, towards the Barge Canal, and Oakledge Park towards South Burlington



Types of Connections

Habitat Islands

PURPOSE
Plant small habitat islands across urban landscape to increase plant, insect, bird, and small mammal diversity near people's homes and places of work and play.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Many small areas, such as pocket parks, are available on public and private land
- Public interest in seeing flowering plants, butterflies, birds, pollinators, and other signs of nature living nearby

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Too dispersed, small and diverse to facilitate long-term protection and management by any one entity
- Correct siting of habitat islands to avoid conflicts, ensure establishment and persistence, and minimize management costs



Green Stormwater Facility

PURPOSE
Ecologically-inspired and functioning facilities to manage stormwater runoff; e.g., rain garden, tree trench, roadside planter (e.g., St. Paul green streets), downspout redirection to turf, bioswale, bioinfiltration basin, stormwater wetland, green roof, treatment train, etc.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Future road upgrades and major repair jobs are best opportunity to install GSI to manage road and parking lot runoff
- Other opportunities in City's stormwater management plan

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Typically high cost
- Usually limited space to manage large catchments
- Usually small catchments are managed – high per-gallon cost for pollutant removal (lbs. removed/dollar spent)



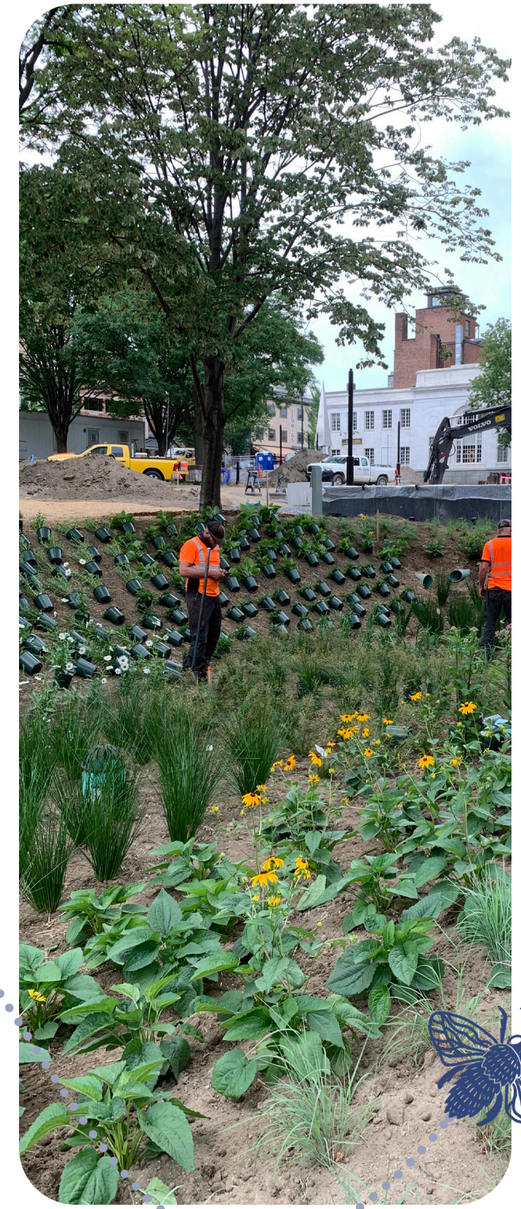
Other Connections

PURPOSE
Understand and support movement of wild animals and native plants through urban landscape.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Neighborhood based NBCS projects, redevelopment projects, wildlife corridor assessments and protocols, pollinators and their habitats.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS
- Feasibility of using non-public lands
- Limited resources for acquisition of fee title, easement, or lease
- No voluntary recognition program exists





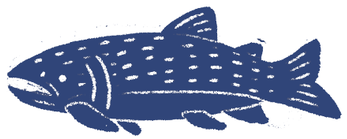
Green Design Standards

Overall

- **A** Develop with native soil, hydrology, and vegetation in mind.
- **B** Protect and maintain healthy and resilient natural areas.
- **C** Understand past and existing conditions to guide restoration and management.
- **D** Create attractive, resilient, and economically feasible plant communities.
- **E** Tell an ecological story that inspires people to restore the natural world.
- **F** Allow people to visit natural areas while protecting ecosystem resilience.
- **G** Document ecological trends by monitoring indicators of health and resilience.

Wildlife

- **A** Protect and restore habitat for rare and uncommon plant and animal species.
- **B** Create the largest, roundest habitats for area-sensitive wildlife species.
- **C** Connect habitat cores to similar nearby habitat.
- **D** Design new reserves to minimize edge effects from adjacent properties.
- **E** Establish stewardship zones to manage edge effects from adjacent developed land.
- **F** Install special habitat features like nest boxes and basking logs.
- **G** Manage nuisance wildlife, such as deer and geese, using appropriate methods.



Soil & Hydrology

- **A** Preserve stable soils and existing natural hydrology.
- **B** Fix eroding lands and degraded hydrology with catchment and watershed management.
- **C** Prevent flooding by preserving natural lands and installing green infrastructure.
- **D** Use ecological stormwater management tools before highly engineered solutions.
- **E** Reduce runoff at its source; use a sequence of natural features to manage runoff.
- **F** Solve soil and hydrological problems in the most cost-effective way.

Vegetation

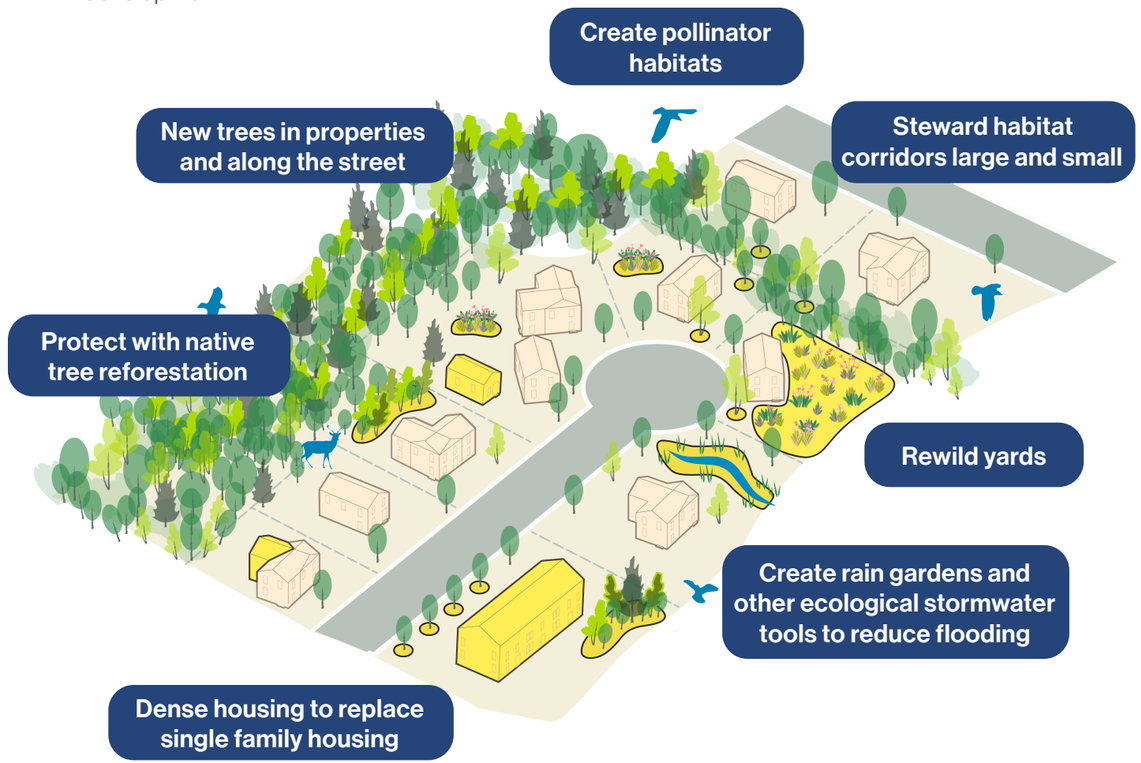
- **A** Protect and restore rare and common native ecological land cover types.
- **B** Encourage diverse native flowering plants across the growing season.
- **C** Control non-native and native plants that disrupt ecosystems and depress biodiversity.
- **D** Establish vegetation that can be managed with the least effort.
- **E** Convert lawns to more productive native habitat where possible.

Human Use

- **A** Identify natural areas with sensitive wildlife that tolerate little human interaction.
- **B** Define management units and access points.
- **C** Detect problems early by monitoring on-trail and off-trail use.
- **D** Recruit organizations, experts and volunteers (such as “Friends Of” groups) to help maintain and monitor natural areas.
- **E** Protect cultural resources, such as Native American artifacts and historical structures.

Nature-Supporting Growth Areas

Development and open space can work in tandem to provide mutual benefits to both nature and people. In the below scenario, a residential neighborhood at the edge of a large forest can grow and change to support new residents through accessory dwelling units, and a new apartment building, while also contributing to the vision and goals outlined in this plan like supporting ecological stormwater infrastructure, forest restoration, pollinator gardens, and redevelopment rather than new development.



CONNECT Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Grow and Celebrate Nature-Based Climate Solutions Across the City

The 2022 Addendum to the Open Space Plan highlighted the connection between a thriving environment and a thriving community. Built on a foundational themes of equity, inclusion, and relationships, NBCS are holistic strategies that protect, restore, and steward the world around us through multidisciplinary collaboration.

While NBCS are deeply integrated throughout this Open Space Plan, this strategy focuses on education and awareness–strengthening existing relationships and building new partnerships to educate on, grow, and track NBCS throughout the city and across many initiatives. This involves not just the city government, but also schools, the public, and private property owners.

ACTIONS

CN1.1 Educate the public on Nature-Based Climate Solutions and their value. (See also EX1.3)

CN1.2 Create and support existing education, recognition, and incentive programs to encourage private property owners to integrate Nature Based Climate Solutions and implement sound ecological practices (e.g. reducing lawn space), especially within Natural Area Stewardship Zones.

- Celebrate and support Grow Wild initiatives to encourage lawn conversions for native spaces to incrementally replace non-native for habitat benefits.
- Use established pockets to disburse throughout neighborhoods.
- Potential programs include adaptation of Green Design Standards, expansion of the BLUE program, and encouragement of "Wild Yards" to convert mowed areas to naturalized open space.

CN1.3 Continue to partner with schools to grow nature-based climate solutions on school grounds.

CN1.4 Create a municipal management plan to track and reduce mowed lawns.

CN1.5 Continue to grow nature-based climate solutions on City property, including but not limited to green stormwater infrastructure.

CN1.6 *See also in CONSERVE: CS2.1. Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*

STRATEGY 2
Cultivate an Ecosystem of Stewardship

From school children to community-based organizations to city leadership, Burlington has a deep sense of care and commitment to stewarding the natural world around them–not just for personal use but for its intrinsic value and environmental health. Burlingtonians across the city are doing meaningful work in many different capacities to educate people to open space, plant pollinator gardens, advocate for resilient waterways, and encourage responsible growing and foraging.

This strategy celebrates the existing communities of care and seeks to support and build on them to facilitate knowledge and resource sharing. Across the community, schools, organizations, and City departments, this strategy streamlines processes and seeks to make valuing open space integral to how everyone operates, particularly through co-education and shared resources.

ACTIONS

CN2.1 Create a database and listserv of open space organizations to support collaboration, resource sharing, etc.

CN2.2 Co-host a recurring open space summit for land stewards, community organizations, and others.

CN2.3 Continue to support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.

CN2.4 Update Urban Wilds definition, including considering expanding beyond city-owned land.

CN2.5 Distribute educational resources about how personal actions can support water quality health in lake, river, and tributaries. (See also EX1.3)

STRATEGY 3
Enhance and Protect Burlington's Urban Forest

Burlington's urban forest offers numerous benefits—from providing shade and wildlife habitat to reducing stormwater runoff and improving air quality. While the city still maintains a robust 40% tree canopy cover, this coverage has declined over the past decade, particularly in areas where more canopy is most needed. Urban forest management should focus not only on protecting existing trees but also on expanding canopy through new plantings.

To support this, tree data must be regularly updated and tracked over time. This includes comprehensively updating the City's Tree Ordinance and conducting regular tree canopy assessments and setting goals. These tools can help identify areas where protection efforts should be strengthened, as well as places suitable for establishing new groves or clusters of trees.

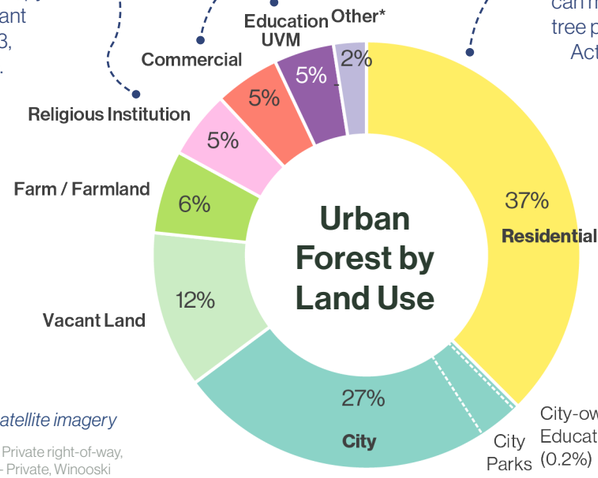
With 37.5% of Burlington's trees located on private property, community engagement will be essential. Public education about alternatives to tree removal and the benefits of tree preservation can help build broader support for a resilient, citywide tree canopy.

ACTIONS

- CN3.1 Comprehensively update the Tree Ordinance.
- CN3.2 Update the urban tree canopy goal and mapping/data analysis every 10 years. Consider developing specific goals for different types of canopy based on their ecological and heat island mitigation value.
- CN3.3 Conduct Pocket Forest Feasibility Study inclusive of existing and potential pocket parks that develops plant lists, identifies potential existing sites, and envisions incentives for establishing pocket forests in new developments, dense neighborhoods, and greenbelts.
- CN3.4 Identify large valuable trees (e.g. specimen trees) in the city that are on public and private land, and consider protection with ideas framed in the policy toolkit from Biophilic Cities network.
- CN3.5 Educate the public on benefits of the urban forest and how to manage it on private property. (See also CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3)

About 10% of the urban forest is on land owned by **religious or educational institutions.** Partnerships could be considered for expanding tree canopy on suitable land. Relevant actions: CN3.1, CN3.3, CN3.4, and CN3.5.

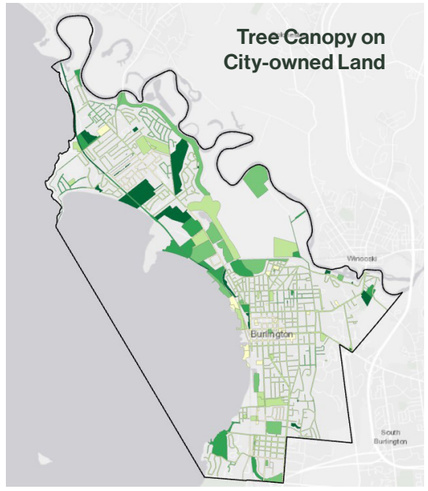
37% of Burlington's urban forest sits on **residential land**, and another 5% is on **commercial land**. Individual actions can make a significant impact, either for tree preservation or tree loss. Relevant Actions: CN3.1, CN3.4, and CN3.5.



27% of the urban forest is on **City-owned land**. The City can directly expand tree canopy on City-owned land and model best practices for urban forest health and maintenance. Relevant actions: CN3.3 and CN3.4.

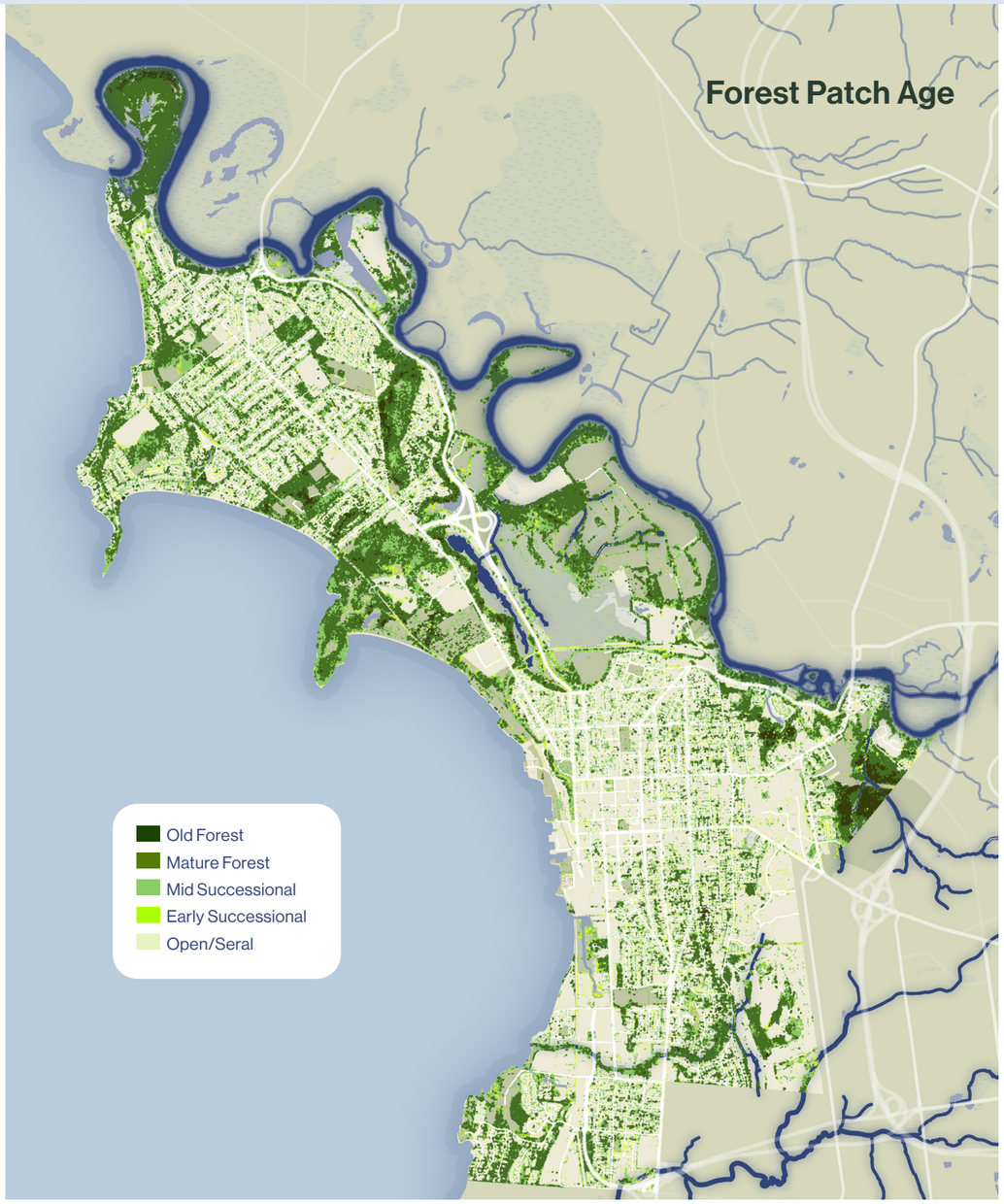
data derived from leaf-on satellite imagery

Other includes following land uses: Private right-of-way, Education - Champlain, Education - Private, Winooski River, State or Federally owned land, Railroad right-of-way, Mixed commercial/residential, or Unknown





Existing Tree Canopy %
- 0-15%
- 15-30%
- 30-50%
- 50-70%
- 70-100%



Urban Tree Canopy Assessment by UVM

Managing for Biodiversity and Resilience with Canopy Assessment Data

UVM's Tree Canopy Assessment provides a valuable dataset that can inform urban forest management decisions across Burlington. For example, data on patch age helps distinguish mature forest areas from those in earlier successional stages.

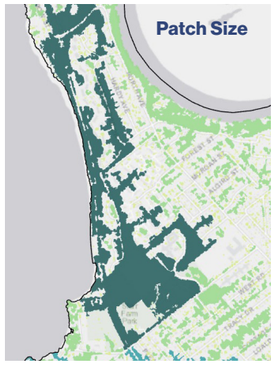
Combined with information about patch shape, this data highlights which forest patches contribute most to a resilient and healthy urban forest network. Smaller or irregularly shaped patches with high edge-to-area ratios are more vulnerable to biodiversity loss over time—a process known as "species relaxation." In contrast, larger, "rounder" forest patches tend to support greater species diversity and are more resistant to aggressive introduced species.

These insights can help guide where to prioritize management actions that build long-term forest resilience and where to maintain different habitat types. Not every area should be managed toward mature forest conditions. Open landscapes and grasslands remain important for supporting species like bluebirds. The open areas and grasslands in the Intervale, for example, could be managed to stay open, supporting edge-requiring species like butterflies and other insects.

Both of these forest patches are identified as very large patches, but due to their age and shape, they have varying levels of long-term resilience to species loss.

Very Large Patch
Large Patch
Medium Patch
Small Patch
Isolated Tree
Old Forest
Mature Forest
Mid Successional
Early Successional
Open/Seral

Small and/or irregularly shaped patches are more vulnerable to biodiversity loss and spread of aggressive introduced species.





Starr Farm Park, North Shore Natural Area, and nearby areas in New North End

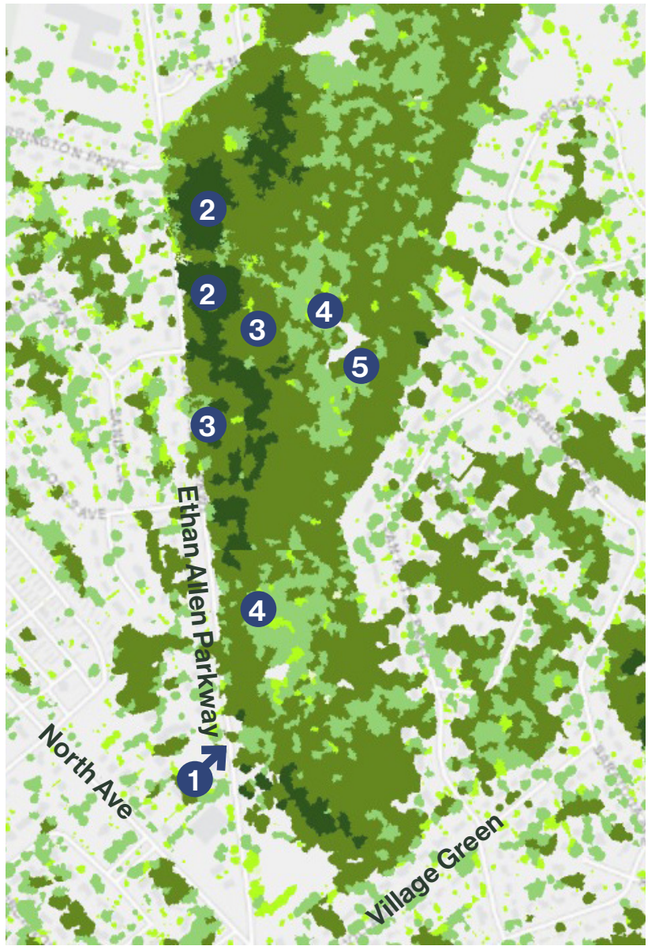
Large, round areas of old and mature forest are more resilient to biodiversity loss.





Arms Forest and Rock Point

Example of using data for management and planting decisions



Ethan Allen Park

General management prioritization principles, with example locations indicated on map of Ethan Allen Park:

1. Areas of old and mature forest that have more edge area could be made more resilient by adding tree canopy where possible to increase the interior areas of these patches.
2. Prioritize aggressive introduced species control in large old and mature forest patches.
3. Also prioritize aggressive introduced species control in mid-successional areas near old/ mature forests to reduce spread of species into older forest areas.
4. Manage mid-successional, especially areas near large old/ mature forests to guide them to the desired mature state. Foresters can help assess current conditions and guide species composition through selective thinning that favors desired canopy species (e.g. oak, hickory, walnut, white pine).
5. Identify open patches that are not needed for recreation or other uses (e.g., picnics, sports fields). These areas can be prioritized for tree planting to reduce the spread of aggressive introduced species.



Leddy Park

Leddy Park shows an example of a park that is balancing a lot of varied needs for both people and wildlife: from recreation, to parking, to habitat / biodiversity. To enhance urban forest health, biodiversity, and resilience, the City could consider relocating parking or recreational uses within Leddy Park to create more interior forest habitat, while still preserving the diversity of uses. When relocating uses, consider shifting to less mature forest areas. For example, shifting the southern parking lot southeast towards the edge of the park could allow replanting on the northwestern end to create a larger area of contiguous forest.

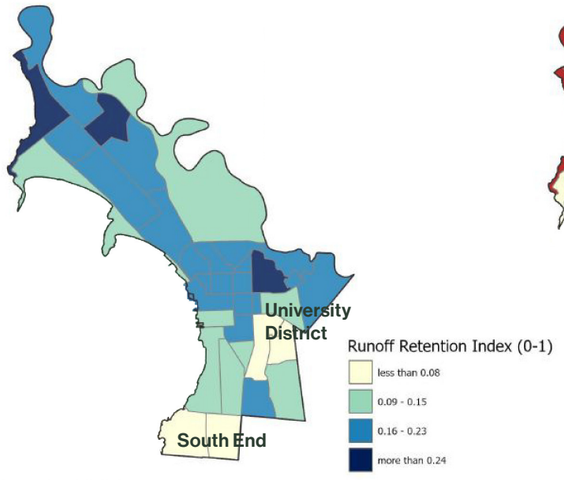
CONNECT Strategies

Using Tree Canopy Assessment to Support Planting and other benefits

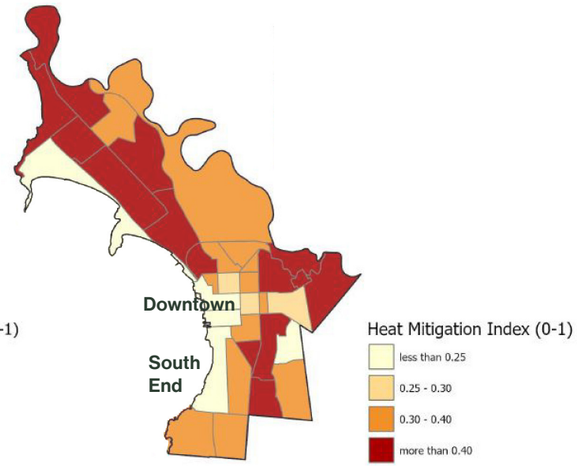
UVM's Tree Canopy Assessment identified high-level opportunities for reforestation as well as where the city's urban forest is absorbing stormwater and cooling adjacent areas.

By planting just one new tree, Burlington can remove enough CO_2 to offset 13 miles of car travel and absorb six bathtubs of stormwater!

Stormwater Absorption



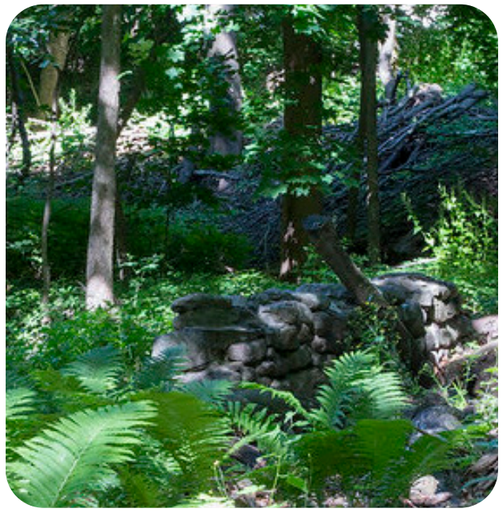
Urban Cooling Benefits



Maps by UVM

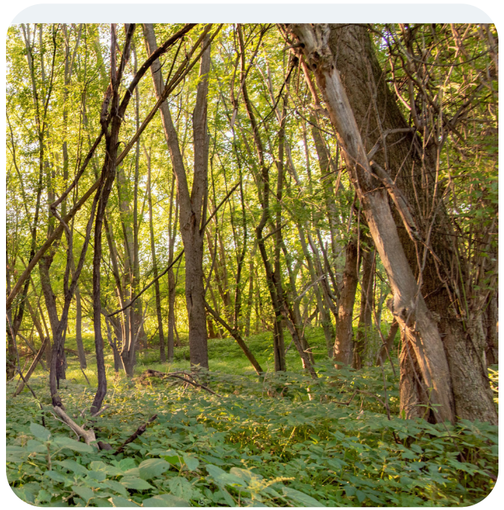
"Areas with low runoff retention may benefit from increased tree plantings due to the capacity of vegetation acting as riparian buffers filtering runoff and absorbing precipitation into the soil."
- UVM Urban Tree Canopy Assessment

Areas with lower heat island mitigation today (e.g. light yellow areas above) could be priorities for more tree planting focused on enhancing urban cooling.









STRATEGY 4
Encourage New Development to Incorporate Nature-Based Principles

Though conservation and development have historically been pitted against each other, the two can work together in mutually beneficial ways. Cities like Burlington that both deeply value open space and sorely need to expand their housing stock can build dense development that also increases ecologically healthy green areas with practices like Low Impact Design and Conservation Development.

This strategy capitalizes on widespread desires across the community to incorporate nature-based principles in development. On the new development side, creating green design standards and development review resources will help foster environmentally-beneficial building. On the existing development side, providing educational resources to owners and occupants within Stewardship Zones will help those closest to natural areas support their ecological health. Green design standards can guide both new and existing development to incorporate principles and engage in tactics like reducing impervious surface, improving drainage, building green stormwater infrastructure, and creating pollinator habitats.

ACTIONS

- CN4.1 Develop Green Design Standards for new developments and redevelopments.
- CN4.2 Provide educational resources for owners and occupants in Stewardship Zones to support ecological health of nearby natural areas.
- CN4.3 Create development review resources to support review bodies in evaluating sustainable/ ecological nature-based approaches to development and open space impacts of new development.



Open Space Stories

BEE a Good Steward

Vermont is home to about 350 different species of native bees, and Burlington is an important statewide hotspot for native bees!

The sandy soils on the lakeshore and river delta and diversified organic agriculture in the floodplain provide prime nesting and feeding grounds for bees, contributing to a high diversity of bee species. While the most famous bee is the non-native honey bee, bees native to Vermont come in all shapes, colors, and sizes. We rely on native bees and pollinators to pollinate our crops, gardens, plants and trees.

Many of these trees and plants won't regenerate without bees and other pollinators. While people rely on urban forests and plants to slow storm water, clean the air, and keep the lake clean, native bees and pollinators rely on native plants for nutrients and habitat. Growing and planting natives around the city helps both us and bees steward healthy connected habitats.

That's why Vermont's open spaces and our ability to continue stewarding them are so important: native plants and habitats are critical for these bees and pollinators survival. In return the city gains many valuable services from native plants and trees that our native bees and other pollinators rely on.

This new Open Space plan will build on past city plans and establish a policy vision for open space inventory, management, access, and preservation going into the future.

