

Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA):

Agenda

Thursday, May 21st 2026

6:30PM-8:30PM



Join in person: 645 Pine Street (DPW Building)

Join virtually: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89574495720>

Facilitator: FaRied Munarsyah

Note Taker: Laura O'Malley

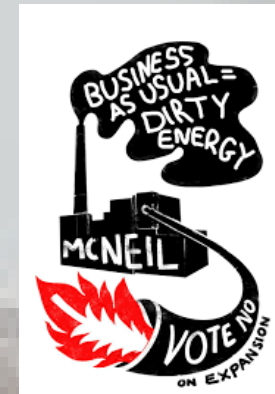
6:30	Community Dinner	30 min
7:00	Welcome & Public Forum, Steering Committee Update <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More members needed–will hold another election	30 min
7:30	350VT Presenting on McNeil	15 min
7:45	DPW Construction Update	15 min
8:00	Sarah George - Chittenden County State's Attorney	15 min
8:15/8:30	Adjourn <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next Ward 5 meeting will be June 18	

Burlington's McNeil Plant: A CASE FOR CLOSURE

A presentation to Burlington's NPAs
By 350 Vermont's Chittenden Node & Stop VT Biomass



SPRING 2026





Bill McKibben
@billmckibben



Burning wood for electricity is a bad idea--the science has changed a lot since Burlington started doing it decades ago. It makes sense to phase it out, not incentivize it



vtdigger.org

Nick Persampieri: Burlington, please vote no on Question ...
The city draws a false contrast between fossil fuels and renewables. Some renewables, such as solar, wind and ...

11:07 AM · Mar 6, 2023 · **7,786** Views

18 Retweets **10** Quotes **57** Likes **1** Bookmark

McNeil Plant Basics

- Commenced operation **June 1984**
- Located in **Burlington's Intervale**
- **Burns wood** to generate electricity
- 50 MW (**largest electricity generator in Vermont**)
- Jointly owned by Burlington Electric Department (BED) (operator and 50% owner), Green Mountain Power (31%) and Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (19%)
- Provides **32-45% of BEDs total power supply** (FY 2015-2023).

The Case Against McNeil Plant

- **Largest stationary source of greenhouse gas emissions in VT**
- **Harmful to health** - particulate matter and other pollutants which leads to or exacerbates health conditions
- **Negative impact on forest ecosystems** and the benefits they provide.
- It **costs a lot**- the power it produces is expensive.
- It's **old** and **inefficient**

McNeil's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

“Burning wood to generate electricity emits more carbon dioxide per kilowatt-hour generated than fossil fuels - even coal, the most carbon intensive fuel.”

-John Sterman, William Moomaw, Juliette N. Rooney-Varga & Lori Siegel, Does wood bioenergy help or harm the climate?, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Vol 78, No. 3 (2022) 130.

McNeil emitted 316,405 tons of CO₂ in 2025 (EPA). It also emits lesser amounts of the greenhouse gases methane and nitrous oxide. Fossil-fuel powered equipment and vehicles used to pull wood feedstock from the forests and transport it to the plant emits additional greenhouse gases.

The Carbon Neutrality Myth

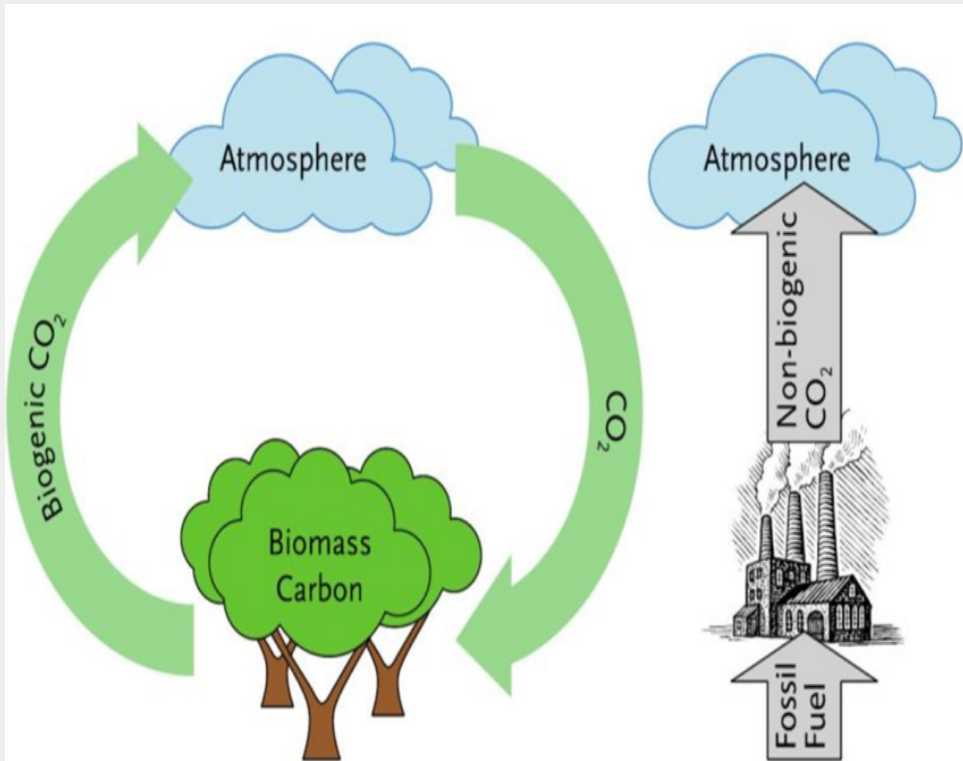
BED claims that McNeil is carbon neutral because BED engages in sustainable forestry and the carbon dioxide emissions from its stack are re-sequestered by trees as they regrow.

