



MEMO

Date: May 4/5, 2015
To: Conservation Board & Parks Commission
From: Jesse Bridges, Director
RE: Request for Conservation Legacy Funding towards Public Input Process
Cc: Dan Cahill, Land Steward & Jen Francis, Parks Planner

Introduction

The property formerly owned by Burlington College and before that the Catholic Diocese has for over a decade been a focus for the Conservation Legacy Fund with regards to open space, trails, community gardens and the waterfront. Additionally the property has long been identified as a potential site for development of housing to address the City's significant housing shortage. With regards to the open space priorities this is the City's first real opportunity, after many years of discussions with previous property owners, to conserve meaningful aspects and amenities on the property. The public input process is the very beginning to this process and is in addition to any permitting process to come.

Background

The interested parties agreed to a collaborative planning process intended to take public input and explore possible site designs for the property in February of this year after extensive dialogue upon the private acquisition of the property. The parties – Vermont Land Trust, Champlain Housing Trust (CHT), property owner Eric Farrell through BC Community Housing, LLC (BCCH), and the City of Burlington – recognize that the property is an iconic piece of Burlington, and the MOU offers the opportunity for a broad public discussion about the future of the land before any formal permitting process begins.

The key long standing priorities of the City and as spelled out in the MOU with the partners are:
The Interested Parties will explore alternative designs to BCCH's current Master Plan consistent with the City's comprehensive plan that incorporate the following goals:

1. A range of housing types should be incorporated into the development, including housing that will serve a range of income levels and that will provide opportunity for homeownership as well as rental opportunities;
2. The final Plan should include open space, some of which may be required as part of the zoning process, but some of which may require consideration of reasonable compensation to the owner; the open space, including the waterfront beach area west of the bike path, should be open to the public; community gardens and the existing East – West connection to the Bike Path should be enhanced so as to increase the public access to the Waterfront from the Old North End;
3. The bluffs directly east of the bike path should be protected from any construction and development;
4. The development should be sensitive to and protect significant natural features, especially a path, and the tree scape on the bluffs, as well as cultural resources, such as the old orphanage;



5. Neighborhood commercial uses that serve the local neighborhood should be allowed but not required and as a result, consideration should be given to allowing currently prohibited uses;
6. Development of this property should enhance revitalization of Old North End, and commerce along North Avenue should be considered;
7. The development should support alternative modes of transportation in order to minimize traffic impacts;
8. The site plan should incorporate “sustainability” components, such as composting, stormwater management, food production, and energy savings where possible and appropriate.

Public Process

The process as proposed will allow the City as well as other partners to set the stage for preservation and conservation of key community priorities including potential acquisition. This process including extensive participation by the participating parties will include continued engagement opportunities for the general public. Since November Conservation Board and Parks Commission meetings, occurring monthly, have had the site on their public agenda and have offered public forum opportunities for input. That will continue for the duration of this process into June.

A site walk guided by Sasaki and the property owner will engage people with the different features of the property additionally providing context on the property for education and information. A formal public open house meeting will be held on May 21st at the Sustainability Academy in the old north end. Following this input the interested parties will work with CEDO to reach out to particular representative groups to conduct a focus group on community needs. Additional public input will be gathered through the landowners conversations with neighbors and NPA’s as well as comment boxes in key locations and an online presence.

Following Sasaki’s work to synthesize the information from the interested parties and the public meetings a second public forum will be held to get input on a feasible site framework.

Potential total cost of \$80,700 with contributions of \$10,000 from Champlain Housing Trust and equal shares of up to \$23,566 from Vermont Land Trust, BC Community Housing, LLC (The Landowner) and the City.

Request

The Department requests use of the Conservation Legacy Fund in the amount not to exceed \$23,566.