

Burlington Development Review Board

Department of Permitting & Inspections
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Evan Gould
Geoff Hand
Sean McKenzie
Leo Sprinzen
Miles Waite
Marina Campbell, (Alternate)
Chase Taylor, (Alternate)



BURLINGTON DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 5:00 PM

Hybrid & In Person (at 645 Pine Street) Meeting

Board Members Present: AJ LaRosa, Caitlin Halpert, Evan Gould, Geoff Hand, Leo Sprinzen, and Miles Waite

Board Members Absent: Sean McKenzie, Marina Campbell, and Chase Taylor

Staff Members Present: Bill Ward, Scott Gustin, Mary O'Neil, Kirk Dressing, and Joseph Cava

Staff Members Absent: Collin Naheedy

- I. **Agenda**
- II. **Communications**
- III. **Minutes**
- IV. **Other Business**

1. **Joint meeting with Planning Commission, Design Advisory Board, and Conservation Board**

Discussion of Board and Commission priorities, including the Mayor's recently announced housing priorities and City Council's BUILD resolution.

Sarah Morgan, Charles Dillard, Stella Jordan, Erin Malone, Jay White, Rebecca Roman, and Zoe Richards

Scott Gustin: I am going to let Sarah Morgan open the discussion.

Sarah Morgan: Our team put together a presentation of zoning amendments, new and upcoming, for the next one to two years.

Charles Dillard: We are small but mighty. We recently relocated the Office of City Planning to the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) for efficient collaboration between City Planning and the goals for housing development under CEDO. This creates greater opportunity for engaging with colleagues. The ongoing effort continues with long-term plans for streamlining development in the City. The biggest initiatives include larger infrastructure development supported through policy making to broaden the focus.

Sarah Morgan: To expand, there has been a lot of discussion to expand Planned Unit Development (PUD) standards in pocket neighborhoods. This includes amendments to Burlington's Comprehensive Development Ordinance (CDO) for stormwater, impact fees, and technical corrections. After so many months, fencing revisions in the Downtown Core districts will go before the City Council for review.

Charles Dillard: When people come before us with amendments, at minimum, the process can take four to six months following statutory regulations. The Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (IZO) is the

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City's affordable housing regulations, acknowledging structural challenges in the United States for creating more affordable housing units.

Sarah Morgan: There are many eyes on this amendment for fine-tuning the process to spur future development.

Charles Dillard: The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan allows individuals to move around effectively without the need for a private vehicle ownership. The toolkit in the CDO is quite limited. We are looking at a menu of options. TDM plans need to be extended to residential neighborhoods.

Sarah Morgan: I recommend people participate in the Long Range Planning committee. This is one of three committees through the Planning Commission which also includes Executive and Ordinance.

Charles Dillard: The Vermont Housing Opportunities Made for Everyone (HOME) Act 47 and Act 181 changes the jurisdictional control of land use, commercial development, and housing development under Act 250. These changes make the process more streamlined. The progression of Burlington's land use map will be much more detailed than the State's Land Use Review Board map. The downtown will remain the downtown, but the South End Innovation District (SEID) will one day connect with the existing downtown. Other developments like Cambrian Rise were never intended to be a downtown development, but other areas like the Ethan Allen Shopping Center in the North End may be in the Tier 1 A downtown category. We have far more areas to manage with Act 250, than any other municipality in the State of Vermont.

Geoff Hand: Can you expand on Tier 1 A status?

Charles Dillard: This will not happen before July 1, 2026.

Sarah Morgan: Speaking on color coordination on the map, planned growth areas evaluate areas like parks, and civic sites like schools and churches.

Charles Dillard: The housing target has been pushed below 7,000 new units per year. The fundamental target is to minimize the financial impact on property owners.

AJ LaRosa: If the target is 7,000, have you done an assessment on the impacts of land uses?

Charles Dillard: We have done a housing probe to understand the impacts of zoning on this type of growth. The goal would be 1,400 new units per year. This will take all types of housing across the City. The University's housing needs are also considered in this calculation.

AJ LaRosa: How does it impact?

Charles Dillard: My greatest disappointment is the impact of 7,000 studio units versus multi-unit bedroom units. The three-prong approach will activate the Neighborhood Code to confront the challenges we have control over. Macroeconomics controls the cost and types of construction. We will be a leader in the equitable practice of access to public goods. On January 12, 2026 the City Council adopted a resolution to reduce the barriers to housing to create livable affordable housing units. The need is for a diverse perspective to support this effort.

Sarah Morgan: We are in the final planning stages for Plan BTV 2050 in the North End. This is in addition to the efforts being done in the South End. We have a strong vision statement and strategies to implement this plan. It includes new access hubs for mobility under the TDM plan. In using the

bike path, the North End along North Avenue will become a focus area. Community engagement is a large part of this, working with local community partners including parks and civic institutions.

Scott Gustin: Where is this at in the process?

Sarah Morgan: We are collecting final feedback to be completed by spring 2026.

Charles Dillard: Plan BTV 2050 is a coordinated effort to create an unprecedented citywide economic development plan. It will be highly detailed and coordinated. These plans will move throughout the summer of 2027 for creating, resolution, and adopting. Rather than doing things incrementally, we are focusing on everything all at once to oversee the efforts to manage prospective elements with feedback from all city departments to implement. There are separate phases to coordinate this massive effort through consultant work. A lot of our work is evaluating existing conditions so we can better understand our community. We asked for this specifically for experience and broad community planning for housing, parks, and preservation to better evaluate the long-range goals. The firms doing the work including Interspace Studios, who will be doing work to evaluate community planning and modeling. The project cost in total will be split between the Office of City Planning and the State's Regional Planning Commission. A bulk of the project will be covered by grants.