This is a myth. When trees are burned the carbon dioxide is released immediately creating a carbon debt which takes decades to centuries to eliminate through tree regrowth.

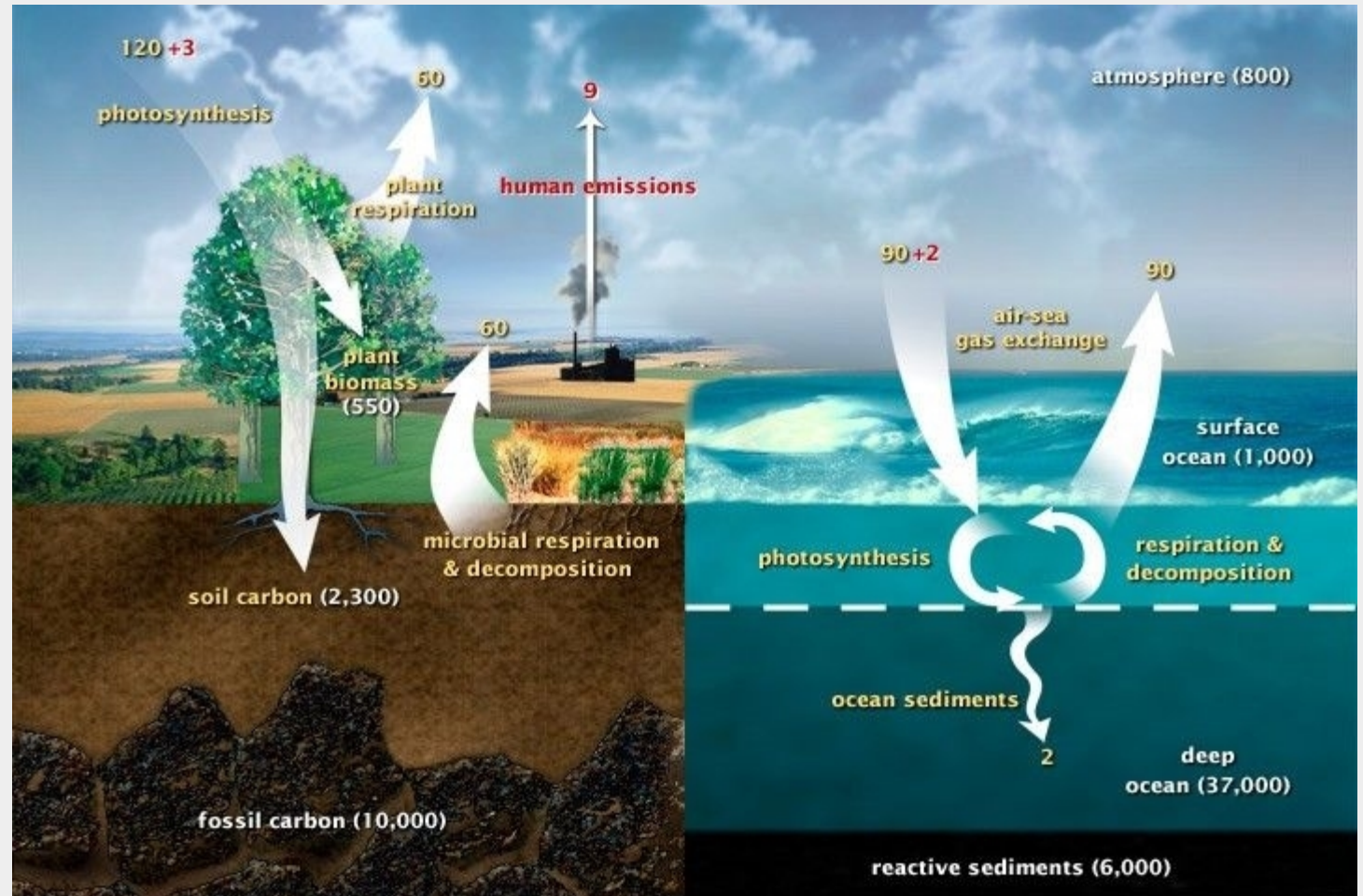
Also, regrowth is uncertain. Harvested areas may be converted to other land uses or trees may succumb to insects, disease or drought.

