

## VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES PLAN

### Vision Statement

*This Plan envisions Burlington as a city where...*

*...local government recognizes the importance of providing high quality community services, and places at least as high a priority on maintaining and upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure than on new construction. City services and facilities are managed in order to maximize efficiency and support increased levels of development without degrading the natural environment or unnecessarily burdening the taxpayers. The City places a high priority on the conservation of precious resources - energy, water, land, air, etc. - so that they may remain available for use by future generations. Innovative approaches to stormwater management, water, and wastewater services and energy services have made Burlington a national leader. City administrative functions and those that involve direct contact with the public are conveniently concentrated downtown and in neighborhood activity centers. The City works in close partnership within and between neighboring communities, government departments, non-profit agencies and private businesses in order to support responsible growth management in the region, and maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal services.*



## **CITY POLICIES**

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### THE CITY OF BURLINGTON WILL...

- **Make the most effective and efficient use of existing services, buildings, utilities, and facilities before adding new capacity, or initiating new construction.**
- **Coordinate land use and development with the availability and capacity of public services, facilities, and utilities, in order to ensure a high level of service.**
- **Ensure that existing public property, buildings, and capital facilities receive regular maintenance, and any upgrade, replacement, or expansion of these facilities be based on approved standards.**
- **Coordinate utility work - including highway, gas, water, sewer, and electric - to minimize the costs of construction and impact on the neighborhood.**
- **Include the needs of workers and residents, as well as the impact of visitors, in setting standards for service.**
- **Place appropriate fiscal burden of facilities and utilities on the users.**
- **Protect its natural environment - including Lake Champlain and the Winooski River - from damage and degradation caused by public infrastructure and utilities.**
- **Require that all city buildings, facilities, and infrastructure adhere to a high standard of urban design, public accessibility, and energy efficiency.**
- **Concentrate City administrative functions and public services in the downtown to the greatest extent possible.**

## INTRODUCTION

This Chapter of Burlington's Municipal Development Plan focuses on the wide range of municipal services and facilities provided by the city in order to support and facilitate development, and meet the needs of its residents, property owners, and visitors. Burlington's municipal facilities include water supply, wastewater disposal, and stormwater drainage. Municipal services include fire, police, library, parks, curbside recycling and general government services. This section discusses services and facilities provided by the City, including current limitations, potential problems and proposed improvements. The transportation system, electric utility, and schools are discussed in separate sections. Also important to the discussion of municipal infrastructure and services is an outline of the implementation strategies – including funding options and priorities – that is found in the Implementation Plan section.



**Burlington City Hall**

Perhaps most pertinent to this section is the concept of *sustainability*. Without adequate infrastructure and public services, the city cannot sustain its current level of development - let alone increase this level of growth and serve as part of a Regional Growth Center. A lack of municipal infrastructure and capacity will be the greatest limiting factor to future growth and development. This is a key area for further analysis before the City fully embraces a proposal for significant future development and population growth. The City must coordinate land use and development with the capacity and capability of municipal facilities and utilities to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness, and maintain a high quality level of service.

Pursuing a sustainable program for providing municipal infrastructure and services is based on:

- 1. Maintenance:** The City's existing buildings, facilities, and property must be properly maintained in order to avoid costly and unnecessary capital expenses due to neglect.
- 2. Efficiency:** Municipal facilities and services must operate at maximum efficiency towards their respective goals and objectives in order to avoid wasting scarce resources – natural, energy, and human - and public tax dollars.
- 3. Conservation:** The City must place a high priority on the conservation of precious resources - energy, water, land, human, etc. - so that they may remain available for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of future generations.
- 4. Partnerships:** The City must pursue partnerships within and between neighboring communities, governments, non-profit agencies and private

businesses in order to maximize resources and talents, share responsibilities and serve the future vitality.

## Municipal Water Supply System

Burlington's drinking water comes directly from Lake Champlain. The city's water distribution system includes the Water Treatment Facility located on the downtown waterfront, the Main Street Reservoir, two water tanks, and a pipe distribution system. The Hill Section, Fletcher Allen Hospital, and UVM, because of their elevation, are served by two high water tanks. This area is called the high service area. The rest of the city is in the low service area, served by the Main Street 7-million-gallon reservoir. The Dept. of Public Works serves more than 40,000 people with more than 10,000 water service connections.



Currently the City's water rates are among the highest in the region. This is due in part to an assessment based on wastewater flows, and coupled with the debt burden on recent, but long overdue, improvements to the wastewater system. Stabilization of water rates remains a high priority for the City. Future efforts to improve the municipal water system must focus on the rate structure in addition to capacity and efficiency improvements.

### SYSTEM CAPACITY

In 1984, the capacity of the water system was expanded to 18 million gallons per day (MGPD). However, peak demand has never actually exceeded 12 MGPD, and Burlington's water system typically operates at less than one-third of its total capacity. This could easily change should the city see the significant growth it desires over the next 20 to 30 years.