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 1: Grow and Celebrate Nature-Based Climate Solutions Across the City							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 1.1	Educate the public on Nature-Based Climate Solutions and their value. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.2	Create and support existing education, recognition, and incentive programs to encourage private property owners to integrate Nature Based Climate Solutions and implement sound ecological practices (e.g. reducing lawn space), especially within Natural Area Stewardship Zones. • Celebrate and support Grow Wild initiatives to encourage lawn conversions for native spaces to incrementally replace non-native for habitat benefits. • Use established pockets to disburse throughout neighborhoods. • Potential programs include adaptation of Green Design Standards, expansion of the BLUE program, and encouragement of "Wild Yards" to convert mowed areas to naturalized open space.	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Wildways, GROW wild, BLUE program, Parks Communications	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 1.3	Continue to partner with schools to grow nature-based climate solutions on school grounds.	Burlington School District	Burlington Wildways, Parks Conservation Team, Shelburne Farms	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.4	Create a municipal management plan to track and reduce mowed lawns.	Parks	Parks Ground Maintenance, Parks Conservation Team, Water Resources	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.5	Continue to grow nature-based climate solutions on City property, including but not limited to green stormwater infrastructure.	Parks	Water Resources	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.6	*See also in CONSERVE: CS2.1. Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 2: Cultivate an Ecosystem of Stewardship							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 2.1	Create a database and listserv of open space organizations to support collaboration, resource sharing, etc.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, Conservation Board	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.2	Co-host a recurring open space summit for land stewards, community organizations, and others.	Wildways, Mayor's Office	VCGN, Audubon, UVM, Wildways partners (e.g. Intervale, WVPD, Rock Point, Parks)	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.3	Continue to support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Communications, WNRCD, Friends of the Winooski, Watersheds United Vermont, etc.	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 2.4	Update Urban Wilds definition, including considering expanding beyond city-owned land.	Conservation Board	Wildways, Large landowners, Parks Conservation Team, DPI	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.5	Distribute educational resources about how personal actions can support water quality health in lake, river, and tributaries. (See also EX1.3)	Lake Champlain Sea Grant (BLUE program)	Water Resources, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 3: Enhance and Protect Burlington's Urban Forest							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 3.1	Comprehensively update the Tree Ordinance.	Parks, City Arborist	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Arborist, Parks Conservation Team, Planning, Planning Commission, DPI	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.2	Update the urban tree canopy goal and mapping/ data analysis every 10 years. Consider developing specific goals for different types of canopy based on their ecological and heat island mitigation value.	Parks, City Planning, Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis, or similar provider	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CN 3.3	Conduct Pocket Forest Feasibility Study inclusive of existing and potential pocket parks that develops plant lists, identifies potential existing sites, and envisions incentives for establishing pocket forests in new developments, dense neighborhoods, and greenbelts.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Planning, City Planning	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 3.4	Identify large valuable trees (e.g. specimen trees) in the city that are on public and private land, and consider protection with ideas framed in the policy toolkit from Biophilic Cities network.	Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, City Arborist, Branch Out Burlington	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.5	Educate the public on benefits of the urban forest and how to manage it on private property. (See also CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3

CN 4: Encourage New Development to Incorporate Nature-Based Principles							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 4.1	Develop Green Design Standards for new developments and redevelopments.	DPI, City Planning	Conservation Board, Planning Commission, Water Resources, land owners, landscape architects (?)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.2	Provide educational resources for owners and occupants in Stewardship Zones to support ecological health of nearby natural areas.	Parks Conservation Team and Parks Communications	Grow Wild, Parks Planning, Lake Champlain Sea Grant	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.3	Create development review resources to support review bodies in evaluating sustainable/ecological nature-based approaches to development and open space impacts of new development.	DPI	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

EXPERIENCE

Expanding a variety of nature experiences across Burlington



Rena Caulkins Trail, Intervale

EXPERIENCE Overview

Fostering diverse outdoor experiences for everyone

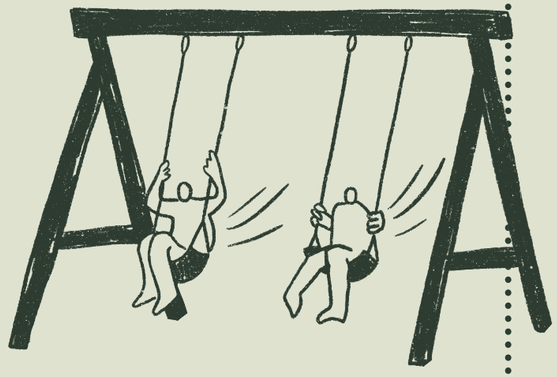
Burlington's Open Space Plan is not just about land–it's about how people use and enjoy them. As reflected in the first wave of engagement, Burlingtonians' outdoor experiences are as diverse as the open spaces themselves. This goal focuses on preserving and enhancing experiences in nature while breaking down barriers to access. It also considers the different types of nature experiences people have–everyday experiences and wild ones–and how to educate people about them while growing opportunities to engage with a variety of open spaces.

EXPERIENCE Strategies

EX1 Increase awareness about Burlington's open spaces

EX2 Grow public access and accessibility to nature-based experiences

EX3 Break down barriers to open space access



"To preserve and maintain the ones we have, and to add smaller open spaces even in the most urban parts of the city if possible"

"Keep them open and plan more areas to provide shade and enjoyment of nature."

Preserving and enhancing wild nature experiences

Increasing visitor stewardship of open spaces

"Connectivity for animals, climate solutions, youth engagement, educational purposes, community gathering spaces."

Expanding universal access to nature experiences

"Increase accessibility to them and encourage more people to get out into them."

"To continue to have spaces that are open and welcoming to all, that respect nature and the land and build community."

Expanding the open space network

"More community spaces to connect with each other and the natural world."

Growing everyday nature experiences

All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

EXPERIENCE Overview



Connecting with nature can take many forms, from everyday nature moments to big woods experiences.

Standing at the edge of Rock Point and gazing out at Lake Champlain, without a building in sight. Pausing along a neighborhood walk to admire a neighbor's pollinator garden and breathe the evening air. Biking on the Burlington Greenway and passing picnickers, skateboarders, and kayakers at different points. These are just a few of the wide range of outdoor experiences that Burlington offers in everyday life and in close-to-home adventures.

Burlington's experiences are rich because of the variety of open space types and their diverse ownership and management practices. Some open spaces are managed intensively by people while others are left more wild. Some spaces lend themselves to passive recreation while others are more active. Some spaces can only be used in certain ways while others have many potential uses. Burlington is lucky to have this multifaceted array of open spaces.

Spectrum of Nature Experiences

Big Woods / Wild Nature Experiences



Hiking in Rock Point and marveling at the Champlain Thrust Fault or bird watching in Arms Forest

Nature and Park Experiences

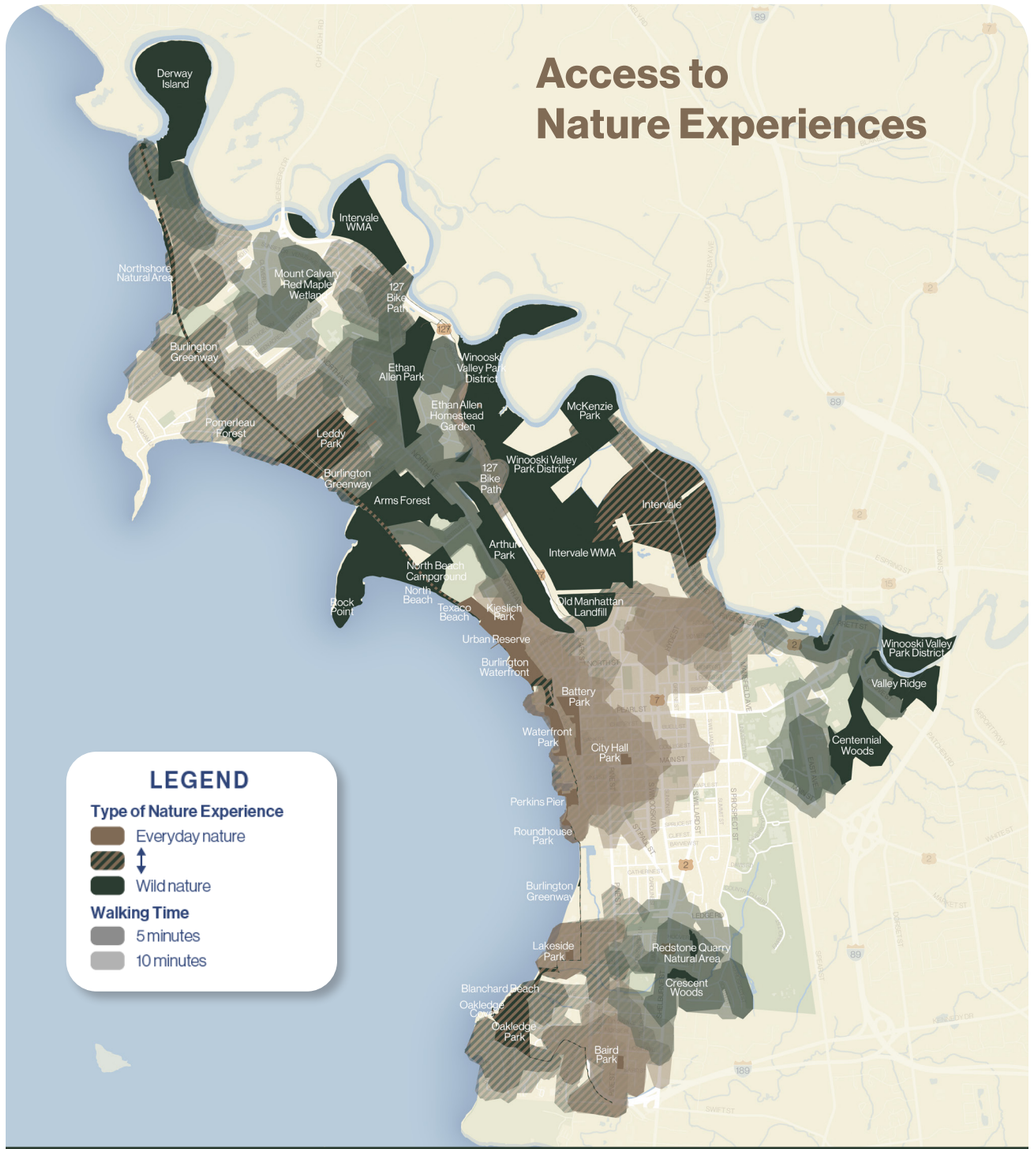


Enjoying the waterfront in Oakledge Park or bicycling along the Burlington Greenway

Everyday Nature Experiences



Glimpses of Lake Champlain while walking Downtown or watching a bee buzz around a pollinator garden



Nature Experiences

	% area within.... 5 walk	10 walk
Everyday Nature	11%	21%
↕	23%	39%
Big Woods / Wild Nature	13%	25%

This map categorizes open spaces by whether they foster everyday nature or wild nature experiences. It shows the surrounding area that is within a 5-minute or 10-minute walk.

EXPERIENCE Strategies



STRATEGY 1
Increase Awareness About Burlington's Open Spaces

Half of Burlington's land area is covered by open spaces, but knowledge about and access to these spaces are not well known. While many people–residents and visitors alike–frequent Burlington's parks and recreate freely–from hiking to swimming to picnicking to relaxing–there is a wealth of knowledge and events that can be readily shared. Some center on history and learning while others foster connections and shared experiences.

This strategy aims to connect more people to more experiences through education and communication. By increasing awareness of the natural world and ways to engage with it, more people may become part of an ever-growing community of open space champions.

ACTIONS

- EX1.1 Collaborate to create educational tools on Burlington's natural history and stewardship story with associated places to visit.
- EX1.2 Create a central calendar that crowdsources events and volunteer efforts around the City. (See also EX1.3)
- EX1.3 Create a comprehensive open space communications and education plan to share recommendations of the open space plan. (See also EX1.2)



STRATEGY 2
Grow Public Access to Nature-Based Experiences

Burlington offers a wide variety of nature experiences, from a morning walk in the park to a weekend rafting escapade. From an afternoon watching bees and birds in a pollinator garden to a thrilling mountain biking adventure through the woods. It's not everyday that those big experiences happen–and they're not necessarily possible for or desired by everyone. Everyone should be able to experience nature every day–and it's much easier in Burlington, where nearly the entire city is within a 10-minute walk from an open space.

This strategy focuses on making those everyday nature experiences more commonplace and integrated into daily routines. It includes increasing opportunities throughout the city, partially in partnership with private and institutional landowners. Public access to private land is already happening in places like Rock Point and can be expanded to even more areas.

The upcoming Comprehensive Plan will continue to address these issues.

ACTIONS

- EX2.1 Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines.
- EX2.2 Continue to partner to expand public access to nature experiences. Partnerships could include, for example, private and institutional landowners, organizations, and visionaries that promote nature-based work.



EXPERIENCE Strategies



STRATEGY 3
Break Down Barriers to Open Space Access

Everyone in Burlington is within a 10-minute walk from an open space, but not all open spaces are created equal. Not only do they differ in size, nature, and types of experiences offered, they also differ in accessibility. Accessibility can refer to physical accessibility ("How easy is it for me to get to an open space by foot, bike, or car?") or cultural accessibility ("Once I get to this open space, how welcoming and comfortable of an environment is it for me? For my family?").

This strategy seeks to tackle both barriers while considering the health of important natural areas. Acknowledging that there are cultural differences in enjoying open spaces, inclusive and accessible strategies need to be employed to engage marginalized communities and integrate cultural preferences. Physical access is a priority as well, particularly by different modes, and needs to be balanced with ecological sensitivities. The Conservation Legacy Fund can be strategically used to help support improved access and accessibility through conservation infrastructure, including focusing on universal design throughout.

ACTIONS

EX3.1 Evaluate opportunities for universal access in natural areas where appropriate and considering ecological sensitivity. (See also EX3.3)

EX3.2 Improve equitable transportation access to natural areas and seek out alternative funding mechanisms.

EX3.3 Regularly engage communities who face barriers to accessing or enjoying open space to identify additional actions to increase use and where to prioritize improvements. (See also EX3.1)

EX3.4 Plan for and integrate different cultural preferences in the use of public outdoor spaces.

EX3.5 Incorporate language access in educational campaigns.

Stakeholder and public feedback included some challenges that are being accomplished outside of the Open Space Plan, including cat and dog regulations, food safety, and border management. This plan acknowledges these challenges and supports related actions in other plans.

The upcoming Comprehensive Plan will include specific strategies for improvements in multi-modal access to the Intervale.



Open Space Stories

Wildways

The Burlington Wildways partnership works together to address some of the most pressing needs for conservation, climate resilience, and equitable nature access in Burlington's urban context.

Wildways was formed by a city council resolution in 2017 to collectively steward these areas and make sure that Burlington residents know about, care about, and have access to them. With the many threats posed by a warming climate, they promote nature connection and many forms of stewardship to help save and increase biodiversity and protect ecological functions in the city. They have piloted some groundbreaking approaches, such as the school-based tree nursery program; the Wildways Stewards program that uses citizens to maintain trails, help manage non-native species and do restoration work; and the Grow Wild native plant initiative. They also host an annual City Nature Celebration.



EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 1: Increase Awareness About Burlington's Open Spaces							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 1.1	Collaborate to create and translate educational tools on Burlington's natural history and stewardship story with associated places to visit.	Parks Conservation Team	REIB, Crows Path, Master Naturalist, UVM, Shelburne Farms, ECHO, WVPD, Vermont Folklife, UVM Spatial Analysis, Generator	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 1.2	Create a central calendar that crowdsources events and volunteer efforts around the City. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Communications (with LoveBurlington)	Wildways, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3
EX 1.3	Create a comprehensive open space communications and education plan to share recommendations of the open space plan. (See also EX1.2)	Parks Communications	City Planning, Park Planning, Wildways	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.2

EX 2: Grow Public Access to Nature-Based Experiences							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 2.1	Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines.	Parks Conservation Team, Parks Planning	DPW, Parks Communications, Neighborhoods/ individual landowners	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
EX 2.2	Continue to partner to expand public access to nature experiences. Partnerships could include, for example, private and institutional landowners, organizations, and visionaries that promote nature-based work.	Parks	UVM, Rock Point, Intervale Center, other large landowners	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

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EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 3: Break Down Barriers to Open Space Access							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 3.1	Evaluate opportunities for universal access in natural areas where appropriate and considering ecological sensitivity. (See also EX3.3)	Parks Planning	BACA	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	EX 3.3
EX 3.2	Improve equitable transportation access to natural areas and seek out alternative funding mechanisms.	Parks Planning	DPW, CCRPC	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	
EX 3.3	Regularly engage communities who face barriers to accessing or enjoying open space to identify additional actions to increase use and where to prioritize improvements. (See also EX3.1)	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB, BACA	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways, Trusted Community Voices	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 3.1
EX 3.4	Plan for and integrate different cultural preferences in the use of public outdoor spaces.	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 3.5	Incorporate language access in educational campaigns.	Parks Communications, REIB	Trusted Community Voices	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

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CULTIVATE

Growing sustainable and accessible local food systems that meet community needs

The Archibald Neighborhood Garden

CULTIVATE Overview

“Growing Local” connects us to our food and can create more sustainable food systems

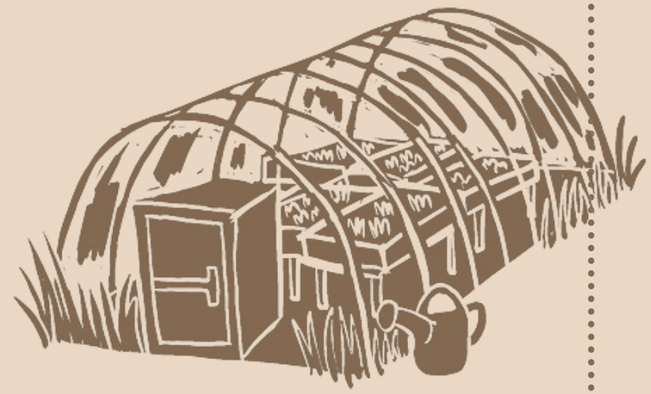
Local food systems are integral to the fabric of open space and life in Burlington, from home gardens to the community garden to the Intervale Center. More growing space is needed to meet the community’s demand, and the food system is susceptible to challenges like climate change.

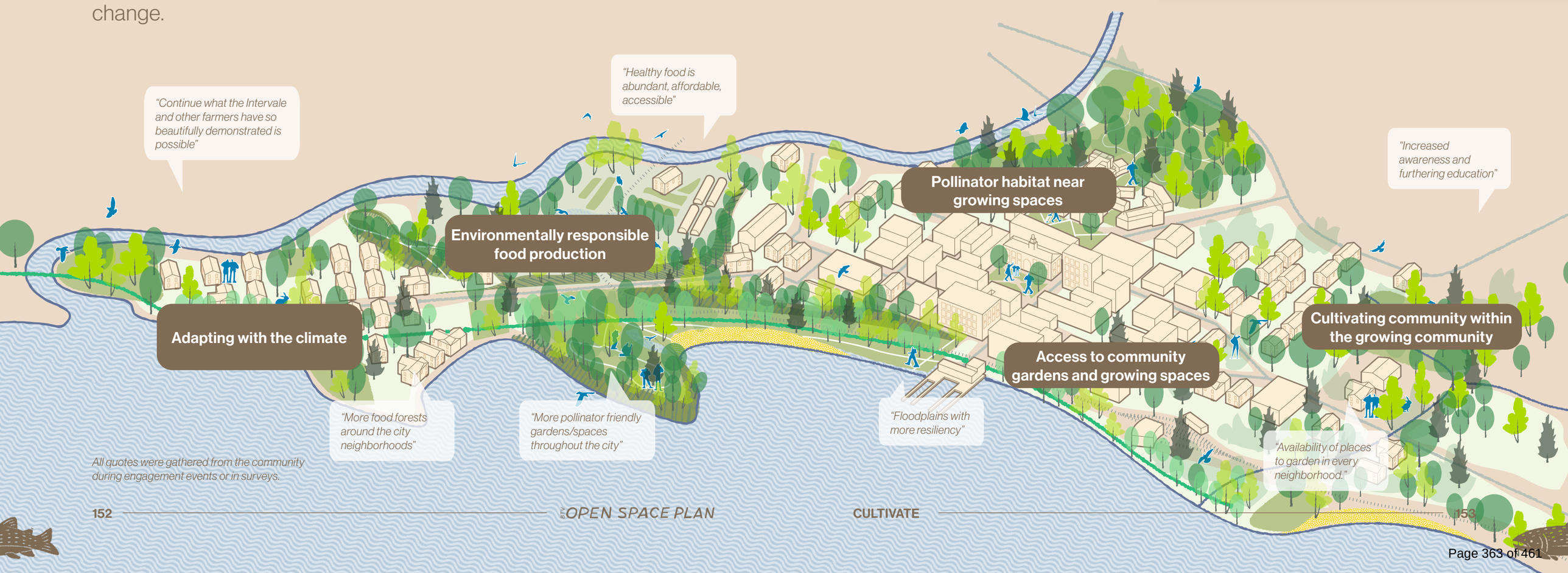
CULTIVATE Strategies

CL1 Cultivate sustainable and resilient agriculture practices

CL2 Expand community gardens and access for new community members

CL3 Support the cultivation of alternate food sources





All quotes were gathered from the community during engagement events or in surveys.

CULTIVATE Overview

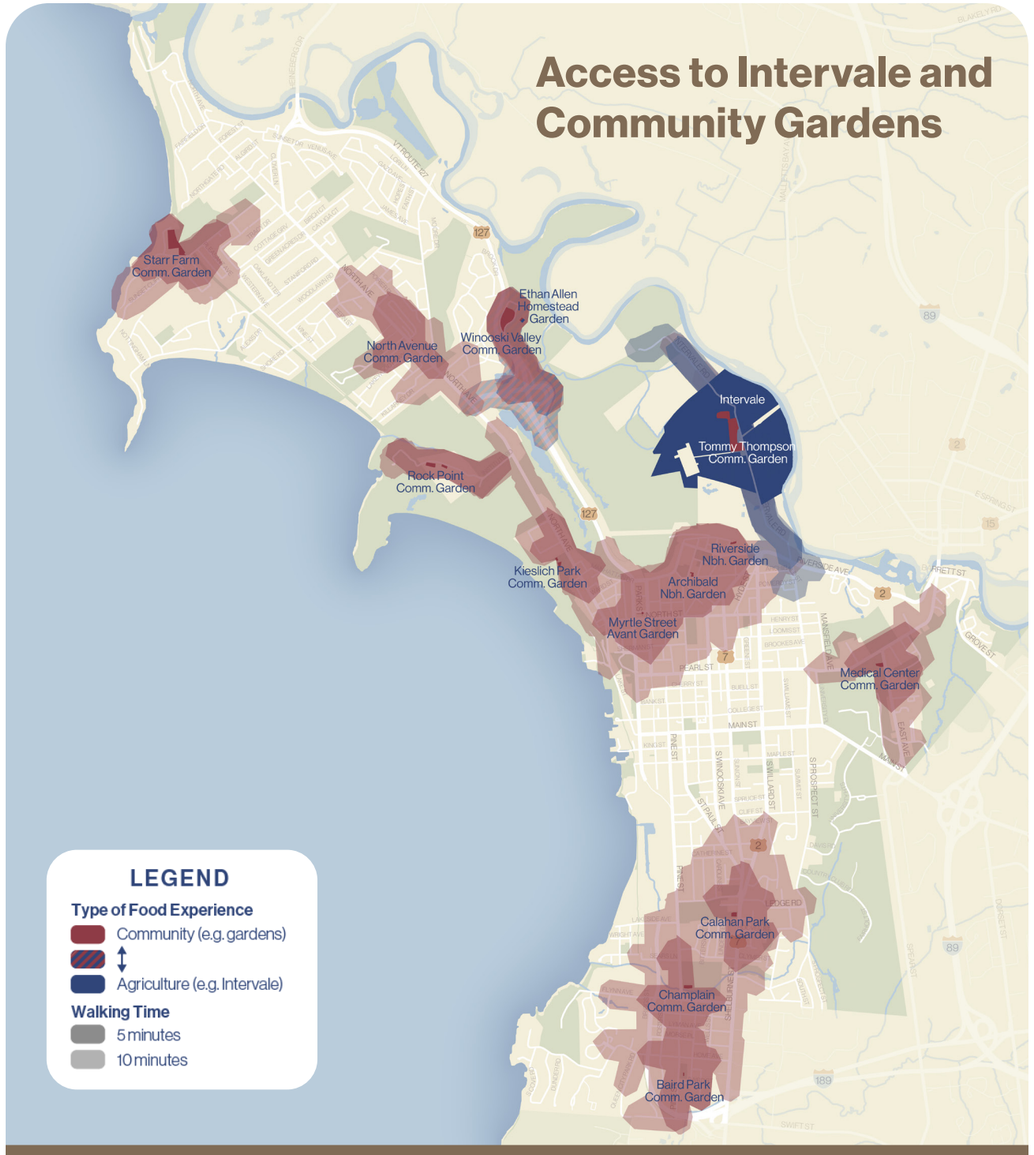


Exposure to varied food experiences can strengthen local food resilience

In Burlington, food growing spaces hold deep cultural significance as symbols of community resilience, heritage, and connection to the land. For many of Burlington's immigrant communities, these spaces exemplify traditional agricultural practices, provide space for intergenerational knowledge sharing, and encourage food sovereignty. Similarly, community gardens often reclaim space for marginalized communities, nurturing identity, pride, and care. These spaces connect people closer to nature and collective health, making them vital to cultural continuity and social cohesion.

Many food procuring methods are practiced in Burlington, like regenerative agriculture, community gardening, and foraging. Exposure to them is a way to increase food experiences and strengthen local food resilience. This could lead the community to expand community gardens, promote sustainable urban agriculture, and encourage alternative food sources like food forests and foraging. There are also many opportunities to propagate growing throughout the community at-large. Community knowledge-sharing is critical to expanding and enriching the ways we cultivate, make, and source food.

Together, these efforts diversify how food is grown and accessed locally, thereby reducing reliance on commercial growing methods and improving food security. Take a look at the map to see the many food experiences are available to Burlington residents today.



Food Experiences

	% area within.... 5 walk	10 walk
Community	14%	30%
Agriculture	1%	2%
	2%	3%

Community gardens are distributed across Burlington, although there are gaps in Downtown and in the New North End. The Intervale Center is located near the mid-point of Burlington, but access is largely car-dependent.

CULTIVATE Overview

Steward Ecological Health to Sustain Long-Term Food Production

While providing access to more food experiences is important to increase awareness and encourage future stewardship of food growing spaces, the quality of those food growing and cultivating spaces is also critical. This plan identifies several strategies to ensure that Burlington also considers soil health, climate resilience, and sustainable land stewardship as part of its cultivation goals. This focus will ensure that both traditional and alternative food systems can thrive in the face of environmental challenges, such as flooding and temperature fluctuations, aggressive introduced species, and habitat pressure.



CULTIVATE Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Cultivate Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture Practices

Community-based urban agriculture and stewardship is an integral part of Burlington's open spaces. Since the creation of the first community garden, there has been a thoughtful balance between open space and food production needs throughout the city. This system is under threat, however, from climate change, aggressive introduced species, and deer overpopulation. Flooding especially has been and will continue to be a major issue as weather patterns become more unpredictable.

This strategy endeavors to address these major issues in order to ensure that urban agriculture can thrive for many generations to come. Sustainable and resilient food growing contributes to ecological benefits, such as reduction in food miles and reduced carbon footprint, that are all part of the city's climate strategies. Underlying it is also a focus on soils: as soils are the core resource to farming, understanding them and how to maintain their health is critical to ensuring they remain fertile and retain growing potential.

ACTIONS

CL1.1 Continue to plan for resilient agriculture strategies in the Intervale as climate and flood risks increase.

CL1.2 Develop and implement deer management strategies, and track progress.

CL1.3 Work with other agencies to educate and share resources on soil health information and remediation, aiming to create a resource similar to Dig Safe to emphasize safe soils for safe food.

CL1.4 Conduct a holistic inventory of available lands in City (both public and private) available for potential food production.

STRATEGY 2
Expand Community Gardens

There are currently 14 community gardens managed by the Burlington Area Community Gardens (BACG) program with plots ranging from 100 square-feet to 750 square-feet. The program not only connects people with plots of land but also encourages community partnerships through community days and knowledge sharing. They foster a close relationship with food and provide food security.

While these gardens are well-loved, demand historically has been and continues to be much higher than supply. There is a great need for more community gardening space, especially as the city continues to grow. This strategy seeks to identify partnerships that can identify where community gardens can be expanded and to set and track goals for expansion. It also emphasizes that education for private land owners is critical to expanding growing opportunities on both private land and in neighborhood community gardens.

ACTIONS

CL2.1 Partner with community and other groups to explore new spaces for community gardens and community agriculture (especially in areas with less vehicle access, higher percentage of low-income residents, and less access to grocery stores).

CL2.2 Track garden plots per capita to establish baseline conditions and evaluate unmet demand. Set and track mid-term and long-term goals for community garden spaces.

CL2.3 Address the need for more community gardens with actions like:

- Conduct city land asset study for community garden opportunities.
- Document and review process for plot distribution
- Proactively .work with neighborhoods to identify potential community garden spaces and support with the Conservation Legacy Fund.
- Encourage and direct expansion of capacity at existing sites with elements like new raised beds and support infrastructure.
- Consider out-of-the-box opportunities, such as rooftop gardens, and innovative practices, such as vertical garden opportunities.

CL2.4 Incentivize creation of community gardens with new and redevelopment through green design standards.

STRATEGY 3
Support the Cultivation of Alternate Food Sources

Gardening is not the only method for sourcing food outside of a commercial environment: the natural world is full of edible plants. Alternative food sources like food forests and the practice of foraging for wild food sources have gradually spread in recent years, partially as a sustainable activity and partially as a safeguard against food insecurity. The Intervale Center, for example, began the first phase of the Agroforestery Riparian Buffer Project in 2024 to "demonstrate the feasibility of a large scale implementation of agroforestry while satisfying the need to enhance the riparian buffer along the Winooski River." This effort can both grow perennial food producing plants and support climate resilience by protecting growing lands and creating additional habitats for birds and beneficial insects.

There sometimes is, however, a conflict between the desire or need for foraging and conservation goals. This strategy not only acknowledges foraging as a viable method but also encourages sustainable foraging practices. Food forests can be planned for and educational resources can be shared to ensure responsible cultivation of foraging practices. These strategies will need to consider the legal environment around community food sources on public property.

ACTIONS

CL3.1 Plan for food forests, including consideration of tree choices to allow for more community food production. (See also CL3.2)

CL3.2 Work with the public to facilitate responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging communities. (See also CL3.1)

CL3.3 Create an inventory of potential food forest spaces and feasibility study.

CL3.4 *See also in CS2.1 CONSERVE: Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*



Open Space Stories

New Farms for New Americans

What began in 2008 as a workforce development program under the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV) has evolved into a community-based gardening and agriculture program for refugees and immigrants.

Each year, NFNA connects around 100 participants with plots of land in the Intervale and Ethan Allen Homestead for subsistence farming–for consumption or for sale–and offers education and training on adapting farming practices to Vermont's climate.

This program not only helps farmers grow culturally significant crops like snake gourd, African eggplants, and daikon but also increases food security, fosters cross-cultural communities, and contributes to local climate resilience.



CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 1: Cultivate Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture Practices							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 1.1	Continue to plan for resilient agriculture strategies in the Intervale as climate and flood risks increase.	Intervale Center	Farmers, UVM AgroEcology, Parks Conservation Team, VT Garden Network, CEDO (with NRCS)	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 1.2	Develop and implement deer management strategies, and track progress.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 1.3	Work with other agencies to educate and share resources on soil health information and remediation, aiming to create a resource similar to Dig Safe to emphasize safe soils for safe food.	NRCS, CEDO	NRCS, Conservation Districts, UVM Extension Service	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 1.4	Conduct a holistic inventory of available lands in City (both public and private) available for potential food production.	Parks Conservation Team	Innovation & Technology	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2: Expand Community Gardens							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 2.1	Partner with community and other groups to explore new spaces for community gardens and community agriculture (especially in areas with less vehicle access, higher percentage of low-income residents, and less access to grocery stores).	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	Vermont Garden Network	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 2.2	Track garden plots per capita to establish baseline conditions and evaluate unmet demand. Set and track mid-term and long-term goals for community garden spaces.	Parks Conservation Team	Community gardeners, Vermont Garden Network	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2.3	Address the need for more community gardens with actions like: • Conduct city land asset study for community garden opportunities. • Document and review process for plot distribution • Proactively work with neighborhoods to identify potential community garden spaces and support with the Conservation Legacy Fund. • Encourage and direct expansion of capacity at existing sites with elements like new raised beds and support infrastructure. • Consider out-of-the-box opportunities, such as rooftop gardens, and innovative practices, such as vertical garden opportunities.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 2.4	Incentivize creation of community gardens with new and redevelopment through green design standards.	DPI	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 3: Support the Cultivation of Alternate Food Sources							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 3.1	Plan for food forests, including consideration of tree choices to allow for more community food production. (See also CL3.2)	Park Planning or Conservation Team	Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	CL3.2
CL 3.2	Work with the public to facilitate responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging communities. (See also CL3.1)	Intervale Center	WVPD, Parks Communications and Conservation Teams, Rock Point, UVM	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	CL3.1
CL 3.3	Create an inventory of potential food forest spaces and conduct a feasibility study.	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	Innovation & Technology	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 3.4	*See also in CS2.1 CONSERVE: Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-



Arms Forest

4

Way Ahead

Implementing the Open Space Plan will be a team effort. This chapter looks at opportunities to work together—and dream big!—for the future of our open spaces.

How can I contribute?

The Open Space Plan is a roadmap to guide the City of Burlington and its many partners and collaborators as they work together to invest in a thriving open space system for future generations.

While the City is the primary author of this document, and many of the actions will be led by the City, the City cannot implement this plan alone. It will require the investment of everyone in Burlington to make this plan a success. Below are Burlington's open space stewards and key actions that each group will need to champion.

Large Land Stewards

- Contribute to **monitoring of important restoration and wildlife indicators** including aggressive, introduced species, and water quality - *See Strategies CS 1.1, 1.6, 2.2, 2.4, and CL1.2*
- Help **expand public access to nature experiences** - *See Strategy EX 2.2*
- **Alleviate the impacts of climate change** by managing stormwater on-site, expanding tree canopy, and reducing impervious surfaces - *See Strategies CN 1.5 and CN 3.2*



Community Organizations

- **Expand access to food cultivation and pollinator-friendly and native gardens** throughout the city through advocacy and City partnerships - *See Strategies CL 3.1 and CS 2.1*
- **Join a consortium of like-minded organizations** and share resources and best practices - *See Strategy CN 2.1*
- **Participate in recurring summits and sustained communications** to strengthen collaboration and increase awareness of city and community initiatives. - *See Strategy CN 2.2*



Development Community

- Lean into **sustainable/ ecological nature-based approaches to development** - *See Strategy CN 4.3*
- **Contribute to the development of Green Design Standards** for new developments and redevelopments to ensure standards balance fiscal realities with aspirations for sustainable building - *See Strategy CN 4.1*



Governmental Partners

- Collaborate across agencies to **identify opportunities for nature-based solutions** in all city, county, and state projects - *See Strategy CS 1.6*
- **Engage seniors and youth** in expanding awareness of nature-based climate solutions - *See Strategy CN 1.2, CN 1.3, and CN 1.5*
- **Retain citywide Nature-based Climate Solutions positions** like the Land Steward and Nature-Based Climate Solutions Field Coordinator



Homeowners with Yards

- Consult with the BLUE program to **add a rain garden or other green infrastructure** to absorb rainfall - *See Strategy CL 3.3*
- Consider replacing non-native plants with native lawn alternatives to **grow not mow** and contribute to a healthier lake, native ecology, and people! - *See Strategies CN 1.2 and CN 1.4*
- **Retain mature trees and plant new trees** to help grow the city's tree canopy and clean our air- *See Strategy CN 3.2 and CN 3.2*



Everybody!

- **Get out into your open spaces, trails, and forests** - *See Strategy EX 1.2, 2.1, and 2.2*
- Learn how to **responsibly forage for food** in forests and other open spaces - *See Strategy CL 3.2*
- **Volunteer** with the city or local community steward - *See Strategy EX 1.2*
- **Learn more about your open spaces** and **spread the word** to neighbors *See Strategy CS 2.4*
- **Participate** in processes to improve open spaces - *See Strategy EX 1.3*



Wild Ideas

Throughout the Open Space Plan process, Burlington residents, land stewards, and other stakeholders shared some out-of-the-box ideas to help guide future investment in and enjoyment of Burlington's open space network and urban wildlife.

Below are a few of Burlington's big ideas! Many of these are tactics or projects that align with the goals and strategies of the plan, and if the funding opportunities and community visions align - these ideas will go a long way in transforming Burlington into a nature-filled city.



Comprehensive Plan Corner

As the City prepares to embark on a new comprehensive plan, there are a few recommendations within the Open Space Plan that will be important to carry forward into the future comprehensive planning.

CS 4.1 Review and update acquisition list and criteria.

EX 2.1 Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines and without driving.

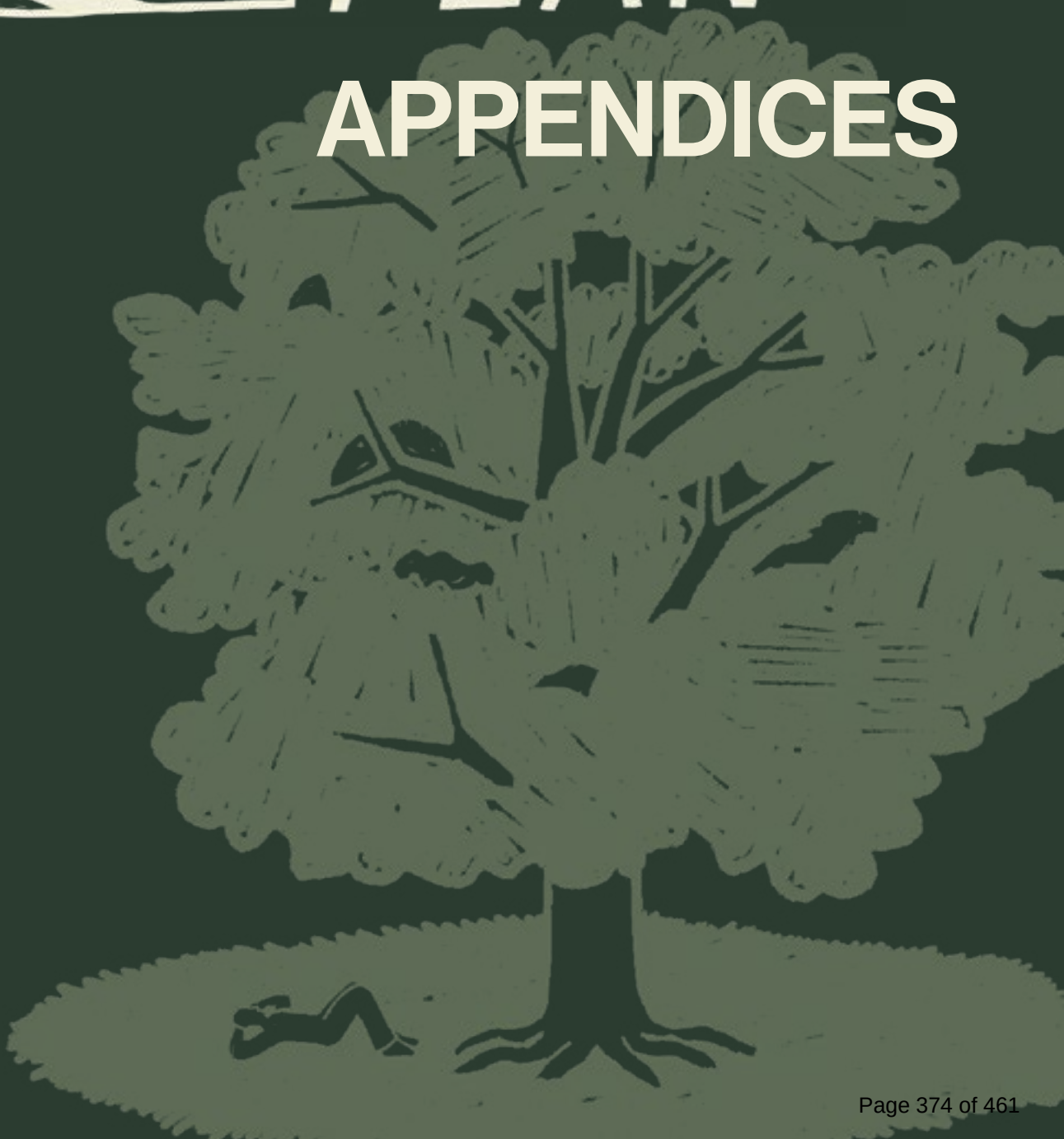
Additional Considerations Improve multi-modal access to the Intervale in conjunction with existing plans; include adequate funding to ensure creation of critical access.

Advance planning around the use of City-owned open spaces for shelter by people experiencing homelessness to ensure ecological health and integrity, public safety, and equitable access, while also planning for equitable access to permanently affordable housing for all Burlington residents.



BURLINGTON OPEN SPACE PLAN

APPENDICES



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APPENDIX D: List of Partners

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- CONSERVE
- CONNECT
- EXPERIENCE
- CULTIVATE

APPENDIX F: Natural Communities Classification

APPENDIX A:
Open Space Map Sections


LEGEND
Burlington Border
Trail or Greenway
Bike Infrastructure
Tree Canopy
Parks & Natural Areas
Community Garden
Beach
Water
Wetland
Derway Island
Delta Park
Halfmoon Cove
Halfmoon Cove WMA
CHURCH RD
HEINEBERG DR
Winooski River
Intervale WMA
Northshore Natural Area
Mount Calvary Red Maple Wetland
Macrae Farm Park
Starr Farm Park
Schifilliti Park
NEW NORTH END
127
Starr Farm Comm. Garden
Ethan Allen Park
Burlington Greenway
Appletree Park
North Avenue Comm. Garden
Winooski Valley Comm. Garden
Ethan Allen Homestead Garden
Leddy Park
Pomerleau Forest
Burlington Wildway
Leddy Beach
Arms Forest
127 Bike Path
Rock Point Comm. Garden
Rock Point
Arthur Park
Lakeview Cemetery
North Beach
Texaco Beach
Kieslich Park Comm. Garden
N
A2
0
0.25
0.5
1
Miles


LEGEND
Burlington Border
Trail or Greenway
Bike Infrastructure
Tree Canopy
Parks & Natural Areas
Community Garden
Beach
Water
Wetland
WMA
Macrae Farm Park
Intervale
Schifilliti Park
Ethan Allen Park
North Avenue Comm. Garden
Winooski Valley Comm. Garden
Ethan Allen Homestead Garden
McKenzie Park
Winooski River
Burlington Wildway
Arms Forest
127 Bike Path
Tommy Thompson Comm. Garden
Rock Point Comm. Garden
Rock Point
Arthur Park
Lakeview Cemetery
Riverside Neighborhood Comm. Garden
North Beach
Texaco Beach
Kieslich Park Comm. Garden
Old Manhattan Landfill
Roosevelt Park
Archibald Nbh. Garden
Kieslich Park
OLD NORTH END
Myrtle Street Avant Garden
Pomeroy Park
Urban Reserve
Elmwood Cemetery
Andy A Dog Skate Park
Battery Park
Waterfront Park
DOWNTOWN
City Hall Park
Roundhouse Park
Smalley Park
N
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles


WINOOSKI
Intervale
Thompson Comm. Garden
Arthur Park
Lakeview Cemetery
Riverside Neighborhood Comm. Garden
Old Manhattan Landfill
Roosevelt Park
Archibald Nbh. Garden
Kieslich Park Comm. Garden
Kieslich Park
Winooski River
OLD NORTH END
Myrtle Street Avant Garden
Pomeroy Park
Urban Reserve
Elmwood Cemetery
Schmanska Park
Winooski Valley Park District
Greenmount Cemetery
Centennial Brook
Valley Ridge
Andy A Dog Skate Park
Medical Center Comm. Garden
Battery Park
Waterfront Park
DOWNTOWN
City Hall Park
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT
Centennial Woods
Roundhouse Park
Smalley Park
SOUTH END
Burlington Greenway
HILL SECTION
Calahan Park
Burlington Country Club
Calahan Park Comm. Garden
Restone Quarry Natural Area
Lakeside Park
Blanchard Beach
Champlain Comm. Garden
Englesby Brook
Crescent Woods
Oakledge Cove
Oakledge Park
Baird Park
Baird Park Comm. Garden
East Woods Natural Area
Red Rocks Park
Potash Brook
Farrell Street Park
LEGEND
Burlington Border
Trail or Greenway
Bike Infrastructure
Tree Canopy
Parks & Natural Areas
Community Garden
Beach
Water
Wetland
N
0
0.25
0.5
1
Miles
A4

APPENDIX B:
University of Vermont
Spatial Analysis Lab
Tree Canopy Assessment

2014–2023



Tree Canopy Assessment

Burlington, VT

PREPARED BY:

The University of Vermont

PREPARED FOR:

City of Burlington

THE NEED FOR GREEN

Trees provide essential ecosystem services in Burlington, like reducing stormwater runoff, cooling the pavement in the summer and providing wildlife habitat. Trees are an indispensable part of the region's infrastructure. Research shows that these green assets can improve social cohesion, reduce crime, and raise property values. A healthy and robust tree canopy is crucial to building a more livable and prosperous town.

As with any community, Burlington faces a host of environmental challenges while seeking to balance development and conservation. A healthy and robust tree canopy is crucial for maintaining this balance, providing the city's residents with a resource that will impact the health and well-being of generations to come.

TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT

For decades governments have mapped and monitored their infrastructure to support effective management practices. Traditionally, that mapping has primarily focused on gray infrastructure, including features such as roads and buildings. Left out of this mapping has been an accounting of the green infrastructure.

The Tree Canopy Assessment protocols were developed by the USDA Forest Service to help communities better understand their green infrastructure through tree canopy mapping and analytics. Tree canopy is the layer of leaves, branches, and stems that provide tree coverage of the ground when viewed from above. A Tree Canopy Assessment can provide vital information to help governments and residents chart a greener future by helping them understand the tree canopy they have, how it has changed, and where there is room to plant trees. Tree Canopy Assessments have been carried out for over 100 communities in North America. This study assessed tree canopy for Burlington over the 2014 - 2023 period.



TREE CANOPY BY THE NUMBERS

Burlington is losing tree canopy. Tree canopy change was computed by mapping the no change, gains, and losses in tree canopy from 2014 - 2023.

40%
2023 EXISTING TREE CANOPY

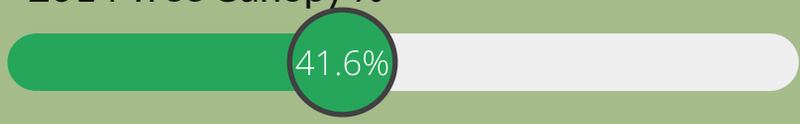
2,620
2023 EXISTING TREE CANOPY ACRES

-109
2014 - 2023 ACRES CHANGE

-1.6%
2014 - 2023 ABSOLUTE CHANGE

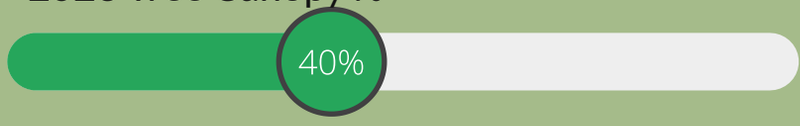
Change in tree canopy from 2014 - 2023

2014 Tree Canopy %



-1.6%
Absolute change in tree canopy

2023 Tree Canopy %



-4%
Relative change in tree canopy

228
Acres of Gain

337
Acres of Loss



Burlington was estimated to have 111,912 individual trees in 2023.



Losses in tree canopy are outpacing gains, resulting in a net decrease in tree canopy.



Growth of existing tree canopy is the biggest contributor to tree canopy gains.

FINDINGS

Despite net tree canopy losses, local gains in tree canopy coverage were possible thanks to preservation and planting initiatives.

Tree canopy loss is neither evenly distributed nor similar. It varies from removal of individual trees in backyards to clearing of patches of trees for new construction.

Burlington can improve environmental equity by prioritizing tree plantings in neighborhoods most susceptible to environmental risk.

To enhance urban resilience, Burlington can improve access to trees and the benefits that they provide.

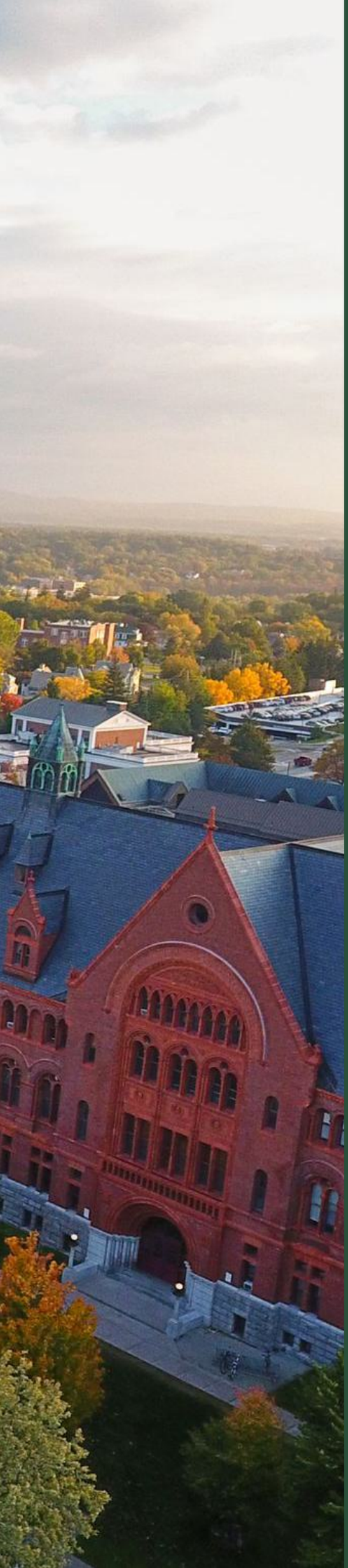
Growth of existing tree canopy is the biggest contributor to Burlington's tree canopy gains.

Land use history, urban forestry initiatives, natural processes, and landowner decisions, all play a role in influencing the current state of tree canopy in the city.

37.5% of Burlington's tree canopy exists on residential parcels. Engaging with land owners will be key to managing the city's tree canopy.

33% of Burlington's land area is covered by grass or shrub area that could theoretically be used to plant more trees and increase canopy cover.





RECOMMENDATIONS

Preserving existing tree canopy is the most effective means for securing future tree canopy, as loss is an event but gain is a process.

Planting new trees in areas where tree canopy is low or in locations where there has been tree canopy removed will also help the city grow canopy.

Having trees with a broad age distribution and a variety of species will ensure that a robust and healthy tree canopy is possible over time.

Community education is crucial if tree canopy is to be maintained over time. Residents that are knowledgeable about the value of trees will help the city stay green for years to come.

Integrate the tree canopy change assessment data into planning decisions at all levels of government from individual park improvements, to comprehensive planning and zoning initiatives, to citywide ordinances.

Reassess the tree canopy at 3-5 year intervals to monitor change and make strategic management decisions.

Tree canopy assessments require high-quality, high-resolution data. Continue to invest in LiDAR and imagery to support these assessments and other mapping needs.

Field data collection efforts should be used to compliment this assessment as information on tree species, size, and health can only be obtained through on-the-ground inventories.

THE TREE CANOPY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This project employed the USDA Forest Service's Urban Tree Canopy assessment protocols and made use of federal, state, and local investments in geospatial data. Tree canopy assessments should be completed at regular intervals, every 3-5 years.



Remotely sensed data forms the foundation of the tree canopy assessment. We use high-resolution aerial imagery and LiDAR to map tree canopy and other land cover features.



The land cover data consist of tree canopy, grass/shrub, bare soil, water, buildings, roads/railroads, and other impervious features.



The land cover data are summarized by various geographical units, ranging from the property parcel to the watershed to the municipal boundary.



The report (this document) summarizes the project methods, results, and findings.







The presentation, given to partners and stakeholders in the region, provides the opportunity to ask questions about the assessment.

The tree canopy metrics data analytics provide basic summary statistics in addition to inferences on the relationship between tree canopy and other variables.

These summaries, in the form of tree canopy metrics, are an exhaustive geospatial database that enables the Existing and Possible Tree Canopy to be analyzed.

The Importance of Good Data

This assessment would not have been possible without Burlington's investment in high-quality geospatial data, particularly LiDAR. These investments pay dividends for a variety of uses, from stormwater management to solar potential mapping. This LiDAR will help Burlington advance risk management plans by creating the tree centroids needed to run a risk analysis. Good data supports good governance.

MAPPING THE TREE CANOPY FROM ABOVE

Tree canopy assessments rely on remotely sensed data in the form of aerial imagery and light detection and ranging (LiDAR) data. These datasets, which have been acquired by various governmental agencies in the region, are the foundational information for tree canopy mapping. Imagery provides information that enables features to be distinguished by their spectral (color) properties. As trees and shrubs can appear spectrally similar, or obscured by shadow, LiDAR, which consists of 3D height information, enhances the accuracy of the mapping. Tree canopy mapping is performed using a scientifically rigorous process that integrates cutting-edge automated feature extraction technologies with detailed manual reviews and editing. This combination of sensor and mapping technologies enabled the city's tree canopy to be mapped in greater detail and with better accuracy than ever before. From a single street tree along a roadside to a patch of trees in a park, every tree in Burlington was accounted for.

Tree Canopy Mapping

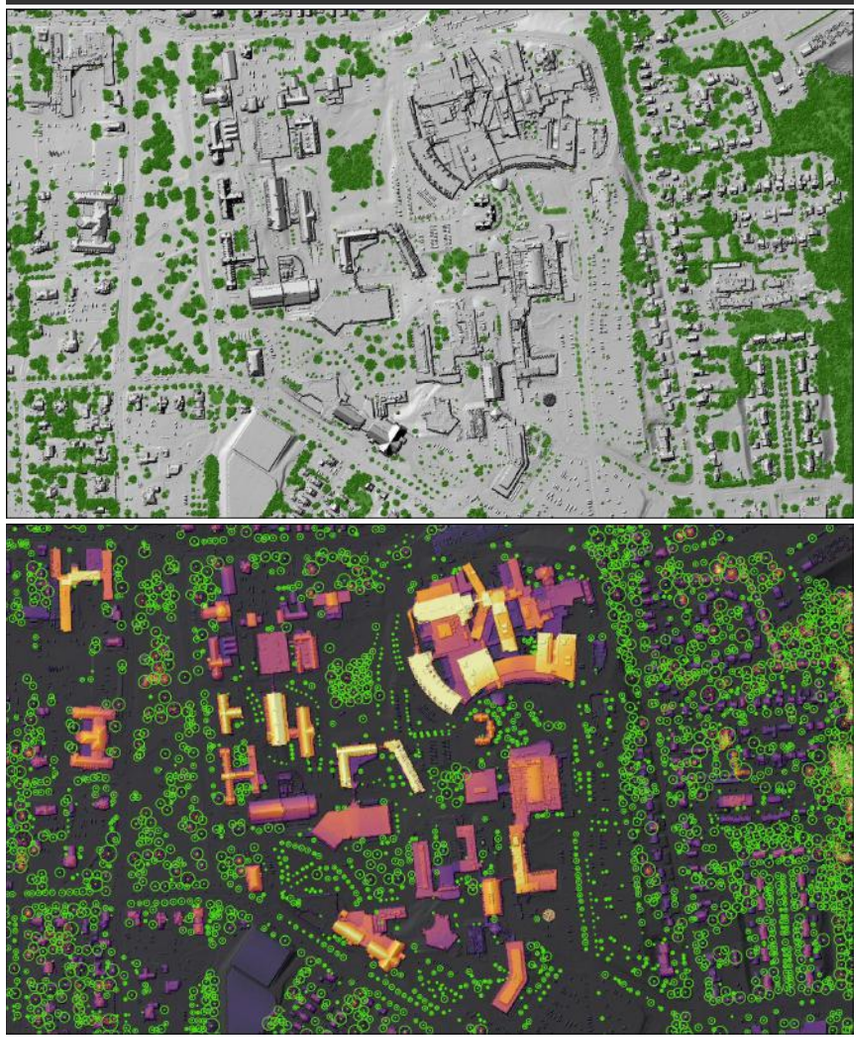


Figure 1. Locations of individual trees and their crowns (top) that were derived from the 2023 LiDAR (bottom).

The high-resolution land cover that forms the foundation of this project was generated from the most recent LiDAR, which was acquired in 2023. Compared to national tree canopy datasets, which map at a resolution of 30-meters, this project generated maps that were over 1,000 times more detailed and better account for all of the city's tree canopy.

Land Cover Mapping



Figure 2. High-resolution land cover developed for this project.

TREE COUNT

111,912+ Individual Trees

Burlington has over 111,912 individual trees, an estimate that was derived from the 2023 LiDAR data.

Tree Crowns & Centroids

Trees, particularly individual ones located in parks, on streets, on college greens, and on residential lands, require attention, care, and maintenance to thrive. In addition to quantifying the town's tree canopy acreage and percent coverage, this study produced an estimate of the number of individual trees in Burlington. This analysis was performed using the 2023 LiDAR data. While not a replacement for field-based inventories, LiDAR provides a unique advantage in that all of Burlington's trees can be counted. With Burlington having an estimated over 111,912 trees, it is important that tree maintenance remains a high priority for land managers. Tree maintenance and care activities will ensure that these critical green infrastructure assets thrive in a challenging urban environment.



Figure 3. Tree centroids (dots) and tree crowns (circles) mapped from the 2023 LiDAR. Tree mapping from LiDAR involves finding relative high points for each tree, then tracing down until a height inflection point is reached, marking the edge of the crown. This approach to individual tree mapping is most accurate where there is a clear differentiation in tree crowns and is less accurate in forested stands where crowns may overlap.

EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental Equity & Urban Resilience

Like many cities in the United States, Burlington faces environmental risks and challenges relating to the urban environment. Trees, when properly cared for, can serve as a solution to create a sustainable and more resilient Burlington. However, resiliency requires preparedness to overcome shocks to Burlington and the community, and a crucial component of Burlington resilience are its residents.

Thus, to enhance urban resilience, we recommend Burlington targets neighborhoods lacking access to tree canopy cover, and for tree planting prioritization to be further informed by the distribution of demographic groups that are typically more susceptible to environmental risks. These include historically marginalized populations like racial and ethnic minorities and residents living in poverty.

In Burlington, distributions of census blocks with greater presence of Non-White residents and little tree canopy cover closely resemble the distributions of census blocks with greater presence of poverty and little tree canopy. It is likely that these demographics, which are typically interrelated, are also more exposed to environmental challenges due to a lack of trees available to provide important benefits that mitigate them.

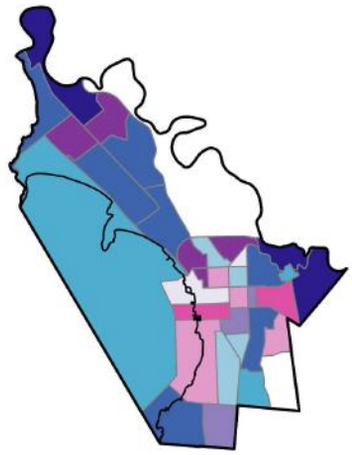
SUCEPTIBILITY AND INEQUITY

-

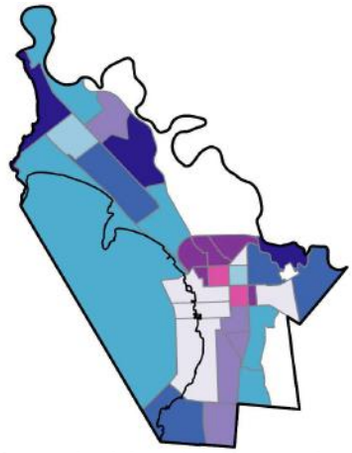
VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHICS* ARE AT GREATER RISK AGAINST ISSUES THAT IMPACT CITIES

*Other demographics at risk besides those illustrated include:

- Hispanic population
- Individuals that had strokes
- Children younger than 5
- Adults older than 65
- Individuals exposed through daily commuted (walking or public transportation)
- Individuals living in areas with hazard risk like sewage overflows



% Non-White (2020 ACS)



% Households with Annual Income < $25,000 (2020 ACS)

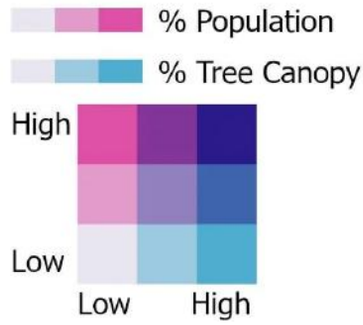


Figure 4: These maps show percent existing tree canopy cover in relation to two demographic groups that are highly interrelated and typically within the most susceptible groups against environmental challenges. Shades of pink indicate tree canopy percentage by block group, with the darkest shade indicating higher percentages. Meanwhile, shades of blue indicate percentage of residents within each of the demographic groups, with the darkest shade indicating higher percentages.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Environmental Stressors & Neighborhood Prioritization

With an increase in severe storms and extreme weather across the country, flooding and rising temperatures are two environmental challenges that impact the city of Burlington. Using both the Urban Flood Risk Mitigation and the Urban Cooling modules of the Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Tradeoffs (InVEST) tool, we were able to identify census block groups that are more at risk of flooding and high temperatures with current tree canopy.

The maps below can be used to determine tree planting allocation to strengthen community resilience against flooding and rising temperatures.

Mitigation Capacity by Local Vegetation

Flooding is of great concern for Burlignton. Trees can be critical in bank stabilization, water quality protection, and absorbing water during high precipitation events. Surface runoff retention **(a)**, as mapped with the Urban Flood Risk Mitigation module of the InVEST tool, represents the capacity for the current vegetation and soil to retain water during rain events. Areas with low runoff retention may benefit from increased tree plantings due to the capacity of vegetation acting as riparian buffers filtering runoff and absorbing precipitation into the soil. The heat island effect has a considerable impact on cities, and rising temperatures can result in fatalities (particularly among the elderly and those with cardiovascular diseases). The capacity of local vegetation to mitigate rising temperatures **(b)** varies throughout Burlington's urban landscape.