John Sterman, et al.; EU Bioenergy, Bioenergy Accelerates Climate Change,
<https://www.eubioenergy.com/the-5-issues/it-accelerates-climate-change/>

BED Theory : “Closed Loop” Carbon Cycle



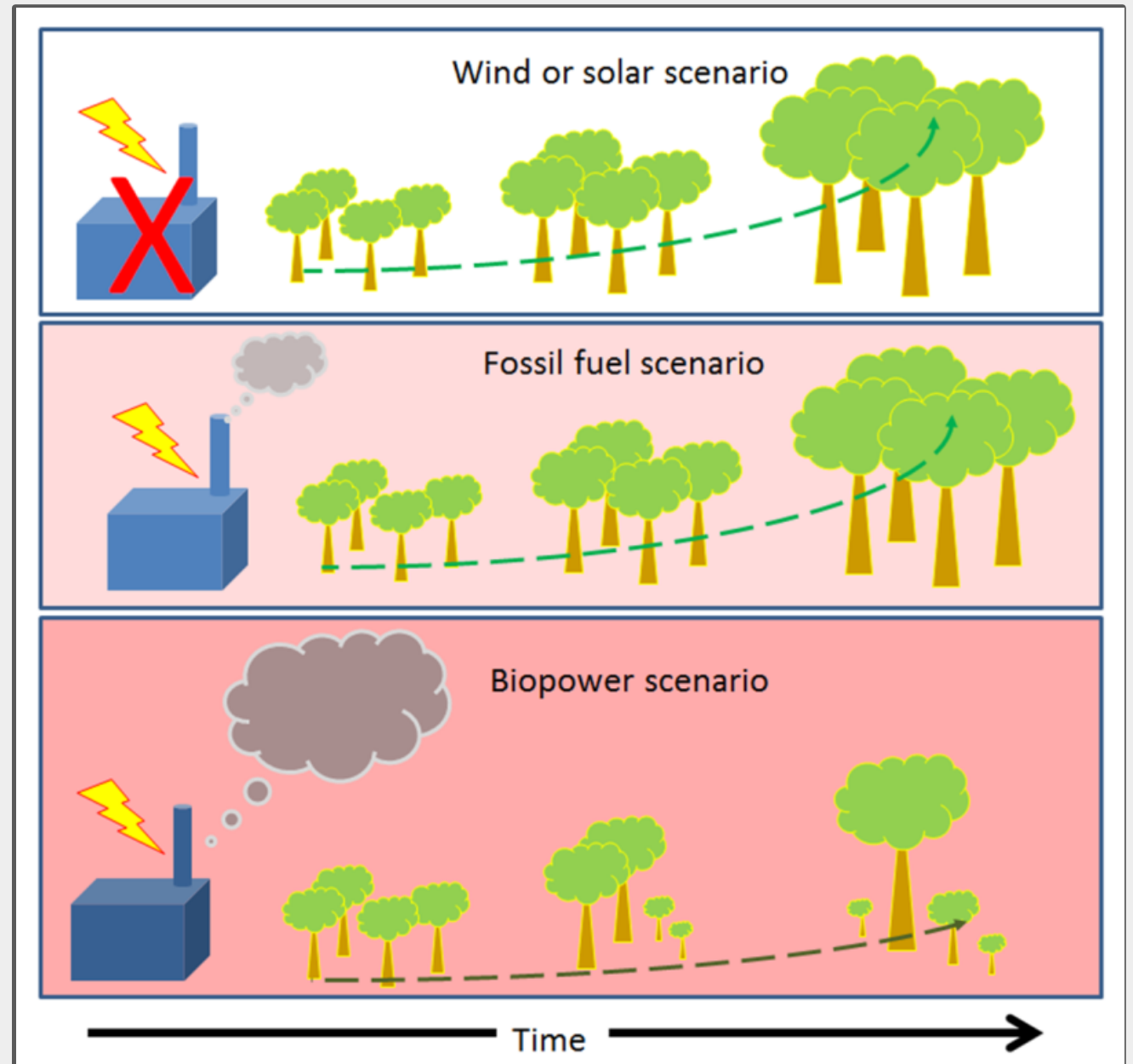
NASA carbon cycle model



Reality:

Wood burning power plants emit more CO₂ per unit energy and also degrade the forest carbon sink.

The result is higher atmospheric CO₂ concentrations.




Ecological Harm

- Burlington Electric claims: “McNeil’s wood supply is primarily 88.4% in-woods chips/residues such as the tops and limbs left over from higher-value wood products, with an additional 9.7% from sawmill residue and 1.6% from waste-wood yard wood.” (Bold added) - *McNeil, Climate and Forestry, BED website.*
- The reality: McNeil’s burns “Whole Tree Chips,” which include chips generated by cutting down and chipping whole trees.

-PUC Dkt. No. 4450, Certificate of Public Good for McNeil, 9/14/81 § 87; 6/22/83 Order Amending Certificate of Public Good.