Burlington has explored ways to use some of this remaining capacity in order to moderate water rates. The Department of Public Works has entered into an agreement with Burlington Electric to investigate the feasibility of providing district-wide heating and cooling to the urban waterfront and hill sections of the City. If viable, such a utility would utilize some of the water system's excess capacity, provide an alternative source of energy, and help lower water rates throughout the City. (Additional discussion of District Heating & Cooling is found in the *Energy Section* of this Plan.) One other option under discussion has been selling water to neighboring communities or the Champlain Water District, in order to help stabilize water rates for city users. Colchester Fire District #2 has purchased wholesale water from the City since 1965. This contract was recently extended to 2010.

Before entering into additional long-term water agreements, the City must first address two important issues – first, will the city have the capacity necessary to accommodate

future levels of growth, and secondly, how might the sale of Burlington’s excess capacity influence growth and development patterns within the region. Adjacent communities and water systems are encouraged to utilize Burlington’s excess capacity before building new treatment facilities, but only to the extent that it helps concentrate development within core growth areas. Burlington’s excess water capacity must not be used to contribute to suburban sprawl, but instead should be used to support a more concentrated development pattern.

**DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM NEEDS**

Nearly all of the city is served by the current distribution system, and no large extensions to the service area are contemplated. However, deficiencies in the water storage system pose potential problems during fire-fighting operations that draw large volumes of water. In addition, while several water pipes have been replaced over the years, the distribution system in the downtown continues to use some of the original pipes laid in the 1800’s. Many of these pipes are very brittle. This problem is most evident during the winter months when sections freeze and breaks occur, and play a role in restricting adequate fire flows.

The City currently does what it can to respond to the breaks as they occur, and replace as much of the pipe as money and time will allow. While this is not the most effective and efficient approach, the wholesale repair and replacement of decrepit sections of the water distribution system will prove expensive, and will be disruptive to daily activities downtown. Cost estimates for a system-wide upgrade approach \$30 million. Efforts to solve this problem must be coordinated with other planned construction activities in the right-of-way in an effort to save excavation costs and minimize disruption to businesses, public services, and the streetscape.

**Municipal Wastewater System**

The municipal wastewater system serves nearly 98% of the city. The wastewater treatment system includes a collection system of pipes under the streets, 23 pumping stations, and 3 treatment plants - the Main Plant at the foot of Maple Street, the East Plant on Riverside Avenue and the North Plant off North Avenue Extension.

**SYSTEM CAPACITY**

In 1991, the City completed a \$52 million wastewater improvement program to expand capacity, separate storm and sanitary sewer systems, and upgrade treatment systems. Capacity at the Main and East Treatment Facilities were expanded by 1.3 million gallons per day (MGD) and 0.2 MGD respectively.

	Main	North	East
Permitted Capacity (MGD)	5.3	2.0	1.0
Reserve Capacity (MGD)	0.600	0.912	0.236

Reserve (%)	11.3	46.0	24.0
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Wastewater capacity – particularly at the Main Plant serving the downtown area - however may be a central factor in constraining potential growth. While the 1991 expansion should help the city serve a total population of more than 60,000 people, the location of these users in relation to the capacity of the respective treatment facility may prove to be the constriction point. Additionally, federal regulations regarding the treatment of combined sewer flows may also limit the capacity at the Main Treatment Facility, and ultimately growth, in the city’s central service area. This will be one of the most important issues for the city to evaluate as it contemplates the pace and location of future development.

*Sludge* is a by-product of the sewage treatment process. Presently, the City participates in a regional Biosolids Processing Facility where de-watered sludge is converted for use as a fertilizer. The City is supporting other communities in the region by de-watering their sludge prior to it being sent to the Regional Treatment Facility. In addition, Burlington currently treats leachate collected at the Regional Disposal Facilities in Williston. Both are examples of regionalization and sharing of services and infrastructure that protect the environment, save resources, and keep down costs.

**STORMWATER RUNOFF**

In the past, sewer overflows during storm events have discharged directly into Lake Champlain without treatment, and basements in certain parts of the city have flooded. As part of the wastewater system improvements, the City separated combined storm and wastewater in the northern and southern sections of the city. However, because of dense development downtown, that portion of the system remains combined. To compensate, the capacity of the Main Treatment Facility was significantly expanded to treat stormwater runoff in addition to the normal sewer flows. While this was an expensive solution, in the end it may prove to be the most effective in terms of improving the water quality in the lake – the City’s, and many other community’s, source of drinking water.

Still, untreated stormwater continues to enter Lake Champlain directly and via the Winooski River and Englesby Brook. The quality of stormwater runoff is a serious problem. Many toxic substances are used on our streets, lawns and in our cars. Polluted runoff is now widely recognized by environmental scientists and regulators as the single largest threat to water quality in the United States. Phosphorus has been identified as the greatest water quality threat to Lake Champlain. Within the Champlain basin, urban land produces approximately 18% of the average annual nonpoint source phosphorus load to the Lake - much more phosphorus per unit area than either agricultural or forested land (Lake Champlain Basin Program, 1996).