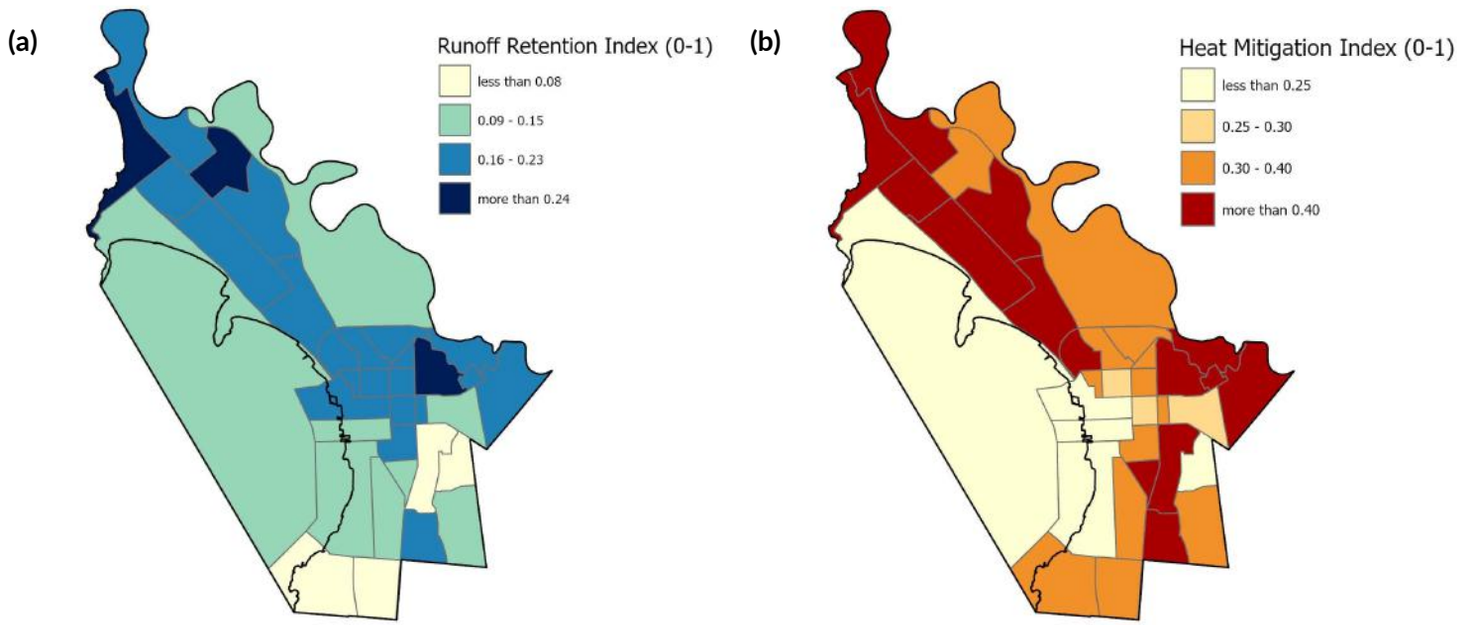


*Figure 5: **(a)** The runoff retention index indicates retention of surface runoff as mapped. The map ranges from zero (indicating low retention of runoff) to one (indicating high retention of runoff). **(b)** The heat mitigation index ranges from zero (low mitigation capacity) to one (high mitigation capacity) and was modeled with InVEST.*

LANDCOVER

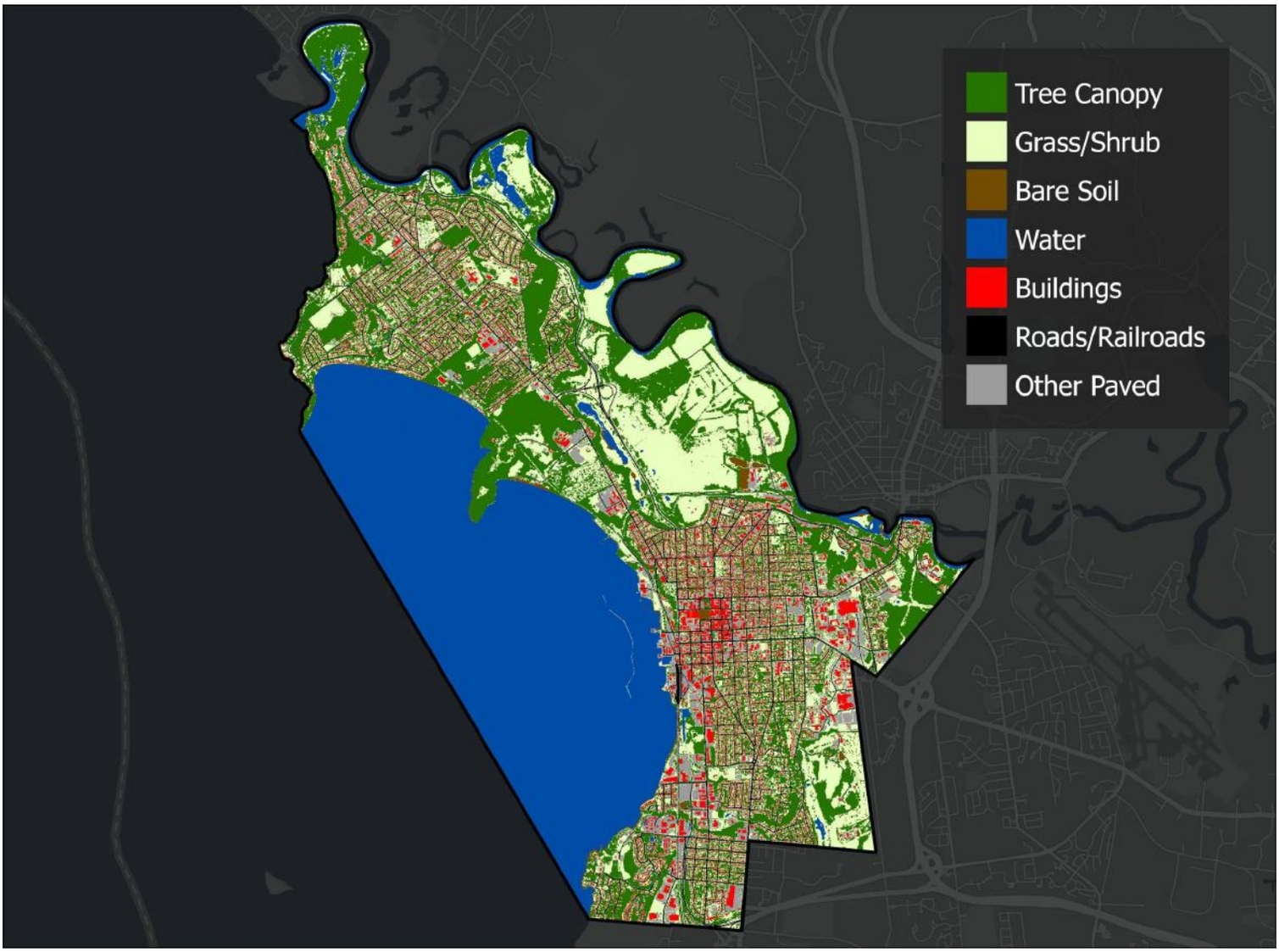


Figure 6. The new 2023 landcover for Burlington *was used in this assessment to quantify existing tree canopy, possible tree canopy - vegetated, possible tree canopy - impervious, and not suitable. The following terminology is used throughout this report.*

Key Terms

Existing Tree Canopy - The amount of tree canopy present when viewed from above using aerial or satellite imagery.

Possible Tree Canopy - **Vegetated:** Grass or shrub area that is theoretically available for **the** establishment of tree canopy.

Possible Tree Canopy - **Impervious:** Asphalt, **concrete** or bare soil surfaces, excluding roads and buildings, that are theoretically available for the establishment of tree canopy

Not Suitable - Areas where it is highly unlikely that new tree canopy could be established (primarily buildings and roads).

Measuring Tree Canopy Change

Area Change - the change in the **area of** tree canopy between the two time periods.

Relative % Change - the magnitude of change in tree canopy based on the amount of tree canopy in 2014.

Absolute % Change - the percentage point change between the two time periods.

TREE CANOPY METRICS

40% *of Burlington's land is covered by tree canopy*

Tree canopy and tree canopy change were summarized at various geographical units of analysis, ranging from tax parcels to watersheds. These tree canopy metrics provide information on the area of Existing and Possible Tree Canopy for each geographical unit.

Existing Tree Canopy

Cities commonly have uneven distribution of tree canopy, a pattern that applies to Burlington. There are some 10-acre hexagons with less than 5% tree canopy and others with nearly 100% tree canopy (Figure 7). This unequal distribution can be traced back to Burlington's history of development patterns and open space planning. Those residents who live and work in more treed areas (darker green hexagons) benefit disproportionately from the ecosystem services that trees provide. Conversely, the more urbanized regions of the Burlington have lower amounts of tree canopy and therefore receive fewer ecosystem services from trees.

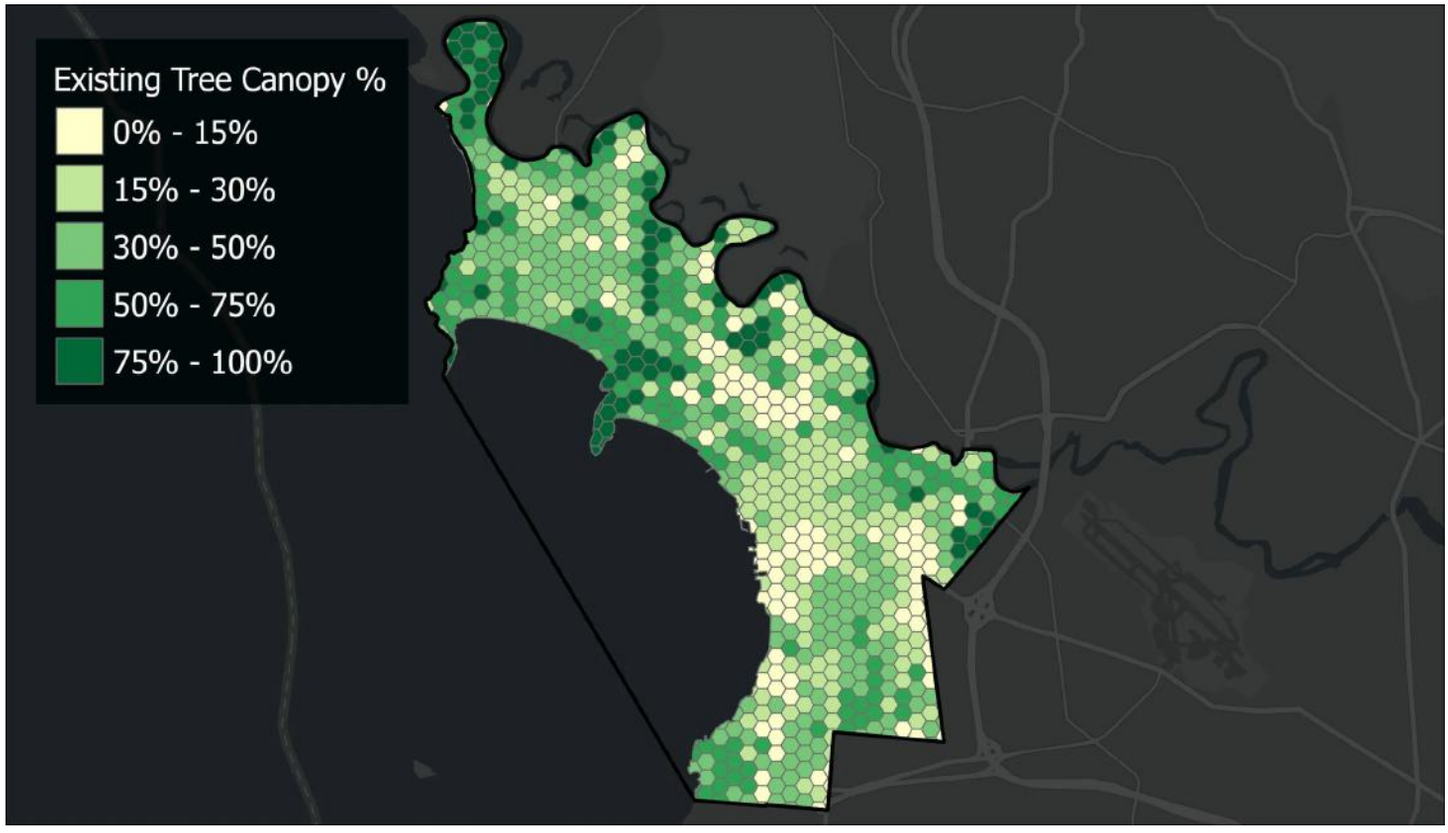


Figure 7. Existing tree canopy percentage for 2023 conditions summarized using 10-acre hexagons. For each of the hexagons, the percent tree canopy was calculated by dividing the amount of tree canopy by the land area, which excludes water. Using hexagons as the unit of analysis provides a standard mechanism for visualizing the distribution of tree canopy without the constraints of other geographies that have unequal area (e.g., zip codes).

Possible New Tree Canopy

There is available space in Burlington to plant more trees. In this assessment, any areas with no trees, buildings, roads, or bodies of water are considered Possible-Vegetation and represent locations in which trees could theoretically be established without having to remove hard surfaces. Many factors go into deciding where a tree can be planted with the necessary conditions to flourish, including land use, landscape conditions, social attitudes towards trees, and financial considerations. Examples include golf courses and recreational fields. While there is open space to plant trees, there is a direct conflict in use; thus, the Possible-Vegetation category should serve as a guide for further field analysis, not a prescription of where to plant trees. With 2,181 acres of land (comprising 33% of the the city's land area) falling into the Possible-Vegetation category, there remain significant opportunities for planting trees and preserving canopy that will improve the city's total tree canopy in the long term.

In Burlington's most densely urbanized areas, significantly increasing the tree canopy will be difficult; nevertheless, it remains vitally important to strive for canopy gains. In the Burlington's residential areas, healthy natural regeneration of the existing tree canopy and planting new trees will be important. There is often a "plant and forget" cycle in residential areas, where trees are generally planted when homes are built, without the follow-up to replace trees as they decline to establish the next generation of canopy.

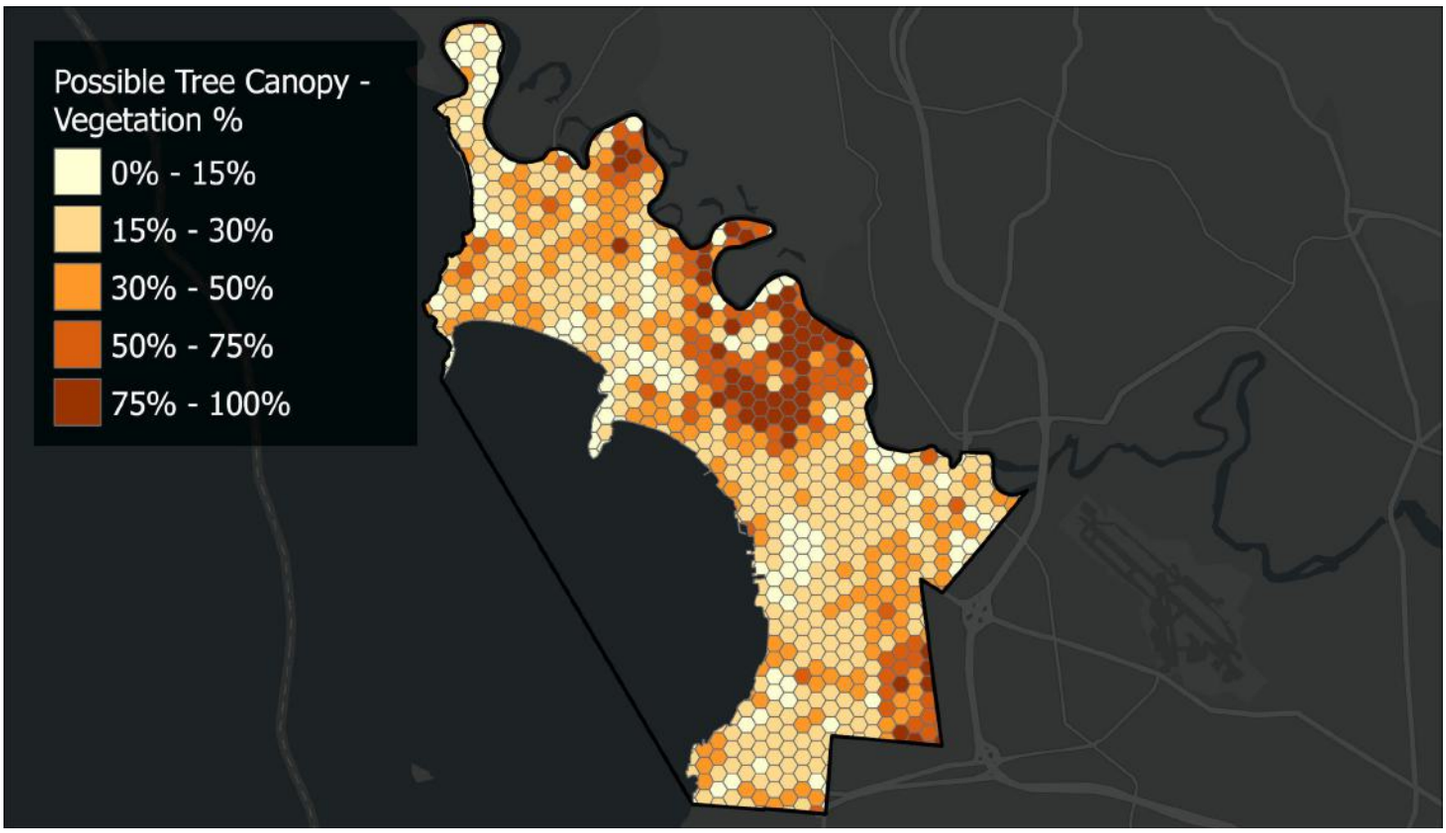


Figure 8. Possible Tree Canopy consisting of non-treed vegetated surfaces summarized by 10-acre hexagons. These vegetated surfaces that are not currently covered by tree canopy represent areas where it is biophysically feasible to establish new tree canopy. It may be financially challenging or socially undesirable to establish new tree canopy on much of this land. Examples include golf courses, recreational and agricultural fields. Maps of the Possible Tree Canopy can assist in strategic planning, but decisions on where to plant trees should be made based on field verification. Surface, underground, and above surface factors ranging from sidewalks to utilities can affect the suitability of a site for tree canopy planting.

Canopy Change Distribution — Absolute % Change

Burlington has experienced a net decrease in tree canopy over the 2014 to 2023 time period, but the story of change is more nuanced, with a mix of loss and gain. All areas of the city experienced both gains and losses of tree canopy, though some areas saw a net increase and others a net decrease. Removal and die off of mature trees resulted in the loss of large patches of tree canopy. Mature trees with large crowns contribute substantially to tree canopy and take decades to grow, so their loss creates large, localized declines in tree canopy. Even though there was evidence of tree loss throughout the Burlington, planting efforts, preservation programs, and natural growth helped offset losses and stem decline. Canopy begets canopy as almost all trees gain canopy on an annual basis. Trees, when properly cared for, can mitigate environmental risks challenges relating to the urban environment such as flooding, air quality, and urban heat island. This makes tree canopy an important part of a the city's infrastructure.

The trajectory of Burlington's tree canopy in the future is uncertain. There are both environmental and anthropogenic risks facing canopy cover. Invasive species could pose a serious threat if not identified and controlled early. Natural events such as storms can have a mixed impact on the canopy. In conserved areas, tree canopy will return through natural growth, but in urbanized areas, trees lost to storms will need to be replanted. Climate change may cause trees to grow more quickly but could also result in inhospitable conditions for native species. Anthropogenic factors include preservation and conservation efforts and the strength of tree ordinances. Managing these risks will be key to achieving sustained canopy growth.

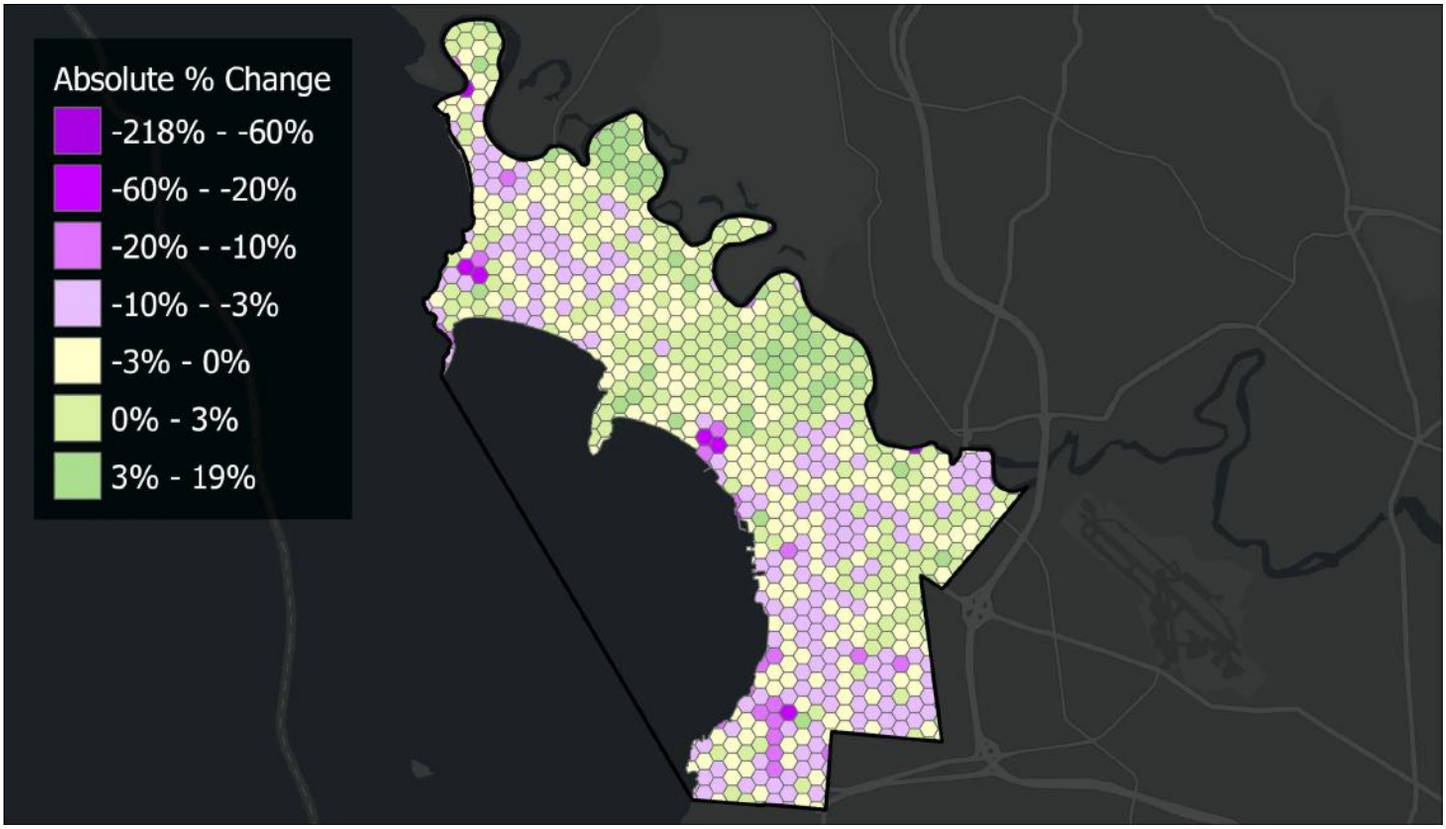


Figure 9: Tree canopy change summarized by 10-acre hexagons. Darker greens indicate greater gain, while darker purple reflects higher amounts of loss.

Canopy Change Distribution - Relative % Change

The magnitude of tree canopy change across Burlington can be measured by the relative tree canopy change over the 2014 - 2023 period. The relative change is calculated by taking the tree canopy area in 2014, subtracting the tree canopy area in 2023, then dividing this number by the area of tree canopy in 2014. Areas with the greatest change indicate that the canopy is markedly different in 2023 as compared to 2014. In some of the commercial and urbanized areas with little tree canopy in 2014, the growth of street trees resulted in a sizeable relative gain. Conversely, the removal of trees as a result of construction in sparsely treed areas resulted in substantial relative reductions in tree canopy.

The greatest relative gains in tree canopy were in locations where new plantings were carried out on areas with little tree canopy to begin with. Just as forest patches provide valuable ecosystem services, such as wildlife habitat, so do individual trees. In areas with low tree canopy, an individual tree can have an outsized impact, through ecosystem services such as providing a refuge from the sun while watching a baseball game, shading cars in a parking lot or helping to reduce homeowner air conditioning costs. Though growing conditions in Right of Way (ROW) areas can be tough, they are a tool to increase canopy in low coverage, often impervious surface dominated areas. Natural growth can provide gains in areas with robust canopy, but in areas with low canopy, such as commercial spaces, tree plantings are an important part a long-term plan to increase tree canopy and resulting ecosystem services.

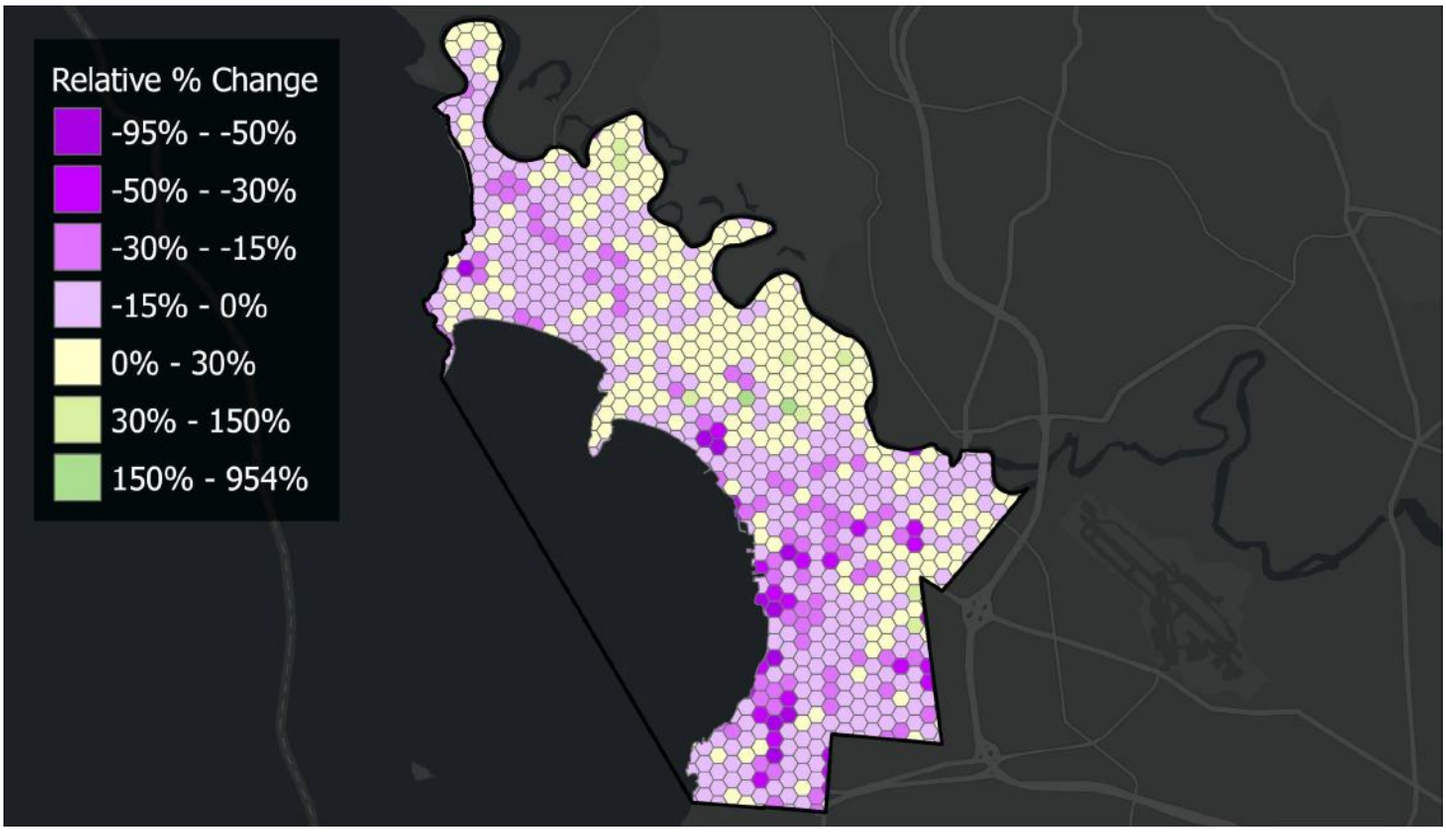


Figure 10: Tree canopy change metrics summarized by 10-acre hexagons. Relative tree canopy is calculated by using the formula (2014-2023)/2023. Colors are categorized by data quantiles. Darker greens indicate greater relative gain, while darker purple reflects a higher magnitude of loss.

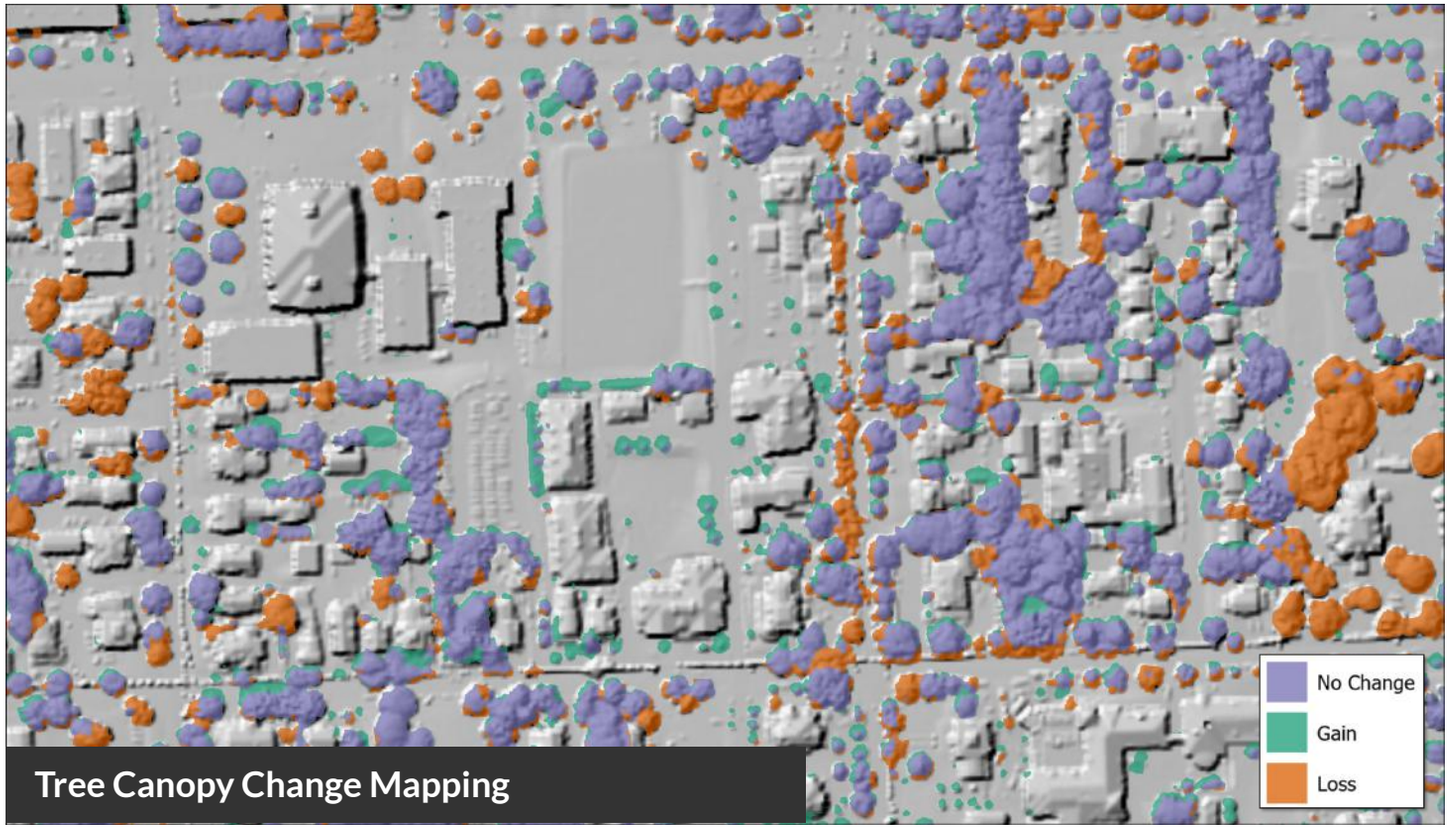


Figure 11: Tree canopy change mapping for the area surrounding S Willard St overlaid on 2014 LiDAR. This area experienced a mix of gain and loss.