- **The plant burns 400,000 tons of woodchips per year**

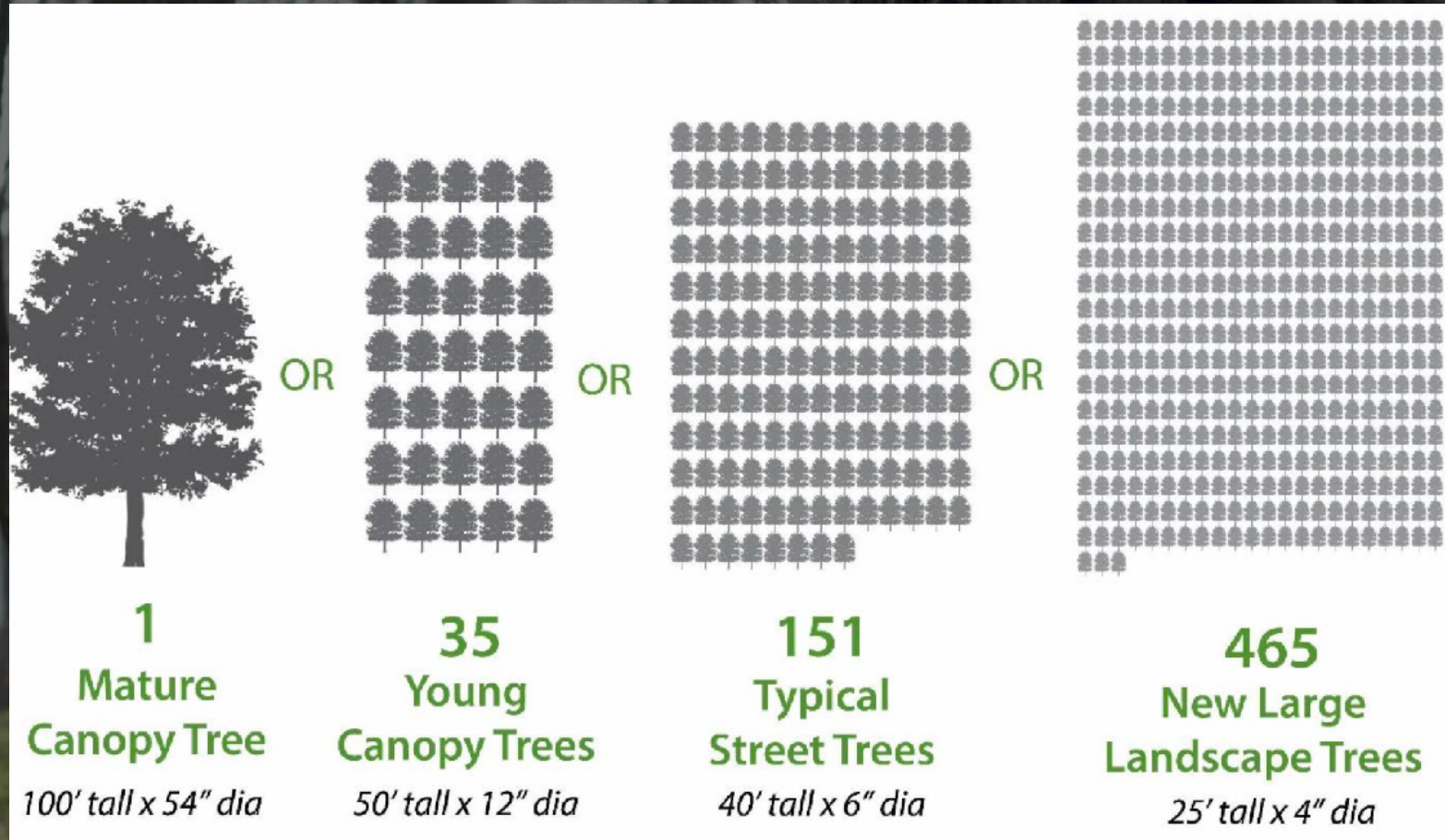
-April 29, 2022 VEIC Summary Memorandum.

A photograph of a forest with a large pile of logs in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image.

This impairs forest ecosystems and erodes important benefits forests provide, including flood protection, & has a destructive impact on forest ecology and wildlife.

Carbon Rock Stars: Large, Older Trees & Forests

How many oak trees does it take to store 8 tons of carbon?





Human Health

McNeil emits **particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, volatile organic compounds, including benzene and formaldehyde, and other pollutants which are known to be harmful to human health.**

McNeil releases these pollutants in proximity to racially diverse, low and middle-income neighborhoods of Burlington's Old North End and Winooski, whose residents face greater environmental risks than residents of other areas.

Expense



- BED Financial statements show that McNeil has generated losses for 8 of the last 10 fiscal years (2016-2025) totaling more than \$34 million over the 10-year period. *(This figure includes depreciation, but does not include interest.)*
- As 50% owner, BED bears 50% of these losses.
- The average real-time price for wholesale power in New England in 2024 was **\$39.50 per megawatt-hour**. *www.iso-ne.com/about/key-stats.*
- Wholesale prices were forecast to **increase to \$55/MWH in 2025**. *U.S. Energy Information Administration.*
- **The net cost of generating power from McNeil was \$96.42/MWH in fiscal year 2025 and \$98.70/MWH in fiscal year 2024.** *McNeil Joint Owners Operating Committee Materials.*