As the city's surface area becomes increasingly paved and otherwise impermeable, the natural filtration process decreases. Natural cover plays an important role in reducing the amount of pollutants entering surface waters. Soils filter out many types of contaminants; grasses and ground cover slow the flow of water, allowing sediment to settle; trees reduce siltation by stabilizing soil along stream banks and hillsides, and slowing the force of precipitation as it reaches the ground. Unlike most overland flow, water entering the

stormwater system in an urban area does not have the benefit of being filtered through vegetative buffers. Each rainfall flushes pollutants from streets and yards into the stormwater collection system that are then transported directly into the lake or river. Although costs may be significant, the City must consider treating stormwater that it collects in the stormwater system, and continue to mandate that developments install and maintain on-site systems to collect and treat surface runoff outside of the downtown area.

## **Solid Waste**

As throughout Vermont and elsewhere, Burlington has a growing solid waste crisis. City residents discard approximately 31,000 tons of trash a year.

### **REGIONAL MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL**

Due to environmental impacts, shrinking land resources, and public opposition, it has become increasingly difficult and costly to properly dispose of solid waste. Burlington's own landfill on Manhattan Drive closed in 1989, as did a small lined landfill in Colchester in 1992. The City continues to maintain responsibility for monitoring these sites for possible groundwater contamination.

Recognizing that solid waste management is a regional issue, Burlington is a member of the Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD). The District recently closed a regional lined landfill in Williston and has been attempting to develop another site for several years. Long-term disposal remains a very volatile issue that must be resolved. Other regional solid waste management facilities that Burlington benefits from include a Biosolids Processing Facility for sludge, a Materials Recovery Facility for commingled recyclables, an Environmental Depot for household hazardous wastes, and composting and a Wood/Yard Waste Depot on the Intervale.

### **CURBSIDE PICK-UP AND RECYCLING**

Residential solid waste is picked-up at the curbside by private haulers. Residential, commercial, and institutional landowners must make their own arrangements for waste pick-up. While this generally has proven to be effective, there is no cooperation between haulers to coordinate pick-up days, resulting in an over-abundance of trucks on residential streets. One alternative to the present system to be considered would be to franchise haulers within the City. The Department of Public Works believes this would better coordinate service, reduce truck traffic in the neighborhoods, and may provide an overall cost savings to individual property owners.

In order to reduce the waste stream and make better use of resources, the City operates its own recycling program through the Department of Public Works. The program is funded by a Solid Waste Generation Tax assessed on each hauler. The program was first piloted in 1991 with a waste reduction goal of 2%. Burlington was recognized in 1994 by the US Conference of Mayors for a waste diversion rate of 41% - exceeding a statewide goal of 40% by 2000. In FY1995, the City collected 2.886 tons of recycled material - nearly 385 pounds per household, and a 20% increase over the previous year.

Beyond recycling, Burlington must continue to find ways to decrease the volume of trash produced. This includes reducing packaging, and stimulating the recycled goods' market through purchasing policies. Closer to home, the City could increase its use of recycled paper in offices, use less paper, and use it more than once. It could also discourage the use of disposable goods such as plastic utensils.

## Public Safety

### POLICING SERVICES

As Burlington has grown over the years, public safety has become an increasingly important concern. The Burlington Police Department meets national standards, which recommend two officers per 1,000 residents. As the city grows, so do the demands on the police department. However, because Burlington serves as a regional growth center - providing many services unrelated to residential uses - the police force must also be capable of meeting a wider range of nonresident demands.



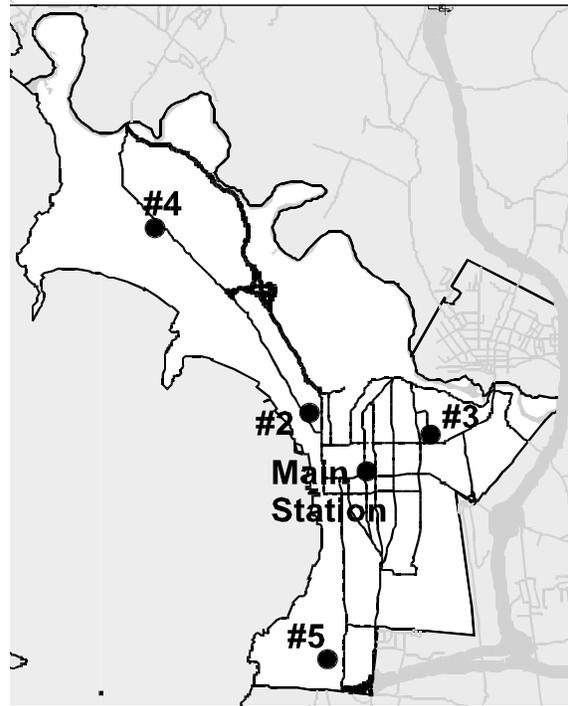
In 1990, the Burlington Police Department began a Community-Based Policing Program. Community-Based Policing recognizes that the sole responsibility for protection and law enforcement cannot rest with the Police Department. By placing officers directly into the neighborhoods, a greater familiarity develops between the police and the residents. The officers then serve as facilitators, allowing the citizens to accept more responsibility for keeping their neighborhoods safe, and are available as a resource when incidents occur.