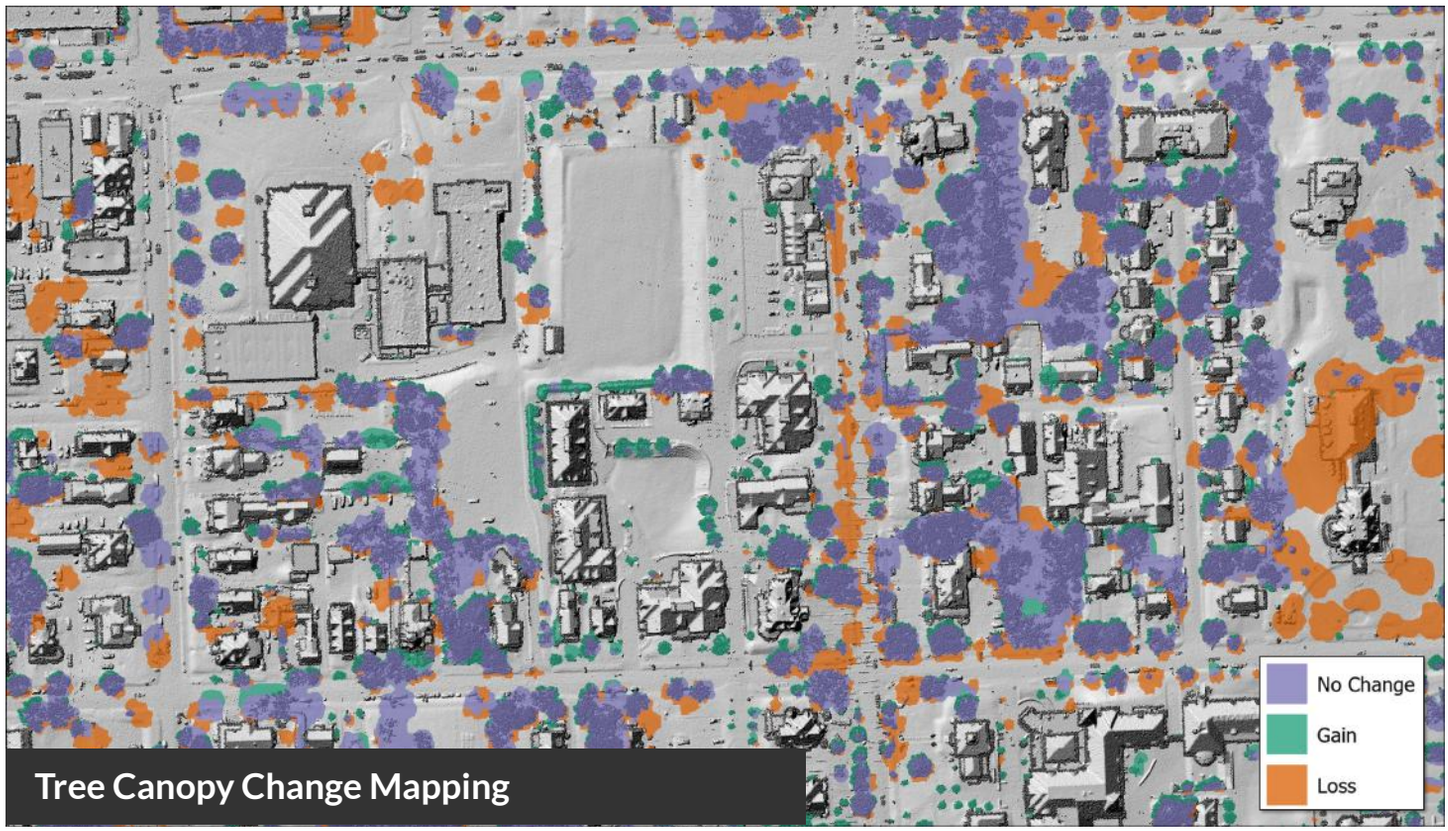


Figure 12: Tree canopy change for the same area above but overlaid on the 2023 LiDAR. The areas of gain appear rough now that tree canopy is present, and the areas of loss appear smooth due to the absence of tree canopy.

PATTERNS OF CHANGE

Numerous factors contribute to the wide range of tree canopy change patterns of Burlington. These include zoning, land use history, urban density, and landowner decisions. The examples that follow illustrate how these factors influence canopy change. Examining patterns and processes over the past decade can provide insights into how the canopy may change in the future.

Natural Succession Drives Growth

Growth of already existing canopy was the largest driver of Burlington's tree canopy gains. Tree planting and natural succession are slow but important processes for increasing urban tree canopy.

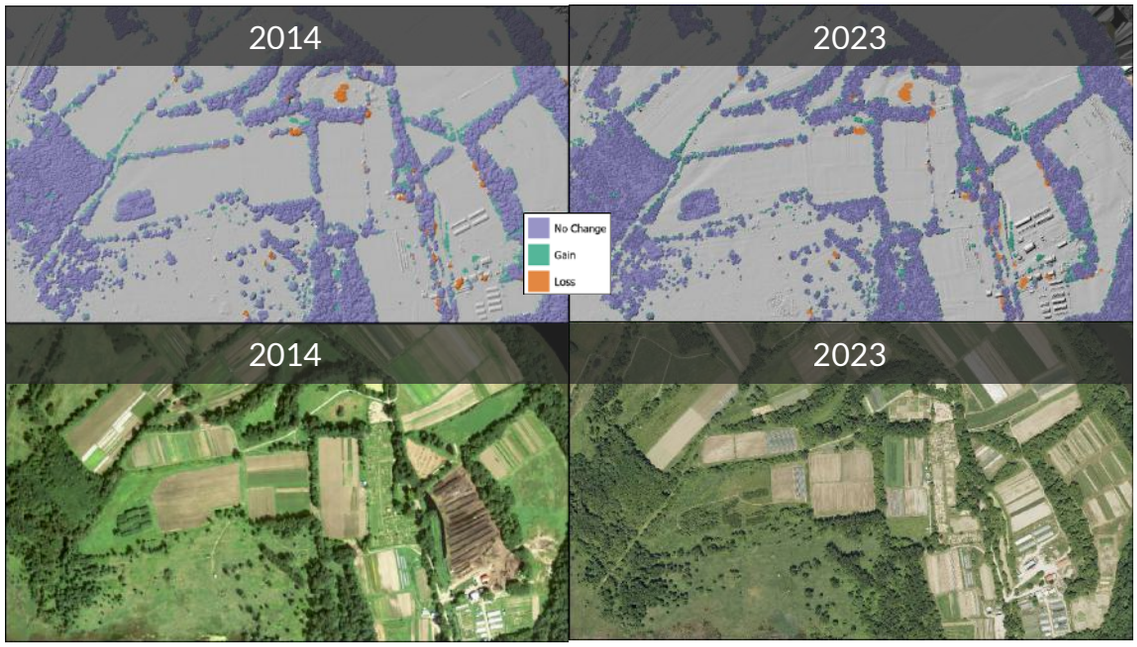


Figure 13. Natural growth in the Burlington Intervale created a net increase in tree canopy in the area.

Tree canopy gain

Agricultural Area

Natural Sucession

Natural Areas Provide Ecosystem Services

Forested areas provide important wildlife habitat, pollution mitigation, and outdoor recreation opportunites.

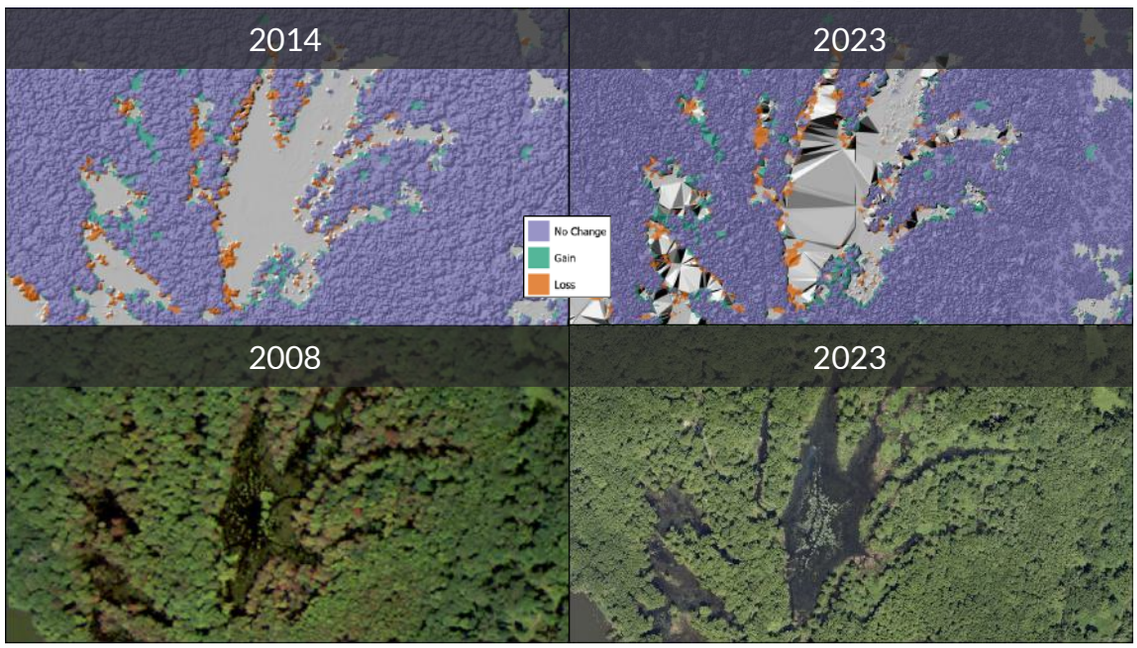


Figure 14. In the Derway Island Nature Preserve natural processes like storms result in downed branches and trees, which are quickly filled in with canopy from surrounding trees.

Stable Canopy

Protected Area

Wildlife Habitat

Residents are Key

Trees continue to grow and contribute canopy in established neighborhoods, but age, disease, invasive species, storms, and changing landowner preferences all contribute to removals. As a result, losses may outpace gains over time if replacement trees are not planted.

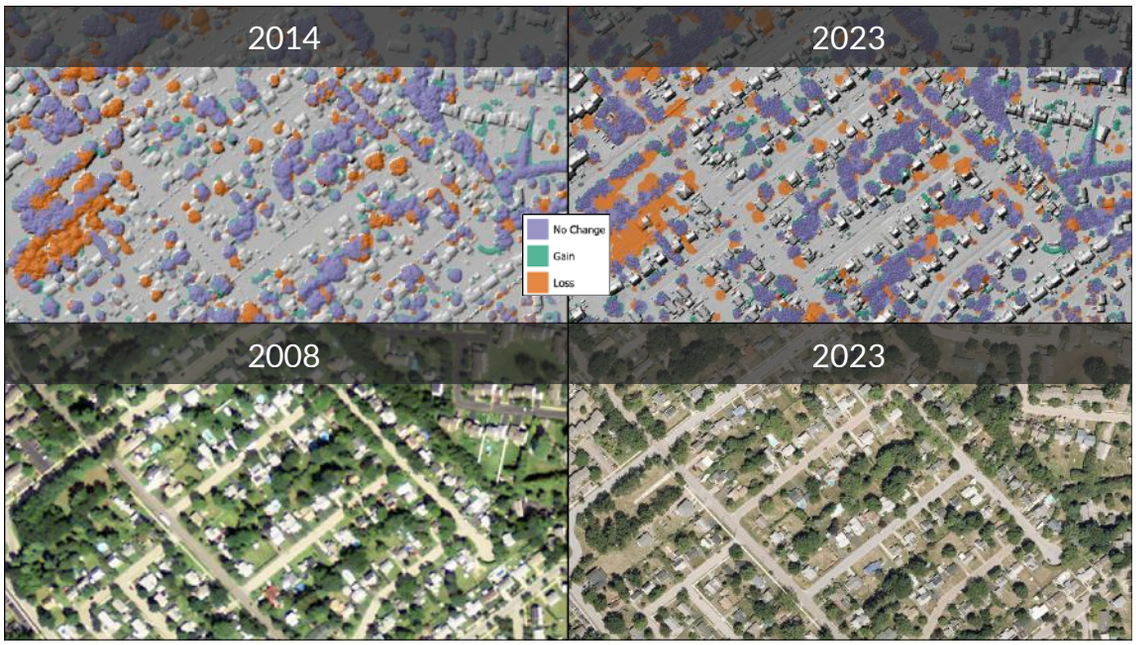


Figure 15. Natural growth of existing tree canopy helped to mitigate losses in this residential area off North Ave

Mix of Loss and Gains

Neighborhood

Widespread Tree Removal

Construction Associated with Tree Canopy Losses

Redevelopment is a natural part of a city's lifecycle and often needed to revitalize communities, create opportunities, and enhance quality of life for residents. But care should be taken to balance development needs with the essential ecosystem services that urban forest patches provide. Trees are often removed to provide space for new construction but new tree planting can help offset losses.

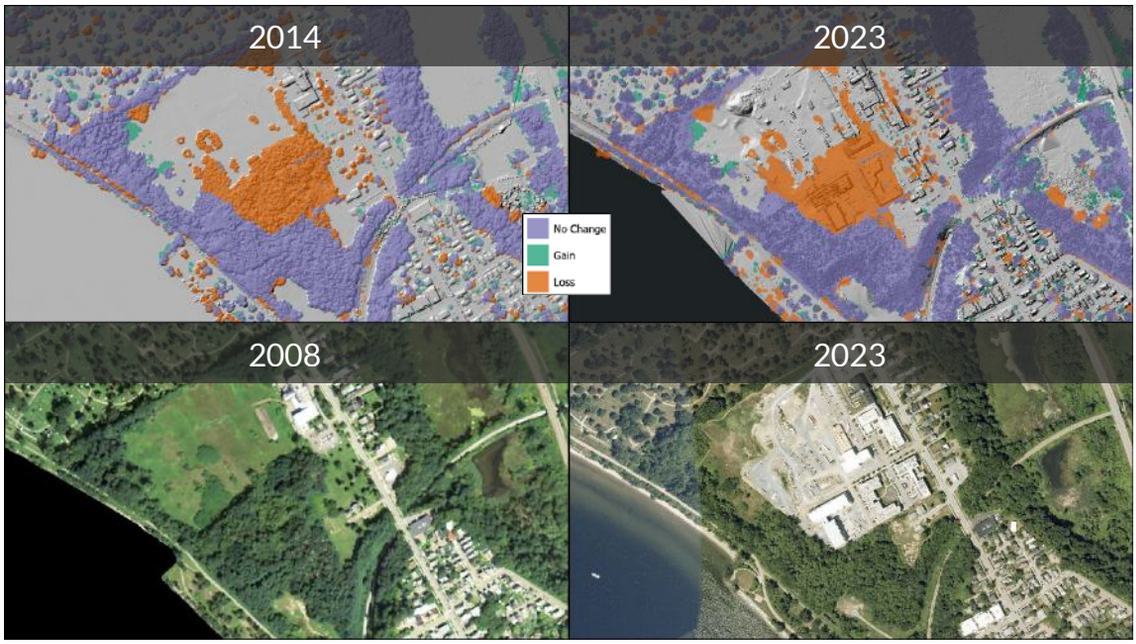


Figure 16. Construction for the redevelopment of the former Burlington College into housing, resulted in tree canopy loss.

Forest Patch Loss

Multi-Family Residential Area

New Construction

Wards

The city's official geographic boundaries are a useful way to summarize tree canopy and draw comparisons between parts of the city and allow communities to make informed decisions about their tree canopy. The differences in canopy between Burlington's wards is the result of land use history and changes to the built environment. Areas with large parks and open space or those that have lower density development tend to have more canopy, while areas that are more dense with commercial or industrial use tend to have less tree canopy. Ward 4 had the highest tree canopy coverage at 53% followed by Ward 1 at 47% and Ward 7 at 46% . Ward 3, which contains the downtown area, had the lowest tree canopy coverage at 17. Ward 7 had the largest area of tree canopy with 784 acres, representing 30% of the city's total tree canopy area. Each ward experienced both gain and loss of tree canopy within their boundaries, but overall losses outpaced gains in all but one of the city's wards. Only Ward 2, saw a net increase, gaining 6 acres of tree canopy between 2014 and 2023. Ward 5 saw the largest declines, losing 38 acres of tree canopy, followed by Ward 4 which lost 26 acres.

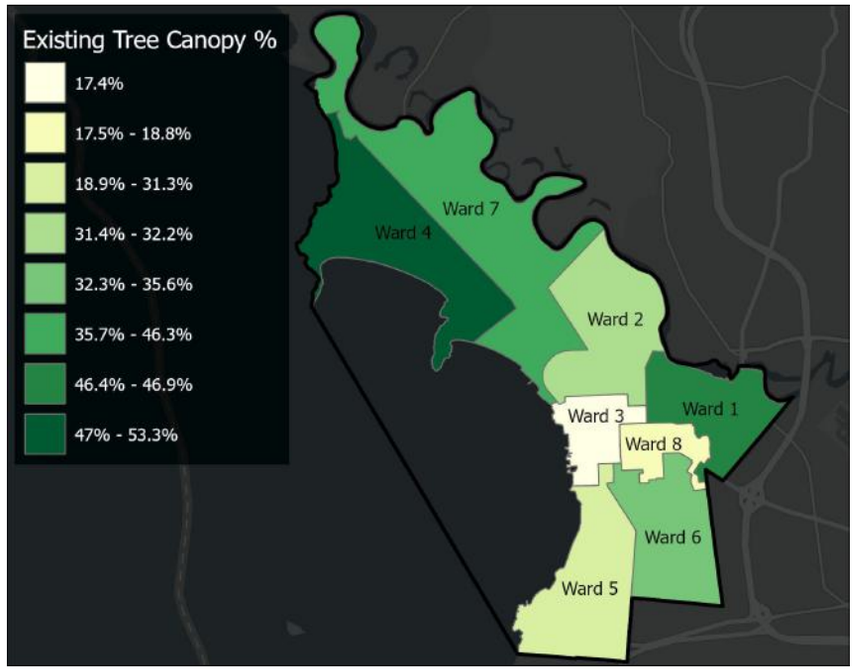


Figure 17: Existing tree canopy percentage for 2023 conditions summarized by Ward.

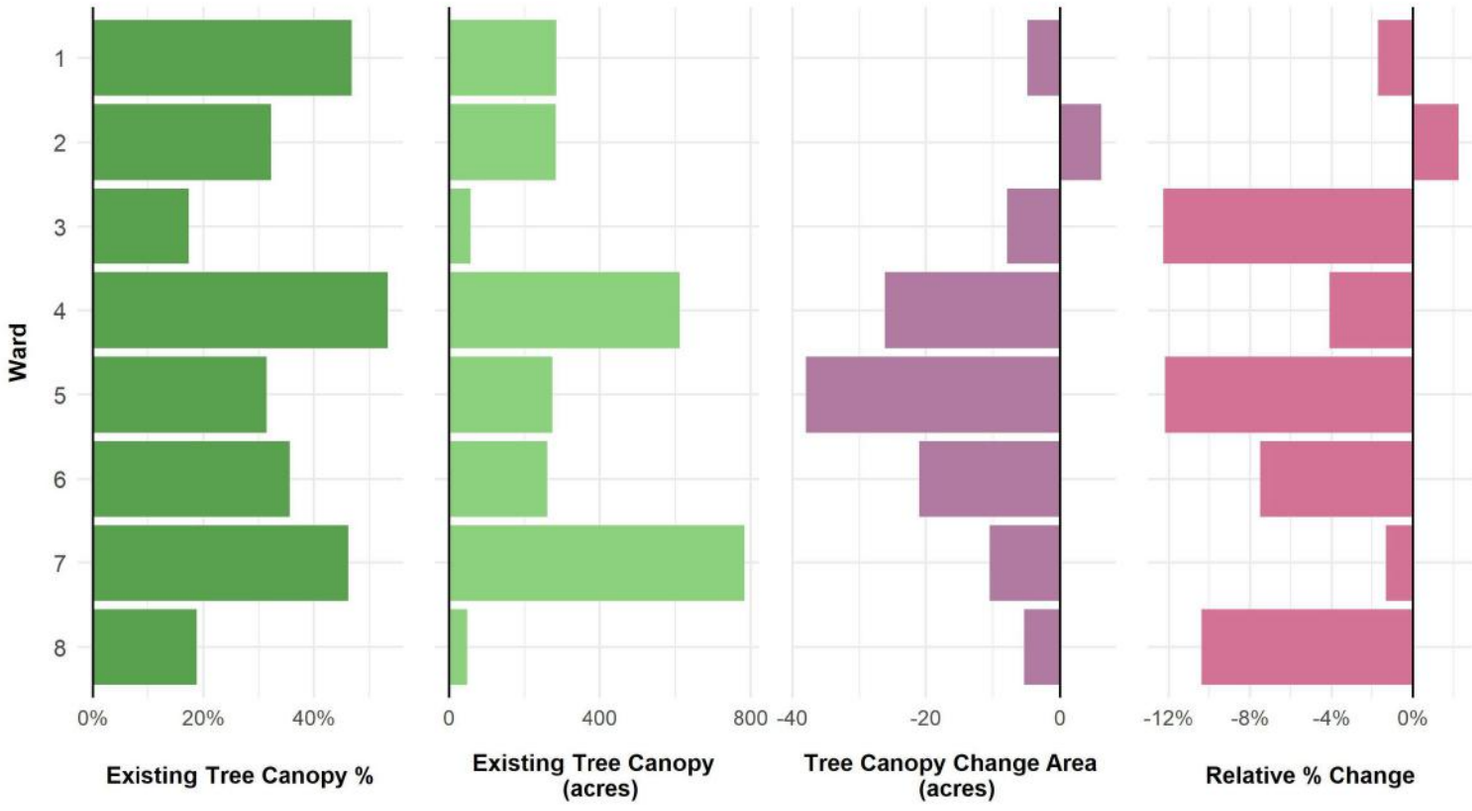


Figure 18: Tree canopy and change metrics summarized by Ward.

Parcel Land Use

Land use is how humans make use of the land including the economic and cultural activities (e.g., agricultural, residential, and commercial) practiced in the city. Land use is not to be mistaken by land cover which refers to landscape features, such as trees, buildings, water and other classes mapped as part of this study. Understanding the location and land-use types that tree canopy falls into is important information for coordination and planning purposes. Tree canopy cover was calculated in terms of percent of the land area within each district (Figure 20) to understand the proportion of canopy coverage for each, and as a percent of city-wide total tree canopy area (Figure 19) to determine contribution to Burlington's overall tree canopy.

The largest share (978 acres or 37.5%) of Burlington's tree canopy falls within residential parcels. Residential parcels also saw the largest decrease in tree canopy over the T1-T2 period with a net loss of 66.5 acres. The next largest share, 627 acres or 24% of the city's tree canopy exists on city property parcels. This land use saw the second largest losses with a decrease of 35 acres of tree canopy. The largest gains in tree canopy was seen on farmland parcels which saw a net increase of 9.7 acres of tree canopy.

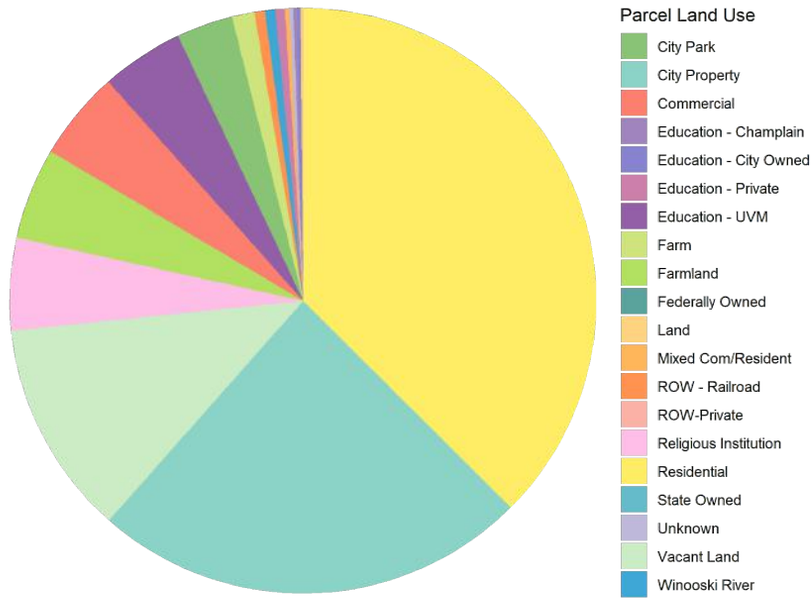


Figure 19: Burlington Tree Canopy Distribution by parcel land use.

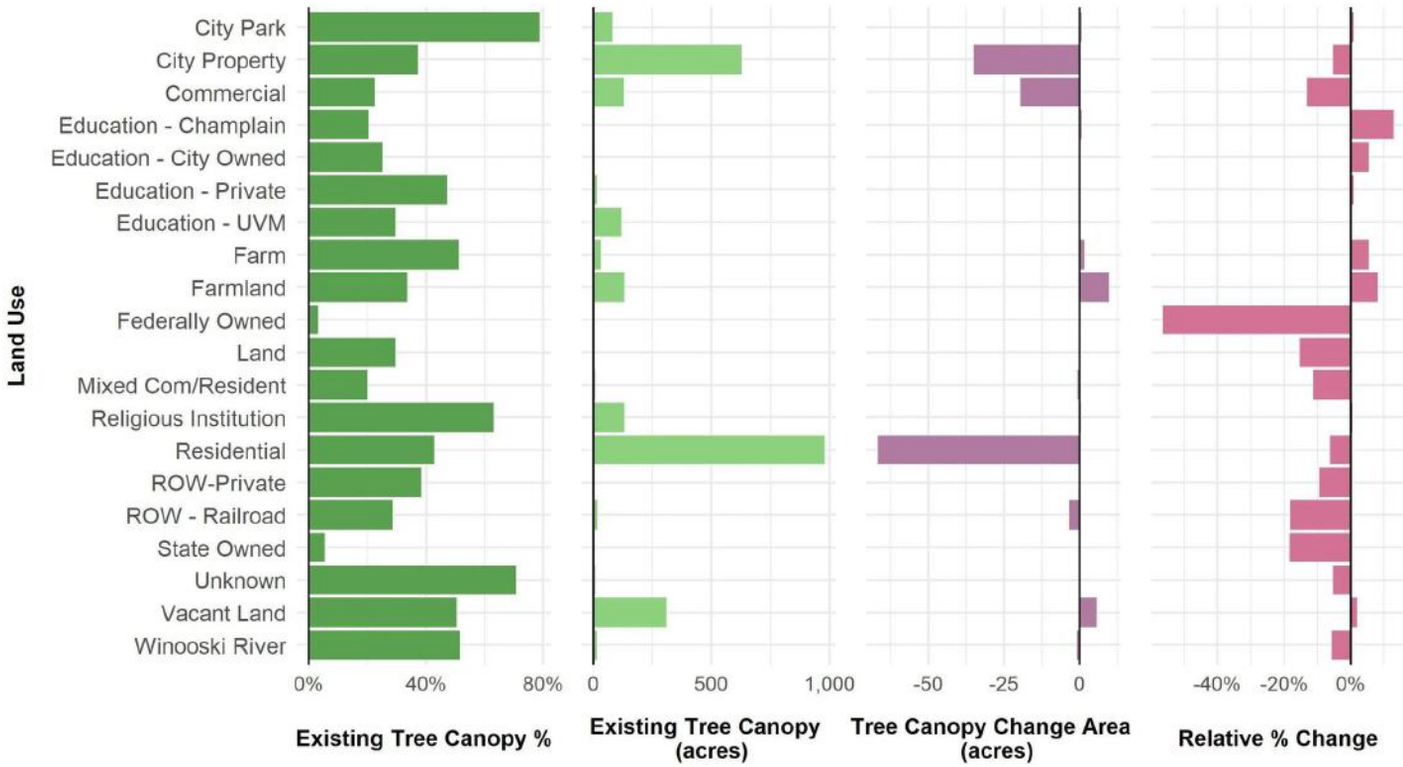


Figure 20: Tree canopy and change metrics summarized by parcel land use.

Watersheds

Watersheds represent areas in which water moves and drains in order to reach streams, lakes, and other waterbodies. Burlington's tree canopy is an important factor in managing the health of the city's three watersheds. The land use within a watershed can have large impacts on its health, including water quality and flood risk. Maintaining robust tree canopy can mitigate problems associated with impervious surfaces within a watershed by managing stormwater runoff, filtering pollution, and stabilizing the banks of streams and rivers. Existing tree canopy coverage within each watershed ranged from 37.5% in Burlington Direct Land Drainage, to 42% in the Tributaries to Lower Winooski watershed, to 50% in Shelburne Bay Direct Drainage. In the Burlington Direct Land Drainage watershed, 106 acres of tree canopy were lost between 2014 and 2023. The Shelburne Bay Direct Drainage watershed lost 12 acres, though this resulted in a higher magnitude of loss with a relative percent change of -8.3%. The Tributaries to Lower Winooski watershed is the only one to see a net increase in tree canopy, with an 11 acre increase over the 2014-2023 time period.

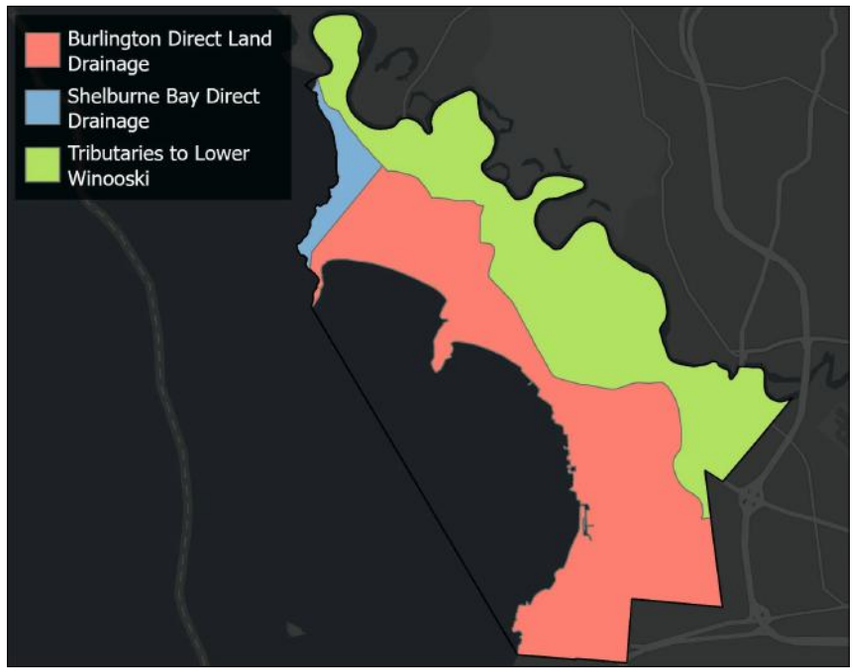


Figure 21: Burlington watersheds by which tree canopy metrics were summarized.