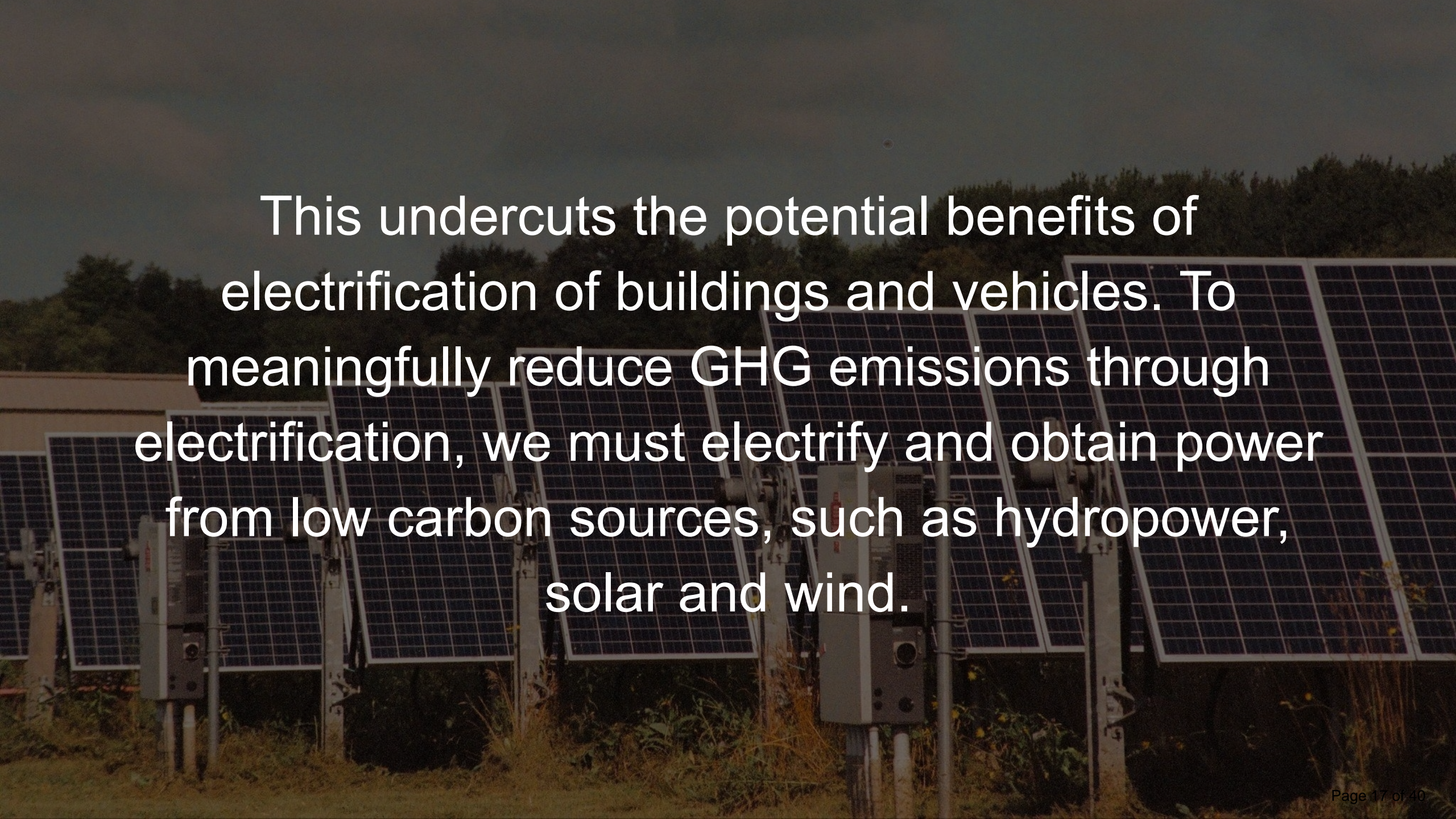
Age & Efficiency of the Plant

- The plant is **26% efficient**. (*April 29, 2022 VEIC Summary Memorandum*)
- It **runs only about 50-60% of the time**, and is frequently off-line for planned maintenance, repairs due to operational problems, or because of market prices.
- BED has invested in capital improvements to extend operation of the 42-year-old plant beyond its anticipated useful life.
- In 2023, BED obtained City Council approval to move forward with District Energy Project which would depend on McNeil.
- Additional capital expenditures are planned or under consideration.
- **BED has planned all of these major expenditures without evaluating whether the plant should continue to operate or whether alternative sources of power would be more effective.**

Flawed Policies

BED has directed the course of Burlington's overall climate policy, leading to flawed policies.

- These call for reducing fossil fuel use rather than reducing GHG emissions from all sources (such as the McNeil Plant).
- The Net Zero Energy Roadmap defines “net zero,” as eliminating fossil fuel use in the heating and ground transportation sectors, yet calls for pursuit of the District Energy Project, which would perpetuate McNeil’s massive GHG emissions to produce electricity.
- The Carbon Pollution Impact Fee is applied to heating systems powered by fossil fuels but not to “renewable” systems and fuels with significant greenhouse gas emissions.

A photograph of a solar farm with rows of solar panels and electrical equipment, overlaid with white text. The background shows a field of solar panels under a clear sky, with some trees in the distance. The text is centered and reads: "This undercuts the potential benefits of electrification of buildings and vehicles. To meaningfully reduce GHG emissions through electrification, we must electrify and obtain power from low carbon sources, such as hydropower, solar and wind."