In 1998, the Department shifted from a single Community Policing Unit to a total community policing philosophy. Teams of supervisors and patrol officers have been assigned to geographic areas of the city. These teams work closely with Americorps\*VISTA members serving with the Public Safety Project to relay community concerns to the Department, and develop creative strategies with active citizen members. This shift is an important component to enhancing the vitality of our neighborhoods as attractive and safe places to live, and facilitating their individual sense of community.

The Department continues to struggle with providing adequate service to some of the city's most active places due primarily to financial constraints. Maintaining a visible police presence on the Church Street Marketplace, downtown waterfront and city beaches and parks has long been a goal. Three approaches to achieving this goal include the re-establishment of a Beaches and Parks Unit, creation of an outpost station in the heart of the Marketplace, and placing more officers on bicycle patrol. Each will improve the visibility and mobility of the police officers, and make them more approachable and accessible to the public. Finally, the role of the Police Department in providing services in the Harbor should be explored in collaboration with the Burlington Harbor Master, the VT State Police, and the US Coast Guard. Clearer lines of jurisdiction and responsibility must be developed in order to meet the growing needs of the harbor and its users.

### FIRE & AMBULANCE SERVICES

The Burlington Fire Department is housed in five stations located throughout the City. The Department has expanded stations on North Avenue, Ferguson Avenue and Central Station within the past 15 years, and has completed a historic preservation project at Station #3 on Mansfield Ave. to correct structural deficiencies and make facade improvements. The Department has also completed equipping each of its stations with exhaust ventilation systems. Major repairs and rehabilitation to the Central Fire Station on South Winooski Ave. remain however. The Department operates six engines, a 95-foot aerial tower truck, and three ambulances. A boat to assist with emergencies on the lake remains a future equipment need as the downtown waterfront continues to develop. The Department has recently begun staffing a second ambulance to serve the city. Future vehicles should be the smallest possible to meet the need of a given area.



Burlington Fire Stations

In addition to fighting fires, the Fire Department provides fire investigation, community outreach, and emergency medical services. In the last year, firefighters responded to 5,351 requests for fire and emergency medical assistance, and performed 833 fire safety inspections. 3,887 of these call were for medical emergencies with over 800 requiring some level of advanced emergency medial care.

Fire department officials believe they have adequate facilities and equipment with which to fight fires as long as building heights do not increase significantly beyond the current maximum heights. Fire prevention is however, the most important concern. Newer structures, equipped with sprinklers and fire detectors, are less likely to burn than are older buildings. Since much of the city's housing, old and new, is wood frame construction; the



City must target its efforts towards improving the safety of existing structures. One example is requiring sprinkler systems in all multi-unit residential construction and rehabilitation. Should the City move inn such a direction however, it should also work closely

with developers and property owners to find economically viable solutions to providing this level of fire protection.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Both the Fire and Police departments currently use a combined 911 emergency communications system through a central dispatch in the Police Department. Emergency service officials statewide have recently completed the implementation of Enhanced-911 service. Enhanced-911, or E-911, provides information to the dispatcher on the location of the originating emergency call. This service eliminates much of the uncertainty when locating emergency calls, should speed up response time, and greatly improve efficiency and public safety.



### Parks & Recreation

Burlington contains approximately 980 acres of public parkland. These lands include parks that are developed for intensive public use, as well as property that remains undeveloped for passive recreation and/or conservation purposes. Over 530 acres of this public parkland is owned by the City and managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. An additional 450 acres is owned and managed by the Winooski Valley Park District, primarily in the form of conservation lands offering access and footpaths to shorelines.

Parks provide a number of functions, and serve a variety of populations. District Parks serve as conservation areas and open space that benefits the entire community, while Neighborhood Parks typically offer playground equipment to serve small areas of the city. Diversity of public open spaces is an important consideration in the future planning for parks. The City must continue to provide a wide range of open space and recreational opportunities for its population, workforce, and visitors. These include both developed and undeveloped sites throughout the city, and distributed within each neighborhood. Special attention must be paid to long-term protection and use to ensure these sites remain a benefit future generations.

In addition, linkages between recreational facilities and parklands are critical to making the most efficient use of these spaces and maximizing their accessibility. We must consider parks in the context of natural and recreational systems. These linkages often take the form of improved recreational paths like the Burlington Bike Path and unimproved foot trails, but also include wildlife travel corridors, streambank buffers, linear parks, and public viewsheds. Burlington will continue to offer improved walking,

biking and recreational opportunities with an eye towards building connections with adjoining communities and protecting streambanks and wildlife travel corridors.