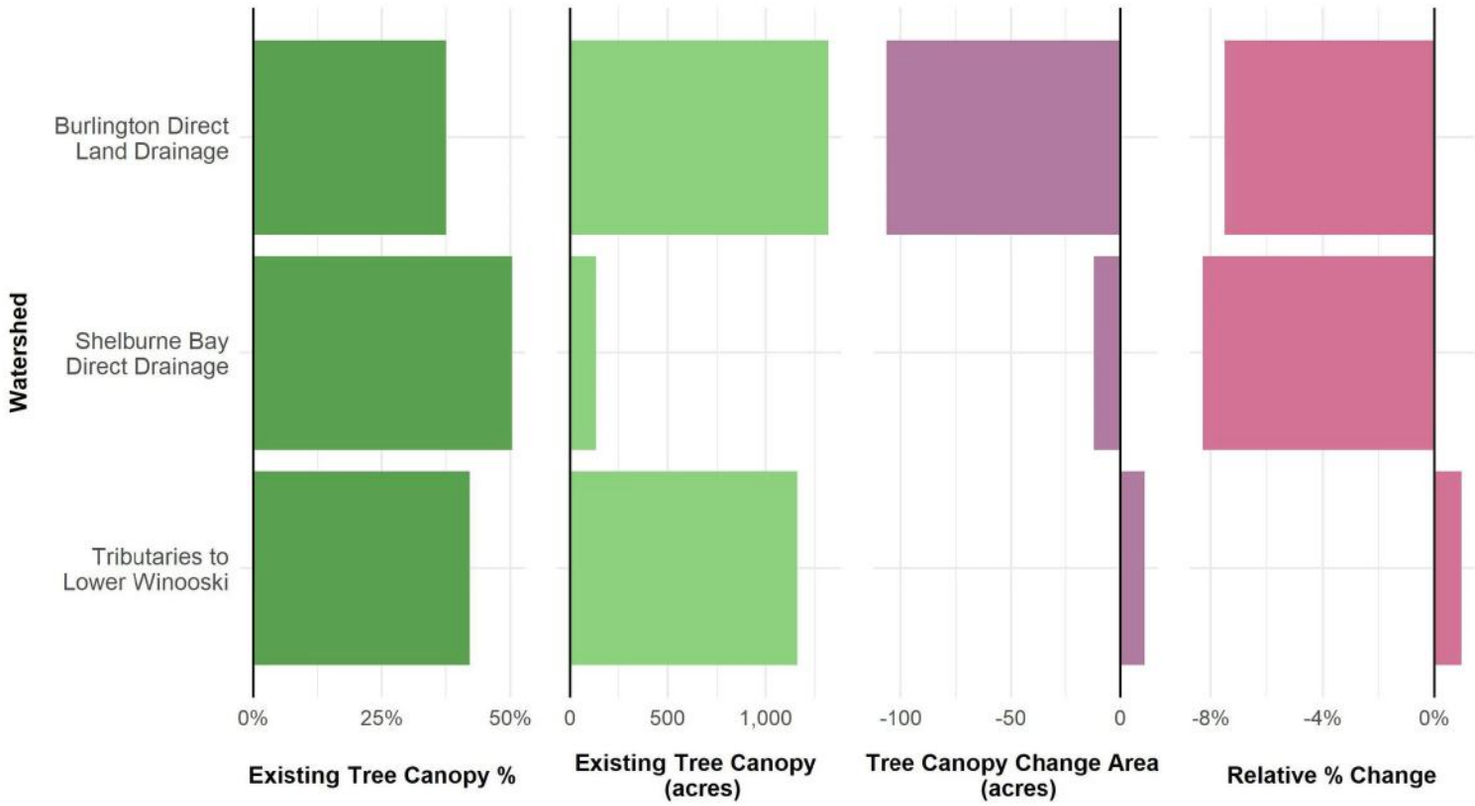


Figure 22: Tree canopy and change metrics summarized by watershed.

TREE HEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

Tree height is a useful proxy for tree age. Diverse height structure indicates a healthy and varied tree age distribution. Even-aged urban tree canopy results when trees were planted around the same time and can lead to a sudden and widespread loss in canopy when many mature trees reach the end of their lifespan at the same time. Age diversity supports a more resilient canopy over time, ensuring that that not all trees reach maturity at the same time.

In Burlington, the most prevalent height of trees is 40-50 feet, with the number of trees in each height class dropping dramatically as the height of trees increases past 60ft tall (Figure 23). There are few trees greater than 110ft tall, which can be expected in an urbanized area.

Mature trees have greater capacity to offer ecosystem services to urban residents. Loss of taller, more mature trees results in loss of those benefits and potential impacts to the overall canopy cover. It will be important to preserve trees in the 50-80 foot height range, while planting a variety of new trees to continue the lifecycle. Proper care and monitoring will help to develop the next generation of trees that reach maturity and balance the distribution. Having trees with a broad age distribution, as well as a variety of species, will ensure that a robust and healthy tree canopy is possible over time. Specific information on individual trees is collected via on-the-ground field inventories and was not captured in this assessment.

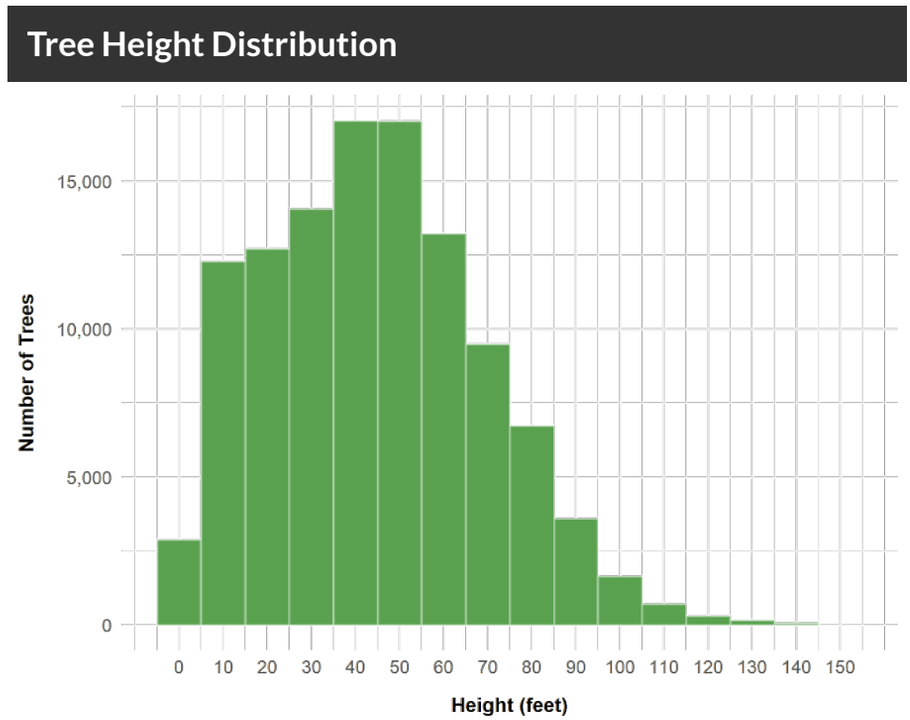


Figure 23: Histogram of the tree canopy height displaying the number of trees in each 10-foor bin.

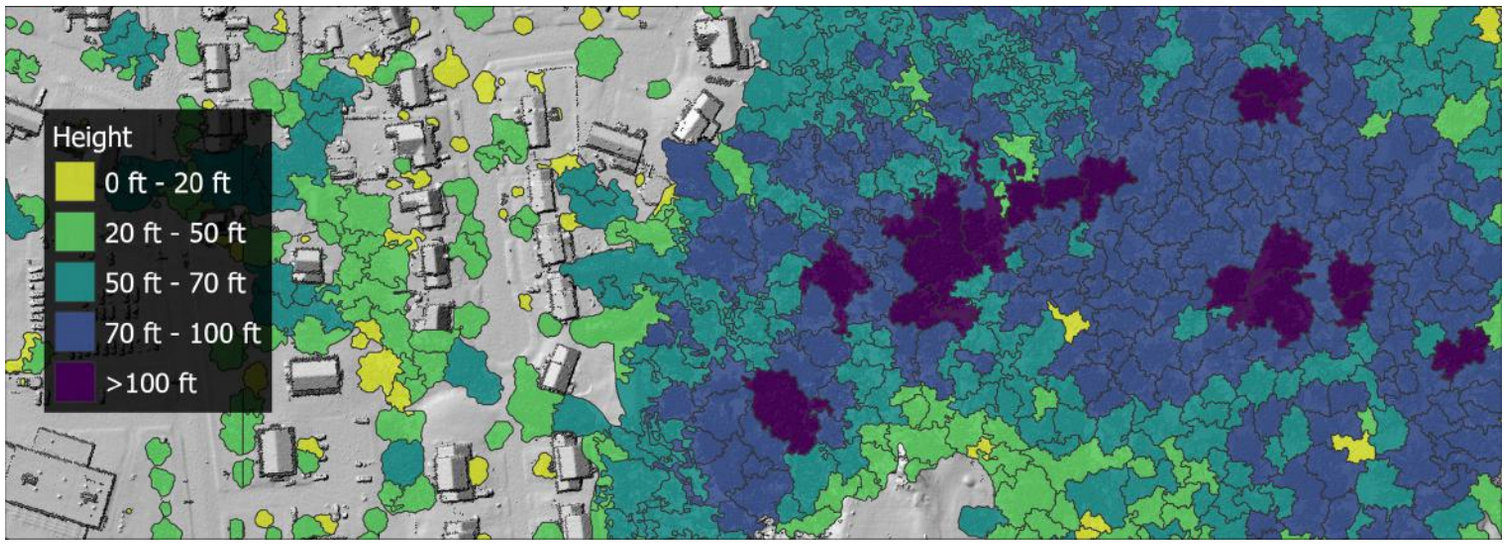


Figure 24: Example of the height classification with darker green representing taller canopy. Burlington's tree canopy was segmented into polygons approximating individual trees. Each of these polygons was then attributed with the height from the 2023 LiDAR.

FOREST PATCH SIZE

Along with the size, distribution, and diversity of urban forests, structure is another key factor to consider in management decisions. Urban forests are made up of patches of tree canopy interspersed throughout the landscape. This project used an algorithm to divide Burlington's tree canopy into five forest patch classes based on their morphology.

Forest patches, large and small, serve important roles in urban landscapes. Small patches and individual trees can provide access to natural areas and associated benefits in urban settings and can serve as stepping stones for wildlife traveling between larger forest patches. It is critical to maintain large patches of forest since they are necessary for certain ecosystem services that smaller patches cannot provide. In addition to producing outsized benefits like pollution mitigation and cooling, large forest patches can accommodate species with larger home ranges and species that rely on interior forest. This supports biodiversity by providing habitat for a wider variety of species than small patches alone can support.

Forest Patch Size Classes



Figure 25: Overview of Burlington forest patches by size (left). Example close-up of forest patch size classification (right). Forest patches are groups of trees surrounded by other, non-forested, land cover types.

Forest Patch Total Area

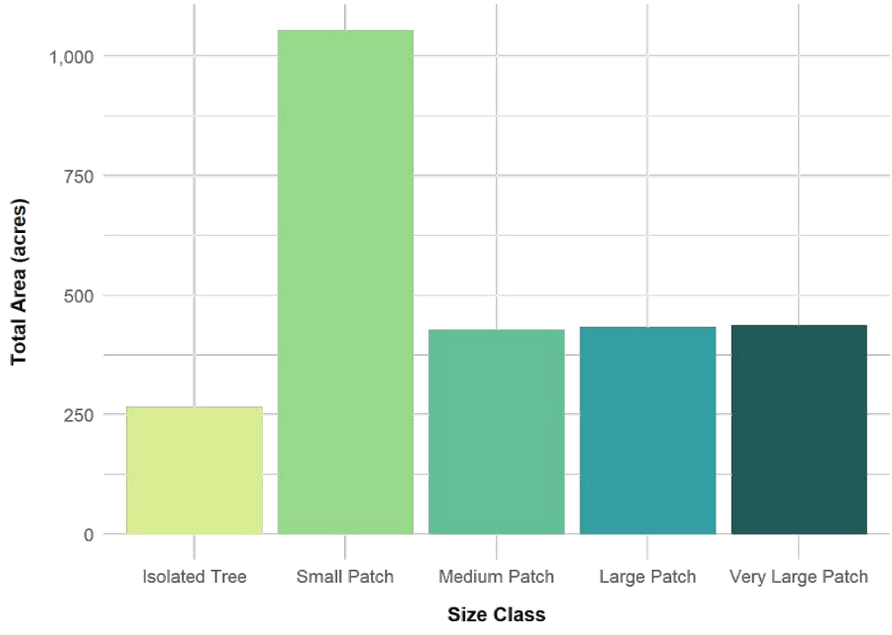
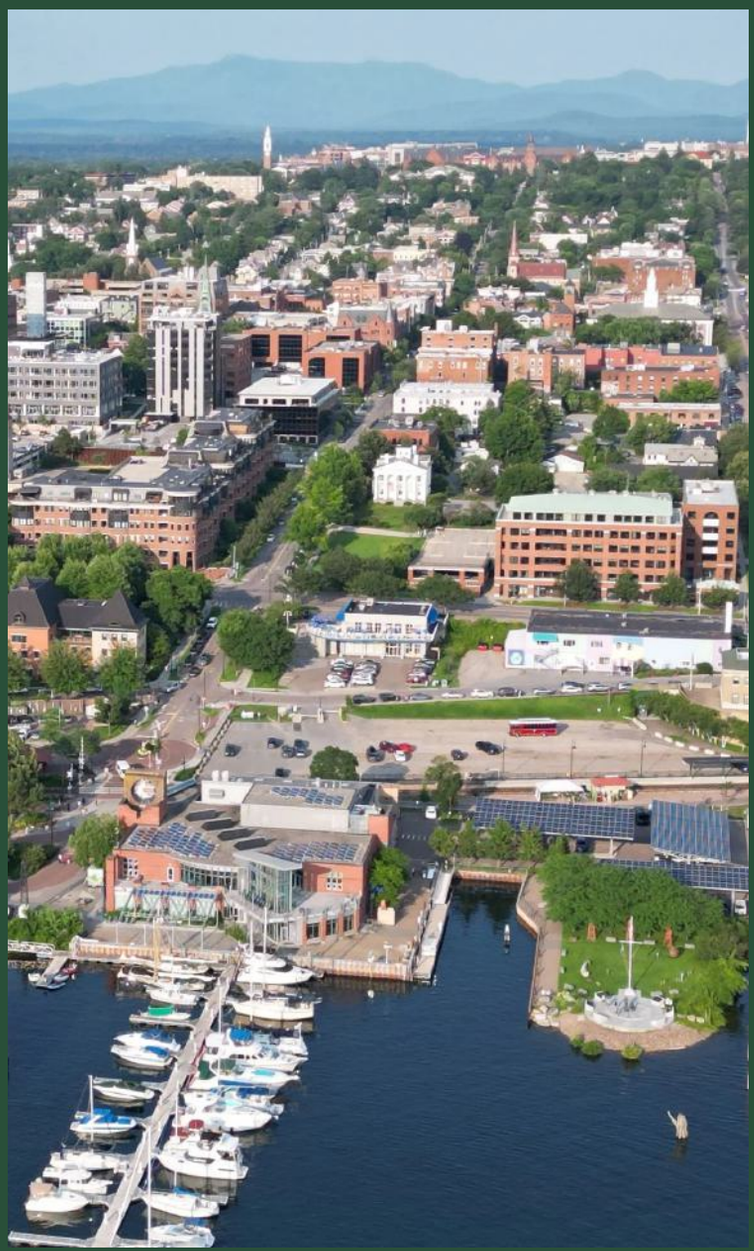


Figure 26: Total area of each forest patch size class.

The largest share of Burlington's tree canopy exists in small patches, with the total area of that size class adding up to 1,055 acres (Figure 26). Very large patches (438 acres), large patches (433 acres), and medium patch (427 acres) total areas were relatively consistent, though their locations in Burlington are concentrated in the northern portion of the city (Figure 25). Isolated trees made up the smallest total area of the five size categories covering a total of 266 acres throughout the city.

This assessment was carried out by the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Lab in collaboration with Burlington, Vermont. The methods and tools used for this assessment were developed in partnership with the USDA Forest Service. The source data used for the mapping came from the City of Burlington, the State of Vermont, and the USDA. The project was funded by the City of Burlington Additional support for this project was provided by the Gund Institute for Environment at the University of Vermont. Computations were performed on the Vermont Advanced Computing Core supported in part by NSF award No. OAC-1827314.



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APPENDIX C:
Glossary of Key Terms

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
aggressive introduced species	A non-native species that spreads or reproduces rapidly, with detrimental effects on its environment, particulary at the expense of native species.
agroforestry	The intentional integration of trees and shrubs into crop and animal farming systems to create environmental, economic, and social benefits.
Comprehensive Plan	The City's primary land use plan that addresses topics such as housing, transportation, conservation, preservation, economic development, flood hazards, and energy. It is updated every 8 years as required by Vermont statute.
Conservation Legacy Fund	A dedicated fund created in 2004 following adoption of the original Open Space Protection Plan that provides financial support for conservation land acquisition, stewardship, and conservation education wthin the City of Burlington.
edge effect	Occurs where two differing habitat types meet, such as where yards or grassy fields and forests meet. While edges can be biodiverse because they include elements of both habitat types, there are often detrimental factors for the forest such as increased light, heat, pollution, predators and aggressive introduced species from the highly managed yard/field.
food forest	A diverse planting of edible plants that attempts to mimic the ecosystems and patterns found in nature.
foraging	The practice of collecting wild food, typically in natural areas, consisting of edible plants, fruit, mushrooms, and nuts.
green design standards	Guidelines for development that address both buildings and the land surrounding them that address things like resource conservation, energy and water efficiency, sustainability, connectivity and functionality of green spaces and the built environment, and environmental quality indoors and out.
green infrastructure	An adaptable term used to describe an array of practices, products, and technologies that use natural systems—or engineered sytems that mimic natural processes—to enhance overall environmental quality and provide utility services such as stormwater management, air pollution mitigation, carbon sequestration, and cooling to mitigate urban heat island effects.
greenbelt	The strip of vegetation, typically grass and street trees, between the street curb and sidewalk.

Term	Definition
grow not mow	Typically conversion of manicured green spaces, like lawns, to their natural state. It goes beyond simply not mowing and includes replacement of nonnative vegetation with native plant species. See also "rewild."
infill	Development on vacant or moderately developed land within an existing urban areas. It typically provides additional development density served by existing utilities and other infrastructure. Infill will be guided by green design standards as Burlington continues to grow its housing stock.
LiDAR	Stands for Light Detection and Ranging, LiDAR is a remote sensing technology that uses laser pulses from aircraft to measure ground characteristics like lawns, forests, water, pavement, and buildings.
native plant habitat	An area with vegetation consisting largely of plants and insects that are endemic to the area.
nature-based climate solutions (NBCS)	Tools and strategies that keep and grow out the capacity of natural systems to provide needed climate resilience through storm water absorption, urban cooling, carbon sequestration, flood mitagation and air filtration.
pocket forest	A small patch of woodland surrounded by built environment or unwooded green space.
pocket park	A small, ususally public, green space within an otherwise dense urban environment.
pollinator habitats	Areas of native plants and trees that provide resources for pollinators such as bees, butterflys and other pollinating insects.
rewild	The conversion of developed or manicured green space areas to its natural state, inclusive of native plants.
stewardship zone	Priority areas, typically around core natural areas, for providing information and other resources to landowners and residents to increase awareness about how their actions affect the natural function of nearby open spaces and support best practices on their property.
urban forest	The complete collection of wooded areas, small to large, across all property types (public, private, & institutional) in the city.
urban heat island	The phenomenon where urbanized areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas, particularly in summer. The phenomenon is caused by materials in the built environment (such as concrete, pavement, brick) and relative lack of vegetation.

APPENDIX D:
List of Partners

List of Partners

Abbreviation/Acronym	Organization
CEDO	Community and Economic Development Office
REIB	Racial Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
WVPD	Winooski Valley Park District
UVM	University of Vermont
VHCB	Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
CCRPC	Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
BHS	Burlington High School
NPA	Neighborhood Planning Assemblies
DPI	Department of Permitting and Inspections
WNRCD	Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
VT DEC	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
BLUE	Burlington's Residential Stormwater Management Program
VGN	Vermont Garden Network
ECHO	ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain
BCA	Burlington City Arts
BPRW	Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront
BACG	Burlington Area Community Garden
AALV	Associations of Africans Living in Vermont
NFNA	New Farms for New Americans

APPENDIX E:
Implementation Matrices

CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 1: Expand Restoration and Management City-wide							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 1.1	Develop restoration and management plans for core natural areas. Use existing management plans as templates and work with other organizations to ensure alignment across plans. Prioritize plans for ecological significance.	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	Qualified ecologists	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.2	Inventory current initiatives and projects that support Nature Based Climate Solutions, identify gaps, and outline future initiatives/projects to close gaps.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, NBCS grantees, Water Resources	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.3	Adjust the City's green infrastructure definition to go beyond stormwater management and to include elements such as the urban forest, natural areas, wetlands, and green corridors.	Conservation Board	Water Resources, DPI, City Planning, NRCD, "Friends of" groups	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 1.4	Establish city- and community-wide values and methods for aggressive introduced species management. Communicate in the communications plan (See EX1.3).	Parks Conservation Team and Wildways	State of Vermont, Parks maintenance team, large landowners (e.g. Intervale)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.3
CS 1.5	Update Natural Resource Protection District Map for consistency with Open Space Plan's core natural areas.	City Planning/DPI	Conservation Board, Planning Commission	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 1.6	Continue to restore urban waterways like Potash, Centennial, Englesby Brooks (through partnerships, restoration activities, and regulations like buffer zones).	Parks Conservation Team	VT DEC, Water Resources, WVPD, BLUE Stormwater	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 1.7	*See also in CONNECT: CN2.3. Support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONSERVE Implementation Matrix

CS 2: Support Wildlife Movement and Ecological Health							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 2.1	Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, VGN, Grow Wild	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.2	Increase data collection on Burlington's Wildlife Corridors (e.g. species use, frequency of use, key environmental components) to incorporate in other City processes (e.g. zoning, neighborhood codes).	Parks Conservation Team	UVM, VT Fish and Wildlife, City Planning, DPI, Conservation Board	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CS 2.3	Continue to identify opportunities to improve large forest areas and improve habitat for songbirds and other indicator species.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team	-	YES (ongoing)	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CS 2.4	Create an open-access dashboard tracking key indicators related to wildlife, water quality, and restoration with suggested ways to make progress.	City Planning (provide data), IT Department (set up dashboard) Parks, Communications (maintain dashboard)	City Planning (Data Analysts), Park Conservation Team, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 3: Evolve the Conservation Legacy Fund to be flexible to changing needs							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 3.1	Increase the Conservation Legacy Fund.	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayor's Office, Director of Financial Operations	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 3.2	Review the Conservation Legacy Fund and evaluate expanding the definition of potential fund uses to support conservation goals and values expressed in the Fund's inception (e.g. conservation infrastructure, education, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.).	DPI, Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Council, Mayors Office, Director of Financial Operations)	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 4: Collaborate to acquire land to protect open space for future generations							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CS 4.1	Review and update acquisition list and criteria.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CS 4.2	Adapt strategies for land acquisition for conservation for both public and private lands, reflecting the priorities of the new open space plan and upcoming comprehensive plan.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, City Assessor, Conservation Board, Parks Commission, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 1: Grow and Celebrate Nature-Based Climate Solutions Across the City							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 1.1	Educate the public on Nature-Based Climate Solutions and their value. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.2	Create and support existing education, recognition, and incentive programs to encourage private property owners to integrate Nature Based Climate Solutions and implement sound ecological practices (e.g. reducing lawn space), especially within Natural Area Stewardship Zones. • Celebrate and support Grow Wild initiatives to encourage lawn conversions for native spaces to incrementally replace non-native for habitat benefits. • Use established pockets to disburse throughout neighborhoods. • Potential programs include adaptation of Green Design Standards, expansion of the BLUE program, and encouragement of "Wild Yards" to convert mowed areas to naturalized open space.	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Wildways, GROW wild, BLUE program, Parks Communications	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 1.3	Continue to partner with schools to grow nature-based climate solutions on school grounds.	Burlington School District	Burlington Wildways, Parks Conservation Team, Shelburne Farms	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.4	Create a municipal management plan to track and reduce mowed lawns.	Parks	Parks Ground Maintenance, Parks Conservation Team, Water Resources	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.5	Continue to grow nature-based climate solutions on City property, including but not limited to green stormwater infrastructure.	Parks	Water Resources	-	YES (ongoing)	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 1.6	*See also in CONSERVE: CS2.1. Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant habitats across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 2: Cultivate an Ecosystem of Stewardship							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 2.1	Create a database and listserv of open space organizations to support collaboration, resource sharing, etc.	Parks Conservation Team	Wildways, Conservation Board	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.2	Co-host a recurring open space summit for land stewards, community organizations, and others.	Wildways, Mayor's Office	VCGN, Audubon, UVM, Wildways partners (e.g. Intervale, WVPD, Rock Point, Parks)	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.3	Continue to support "Friends Of" groups near natural areas (including supporting existing efforts and expanding to new groups) and target outreach within stewardship zones.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Communications, WNRCD, Friends of the Winooski, Watersheds United Vermont, etc.	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 2.4	Update Urban Wilds definition, including considering expanding beyond city-owned land.	Conservation Board	Wildways, Large landowners, Parks Conservation Team, DPI	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 2.5	Distribute educational resources about how personal actions can support water quality health in lake, river, and tributaries. (See also EX1.3)	Lake Champlain Sea Grant (BLUE program)	Water Resources, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3

CONNECT Implementation Matrix

CN 3: Enhance and Protect Burlington's Urban Forest							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 3.1	Comprehensively update the Tree Ordinance.	Parks, City Arborist	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, City Arborist, Parks Conservation Team, Planning, Planning Commission, DPI	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.2	Update the urban tree canopy goal and mapping/ data analysis every 10 years. Consider developing specific goals for different types of canopy based on their ecological and heat island mitigation value.	Parks, City Planning, Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis, or similar provider	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CN 3.3	Conduct Pocket Forest Feasibility Study inclusive of existing and potential pocket parks that develops plant lists, identifies potential existing sites, and envisions incentives for establishing pocket forests in new developments, dense neighborhoods, and greenbelts.	Parks Conservation Team	Parks Planning, City Planning	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 3.4	Identify large valuable trees (e.g. specimen trees) in the city that are on public and private land, and consider protection with ideas framed in the policy toolkit from Biophilic Cities network.	Conservation Board	UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, City Arborist, Branch Out Burlington	-	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CN 3.5	Educate the public on benefits of the urban forest and how to manage it on private property. (See also CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3)	Parks Conservation Team	Conservation Board, Parks Commission, Wildways, Parks Communications	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	CN1.1, CN1.2, EX1.3

CN 4: Encourage New Development to Incorporate Nature-Based Principles							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CN 4.1	Develop Green Design Standards for new developments and redevelopments.	DPI, City Planning	Conservation Board, Planning Commission, Water Resources, land owners, landscape architects (?)	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.2	Provide educational resources for owners and occupants in Stewardship Zones to support ecological health of nearby natural areas.	Parks Conservation Team and Parks Communications	Grow Wild, Parks Planning, Lake Champlain Sea Grant	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CN 4.3	Create development review resources to support review bodies in evaluating sustainable/ecological nature-based approaches to development and open space impacts of new development.	DPI	Conservation Board, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 1: Increase Awareness About Burlington's Open Spaces							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 1.1	Collaborate to create and translate educational tools on Burlington's natural history and stewardship story with associated places to visit.	Parks Conservation Team	REIB, Crows Path, Master Naturalist, UVM, Shelburne Farms, ECHO, WVPD, Vermont Folklife, UVM Spatial Analysis, Generator	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 1.2	Create a central calendar that crowdsources events and volunteer efforts around the City. (See also EX1.3)	Parks Communications (with LoveBurlington)	Wildways, Parks Conservation Team	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 1.3
EX 1.3	Create a comprehensive open space communications and education plan to share recommendations of the open space plan. (See also EX1.2)	Parks Communications	City Planning, Park Planning, Wildways	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	EX 1.2

EX 2: Grow Public Access to Nature-Based Experiences							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 2.1	Expand "everyday" nature experiences across the city that give community members opportunities to experience green/natural spaces as part of daily routines.	Parks Conservation Team, Parks Planning	DPW, Parks Communications, Neighborhoods/ individual landowners	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
EX 2.2	Continue to partner to expand public access to nature experiences. Partnerships could include, for example, private and institutional landowners, organizations, and visionaries that promote nature-based work.	Parks	UVM, Rock Point, Intervale Center, other large landowners	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

EXPERIENCE Implementation Matrix

EX 3: Break Down Barriers to Open Space Access							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
EX 3.1	Evaluate opportunities for universal access in natural areas where appropriate and considering ecological sensitivity. (See also EX3.3)	Parks Planning	BACA	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	EX 3.3
EX 3.2	Improve equitable transportation access to natural areas and seek out alternative funding mechanisms.	Parks Planning	DPW, CCRPC	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	
EX 3.3	Regularly engage communities who face barriers to accessing or enjoying open space to identify additional actions to increase use and where to prioritize improvements. (See also EX3.1)	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB, BACA	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways, Trusted Community Voices	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	EX 3.1
EX 3.4	Plan for and integrate different cultural preferences in the use of public outdoor spaces.	Parks Planning, City Planning, REIB	Liberation Ecosystem, BPRW Conservation Team, Wildways	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
EX 3.5	Incorporate language access in educational campaigns.	Parks Communications, REIB	Trusted Community Voices	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-

CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 1: Cultivate Sustainable and Resilient Agriculture Practices							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 1.1	Continue to plan for resilient agriculture strategies in the Intervale as climate and flood risks increase.	Intervale Center	Farmers, UVM AgroEcology, Parks Conservation Team, VT Garden Network, CEDO (with NRCS)	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 1.2	Develop and implement deer management strategies, and track progress.	Conservation Board	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	-	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 1.3	Work with other agencies to educate and share resources on soil health information and remediation, aiming to create a resource similar to Dig Safe to emphasize safe soils for safe food.	NRCS, CEDO	NRCS, Conservation Districts, UVM Extension Service	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 1.4	Conduct a holistic inventory of available lands in City (both public and private) available for potential food production.	Parks Conservation Team	Innovation & Technology	YES	-	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2: Expand Community Gardens							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 2.1	Partner with community and other groups to explore new spaces for community gardens and community agriculture (especially in areas with less vehicle access, higher percentage of low-income residents, and less access to grocery stores).	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	Vermont Garden Network	-	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-
CL 2.2	Track garden plots per capita to establish baseline conditions and evaluate unmet demand. Set and track mid-term and long-term goals for community garden spaces.	Parks Conservation Team	Community gardeners, Vermont Garden Network	YES	YES	Near-term (0-2 years)	-
CL 2.3	Address the need for more community gardens with actions like: • Conduct city land asset study for community garden opportunities. • Document and review process for plot distribution • Proactively work with neighborhoods to identify potential community garden spaces and support with the Conservation Legacy Fund. • Encourage and direct expansion of capacity at existing sites with elements like new raised beds and support infrastructure. • Consider out-of-the-box opportunities, such as rooftop gardens, and innovative practices, such as vertical garden opportunities.	Parks Conservation Team	City Planning, DPI	YES	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 2.4	Incentivize creation of community gardens with new and redevelopment through green design standards.	DPI	City Planning, Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	-

CULTIVATE Implementation Matrix

CL 3: Support the Cultivation of Alternate Food Sources							
No.	Action	Lead	Key Partners	High Priority	Quick Win	Implementation Timeframe	Related Actions
CL 3.1	Plan for food forests, including consideration of tree choices to allow for more community food production. (See also CL3.2)	Park Planning or Conservation Team	Parks Conservation Team	YES	-	Long-term (6+ years)	CL3.2
CL 3.2	Work with the public to facilitate responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging communities. (See also CL3.1)	Intervale Center	WVPD, Parks Communications and Conservation Teams, Rock Point, UVM	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	CL3.1
CL 3.3	Create an inventory of potential food forest spaces and conduct a feasibility study.	Parks Conservation Team, Intervale Center	Innovation & Technology	-	-	Mid-term (2-6 years)	-
CL 3.4	*See also in CS2.1 CONSERVE: Create network of pollinator-friendly and native plant gardens across the city.*	-	-	-	-	-	-

APPENDIX F:
Natural Communities Classification

Natural Communities Classification

Natural Community Group	Natural Community Types
Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest	White Pine-Red Oak-Black Oak/White Pine NH Forest
	Mesic Maple Ash-Hickory/NH Limestone Forest Variant*
	Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak Forest/Rich NH Forest
	Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak/Rich NH Forest
	Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak/Transition Hardwood Limestone
Mesic Pine-Oak Sandplain Forest	Hemlock NH/NH Forest*
	Hemlock-NH Forest/Hemlock-White Pine NH Forest
	Hemlock/Hemlock White Pine
	NH Forest/Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak Forest
	NH Forest/Mesic Red Oak
	NH Forest/Rich NH Forest*
	Valley Clayplain/NH Forest
	Valley Clayplain*
Maple-Green Ash Swamp	Red Maple-Black Ash Swamp/Calcareous Red Maple-Tamarack Swamp*
	Red Maple-Black Ash Swamp/Lowland Spruce Fir Forest*
	Red Maple-Black Ash/Alder Swamp*
	Red Maple-Black Ash/Spruce-Fir-Tamarack
	Valley Clayplain/Red Maple-Black Ash
	Wet Clayplain Forest*
Silver Maple-Sensitive/Ostrich Fern Floodplain Forest	Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern/Alluvial Shrub Swamp
	Silver Maple-Sensitive Fern/River Mud Shore
	Silver Maple-Ostrich Fern
Alder Swamp	Alder Swamp/Sedge Meadow
Shallow Emergent/Cattail Marsh	Fresh Water Marsh
Water	Water
Disturbed Land (Not A Natural Community)	Borrow Pit
	Fill Land
	Gravel Pit
Soils & Landforms (Not A Natural Community)	Alluvial Land*
	Muck and Peat
	Terrace escarpments, silty and clayey*
	Limit of detailed soil survey

**under-represented natural communities in available data*

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Department: Permitting & Inspections Submitter: Scott Gustin

Title/Subject: Open Space Plan

	Approval:	Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	Click or tap to enter a date.
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Concurrent	Click or tap to enter a date.