This undercuts the potential benefits of electrification of buildings and vehicles. To meaningfully reduce GHG emissions through electrification, we must electrify and obtain power from low carbon sources, such as hydropower, solar and wind.

Our Vision:



Advocate!

Burlington City Government Should:

- Place responsibility for development of the city climate policy in a city department or official independent of BED.
- Develop a plan to close the McNeil Plant, preferably by June 2028. The plan should include measures for a just transition to other employment for affected employees, a plan to keep electric rates stable, and ensure adequate energy for future needs.

Actions We Can Take

- **Connect with our city councilors** (email, phone calls, in person conversations).
- Write to Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak.
- **Attend a city council meeting** and speak during public comment.
- NPAs to consider a resolution to send to City Council on this issue.
- **Attend Electric Commission meetings** and speak during public comment.
- **Get involved** with VT 350.org or Stop VT Biomass.

Questions Comments Discussion





DPW: 2026 CONSTRUCTION

Our Mission is to steward Burlington's infrastructure and environment by delivering efficient, effective, and equitable public services.

Chapin Spencer, Director

Cspencer@burlingtonvt.gov/802-863-9094

Robert Goulding, Public Information Manager

RGoulding@burlingtonvt.gov/802-881-2278

WRAPPING UP TWO MAJOR PROJECTS



Main Street & the Champlain Parkway are both anticipated to wrap up in early summer.

Both projects are on-time, and on-budget.

These projects are unlocking the potential for additional housing & commerce while providing enhanced infrastructure for residents

CHAMPLAIN PARKWAY

- 25MPH road
- Connects South End with Downtown
- Stormwater improvements
- Pedestrian enhancements: signals, shorter crossings, new sidewalks



WHAT'S LEFT TO DO

(tentative schedules below)

Pine Street

- Roadway sign installation
- Signal activation (week of May 4)
- Pavement (Main Street) and sidewalk repairs (misc. along Pine) (upcoming weeks)
- General clean up

Champlain Parkway

- Overhead signs
- Roadway signs
- Final Pavement
- Line striping
- Signal timing adjustments

MAIN STREET

- A welcoming gateway into Vermont's Queen City
- Wider sidewalks for pedestrians & commerce
- More trees & gardens
- Enhanced lighting
- Abandonment of ravine sewer