As a regional growth center, Burlington must find a balance between conservation and continued development that addresses the needs of the City's diverse population - present and future. As Burlington continues to develop, remaining natural areas become more vulnerable to encroachment and their ecology more endangered. The City must work to protect some of these areas through full or partial acquisition. Presently the city has approximately 650 acres of natural area either publicly owned or permanently protected by easements. The City has long-held a goal to retain a four-to-one ratio of developed land-to-protected natural areas in an effort to ensure that natural areas are protected as other land is developed. The newly adopted *Open Space Protection Plan*, will play an important role in helping the City achieve this objective. (See also the Natural Environment Section)

### **BURLINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION**

The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the planning and management of the city's park system under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Commission. This system includes City Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Playfields, Special Use Areas, and District Parks. In addition, the Department is responsible for managing a system of community gardens, management of the Burlington Harbor and its facilities, planting and maintaining approximately 8,000 street trees, and offering a broad base of recreational programs to residents of the city and neighboring communities.



**North Beach Bath House**

As a regional center, Burlington's parks and recreational facilities offer an important attraction to businesses and tourists - thus serving the city's future economy in addition to its residents. The Parks and Recreation Commission has adopted national standards to assess the City's need to acquire and develop additional park land, and its ability to meet the needs of the community. These standards are based on proximity to populations, and identify the quantity, type, and distribution of parkland and recreation facilities. However, recent studies show that 50% of those who use Burlington's downtown and waterfront parks are non-residents, and therefore City standards have been modified accordingly. However, national standards aren't able to take into account the existing natural assets of a given community. Some places, like Burlington, are very fortunate to have an abundance of high quality natural features, while others may have very few.

Burlington must also consider this when evaluating its consistency with national standards.

### ***Maintenance***

The Parks and Recreation Commission have identified the need to maintain and rehabilitate existing facilities and infrastructure as its top priority. Proper maintenance is essential to ensuring that our parks adequately and efficiently serve their intended purposes. It can also prevent the need for unnecessary capital improvements to correct deficiencies that occur as a result of neglect. Priority is given to restoration and rehabilitation projects over new construction whenever possible. Maintenance must be a priority issue for the City's park system in the future.

### ***Future Facility Needs***

In 1992, the Department completed a *Five Year Recovery Action Plan 1992-1997*. This plan was prepared in an effort to define specific needs and interests of the public with regard to Parks and Recreation lands, facilities and programs. The Plan outlined three areas of focus for the City:

- addressing increased demand associated with continued residential growth;
- development of recreational facilities associated with the Lake Champlain waterfront; and
- development of a network of bicycle paths throughout the City.

While originally completed in order to participate in a federally funded program, this plan proved a useful tool for evaluating the city's parks system and developing improvement strategies. It should be revised in light of demographic changes, financial constraints and new opportunities.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has identified indoor recreational facilities as the most pressing unmet facility need. The Commission's long-term solution proposes to meet this need through an Indoor Recreation Center that would include a swimming pool, a therapy pool, an indoor track, senior citizen and children's facilities, and multi-purpose rooms. While proposals have been crafted to create such a facility, nothing has advanced beyond the conceptual stage. A centralized location in the downtown is preferred, however the lack of available land remains an obstacle. Consideration must also be given to developing one or more of the facilities (gym, pool, track, etc.) within neighborhood activity centers located the north and/or south ends of the city. Partnerships with existing facilities, particularly in collaboration with the YMCA in the downtown and neighborhood schools in other parts of the city, should also be explored.

The most pressing unmet need of the park system includes a four-acre neighborhood park the New North End necessitated by continued growth in residential development. New Park facilities



**Little Park**

include the *Elaine and George Little Park* in the Old North End which greatly improves the aesthetic qualities of street and adjoining neighborhood; the recently completed Skate Park on Lake Street near to the former Moran Generating Plant on the waterfront. This project provides a much needed location to accommodate a growing demand for skateboarding and in-line skating facilities; and finally, a new fishing pier on the Waterfront opened to the public in May 2001 offers a much welcome venue for anglers.

The Parks & Recreation Department relies heavily on the use of School Department property and facilities. This is an example of sharing resources between city departments for the maximum benefit to the community. However, through shared use, these facilities receive more intensive use than anticipated when originally constructed, and thus will be expected to require more frequent maintenance and restoration. This type of collaboration is encouraged for existing and future recreational and school facilities.