This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials, and sent with the final submission. Please do not indicate that a signoff was received until it has actually been obtained.

Signoffs Received

Signoff Needed	Received	Date Received	Note
Department Head	Yes	1/5/2026	Bill Ward
Mayor's Office informed and approved memo	Yes	1/7/2026	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission, if required	Yes	11/13/2025	Planning Commission (Conservation & Parks previously)
City Attorney's Office has approved contract and/or legal documents, -Identify attorney in note	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office has approved memo and motion(s) or resolution(s) -Identify attorney in note	Yes	1/7/2026	Atty. Sturtevant
CAO has reviewed budget, financing, and memo	Yes	1/6/2026	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action -Identify HR Manager in note	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if an IT-related investment/purchase	N/A	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Materials Included

	Included?	Note
Final Memo Attached?	Yes	Memo
Contract Attached, if applicable?	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.
Additional Materials, if necessary	Yes	Weblink to Plan and Appendix
Draft Resolution or Motion?	Yes	In the memo
If for submission to Council, are sponsors identified?	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4442 and §4444, notice is hereby given of a public hearing by the Burlington City Council to hear comments on the following proposed amendments to the City of Burlington's *Comprehensive Development Ordinance* (CDO):

ZA-26-01 Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions

The public hearing will take place on **Monday, January 12, 2026 during the Regular City Council Meeting which begins at 6:00 pm in Contois Auditorium, Burlington City Hall, 149 Church Street, Burlington, VT or you may access the hearing/meeting as follows:**

On-line: https://zoom.us/j/99551944677
By telephone: +1 646 931 3860 US
Webinar ID: 995 5194 4677

Pursuant to the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4444(b):

Statement of purpose
The purpose of the proposed amendment is to support greater flexibility within current zoning regulations to accommodate development needs and seeks to correct several errors in the CDO, enhancing clarity and consistency in administration for both staff and applicants.

Geographic areas affected
This amendment applies to all areas of the city.

List of section headings affected
The proposed amendments modify the following sections of the *Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance*: Modifies Sec 3.1.2(c) 11; Table 3.5.2-1; and deletes and reserves Sec 3.5.3; modifies Table 4.4.2-1, Sec. 4.4.2 (d) 3 B; Table 4.4.5-1; Sec. 4.4.5(d) 2 B; Sec 4.4.5 (d) 4 D; Table 4.4.5-6; 4.4.5-7; Table 4.5.6-2; Sec 4.5.6-2; and deletes and reserves Sec 4.4.5(d) 4 C; modifies Sec 5.3.5(a); modifies Sec 6.2.2 (m); modifies Sec 7.1.1 and Sec 7.1.43; modifies Sec 9.1.5; Table Sec 9.1.12; Sec 9.2.10 (~~b~~c); modifies Table 11.1.5-2; modifies Article 13;

The full text of the *Burlington Comprehensive Development Ordinance* is available online at https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPI/CDO Upon request, a hard copy of the proposed amendments can be viewed at the Clerk's Office located on the second floor of City Hall, 149 Church Street, Burlington, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or online at https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPI/CDO/Amendments

CITY OF BURLINGTON

ORDINANCE _____

Sponsor: Office of City Planning, Planning Commission, Ordinance Committee

Public Hearing Dates: _____
_____

First reading: _____
Referred to: _____

Rules suspended and placed in all stages of passage: _____
Second reading: _____
Action: _____
Date: _____
Signed by Mayor: _____
Published: _____
Effective: _____

In the Year Two Thousand Twenty-Six

An Ordinance in Relation to

CDO—Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions
ZA-26-01

It is hereby Ordained by the City Council of the City of Burlington as follows:

That Appendix A, Comprehensive Development Ordinance of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Burlington be and hereby is amended by: amending Sec. 3.1.2 (c), Exemptions; Table 3.5.2-1, Zoning Districts; Sec. 3.5.3 (c), Exemptions; corrects a footnote referenced in Table 4.4.2-1, Dimensional Standards and Density; amends Sec. 4.4.2 (d) 3. B., Senior Housing; deletes and reserves footnote 8 in Table 4.4.5-1, Lot Size, Frontage, Setback, and Lot Coverage Standards in Residential Districts; corrects reference in Sec. 4.4.5. (d) 2. B.; corrects and clarifies Sec. 4.4.5. (d) 4. D.; amends Table 4.4.5-6, Housing for Older Persons and Individuals with Disabilities Bonus and Table 4.4.5-7, Maximum Intensity, Lot Coverage and Building Heights with Bonuses; amends Table 4.5.6-2, Frontage and Activation Standards and Sec. 4.5.5 (c) 2. C., Ground Floor Entries; amends Sec. 5.3.5 (a), Changes and Modifications; to remove reference to Sec. 5.2.3 (b) 10; corrects reference made to Sec. 5.2.6 (d) under Sec. 6.2.2 (m); amends Sec. 7.1.1, Authority and Intent; and Sec. 7.1.3 (h), Historic Marker; removes reference to Adaptive Reuse under Sec. 9.1.5 (b); Aligns table in Sec. 9.1.12, Additional Density and Other Development Allowances; to reflect base allowances amended under ZA-25-02; amends Sec. 9.2.2, Applicability; amends Sec. 9.2.10 (c); corrects a reference to Table 11.1.5-2 in Article 11; amends reference to and the Footnotes 1 and 2 in Table 11.1.5-2, Residential District Planned Unit Development Setback Standards; modifies Article 13 by deleting definitions for "Elderly Housing", "Housing, Senior", and "Senior Housing", adding the definition for “Building” from Article 14, amends the definition for Planned Unit Development; and amends the definition of “Building” in Section 14.8, Glossary; thereof to read as follows:

***

Article 3: APPLICATIONS, PERMITS, AND PROJECT REVIEWS

PART 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS AND ZONING PERMITS

***

3.1.2 Zoning Permit Required

Except for that development which is exempt from a permit requirement under Sec. 3.1.2(c) below, no development may be commenced within the city without a zoning permit issued by the administrative officer including but not limited to the following types of exterior and interior work:

(a - b) *As Written*

(c) Exemptions

The following shall be exempt from the requirements of this Ordinance and shall not be required to obtain a zoning permit:

1. – 10. *As Written*

11. All ~~structures~~ Buildings, as defined in Article 13, of 24 square feet or less and no taller than 15 feet, as long as they are located in compliance with applicable setbacks. This exemption is limited to 1 such structure, or multiple structures in aggregate up to 24 square feet, per property. This exemption does not apply to properties located within the Special Flood Hazard Area.

12. – 21. *As Written*

(d) *As written*

***

Article 3: APPLICATIONS, PERMITS, AND PROJECT REVIEWS

***

PART 5: CONDITIONAL USE AND MAJOR IMPACT REVIEW

***

Sec. 3.5.2 Applicability

(a) Conditional Use Review – *As Written*

(b) Major Impact Review

Major Impact Review shall be required for the approval of all development involving any one or more of the following:

Table 3.5.2-1 Zoning Districts

	Downtown Mixed Use and Form Districts	**Neighborhood Mixed Use, Institutional, Enterprise, Residential Corridor**	**Residential- Medium ~~Density~~Intensity, Residential – High ~~Density~~Intensity**	**Residential- Low ~~Density~~Intensity**	**RCO-A, RCO-C, RCO-RG, UR**
Dwelling Units	Creation of fifty (50) or more dwelling units	Creation of twenty-five (25) or more dwelling units	Creation of ten (10) or more dwelling units	Creation of five (5) or more dwelling units	NA
Land Subdivision	NA	NA	Creation of ten (10) or more lots;	Creation of five (5) or more lots	NA
Non-residential or Mixed Use Development	A development footprint[1] of fifty thousand (50,000) sf or more, or the creation of one hundred thousand (100,000) sf or more of gross floor area.	A development footprint[1] of twenty thousand (20,000) sf or more, or the creation of forty thousand (40,000) sf or more of gross floor area.	A development footprint[1] of eight thousand (8,000) sf or more, or the creation of fifteen thousand (15,000) sf or more of gross floor area.	A development footprint[1] of five thousand (5,000) sf or more, or the creation of ten thousand (10,000) sf or more of gross floor area.	Creation of five thousand (5,000) sf or more of gross floor area[2]

[1] Development Footprint: total area of impervious coverage – buildings and parking.
[2] Farm structures are exempt per 10 VSA 6001.

In addition, Major Impact Review shall also be required for multiple projects undertaken by the same applicant or responsible party within any consecutive twelve (12) month period on the same or adjacent property that in the aggregate equal or exceed the above criteria.

Sec. 3.5.3 Exemptions

Major Impact Review shall not be required for applications involving one or more of the following:

(a) Temporary structures that do not otherwise involve a conditional use;
(b) Rehabilitation that does not expand the floor area of an existing building or the structural capacity of existing development;
(c) Projects that do not result in a change of use ~~or increased parking demand~~;
(d) Subsurface site improvements including but not limited to underground utility lines and subsurface drainage ways; and,
(e) Projects where the scope and authority of municipal regulation is limited by statute pursuant to 24 VSA 4413.

***

Article 4: ZONING MAPS AND DISTRICTS

***

PART 4: BASE ZONING DISTRICT REGULATIONS

***

Sec. 4.4.2 Neighborhood Mixed Use Districts

(a) Purpose – *As Written*

(b) Dimensional Standards and Density:

The density and intensity of development, dimensions of building lots, the heights of buildings and their setbacks from property boundary lines, and the limits on lot coverage shall be governed by the following standards:

Table 4.4.2 -1 Dimensional Standards and Density

Districts	**Max. Intensity** (floor area ratio[1])	**Max. Lot Coverage**	**Minimum Building Setbacks** (feet) Front[3]	Side	Rear	**Building Height** (feet)
NAC	2.0 FAR	80%[4]	0	0[2]	0[2]	Min: 22', 2 stories Max: 35
NMU	2.0 FAR	80%	0[5]	0[2]	0[2]	Min: 22', 2 stories Max: 35
NAC-Riverside	2.0 FAR	80%	0	0[2]	0[2]	Min: 22', 2 stories Max: 35
NAC-CR	2.0 FAR	60%	Min. 0[7] Max. 20[7]	10[6]	20[6]	Min: 22', 2 stories Max: 65'

1 – 2. *As Written*
3. Structures shall be setback a minimum of 12-feet from the curb on a public street.
4. Exceptions to maximum lot coverage are provided in (d)2.
5. Notwithstanding footnote ~~4~~ 3, the NMU district at the intersection of Pine St. and Flynn Avenue shall have a minimum front yard setback of 10 feet.
6 – 7. *As Written*

(c) Permitted and Conditional Uses – *As Written*

(d) District Specific Regulations

1. – 2. *As Written*

3. *Development Bonuses/Additional Allowances*

A. Inclusionary Housing – *As Written*

B. ~~Senior Housing~~ Housing for Older Persons and Individuals with Disabilities

A maximum of an additional 10-feet of building height, and corresponding FAR, may be permitted at the discretion of the DRB in the NAC and NAC-Riverside districts where no less than twenty-five per cent (25%) of the total number of onsite units are reserved for projects including exclusively housing for Older Persons (as defined by the federal Fair Housing Act), housing for Individuals with Disabilities (as defined by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act), or a mixture exclusively thereof ~~low-moderate income senior households as defined by state or federal guidelines~~, including no less than ten percent (10%) reserved for low income households. The total gross floor area dedicated to ~~the senior housing~~ housing for older persons and individuals with disabilities shall be equivalent to the gross floor area resulting from the additional allowance. Increased lot coverage allowance for ~~senior housing~~such projects in these districts shall be the same as for inclusionary housing (see Sec. 9.1.12)

C. Maximum Bonus: --*As written*

***

Sec. 4.4.5 Residential Districts

(a) Purpose – *As Written*

(b) Dimensional Standards

The intensity of development, dimensions of building lots, the heights of buildings and their setbacks from property boundary lines, and the limits on lot coverage shall be governed by the following standards:

Table 4.4.5-1 Lot Size, Frontage, Setback, and Lot Coverage Standards in Residential Districts

District	Min. Lot Frontage[2,3,4,5] (linear feet)	Setbacks[1,6,7,8,9]			Lot Coverage[1,9] ~~10~~
		Front	Side	Rear	
Residential Low (RL)	30’	**Min:** Avg. of front setback 2 adjacent lots on both sides +/- 5 feet **Max required:** 25 ft	**Min:** 10% of lot width or avg. of side setback of 2 adjacent lots on both sides **Max required:** 20 ft	20 ft.	45%
Residential Medium (RM)				15 ft.	55%
Residential High (RH)	N/A				80%
Residential Corridor (RC)	N/A	**Min required:** 5 ft **Max permitted:** 20 ft			80%

1 – 7: *As Written*

8. Reserved ~~For properties in the RL and RM zones with frontage along Lake Champlain or the Winooski River, the front yard setback shall not be required to exceed 50 feet.~~

9. *As Written* - An additional ten per cent (10%) lot coverage may be permitted for accessory residential features per (d) 2C below.

Table 4.4.5-2 Principal & Secondary Structures Massing and Placement Standards in Residential Districts
As written

(c) Permitted and Conditional Uses – *As written*

(d) District Specific Regulations

The following regulations are district-specific exceptions, bonuses, and standards unique to the residential districts. They are in addition to, or may modify, city-wide standards as provided in Article 5 of this ordinance and district standards as provided above.

1. *Additional Residential Development Permitted* – *As written*

2. *Exceptions to Dimensional Standards*

A. Encroachment into Side Setback for Residential Driveways – *As written*

B. Encroachment into the Waterfront Setback

The following exceptions to the required waterfront setback for Lake Champlain and the Winooski River established under ~~Sec. 4.5.4:~~ Article 4, Table 4.4.5-1, footnotes 7 ~~and 8.~~

(i) and (ii) *As written*

C. - D. *As written*

3. *Exception for Neighborhood Commercial Uses* – *As written*

4. *Miscellaneous Standards*

A. – C. *As written*

D. *Additional Unit on lot or within Owner-Occupied Single Detached Dwelling*

Where an existing Principal Structure in any Residential Zoning District contains only an owner-occupied Single Detached Dwelling, and an applicant proposes to add a single additional dwelling unit within the Principal Structure or within a detached Secondary Structure on the same lot as the owner-occupied home, the application shall be subject to administrative review and approval according to Sec.3.2.7 (a) 13, and exempt from paying impact fees, according to Sec. 3.3.1~~3., except where otherwise required~~.

5. *Residential Development Bonuses*

The following exceptions to maximum allowable residential standards in Tables 4.4.5-1 and 4.4.5-2 may be approved in any combination subject to the maximum limits set forth in Table 4.4.5-6 at the discretion of the DRB. Any bonuses that are given pursuant to this ordinance now or in the future shall be regarded as an exception to the limits otherwise applicable.

A. Housing for Older Persons and Individuals with Disabilities Bonus

Residential development in excess of the limits set forth in Tables 4.4.5-1 and 4.4.5-2 may be permitted by the DRB for projects including exclusively housing for Older Persons (as defined by the federal Fair Housing Act), housing for Individuals with Disabilities (as defined by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act), or a mixture exclusively thereof provided the following conditions are met:

(i) – (iii) *As Written*

Table 4.4.5-6: Housing for Older Persons and Individuals with Disabilities Bonus			
District	**Maximum Lot Coverage**	**Maximum Development Intensity**	**Maximum Height**
RL	55%	1.5 FAR	4 stories, 50 ft
RM	65%	1.75 FAR	
RH, RC	90%	2.0 FAR	5 stories, 62 ft.

B. Residential Conversion Bonus – *As written*

C. Limitations on Residential Development Bonuses:

For projects where the conditions of more than one applicable bonus listed above and under Sec. 5.4.8 (e) are met, and where any applicable development allowances per Article 9 are utilized, the applicant may use the most permissive exemption to the underlying lot coverage or residential intensities applicable.

In no case shall any development bonuses and allowances granted, either individually or in combination, enable a building to exceed the maximum development intensity, lot coverage, and building height permitted in any district as defined below:

Table 4.4.5-7: Maximum Intensity, Lot Coverage and Building Heights with Bonuses

District	Maximum FAR*	Maximum Height	Maximum Lot Coverage*
RL	1.5 FAR	50-feet	55%
RM	1.75 FAR	50-feet	65%
RH, RC	2.0 FAR	62-feet	90%

*- or 125% of the pre-application gross floor area or coverage of the qualifying principal building as may be applicable per Table 5.4.8-1 Historic Building Rehabilitation Bonus

(c) Effective Date – *As Written*

***

Article 4: ZONING MAPS AND DISTRICTS

***

PART 5: OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT REGULATIONS

***

Sec. 4.5.6 South End Innovation District Overlay

***

(a) – (b) – *As written*

(c) District Specific Regulations

Table 4.5.6-1 SEID Dimensional Standards & Density *As written*

1. *Dimensional Standards & Density* – *As Written*

Table 4.5.6-2: Frontage and Activation Standards

Frontage Type	Min lot frontage occupied by buildings[1,2]	Percent of ground floor building frontage containing non-residential uses[1]	Ground ~~floor~~level entries required
Primary	80% min	80% min	Every 60’ min
Secondary	70% min	20% min or 500 sq. ft. whichever is greater	N/A

1. Measured linearly.
2. A courtyard on a building façade adjacent to a street or Public Path, with minimum dimensions 12 feet minimum and 35 feet maximum, shall be counted in the calculation of frontage to satisfy this requirement.

2. ***Frontage and Ground Floor Activation Standards***

A – B. – *As Written*

C. Ground ~~Floor~~ Level Entries: At least one ground level ~~floor public~~ entry into a building or interior courtyard or open space, not including service doors, is required each 60’ linear feet along a Primary frontage.~~of each building façade fronting on a Street, Public Path or open space on the same lot~~.

3. – 4. *As written*

****

Article 5: CITYWIDE GENERAL REGULATIONS

***

PART 3: NON-CONFORMITIES

***

Sec. 5.3.5 Nonconforming Structures

(a) Changes and Modifications

Nothing in this Part shall be deemed to prevent normal maintenance and repair or structural repair, or moving of a non-complying structure pursuant to any applicable provisions of this Ordinance.

Any change or modification to a nonconforming structure, other than to full conformity under this Ordinance, shall only be allowed subject to the following:

1. Such a change or modification may reduce the degree of nonconformity and shall not increase the nonconformity except as provided below.

Within the residential districts, and subject to Development Review Board approval, existing nonconforming single family homes and community centers (existing enclosed spaces only) that project into side and/or rear

yard setbacks may be vertically expanded so long as the expansion does not encroach further into the setback than the existing structure. Such expansion shall be of the existing nonconformity (i.e. setback) and shall:

i) Be subject to conformance with all other dimensional requirements (i.e. height, lot coverage, density and intensity of development);

ii) Not have an undue adverse impact on adjoining properties or any public interest that would be protected by maintaining the existing setbacks; and,

iii) Be compatible with the character and scale of surrounding structures.

Existing accessory buildings of 15 feet in height or less shall not exceed 15 feet tall as expanded.

~~Within all districts, and subject to the Development Review Board approval, structures for the purpose of creating an ADU may be constructed on lots with legally non-conforming lot coverage per Sec.5.2.3 (b) 10~~.

2. – 3. *As written*

(b) *As written*

***

Article 6: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW STANDARDS

***

PART 2: SITE PLAN DESIGN STANDARDS

***

Sec. 6.2.2 Review Standards

(a) – (l) *As written*

(m) Landscaping, Fences, and Retaining Walls

Landscaping shall be used to beautify the development site and to provide specific functions and benefits to the uses and buildings on the site. These include but are not limited to stormwater retention and erosion control, winter windbreaks and summer shade, recreational and habitat corridors, buffers and screening of parking areas, and creating privacy for and from adjacent property.

Existing trees shall be retained and incorporated into a landscape plan to the extent possible, and existing trees to be retained shall be protected during construction in accordance with specifications provided by the city arborist. Contiguous green space, both within the site and with adjacent properties, should be provided on a site whenever possible and be designed to provide wildlife travel corridors and habitat preservation, as well as enabling recreational access. If open space is intended to be publicly accessible, it shall be designed to maximize accessibility for all individuals including the disabled, encourage social interaction, and facilitate ease of maintenance. Along the street edge, landscaping shall be used to provide a visual buffer into parking areas from the public street and reinforce the streetscape.

The selection of plant materials and planting sites should create a sustainable landscape, and consideration shall be given to factors such as hardiness, salt tolerance, disease resistance, invasiveness, root and canopy spread, underground and overhead utilities, soil conditions, and microclimates. The use of native plant materials is encouraged, and the use of plants considered invasive by VT Agency of Agriculture shall be prohibited. For more information on sustainable landscapes, applicants are encouraged to consult Planting Sustainable Landscapes: A Guide for Plan Reviewers prepared for the Vermont Department of Forests Parks and Recreation by the Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

New or replacement street trees shall be provided consistent with the city's Street Tree Master Plan. All proposed street trees shall be selected and planted in accordance with specifications provided by the city arborist.

Fences may be placed within the required setback along a property line, but shall be setback sufficiently to provide for the maintenance of both sides of the fence without entering onto the adjacent property and shall present a finished side to the adjoining property and public street. Fences placed within a clear sight triangle shall adhere to the standards of Sec. 5.2.6 (~~c~~d). Styles, materials, and dimensions of the proposed fence shall be compatible with the context of the neighborhood and the use of the property.

Retaining walls greater than 5 feet tall shall incorporate textured surfaces, terracing, and/or vegetation to avoid long monotonous unarticulated expanses and to minimize adverse visual impacts to neighboring properties. As with fences, retaining wall styles, materials, and dimensions shall be compatible with the context of the neighborhood and use of the property.

(n) – (o) *As written*

***

Article 7: SIGNS

PART 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 7.1.1 Authority and Intent

These regulations are enacted under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. Section 4411 with the intent to ensure that all Signs and advertising features:

(a) – (e) *As written*

Any sign or advertising feature not expressly permitted by this ordinance shall be prohibited.

****

Sec. 7.1.3 Exemptions

Repainting, refacing, repair, or change of lettering, logo, or colors using the same materials within an existing permitted Sign frame shall be exempt from the requirements of this Article and allowed without the requirement to obtain a new zoning permit.

The following types of Signs are permitted in all parts of the city, and shall also be exempt from the requirements of this Article and the necessity to obtain a permit:

(a) – (g) *As written*

(h) *Historic Marker:* A non-illuminated sign, either a Wall Sign sixteen square feet or less in size or a Freestanding Yard sign of 14 square feet or less and 12 feet tall or less, commemorating the historic significance of a building or site.

(i) – (j) *As written*

***

Article 9: INCLUSIONARY AND REPLACEMENT HOUSING

PART 1: INCLUSIONARY ZONING

***

Sec. 9.1.5 Applicability

This ordinance provision shall apply to any development of five or more residential units in a single structure. Multiple developments or projects by the same applicant or responsible party within any consecutive twelve (12) month period that in the aggregate equal or exceed the above criteria shall be subject to these regulations.

Except as otherwise provided in this ordinance, these regulations shall apply in the instances specified below.

(a) The creation of five (5) or more residential units through new construction and/or substantial rehabilitation of existing structures, including the development of housing units utilizing development provisions other than those specified in Sec 9.1.5 (b).

(b) Where units are created using the ~~Adaptive Reuse or~~ Residential Conversion criteria pursuant to the provisions of Art 4, Sec 4.4.5, this article shall be applicable when at least ten (10) or more dwelling units are created.

(c) – (d) *As written*

***

Sec. 9.1.12 Additional Density and Other Development Allowances

All covered projects shall be entitled to increases in the development allowances of the underlying zoning district in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(a) Any covered project shall be entitled by right to an increase in the maximum lot coverage density/intensity, and, where applicable, height allowed for the lot(s) on which the project is located when all required Inclusionary Units are constructed on the same lot, or lots subject to Article 11 Planned Development. Calculations for these entitlements shall be based on the following table~~s~~:

Table 9.1.12-1 Additional Density and Other Development Allowances

Zoning District	~~Maximum Units/Acre~~	Maximum FAR	~~FAR/~~Height	Maximum Lot Coverage
RH, RC	~~46~~	2.0 FAR	5 Stories, 62 ft. 12’ height set back 10’ along street facade [1]	~~92~~90%
RM	~~25~~	1.75 FAR	~~n/a~~ 4 Stories, 50 ft.	~~48~~65%
~~**RM-W**~~	~~25~~		~~12’ height set back 10’ along street facade [1]~~	~~72%~~
RL~~, RL-W~~	~~8.75~~	1.5 FAR	4 Stories, 50 ft. ~~n/a~~	~~44~~55%
FD6, FD5	~~n/a~~	0.5 FAR	~~0.5 FAR~~	100%
NMU, NAC, NAC-R	~~n/a~~	0.5 FAR	~~0.5 FAR+~~12’ height set back 10’ along street facade	92%
NAC-CR	~~n/a~~	0.5 FAR	~~0.5 FAR+~~12’ height set back 10’ along street facade	72%
E-LM-SEID	~~n/a~~	0.25 FAR	~~0.25 FAR~~	n/a

[1.] In the ~~RH and RM-W~~ Neighborhood Mixed Use ~~residential~~ zones an additional 12 feet of building height shall be allowed by right only for an additional 5% of inclusionary housing units provided in excess of the minimum requirements of Sec. 9.1.8.

(b) – (d) *As written*

***

Article 9: INCLUSIONARY AND REPLACEMENT HOUSING

***

PART 2: HOUSING PRESERVATION AND REPLACEMENT/DEMOLITION AND CONVERSION

****

Sec. 9.2.2 Applicability

Except as otherwise provided for in Section 9.2.10, this Part is applicable to the loss, demolition, or conversion to a nonresidential use of any housing unit in the City, including those demolished or declared unfit for habitation pursuant to any order, decision or other action of the city's office of inspection services. An example of a loss of a housing unit would be the change from a duplex to a single family home.

The conversion to a nonresidential use of any housing unit located on the ground floor of a building within a form or mixed-use zoning district shall be exempt from the provisions of this Part.

***

Sec. 9.2.10 Exemptions

This article shall not be applicable to:

(a) – (b) *As written*

(c) The demolition, loss, or conversion to a nonresidential use of a single attached or detached housing unit or duplex that is occupied by the owner as his or her primary residence for the twelve-(12) month period preceding the date of application for ~~conditional use~~ approval. Nor shall this section be applicable in its replacement requirement to that portion of a multi-unit building of three (3) units or more that is occupied by the owner as his or her primary residence for the thirty-six-(36) month period preceding the date of application for ~~conditional use~~ approval. Any exemption allowed under this provision shall be void if the owner sells any of the applicable units within twenty-four (24) months of the date of ~~conditional use~~ approval; and,

(d) *As written*

***

Article 11: PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

Part 1: PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

****

Sec. 11.1.5 Residential District Planned Unit Developments.

(a) Dimensional Standards

Unless otherwise stated, Planned Unit Development standards are required to follow the underlying district dimensional standards.

1. A Planned Unit Development with Project Size of less than 0.5 acres and consisting of a Pocket Neighborhood or Rowhouse project, shall be allowed, subject to underlying standards in Sec. 4.4.5(d)1.
2. A Planned Unit Development with Project Size of 0.5 acres or more shall be allowed, subject to the standards established below in Table 11.1.5 -1 and Table 11.1.5-2.

Table 11.1.5-1 Residential District Planned Unit Development Intensity Standards – *As written*

The Development Review Board may exempt Planned Unit Developments existing as of January 1, 2024 from any standard in Table 11.1.~~3~~5-2.

Table 11.1.5-2 Residential District Planned Unit Development Setback Standards

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">District</th><th colspan="4">Setback</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Project Periphery</th><th rowspan="2">Front Internal ROW[3]</th><th rowspan="2">Rowhouse Party Wall Boundary (Lot or Building)</th></tr>
<tr><th>Rear[1]</th><th>Front[2]</th><th>Side</th></tr>
<tr><td>RL</td><td>20 ft.</td><td rowspan="2">Avg. of front setback 2 adjacent lots on both sides +/- 5 feet

Max Required: 20’</td><td rowspan="3">Min: 10% of lot width or avg. of side setback of two adjacent lots on both sides, whichever is less

Max Required: 20’
Min Required: 0 ft.</td><td rowspan="3">0’ Min
20’ Max</td><td rowspan="3">0 ft.</td></tr>
<tr><td>RM</td><td rowspan="2">15 ft.</td></tr>
<tr><td>RH</td><td rowspan="2">Min Required: 5’
Max Required: 20’</td></tr>
<tr><td>RC</td></tr>
</table>

1. Buildings with a footprint greater than 5,000 sq. ft. must be set back at least 50 feet from any adjacent Lot not within the PUD and located in an RL or RM district. However, this footnote shall not apply to the Residential - Special Uses specified in footnote 6 of Table 4.4.5-2.
2. Buildings fully contained in the RL and RM districts with a footprint greater than 5,000 sq. ft. must have a front project periphery setback of at least 50 feet. This footnote does not apply to any building that partially occupies any portion of a lot zoned RC, nor does it apply to Residential – Special Uses specified in footnote 6 of Table 4.4.5-2.
3. Front setbacks shall be measured from the edge of the Right-of-Way that is fully internal to the project, to which the building draws its frontage. Buildings must be at least 10’ from the curb or edge of a public Right-of-Way if no curb exists, except where the ROW is a Public Path, in which case the building must be at least 5’ from the edge of the Public Path.

***

Article 13: DEFINITIONS

***

Sec. 13.1.2 Definitions.

For the purpose of this ordinance certain terms and words are herein defined as follows:

Unless defined to the contrary in Section 4303 of the Vermont Planning and Development Act as amended, or defined otherwise in this section, definitions contained in the building code of the City of Burlington, Sections 8-2 and 13-1 of the Code of Ordinances, as amended, incorporating the currently adopted edition of the American Insurance

Association's "National Building Code" and the National Fire Protection Association's "National Fire Code" shall prevail.