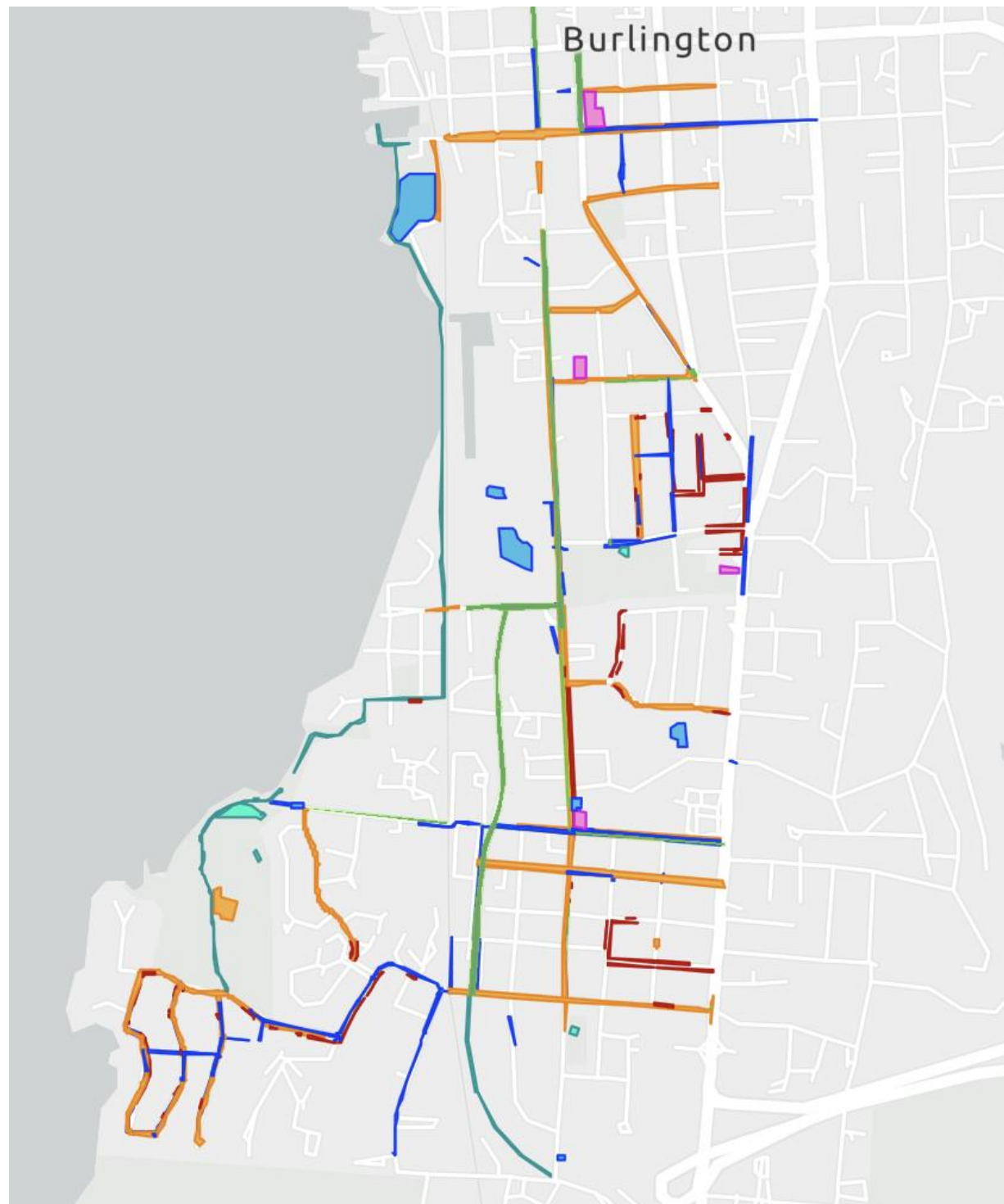


WHAT'S LEFT TO DO

- Sidewalks
- Signals
- Tree plantings
- Paving
- Public Art



A decade of work in Ward 5



*Paving in orange

*Sidewalk in red

Town Meeting Day 2025



3 ballot questions for sustainable & affordable capital investments

		
\$20 million General Obligation (GO) bond to support needed investments in public safety vehicles, streets and sidewalks, city buildings, and parks.	\$20 million WATER bond will shore up critical parts of our drinking water supply network.	\$152 million LAKE bond funds a major and generational overhaul of the Main Wastewater Treatment Plant.

SIDEWALKS

The season has started!

\$1.65M contract + additional work with in-house crew

3.1 miles planned overall – hitting our annual target

Contract largely funded by 2025 Town Meeting Day



SIDEWALKS: developing a workplan

- Developed using the City's 2021 citywide sidewalk inventory
- Prioritizes based on utilization, location, and sidewalk condition.
- Location considers the sidewalk's proximity to schools, neighborhood activity centers, employment centers, etc.
- Resident requests, field inspections, and coordination with other City projects.



SIDEWALKS**

Street	Limits
N Willard St	Archibald St - North St (East Side)
Wildwood Dr	All*
Woodlawn Rd	All*
N Willard St	North St - Henry St (East Side)
Holly Ln	East Side
St Paul St	Crosswalk enhancement
North/Blodgett	New crosswalk
Pearl/George	Crosswalk enhancement
Union/Bradley	New crosswalk

**Short run segments not included above



PAVING



Asphalt plants are open!
\$1.7M contract + remaining work from CY 25
Total ~3.5 miles planned for the year
Largely funded by 2025 TMD Bond
Larger workplan being developed for

PAVING: developing a workplan

BACKGROUND

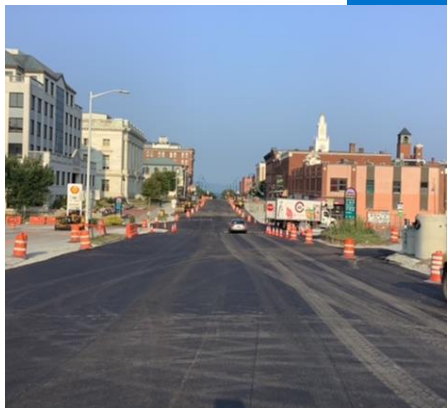
- Street network consists of over 96 miles of streets.
- Classified as Primary/Arterial, Secondary/Collector and Tertiary/Residential.
- Each street type has different anticipated lifespan generally based on average daily traffic volumes.
- In order to keep pace with the anticipated lifespan of the Burlington Street network, minimum target is 4 miles/year.

PRIORITIZATION

- Funding, street condition, street type/traffic volume, nearby projects and resident requests

HEADWINDS

While this year we had our most competitive bid environment in awhile, inflation & fuel prices may eat into available construction funding



PAVING*



<u>Street</u>	<u>Limits</u>	<u>Length (miles)</u>
Colchester Avenue	S. Prospect-Latham Ct	~0.46
Cumberland Road	Entire Street	~0.30
Greene Street	Loomis St-Hickok Pl	~0.11
Park Street	North St-Sherman St	~0.17
Summer Street	Entire Street	~0.05
Saratoga Avenue	Entire Street	~0.35
Rivermount Terrace	Entire Street	~0.30
Bennington Court	Entire Street	~0.05
Scarff Avenue	Shelburne St-Wells St	~0.10
Depot Street	Entire Street	~0.21

Remaining 2025 contract streets

College	Union - Willard
Pearl	Battery - Winooski

*Includes patches on lower North Ave, Lake St, Archibald St, Intervale Rd



WATER WORKS!

Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades

- Stage 0 remains on target for completion this summer/fall. This is a major first step to begin comprehensive upgrades funded by 2025 TMD bond
- Screening & grit equipment being installed at all 3 plants

Water main improvement project

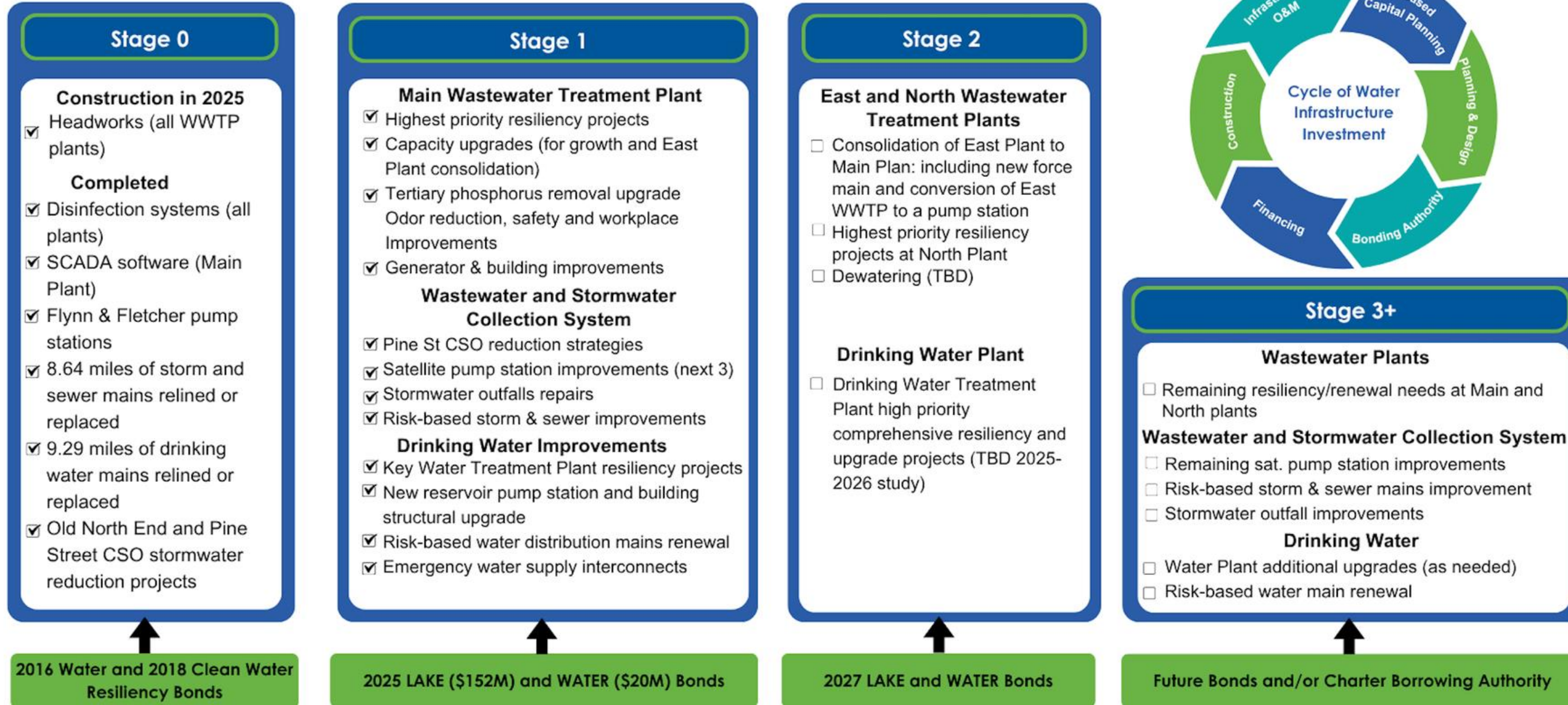
- Includes: Pine St (from S Crest to Home Ave), Summit St (Maple to Main), and all of Bennington Court (coordinated with paving)

Manhattan Ave Stormwater Outfall: late summer/early fall

Water Resources

Sustainable Infrastructure Plan: The 2025 LAKE & WATER bonds

How does this phase of investment fit in with the overall plan?



WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR WATER:



ABOUT US | OUR PROGRAMS | OUR PRIORITIES | RESEARCH | NEWS | EVENTS | RESOURCES | Q



BLUE Stormwater Program

What is BLUE? Lake Champlain Sea Grant is part of BLUE BTV, a residential green stormwater infrastructure incentive program in Burlington, Vermont. BLUE evaluators educate and collaborate with residents to identify opportunities for stormwater mitigation, affect behavioral changes, and establish stewardship principles to protect our waters from cyanobacteria blooms.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure

<https://seagrant.w3.uvm.edu/blue/>

<https://vt.adopt-a-drain.org/>

How to Adopt A Storm Drain | Drain Clearing Tips | Track Impact



We protect our water

Sweep up! Rake up! Pick up!

Adopt a Drain



STAY INFORMED STAY IN TOUCH

Maintenance Requests



See Click Fix:
burlingtonvt.gov/dpw

Construction Impacts



- Front Porch Forum
- Signage
- VT-Alert:
[burlingtonvt.gov/
construction](http://burlingtonvt.gov/construction)

Customer Service



802-863-9094

[dpw-pinecustomerservice
@burlingtonvt.gov](mailto:dpw-pinecustomerservice@burlingtonvt.gov)



THANK YOU