**Fishing Pier**

***Community Gardens***

Burlington Area Community Gardens (administered by the Dept. of Parks & Recreation) maintains 350 garden plots at seven sites throughout the city. Burlington has more community garden plots per capita than any other community across the country. Currently they serve approximately 1,400 people. Three of the garden sites are designated as “organic gardens” where only organic fertilizers and natural pest controls may be used. The Department is currently in the process of revising the *Burlington Area Community Gardens Master Plan* (1991) in order to maintain, and possibly increase, the availability of convenient garden plots to all areas of the city, and ensure the necessary infrastructure is available to meet the needs of the users. Securing long-term access to garden space, and making them available across the city are important priorities. Among the greatest needs for future garden space in the City are in and near to the Old North End neighborhood, and in the South End. Efforts will also be made to relocate existing gardens that are not currently located convenient to residents. Efforts to implement the *2000 Burlington Open Space Protection Plan*, if successful, should be useful in these regards.



**Starr Farm Community Garden**

***Open Space Protection***

Protection of natural areas and open space in Burlington has long been identified as one of the public’s highest priorities, and was included as one of the priorities of the *Burlington Legacy Project Action Plan*. In February 2002, the City Council unanimously adopted a resolution creating the “Burlington Conservation Legacy Program” within the Dept. of Parks & Recreation as a major element of the 2000 Burlington Open Space

Protection Plan. The purpose of this program is to manage and coordinate the protection and enhancement of significant natural areas, and other important conservation lands within the City of Burlington, under three programmatic elements:

- ***Land Stewardship***  
To ensure the responsible long-term stewardship and management of significant natural areas and conservation lands owned by the City of Burlington.
- ***Acquisition Planning***  
To facilitate the acquisition of significant natural areas and important conservation lands for permanent protection within the City of Burlington in partnership with area land trusts, non-profit organizations, and local, state and federal government agencies.
- ***Conservation Education***  
To improve the public’s familiarity and appreciation of Burlington’s natural areas, to communicate the importance of open space protection, and to encourage public participation in the protection and planning process.

The Conservation Legacy Program is jointly administered by the Department of Parks and Recreation with oversight by and the Conservation Board. Since its creation, a new category of public lands has been established within the City Parks System called “Urban Wilds.” Urban Wilds are those lands that provide habitat for rare and endangered plant and animal communities, wetlands and other riparian systems, flood plain, unique geological and hydrological features, important wildlife habitat and travel corridors, areas important for scientific research and education, scenic vistas, trails, passive recreation, sustainable forest communities, and cultural features. To date the program has completed management plans for two Urban Wilds – the **Arms Grant** on North Avenue and the **Mackenzie Property** on the Intervale, and organized several public outreach activities including clean-ups, a photo contest and fund raisers.

### ***Urban Forests<sup>1</sup>***

The Department of Parks and Recreation has completed a *Street Tree Planting Plan* as a component of an *Urban Forest Master Plan*. As noted in the *Built Environment* section, the Plan articulates city-wide and neighborhood objectives for public trees, and outlines a plan for maintaining the City’s street tree population. Voters recently passed a local property tax increase that will be dedicated to planting and maintaining the city’s street trees.

However, Burlington’s urban forest is much more than street trees, and also includes public trees and forests in parks, cemeteries, schools and other public land, and trees on private land in yards, open space and edges of developed areas. Examples include forest

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<sup>1</sup> The urban forest is the aggregate of all vegetation within an urban area, the management of populations of trees, and the intersection of people with biology of urban flora and fauna.

communities such as Ethan Allen Park, Leddy Park, Arms Grant Park, Intervale properties, and WVPD. Whether they are found within the public greenbelt, in a backyard, or in a city park or natural area, trees contribute greatly to the vitality and livability of a community. The *Urban Forest Master Plan* takes this holistic view of the city's trees and, in concert with the *Open Space Protection Plan*, offers a framework and strategy for retaining and nurturing Burlington's urban forests.

### ***Cemeteries***

The City maintains and operates three public cemeteries – Lakeview, Elmwood and Greenmount. Of these, only Lakeview continues to offer future burial sites. An issue that the City will need to address in the near future is should additional space be acquired to accommodate new cemeteries?

### **WINOOSKI VALLEY PARK DISTRICT**

Independent from the City, the Winooski Valley Park District (WVPD) also manages parkland in Burlington. The WVPD is a consortium of 8 member communities along the lower Winooski River working together to conserve natural resources of regional significance. The mission of the WVPD as stated in their Master Plan is the:

*...planning, acquisition and management of lands and waters within the boundaries of its member municipalities in the Winooski River Valley for the purposes of conservation, preservation of natural areas, establishment of parks and passive recreation.*

Properties owned and managed by the WVPD within the city include: Ethan Allen Homestead, Derway Island Nature Preserve, Heineberg Wetland, and the Salmon Hole. The most recent addition is the “Mayes Landing” property near the mouth of the Winooski River. These lands are a great asset to the city and its residents.

Burlington is very fortunate to have such a wealth of conservation lands. These properties provide important recreation, education and conservation opportunities that benefit the entire region. Future development in the City must ensure the long-term protection of these properties, encourage their use for educational and recreational purposes, and consider future acquisitions of important and threatened conservation areas. The City will also continue to partner with the District in the acquisition and protection of important conservation lands.