Additional definitions specifically pertaining to Art. 14 planBTV: Downtown Code can be found in Sec. 14.8, and shall take precedence without limitation over any duplicative or conflicting definitions of this Article.

***

Building: Not synonymous with Structure; man-made construction completely enclosed by a roof, window, doors and solid exterior walls, and designed, built, or occupied as a shelter of enclosure for persons, animals, or property.

***

~~**Elderly Housing:** See Housing, Senior.~~

***

~~**Housing, Senior:** Housing that is designed for, and is occupied primarily by, those persons fifty-five (55) years of age or older.~~

***

Planned Unit Development: A development plan for one or more lots, tracts, or parcels to be developed as a single, integrated entity. See Article 11 for specific provisions. ~~One or more lots, tracts, or parcels of land to be developed as a single entity, the plan for which may propose any authorized combination of density or intensity transfers or increases, as well as the mixing of land uses. This plan, as authorized, may deviate from bylaw requirements that are otherwise applicable to the area in which it is located with respect to lot size, bulk, or type of dwelling or building, use, density, intensity, lot coverage, parking, required common open space, or other standards, pursuant to the authority and limitations set forth in the comprehensive master plan and 24 V.S.A. §4417 as amended.~~

***

~~**Senior Housing:** See Housing, Senior~~

***

Article 14 PlanBTV Downtown Code
Section 14.8: Glossary

This Section provides definitions for certain terms found in this Article 14. Additional definitions are to be found in Article 13 of the BCDO.

The following terms, as used in this Article 14, shall have the following meanings:

***

Building: ~~not synonymous with Structure; man-made construction completely enclosed by a roof, window, doors and solid exterior walls, and designed, built, or occupied as a shelter of enclosure for persons, animals, or property.~~ See definition for “Building” in Article 13.

***

* Material stricken out deleted.
** Material underlined added.

City of Burlington, VT
149 Church Street, 3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401
Phone: (802) 865-7194
www.burlingtonvt.gov/plan

TO: Burlington City Council
FROM: Sarah Morgan, AICP, Principal Planner
Charles Dillard, AICP, Director of City Planning
DATE: January 7, 2026
RE: Proposed ZA-26-01 Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions

This memo is intended to provide an overview about the set of proposed changes included in ZA-26-01.

1. Overview & Background

The revisions proposed in ZA-26-01 include technical corrections to the ordinance as well as minor revisions to standards related to the South End Innovation District.

Technical Corrections
In collaboration with the Department of Permitting and Inspections, this amendment includes a number of technical amendments, which are included and outlined in Section 4c of this memo.

Minor revision related to the South End Innovation District
The proposed amendment to the SEID Ground Floor Entries standards addresses a primary challenge that has arisen in reviewing ongoing development plans in the overlay. These entry standards were based on a desire for highly-activated ground floors, particularly those occupied by retail uses. However, local and national trends continue to demonstrate reduced viability of retail and non-residential uses, particularly those in ground floor podiums that are costly to build. As such, the ground floor standards should be amended, both to facilitate greater amounts of private entries into ground floor residential uses on Primary Frontages, and to acknowledge the aforementioned concerns regarding retail viability. Furthermore, the amendment proposes to eliminate the requirement for ground floor entries on Secondary Frontages to extend flexibility to site development and to facilitate marketable residential ground floor uses on these less prominent streets.

Finally, City staff has encountered several site-specific challenges related to topographical and infrastructural conditions that make meeting the current standards challenging. For example, Lakeside Avenue, long proposed as a Secondary Frontage in the first phase of the SECORD project, is approximately eight feet below the developable portion of the parcel. As the ROW width, particularly as it crosses under the railroad, does not accommodate a sidewalk, the requirement to locate ground floor entries along this Frontage is not reasonable. Similar challenges have been seen at other locations in the SEID.

Ultimately, this proposed amendment will increase flexibility in the SEID and allow for much-needed housing within a larger South End that continues to see successful business activity in existing buildings.

2. City Council Ordinance Committee

The City Council Ordinance Committee made the following modifications over the course of two meetings, held on December 5th and 18th:

- Amends the proposed change to Sec. 4.4.5 (d) 2. B. *Encroachment to the Waterfront Setback* by removing the reference to footnote 8, which this amendment proposes to delete and reserve.
- Amends Sec. 4.4.5 (d) 4. D. *Additional Unit on lot or within Owner-Occupied Single Detached Dwelling* to clarify that this housing type is exempt from impact fees.

- Creates a table number and title for Table 9.1.12-1*: Additional Density and Other Development Allowances*, which currently does not have a table name or number.
- Provides an in-text definition of "loss" in Sec. 9.2.10 (c) *Exemptions*.

3. Proposed Amendment: ZA-26-01

a) Amendment Type

Text Amendment	Map Amendment	Text & Map Amendment

b) Purpose Statement

The proposed changes in ZA-26-01 all aim to support greater flexibility within current zoning regulations to accommodate development needs and seeks to correct several errors in the CDO, enhancing clarity and consistency in administration for both staff and applicants.

c) Proposed Amendment

** Indicates changes made by the City Council Ordinance Committee*

1. Amendments to Article 3: Applications, Permits, and Project Reviews

- Revises Sec. 3.1.2 (c) 11. to apply to "Buildings, as defined in Article 13" instead of "structures".
- Amends Table 3.5.2-1 Zoning Districts (Major Impact) to reflect changes made under the Neighborhood Code, including the creation of the Residential Corridor district.
- Amends Sec. 3.5.3 (c) Major Impact Exemptions to reflect the elimination of minimum parking standards under ZA-22-07.

2. Amendments to Article 4: Zoning Maps and Districts

- Corrects footnote reference in Table 4.4.2-1
- Amends Sec. 4.4.2 (d) 3. B. to reflect the changes made under ZA-25-04, including referring to Senior Housing as Housing for Older Persons and Individuals with Disabilities.
- Modifies Table 4.4.5-1 Lot Size, Frontage, Setback, & Lot Coverage Standards in Residential Districts:
  - Corrects a footnote reference in the column related to Lot Coverage.
  - Deletes and reserves Footnote 8, which is now irrelevant given the standard related maximum required front yard setback.
- Corrects reference made in Sec. 4.4.5 (d) 2. B. Encroachment to the Waterfront Setback*
- Corrects reference made in Sec. 4.4.5 (d) 4. D. Additional Unit on lot or within Owner-Occupied Single Detached Dwelling **and clarifies that this housing type is exempt from impact fees.*
- Amends Tables 4.4.5-6 Housing for Older Persons and Individuals with Disabilities Bonus and Table 4.4.5-7 Maximum Intensity, Lot Coverage and Building Heights with Bonuses to include the Residential Corridor District.
- Amends Table 4.5.6-2 Frontage & Activation Standards to reflect changes proposed in Sec.4.5.6(c)2.C
- Amends Sec. 4.5.6 (c) 2. C SEID Ground Floor Entries to facilitate greater amounts of private entries into ground floor residential uses on Primary Frontages, and to acknowledge the aforementioned concerns regarding retail viability.

3. Amendments to Article 5: Citywide General Regulations

- Amends Sec. 5.3.5 (a) to remove reference to Sec. 5.2.3 (b) 10, which was eliminated under ZA-25-04.

4. Amendments to Article 6: Development Review Standards

- Corrects reference made in Sec. 6.2.2. (m) Landscaping, Fences, and Retaining Walls

5. Amendments to Article 7: Signs

- Amends Sec. 7.1.1 Authority and Intent to clarify that signs of advertising features not expressly permitted in this ordinance are prohibited.
- Amends Sec. 7.1.3 Historic Marker Exemptions to incorporate Freestanding Yard signs.

6. Amendments to Article 9: Inclusionary and Replacement Housing

- Amends Sec. 9.1.5 Applicability to remove reference to Adaptive Reuse.
- **Establishes a table number and name for Table 9.1.12-1 Additional Density and Other Development Allowances, which is currently unnamed and unnumbered.*
- Amends Table 9.1.12-1 Additional Density and Other Development Allowances to align with changes made via the Neighborhood Code.
- **Amends Sec. 9.2.2 to provide an in-text example clarifying the meaning of "loss" in this context.*
- Amends Sec. 9.2.10 (c) to remove reference to conditional use
- Amends Sec. 9.2.10 (c) to incorporate the "loss" of the specific residential uses to non-residential uses.

7. Amendments to Article 11: Planned Development

- Corrects typo in the reference to Table 11.1.5-2, which previously referenced a non-existent table.
- Amends Footnotes 1 in Table 11.1.5-2 Residential District Planned Unit Development Setback Standards to clarify that Residential Special Uses are exempt from the requirement of 50ft rear setbacks for buildings greater than 5,000ft^2 in the Residential Low and Residential Medium Intensity Districts.
- Amends Table 11.1.5-2 Residential District Planned Unit Development Setback Standards to indicate that the Residential – Special Uses listed in Table 4.4.5-2 are is also exempt from Footnotes 1 and 2.

8. Amendments to Article 13: Definitions

- Moves the definition for "Building" in Article 14 to Article 13 to consolidate definitions.
- Deletes definitions for "Elderly Housing", "Housing, Senior", and "Senior Housing" to reflect changes made in ZA-25-04, where Housing for Older Persons uses the definition established under the Fair Housing Act.
- Simplifies the definition of "Planned Unit Development" and references Article 11 for specific provisions.

d) Relationship to planBTV

This following discussion of conformance with the goals and policies of planBTV is prepared in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. §4441(c).

Theme:	**Dynamic**	**Distinctive**	**Inclusive**	**Connected**
Land Use:	**Conserve**	**Sustain**	**Grow**	

Compatibility with Proposed Future Land Use & Density

The proposed amendment is consistent with the Land Use and Density related policies of planBTV. As frequently discussed with the Planning Commission, the rise in housing costs and slow pace of construction are some of the biggest challenges related to housing in Burlington. The "Dynamic" theme prioritizes innovative solutions that are environmentally, economically, and socially sound, echoing this amendment's need to support greater flexibility within current zoning regulations to accommodate development needs.

Additionally, many of these amendments are primarily and are intended to clarify for the public and staff the standards and processes regulating development and growth across the city.

Impact on Safe & Affordable Housing

This amendment has no direct impact on safe and affordable housing, except in that it corrects errors and provides greater flexibility and clarity for applicants.

Planned Community Facilities

This amendment has no direct impact on planned community facilities, except in that it corrects errors and provides greater clarity.

h) Process Overview

The following chart summarizes the current stage in the zoning amendment process, and identifies any recommended actions:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">Planning Commission Process</th></tr>
<tr><td>Draft Amendment prepared by Staff
9/18/25</td><td>Presentation to & discussion by Commission:
9/23/25</td><td>Approve for Public Hearing
9/23/25</td><td>Public Hearing
11/13/25</td><td colspan="2">Approved & forwarded to Council
11/13/25</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="6">City Council Process</th></tr>
<tr><td>First Read, Referral to Ordinance Committee, and Warn Public Hearing
12/1/2025</td><td>Ordinance Committee discussion
12/5/25
12/18/25</td><td>Ordinance Committee recommend
12/18/25</td><td>Second Read
1/12/26</td><td>Public Hearing
1/12/26</td><td>Council Approval & Adoption</td></tr>
</table>

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: Office of City Planning Submitter: Sarah Morgan

Title/Subject: ZA-26-01: Technical Amendments and Minor Revisions

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	Click or tap to enter a date.
☒	City Council	1/12/2026
☐	Both BOF and Council	Click or tap to enter a date.

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	1/5/2026	Charles Dillard
Mayor's Office	Yes	1/8/2026	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Yes	1/8/2026	Kim Sturtevant
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Yes	1/6/2026	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

ZA-26-01
Technical Amendments + Minor Revisions

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

2026.01.12

Overview

Amendments proposed in ZA-26-01 include:

- Revisions to existing standards related to the South End Innovation District
- Technical Corrections

South End Innovation District

SEID amendment proposes 2 primary actions

- Clarifies that the ground level entry requirement can be achieved by providing access to a building, or by providing access to an interior courtyard or open space
- Releases Secondary Frontages from that requirement

South End Innovation District

Proposal: Amends Sec. 4.5.5 (c) 2. D. Ground Floor Entries to clarify that the ground level entry requirement can be achieved by providing access to a building, or by providing access to an interior courtyard or open space *(Lines 156-158)*

C. Ground Floor Entries: At least one ground floor public entry, not including service doors, is required each 60' linear feet of each building façade fronting on a Street, Public Path or open space on the same lot.

South End Innovation District

Proposal: Amends Sec. 4.5.5 (c) 2. D. Ground Floor Entries to clarify that the ground level entry requirement can be achieved by providing access to a building, or by providing access to an interior courtyard or open space *(Lines 156-158)*

C. Ground ~~Floor~~ Level Entries: At least one ground level ~~floor public~~ entry into a building or interior courtyard or open space, not including service doors, is required each 60' linear feet along a Primary frontage.~~of each building façade fronting on a Street, Public Path or open space on the same lot~~.

South End Innovation District

Proposal: Amends Table 4.5.6-2: Frontage + Activation Standards to eliminate the requirement for ground floor entries on ***Secondary*** Frontages. *(Amendment Page 7)*

- The current entry standards were based on a desire for highly-activated ground floors, particularly those occupied by retail uses
- However, local and national trends continue to demonstrate reduced viability of retail and non-residential uses, particularly those in ground floor podiums that are costly to build.

South End Innovation District

Proposal: Amends Table 4.5.6-2: Frontage + Activation Standards to eliminate the requirement for ground floor entries on Secondary Frontages. *(Amendment Page 7)*

- Lakeside Avenue, long proposed as a Secondary Frontage in the first phase of the SECORD project, is approximately eight feet below the developable portion of the parcel.
- The ROW width, particularly as it crosses under the railroad, does not accommodate a sidewalk. This challenge makes the requirement to locate ground floor entries along this Frontage not reasonable.


AHEAD




Lakeside Ave
Champlain Pkwy

South End Innovation District

Proposal: Amends Table 4.5.6-2: Frontage + Activation Standards to eliminate the requirement for ground floor entries on Secondary Frontages. *(Amendment Page 7)*

- This proposed change acknowledges concerns related to retail viability.
- Extends flexibility to site development and facilitates marketable residential ground floor uses on these less prominent streets

Table 4.5.6-2: Frontage and Activation Standards

Frontage Type	Min lot frontage occupied by buildings[1,2]	Percent of ground floor building frontage containing non-residential uses[1]	Ground ~~floor~~level entries required
Primary	80% min	80% min	Every 60' min
Secondary	70% min	20% min or 500 sq. ft. whichever is greater	N/A

1. Measured linearly.
2. A courtyard on a building façade adjacent to a street or Public Path, with minimum dimensions 12 feet minimum and 35 feet maximum, shall be counted in the calculation of frontage to satisfy this requirement.

Maintaining **Visual Interest** & **Physical Porosity**

*How can the SEID grow in a way that **avoids large expanses of un-activated streets** without requiring ground level entries on secondary frontages?*

Article 6: Development Review Standards

Sec. 6.3.2. (a) 3: Building Openings

> Window openings shall maintain consistent patterns and proportions appropriate to the use. The window pattern should add variety and interest to the architecture, and be proportioned to appear more vertical than horizontal. Where awnings over windows or doors are used, the lowest edge of the awning shall be at least eight (8) feet above any pedestrian way, and shall not encroach into the public right-of-way without an encroachment permit issued by the dept. of public works.

Maintaining **Visual Interest** & **Physical Porosity**

*How can the SEID grow in a way that **avoids large expanses of un-activated streets** without requiring ground level entries on secondary frontages?*

Article 4: Zoning Districts & Maps

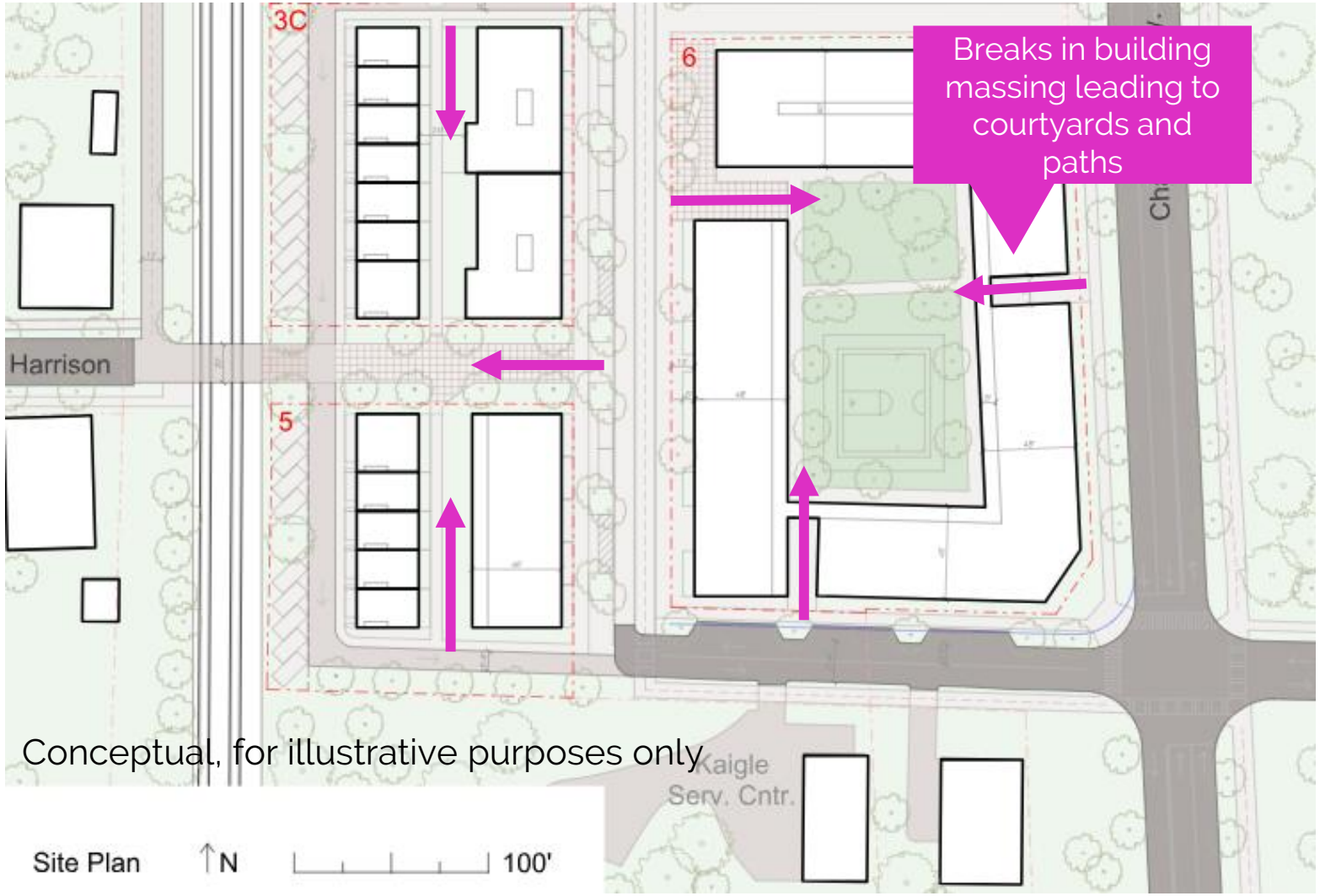
Table 4.5.6-1: SEID Dimensional Standards & Density

Block Perimeter[1]	**Max. Intensity** (floor area ratio[2,3])	**Max Building Size per Floorplate**[4,5]	**Max. Lot Coverage & Pervious Surface Required**	**Minimum Building Setbacks**[6] Front	Side	Rear	**Max. Height**[7]
1,600' max	2.5 FAR	Floors 1-6: 15,000 sq. ft. Floors 7-8: 10,000 sq. ft. *Except as permitted by Sec.4.5.6 (c) 1*	80% max impervious	0' min 20' max[5]	0' min 20' max[5]	0' min 20' max[6]	85'

Maintaining **Visual Interest** & **Physical Porosity**

*How can the SEID grow in a way that **avoids large expanses of un-activated streets** without requiring ground level entries on secondary frontages?*

- The SEID building floorplate standards limit the proliferation of long expanses of building façade.
- Inevitably, this will lead to breaks in building massing that almost always will lead to interior courtyards or intra-block paths.



City of Burlington, VT
149 Church Street, 3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401
Phone: (802) 865-7144

www.burlingtonvt.gov/plan

TO: Burlington City Council
FROM: Charles Dillard, AICP, Director, Office of City Planning
Katherine Schad, CAO
Kara Alnasrawi, Director, CEDO
Phil Lewis, Director, BPRW
DATE: January 12, 2026
RE: Authorization to Execute Contract with Interface Studio for *planBTV: 2050*

Summary
The Office of City Planning and the Clerk Treasurer seek approval of $340,000.00 ($325,755.00 + 4.2% contingency) for a contract with Interface Studio, a city planning and urban design firm, to conduct and lead a subconsultant team in the creation of *planBTV: 2050*, a new unified plan that combines a new Municipal Plan with a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and a new System Plan for Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront. The fourth planBTV: 2050 element is a Citywide Transportation Plan, the contract for which will be held by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). The City is combining these planning efforts to craft a holistic long-term vision that reflects the way Burlingtonians experience the interconnected city in their daily lives. By undertaking an integrated process, the boundaries of each department and 'area of care' will overlap rather than abut. Ultimately, PlanBTV 2050 will provide a unified framework to create a more livable, affordable, sustainable, inclusive and accessible city for all residents. This process will result in four standalone elements that will serve as implementation roadmaps for the respective departments.

The Municipal Plan – currently *planBTV*, is required to be updated every eight years. Burlington's current *planBTV* was adopted on March 25, 2019. As such, the Municipal Plan portion of this contract must be completed in due time to allow for its adoption no later than March 25, 2027.

Scope of Work
The proposal from Interface Studio includes a six-phase process:

- **Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork** will establish a foundation for the planning process. It includes a Project Kick-Off meeting with representatives from the City and consultant teams to discuss project goals, existing values frameworks, roles, and responsibilities. A team-wide exploratory visit to Burlington will introduce the consultant team to Burlington's diverse cityscape and communities, including residents, employees, business owners and stakeholders. Phase 1 will conclude with the finalization of work plan revisions, a community engagement plan and data and graphics standards.
- **Phase 2: Assessment** consists of a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions relative to the Plan's four constitutive elements. The Interface team will document on-the-ground conditions and identify trends and gaps in current City policies and practices. This phase will also include a review of existing plans, capital projects and other major city initiatives, population and growth projections, and a review of potential budget impacts of current land use and policy practices.
- **Phase 3: Vision and Engagement** will concentrate the bulk of the processes' community engagement. While engagement will be critical to each of the other phases, Phase 3 will include the widest range of public visioning activities and will be designed to engage with Burlington's diverse communities in the most effective, culturally and socially appropriate ways. This phase also includes a statistically valid survey and focused collaboration with the City's Trusted Community Voices.
- **Phase 4: Scenario Planning** will allow City staff and Burlington residents to engage with multiple growth scenarios and understand the trade-offs inherent to and resulting from each.

The City of Burlington will not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status, crime victim status or genetic information. The City is also committed to providing proper access to services, facilities, and employment opportunities. For accessibility information or alternative formats, please contact the City Planning department or 711 if you are hearing or speech impaired.

This process will identify a preferred scenario that allocates and encourages 7,000 new homes by 2050 and the evolutions of Burlington's transportation systems, park infrastructure and programming, economic development and climate resiliency necessary to facilitate that growth in a manner consistent with the community's values.

- **Phase 5: Plan Development** will draw upon the previous phases and consist of four sets of draft strategies, one for each element. The strategies will be reviewed and confirmed via a public engagement roadshow. Following this final review period, the Interface team will develop a coordinated implementation plan that will guide decision-making and budgeting and that will specify sequencing, responsible parties, and funding sources for each strategy.
- **Phase 6: Final Plan Production** will result in a cohesive set of four planning elements that will be designed to reach and be compelling to diverse audiences. The final planBTV: 2050 will meet the State's Municipal Plan requirements, as well as those of the City Council resolutions.

This project will be directed by the Office of City Planning, with project management leadership from CEDO, BPRW and DPW. A project charter outlining roles, responsibilities and standard operating procedures has been agreed to by the four core Department Directors, the Mayor's Office, and the Directors of DFA and REIB.

Procurement

The Interface Studio team was selected after a competitive Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process conducted between September and November, 2025. The City received six submittals, each consisting of multi-firm teams. The City conducted interviews with four firms and the project leadership team, consisting of the Project Director and each of the four planning element leads, determined that the Interface Studio team best addressed the multi-disciplinary needs of this planning process.

Interface Studio will oversee the effort and serve as the primary consultant for the Municipal Plan and BPRW elements. The sub-consultant team and their roles are as follows:

- Buro Happold is an international consulting firm that will lead the scenario planning work and support components of each element.
- Ninigret Partners is an economic consulting firm and will lead the Economic Development element.
- Toole Design, one of North America's leading planning, urban design, and engineering firm specializing in multimodal transportation planning and design will lead the Mobility Element. The City's contract does not allocate funds to Toole, though contingency funds are available should they be needed for mobility-related work.
- Smart Mobility is a consultancy specializing in transportation modeling and planning that will support the Mobility element. The City's contract does not allocate funds to Smart Mobility, though contingency funds are available should they be needed for mobility-related work.

Project Funding

The total cost of planBTV: 2050 is $640,000.00. The work will be delivered under two separate contracts:

- The City will hold a $340,000.00 contract with Interface Studio as the prime consultant conducting and overseeing the Municipal Plan, Economic Development, and Parks, Recreation and Waterfront elements. Included in this amount is a $14,245 contingency (4.2 percent).
- CCRPC will hold a $300,000.00 contract with Interface Studio as the prime consultant conducting and overseeing the Mobility element, which includes the citywide transportation plan and strategies to improve mobility access to BPRW facilities and programming. The CCRPC contract includes a $31,000 contingency (10.3 percent).

The City's contract is funded as follows:

- Municipal Plan Element ($115,000):
    - A $30,000 State of Vermont Municipal Planning Grant (MPG), which is matched by $6,400 in Office of City Planning professional and consultant services funds, for a total of $36,400.00
    - A $75,000 professional and consultant services budget in the FY27 budget for the Office of City Planning.
    - A $4,000 balance in professional and consultant services funds in the FY26 Office of City Planning budget
- The BPRW Element is funded via $150,000 in BPRW general funds for professional and consultant services.
- The Economic Development Element ($75,000):
    - A $30,000 State of Vermont Municipal Planning Grant (MPG), which is matched by $3,400 in CEDO professional and consultant services funds, for a total of $33,400.
    - $41,600 in Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) funds, which are in professional and consultant services lines in the FY26 and FY27 budgets for CEDO.

Requested Motion

1. Approve the expenditure of up to $340,000.00 ($325,755.00 + 4.2% contingency) from the sources identified above; and
2. Authorize the Planning Director to execute the contract with Interface Studio for planBTV: 2050, subject to the review and approval of the City Attorney.

Board of Finance and City Council Submission Checklist

Version: April 2025

Department: Office of City Planning Submitter: Charles Dillard

Title/Subject: planBTV: 2050 Consultant Contract Authorization

Approval Requested:		Meeting Date:
☐	Board of Finance	1/12/2026
☐	City Council	1/12/2026
☒	Both BOF and Council	1/12/2026

Instructions

1. This form must be completed by the person submitting the materials.
2. This form must be sent with the final submission of materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Do not indicate that a sign-off was received until it has actually been obtained.
4. Commission reports and presentations do not need to be reviewed by the CAO or Attorneys.
5. Name the reviewing Attorney or HR Manager in the Note column.

Signoff Needed	Received?	Approval Date	Note
Department Head	Yes	1/5/2026	Charles Dillard
Mayor's Office	Yes	1/7/2026	Erin Jacobsen
Board/Commission	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
City Attorney's Office for memo and contracts or legal documents	Yes	1/7/2026	Erik Ramakrishnan
City Attorney's Office for memo and motion(s) or resolution(s)	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CAO for budget, financing, and memo	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Katherine Schad
Human Resources, if personnel action or policy	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.
CIO, if IT-related	Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Resolution Relating to

BURLINGTON UNLOCKING INFILL & LIVABLE DEVELOPMENT (BUILD)

RESOLUTION_____

Sponsor(s): Councilors Traverse, Barlow, Brown McKnight, Carpenter, Litwin, Schachter, Singh
Introduced: _____
Referred to:_____
_____
Action: _____
Date: _____
Signed by Mayor: _____

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-Six…….

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

That WHEREAS, the City of Burlington is experiencing an ongoing housing shortage that affects residents across income levels and household types; and

WHEREAS, the lack of sufficient housing supply has contributed to rising housing costs, increased cost burdens on renters and homeowners, hurdles to recruiting and retaining working people, and constraints on the City's long-term vitality; and

WHEREAS, increasing the supply of housing, including permanently affordable housing, middle-income housing, and housing suitable for families, seniors, students, and young working people is a critical public purpose of the City of Burlington; and

WHEREAS, the City recently adopted the Neighborhood Code, which modernized Burlington's zoning regulations and is intended to enable additional housing development, support neighborhood-scale growth, and expand opportunities for diverse and affordable housing throughout the city; and

WHEREAS, the Neighborhood Code reflects the City's goals of promoting equitable access to housing, supporting climate-conscious land use, encouraging infill and missing-middle housing, and aligning land use regulations with Burlington's adopted plans and policies; and

WHEREAS, despite the adoption of the Neighborhood Code, administrative, procedural, and regulatory barriers remain that may limit or delay the realization of its intended housing outcomes; and

WHEREAS, these barriers may include, but are not limited to, permitting processes, layers of administrative review, review timelines, applicable building and housing codes, interpretation of regulations, and other local or state administrative requirements; and

WHEREAS, identifying and addressing such barriers in a coordinated and transparent manner is necessary to ensure the Neighborhood Code achieves its full potential to deliver additional housing, including affordable housing, in a timely way; and

WHEREAS, the City Council understands the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO), in conjunction with the Office of City Planning, has been working with stakeholders on addressing barriers to housing development; and

WHEREAS, the City Council should also have a role in the evaluation of housing barriers and identifying recommendations on actionable improvements to processes, policies, and coordination related to housing development;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Burlington City Council that within a reasonable time following enactment of this resolution, and no later than its meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, CEDO, the Office of City Planning, and any other relevant designee(s) of the Mayor's Office will report to the City Council on the work it has completed to address the following, among any other identified housing barriers:

a. Administrative, procedural, and regulatory barriers that impede or delay housing development consistent with the Neighborhood Code;
b. How permitting, review, and approval processes may be improved to increase clarity, predictability, and efficiency while maintaining public accountability and safety;
c. Coordination between City departments, relevant boards and commissions, and State counterparts related to housing development; and
d. Impacts of local and state regulatory requirements on housing development, including but not limited to applicable building and housing codes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the above-referenced report to the City Council will also include recommendations on next steps to address identified housing barriers, including suggestions on how the City Council, and its Committee on Community Development and Neighborhood Revitalization (CDNR), will actively participate in this work; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, after receiving the above-referenced report, in addition to considering any legislative action necessary to enact recommended next steps on addressing identified housing barriers, the City Council will also consider whether to act, in partnership with the CEDO and the Office of City Planning, to expand the group of stakeholders participating in this work, including by but not limited to considering the establishment of a dedicated Committee on Burlington Unlocking Infill & Livable Development (BUILD Committee).

Resolution Relating to

BURLINGTON UNLOCKING INFILL & LIVABLE DEVELOPMENT (BUILD)

RESOLUTION_____

Sponsor(s): Councilor Traverse
Introduced: _____
Referred to:_____
_____
Action: _____
Date: _____
Signed by Mayor: _____

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