Scott Gustin: What are some of the primary ways for individuals and groups to engage?

Sarah Morgan: We are developing a City framework plan over the next seven to 18 months to evaluate this. The consulting firms have positive recommendations for how to implement the engaging plan.

Charles Dillard: We also have focus groups and advisory committees to engage in their capacities with boards and members of the public. The creation of the scenarios can be shared with the public for feedback.

Stella Jordan: Please let us know if you have questions on how to engage.

Scott Gustin: We will open it up to Bill Ward to speak on problem properties.

Bill Ward: We have a strong crew of inspectors evaluating the existing 11,000 rental properties and other unoccupied and physically stressed properties. We have put together a summary of the top 31 properties for enforcement. The goal through this work is to make these distressed properties better for Burlington residents. Often these properties are resolved through the payment of fees and permitting to bring these properties back into habitable condition. We work closely with the police department and the fire marshal's office to bring these properties into compliance. The top three issues I look at are how long a property has been vacant and what financial costs are needed to bring a property back up to positive standards. We created a tiered fee structure, which phases out what pushes property owners to come into compliance.

Erin Malone: Can you expand on the vacancy of commercial properties versus residential properties?

Bill Ward: Commercial properties are included with the standards for reviewing residential properties. It is easier to resolve residential properties because there's not as much overhead required as with commercial properties. A popular residential example is 184 Church Street, which has gone through substantial permitting for rehabilitation.

Erin Malone: When does vacancy charges begin for commercial properties like empty storefronts at Cambrian Rise?

Bill Ward: Cambrian Rise is actively permitted, and vacancy rates have not begun on properties like this. We also see changes of use in response to changing times that no longer fit the project's intended use. We are also not just looking at that one business, but distressed buildings as a whole.

Evan Gould: What types of charges pile up?

Bill Ward: This is through the City Attorney's office to arrange a tax sale to recoup the lost funds. Neighbors are elevating this by letting us know about priorities in the community. The final call is the Mayor's decision. The direct result is bringing property owners into compliance.

Jay White: I want to thank you for what you do.

Bill Ward: Often, people are not reaching out because they are afraid that reaching out means they will be required to do more than what they can afford. There are appeal levels and ways to get relief through this process.

Scott Gustin: Are there any questions, comments, or concerns?

Caitlin Halpert: There have been many issues around the restrictive nature of the sign ordinance.

Charles Dillard: Scott Gustin and Mary O'Neil have brought sign ordinance rewrites to us which is due for an overhaul.

Caitlin Halpert: The requirements for tenant spaces above the second floor are very restrictive.

Evan Gould: How is the Historic Preservation Plan folded into this?

Charles Dillard: The Historic Preservation Plan is currently on hold, but it will coincide with the conclusion of 2026.

Mary O'Neil: Our pause in activities was unforeseen, but we are regrouping and will move forward this winter.

Rebecca Roman: I was curious if feedback from Front Porch Forum is being incorporated. I do not want to minimize the housing crisis, but I do think it is not good decision making to develop areas like Starr Farm Park that enhance climate resiliency. I am curious to see how the public input affects this.

Charles Dillard: The city did not decide to develop parklands, but there has been a lot of public input and engagement to reach this type of decision-making. We do not seek to diminish public opinion, but it is easier to have in-person, constructive conversations, than to register online public opposition. I hope folks understand the balance between housing development and the green spaces of Starr Farm Park. We evaluate important community spaces, and replacing open spaces with housing will have generational impact to create new opportunities for housing, parks, and equitably distributed lands. We also need to look at de-paving of some of our areas like along Sears Lane. Our conversations and goals are democratic to inform community members of what is possible through collaboration.

Rebecca Roman: We need to shift the focus to redeveloping existing paved spaces versus destroying parklands.

Evan Gould: Yes, it is green space here, but evaluating the long range planning and goals is also important.

Rebecca Roman: I work all over the state and not just in Burlington.

Zoe Richards: There is a lot of green space infrastructure that we take for granted in the City of Burlington. We map and monitor these areas of the City, so there is not a lot of trade off. There are interesting and low cost alternatives that we are not evaluating. On a positive, the Open Space Plan gives us a context of cost benefits for new development and where it is important.

Mary O'Neil: I like this analysis concept. I did two reports for the Design Advisory Board (DAB) this week and there are few regulations concerning landscaping. I am talking about something with functional and inspirational service.

Erin Malone: There are standards outlined and summarized in the SEID as to green infrastructure.

Zoe Richard: A little more data here would be beneficial. We have increased temperatures with every passing summer. How do we mitigate this process with natural functions moving forward? The Trust of Public Lands works with this.

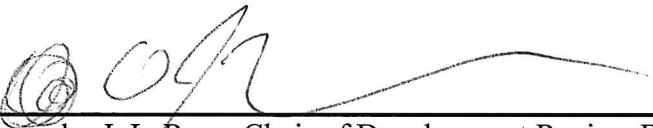
Caitlin Halpert: We need standards that have been developed by experts in regard to factors like lighting for newer development. We need to find standards that we agree on, as they change over time.

Scott Gustin: The lighting standards are very old. They should be updated and could refer to an outside standard such as IESNA but would need to be translated for the homeowners.

AJ LaRosa: Hearing no additional questions or comments, we will close the meeting.

V. Adjournment

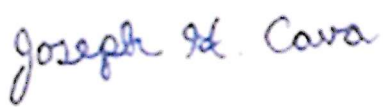
Hearing closed at 6:30 PM.



Alexander J. LaRosa, Chair of Development Review Board

3-11-26

Date



Joseph H. Cava, Permitting & Inspections Permit Technician

2-17-26

Date

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