### **Library Services**

Residents of Burlington have access to several libraries throughout the community. These include the Fletcher Free Library operated by the City, the UVM Bailey-Howe Library, and other smaller libraries in local colleges and neighboring communities.

### **FLETCHER FREE LIBRARY**

Located in a renovated and expanded building on College Street, the Fletcher Free Library is a source of information, education, culture, and recreation for residents of Burlington, and the surrounding region. The library currently holds 107,597 volumes, 2,204 videos; 2,820 audio materials, and 273 periodicals. The library has approximately 11,000 borrowers and circulates over 270,000 items per year. A 0.5 cent tax dedicated to books was created in 1996.

In most cities the public library is considered the most appropriate site for computers for public use, and the Fletcher Free is no exception. The library has been working with IBM and several other local agencies to bring a Public Access Computer Center to the main reading room, where computer users will be able to access the Internet for research and e-mail, participate in short workshops where they can to use various types of standard software, and work on their own to practice what they have learned.



**Fletcher Free Library**

While the library has continued to provide in-house and telephone reference service, the whole nature of public library information service has changed dramatically due to the widespread use of the World Wide Web. A large subscription database incorporating the full text of general information, health, and business related periodicals and newspapers is available on the library's Web site to anyone with a Fletcher Free borrower's card. The library's plans to provide additional subscription databases on topics such as history, women's and ethnic studies, genealogy and literature will depend largely on future funding. The library plans to migrate to a Web based automated library system, which will make the library's catalog accessible to the public through its Web site.

The library has a computerized card catalog and checkout system as it seeks to make the best use of emerging technologies. This effort is expected to continue with integration into the Vermont Automated Library System (VALS). VALS offers dial-up access to card catalogs in the State Library System and most Vermont colleges, and a variety of other information services including pending legislation, state bids and text-based internet connections. Technology promises to improve the public's access to information and services, and libraries are likely to become central information points. Improved public access via technology may also reduce unnecessary automobile trips.

The Fletcher Free Library also provides a variety of cultural events, exhibits, and meeting rooms for groups and programs. As the city grows, the library will need to continue to expand both its collection and its services. The library should continue to serve as an important community focal point. Continued increases in use of the library will also demand the continued maintenance and improvement of existing facilities.

The greatest future needs of the Library continue to be the need for ongoing maintenance of the building and utilizing technological innovations that improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and accessibility of the library and its collection, and that respond to public demand..

### ***Neighborhood Linkages & Outreach***

The library has an outreach librarian to bring library services into the community. The Library operates an Outreach Van that serves senior and childcare centers, low-income neighborhoods, and shut-ins. The library continues to pursue ways to replace this outdated vehicle, through leasing arrangements and bookmobile grants.

The library attempted to offer some of its services through a branch library in the city's south end. However, the need to rely on volunteer staff and lack of funds to support a separate collection resulted in the branch being closed. Although the Library Commission has received formal requests for a branch library in nearly every ward in the city, any future consideration for branch libraries should be targeted for Neighborhood Activity Centers, and should consider utilizing existing or co-locating with, public or community facilities, such as schools or senior centers.

## **General Government Services**

The City of Burlington employs over 650 people located in many different sites throughout the city. These include general city services in City Hall and Ethan Allen Fire Station, the Departments of Public Works and Parks & Recreation offices on Pine Street, and Electric Department facilities on Pine Street, Lake St. and the Intervale.

### **INVENTORY OF CITY PROPERTY AND BUILDINGS**

As the city grows and expands its services, pressure for additional employees and facilities will also increase. Because city government is distributed among several quasi-independent departments, there is often inadequate consideration of joint services, and an independent decision of one department will likely affect others. For example, expansions of department functions within City Hall have created a serious shortage of meeting rooms. In order for the City to make informed decisions regarding its own future needs, it must maintain an accurate inventory of all city-owned property - including its current condition and future capabilities. Where available, this type of information is typically maintained by the individual departments with limited coordination. With the exception of periodic Master Plan updates and annual capital budgeting processes, there are few opportunities for city services and facilities to be considered as a single entity.

In 1992, the City began an annual Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the prioritization of capital needs and allocation of capital funds between city departments. The CIP is an essential component to the City's financial planning processes. An accurate inventory of all city property, facilities, and buildings must be incorporated into the annual Capital Improvements Program. Additional steps should be explored for joint planning and use of city- and school-owned property and facilities.

### **IMPROVEMENTS AND MAINTENANCE OF CITY BUILDINGS**

City-owned buildings and facilities are an important capital asset, and present a visible expression of the City's values, priorities, and expectations. The City must serve as

responsible steward of these public resources, and an example to others with innovative rehabilitation and new construction projects that demonstrate high quality design, energy-efficiency, and green building techniques.

The City must ensure the sustainability of its capital plant in order to prevent costly and unnecessary repair and reconstruction in the future. Chronic funding limitations have forced continued deferment of necessary maintenance and improvements, and an inability to respond to changing demands for services. The City must commit to a long-term building maintenance and improvement program that places a priority on the preservation and enhancement of historic public buildings and long-term stewardship of all public facilities.

The 1999-2004 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) proposed the creation a new project for major repairs and renovations to existing city-owned buildings. This initiative is intended to begin to address the costs incurred by the city from years of neglect. Initially 10% (\$75,000) of the General Fund should be dedicated in the CIP to be allocated upon specific request to the City Finance Board. Eligible repairs and restorations must be limited to major "bricks and mortar" repairs and renovations that address important health & safety, structural or energy-related needs of important city buildings. Priority buildings include City Hall, Ethan Allen Firehouse, Memorial Auditorium, and Central Fire Station. This project should follow, and first include where one does not already exist, a historic assessment of the building to ensure that all repairs respect the historic significance and integrity of these important public structures.

Ethan Allen Firehouse



A City Facility Improvement Study/Plan is also necessary to inventory and document existing conditions of all public buildings and facilities, and identify and prioritize needed improvements. Such a study/plan could provide important documentation, justification, and guidance for any long-term capital funding mechanisms the city may consider. The city must also identify the appropriate city department or office to coordinate and oversee such an effort, and include a mechanism and process to update this information over time, and to monitor its implementation.

### **CONCENTRATION OF SERVICES IN DOWNTOWN**

In order to encourage future development, and to provide a wide-range of city services in a centralized location, the City will concentrate its facilities and services downtown whenever feasible. Locating city offices and services in the downtown provides opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between departments. It improves public access, opportunities for sharing resources, and lessens unnecessary automobile trips for city employees and the public.

One such effort in the future should address the co-location of departments, or department offices, responsible for permitting. City departments that issue development

permits should be accessible in one central location to provide permits and information. This would not only improve public access and make the overall process easier to understand, but also would facilitate streamlining and improve coordination and collaboration between the various departments that issue permits.

### **ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

In 1995, the City took a comprehensive look at how city government can make the most effective and efficient use of technology and telecommunications. The purposes of this study were to identify how various portions of city government currently utilize computer technology, and define ways to share resources most effectively.

Technology and telecommunications hold significant opportunities for improving the way city government functions and provides services to the public. Computers must be more than automation-for-automation-sake, however. Technology must, at a minimum,:

- improve the efficiency and accuracy of routine and duplicative tasks;
- be a vehicle for communication and information sharing within city government, and with the public; and,
- facilitate cooperation and collaboration between city departments.

Since that time, information technology has evolved significantly. Speed, access, and capability have all blossomed at blinding speed, however the City's needs and priorities remain the same. Today, most city departments are connected to a wide-area network (WAN) that enable email and file sharing. Several city departments are actively using the worldwide web to provide information about programs and services to the public. Future efforts must continue to improve the quality of the city's telecommunications infrastructure and expand public access where appropriate. They must also consider the needs of several city departments for shared information systems such as land records/assessment/permitting, GIS, and financial systems that facilitate the integration and sharing of information.

**Community Facilities and Services Action Plan**

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Secondary Agencies</b>
Complete a detailed analysis of the City’s water and wastewater capacity, and its ability to serve future population growth and development.	Public Works	Planning & Zoning
Develop alternative sites, programmatic alternatives, and financing options for the development of one or more Indoor Recreation Centers in the Downtown or in convenient neighborhood locations.	Parks & Recreation	Planning & Zoning
Develop a neighborhood park in the New North End.	Parks & Recreation	Planning & Zoning
Revise Parks and Recreation’s Five Year Action Plan into a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan for the City.	Parks & Recreation	Planning & Zoning
Develop strategies to improve treatment of stormwater runoff on-site through site design guidelines.	Planning & Zoning	Public Works
Evaluate requiring sprinklers in all new residential construction and rehabilitation involving four or more units.	Public Works	Fire
Establish “Utility Corridors” within rights-of-way to co-locate utilities, minimize the costs of construction and maintenance, and avoid negative impacts to the streetscapes.	Public Works	Parks & Recreation BED
Upgrade the water distribution system to correct fire protection flow deficiencies and modernize city infrastructure.	Public Works	
Define standards and requirements for paving materials that increase natural filtration.	Public Works	
Continue to treat stormwater runoff from the Downtown area through system improvements, and consider future capacity expansions as necessary.	Public Works	
Evaluate franchising solid waste haulers within the city.	Public Works	
Establish a Municipal Permitting Center in the Downtown area.	Public Works Planning & Zoning	
Develop a long-range Municipal Building Maintenance and Improvement Program.	Treasurer	Public Works Planning & Zoning

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Continue to upgrade the ability of City departments Treasurer to effectively implement and use technology and telecommunications to expand and improve city services for the public.

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