

Rec.e 3/7/18
DRB mtg.

TO: Burlington Design Review Board
VJ Comai
FROM: Jennifer Ely
DATE: March 7, 2018
RE: Give nature a chance at City Hall Park

I would like to respectfully submit a suggestion that the City should not give up on the existing trees in City Hall Park not yet anyway. I recommend that the City commit to the notion ... for now ... that City Hall Park's highest and best use is a place of respite in a natural setting with trees, many trees.

More specifically I suggest that the City pursue this by moving the Farmers Market off the park and on to abutting streets during a trial period that would commence this summer. Here movable chairs could be placed during market hours, which will encourage most of the people to linger on the streets instead of the Park. At the same time, the Park trees would be given additional TLC (fertilizing, watering, aerating the soils). My guess is that we will find ourselves surprised by the regenerative power of many of the trees over just one growing season, maybe two.

Learning from what we see, what the trees are telling us, we will stand a much better chance of designing a managable, natural place of respite that is sustainable. An oasis with many trees in Burlington's downtown.

If this works, the ~~proposed venue~~ for larger public events will probably not be compatible. But aren't they better situated on the waterfront (with its expanded parking) or Battery Park anyway?

As a biologist (not an arborist) I believe this strategy could allow a surprising number of trees to return to a healthier state. We all know that nature has an amazing capacity to mend itself. With a little help and greater protection the existing trees will have the chance to restore themselves and create a sustainable natural place of respite. Let's give nature this chance.

*Presented at DRB
3/7/18*

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August 20, 2017

Meagan Tuttle, Principal Planner
City of Burlington
City Hall
149 Church Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Dear Meagan:

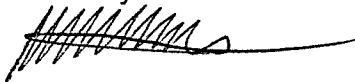
My name is Peter Liska and I was one of the commentators on the City Hall Park Project last Monday at your meeting. Thank you for that opportunity. I am following up with a summary of my comments and with few more observation about the use and present condition of the park, which I made yesterday while the Farmers Market was in progress.

1. While the park is used by many groups for many public purposes, it is obvious that the major user is the Farmers Market for six prime summer months. The large number of vendors and the huge traffic this event draws week after week has desecrated the grass and other vegetation.
2. I grew up on a farm in Europe and as a young child I remember seeing similar conditions of grass which recovered very nicely after the trampling on the grass was stopped and some help of new soil and reseeding. Same could be done here.
3. A common sense look at the existing trees show that the trees are not dead or even dying at this point, but the roots are being compromised and if this is not dealt with, some of threes may die. Given today's rising global temperatures all trees are an essential element of controlling the earth's warming. Everything possible should be done to save trees and not cut them down. Especially the large mature trees.
4. The Park redesign maybe in order to update and if this is the best way to spend three million dollars, then be it, Part of that money should be invested in public restrooms, appropriate in size with ongoing funds budgeted to staff the facility and keep it clean at all times. This park staffing should also include security.

5. The Farmer's Market should be permanently relocated to another City location. If returned to the City Hall Park, it will take one season and the grass and vegetation will be destroyed. Below is a list of other reasons to consider with respect to a permanent location of the outdoor market.
- The vendors need to be on a hard surface, asphalt or gravel
 - The market should have customer parking associated with its location.
 - There should be an area within the market for customers to sit, eat, drink or just rest. Picnic tables would serve this purpose.
 - The market needs public bathrooms when the market is open.
 - Vendors should have access to running water.
 - Vendors should have access to electricity and WI FI
 - There needs to be ample trash cans and a dumpster for after-market clean up. Today there is only one trash station located in the middle of St. Paul Street.
 - If the new Farmers Market is not within walking distance of Church Street, then a shuttle bus should be provided to bring people back and forth.
 - Removing the Farmers Market will not only restore the grass at the City Hall Park, but it will also address the concerns of many restaurants that are being negatively impacted by the many food vendors at the market.
6. I have given some thought to a possible permanent location for the Farmers Market and I believe that a very suitable location would be the Perkins Pier parking lot with the adjoining grass strip. Here is some of my argument for this space:
- Very large gravel parking lot with space for vendors and customers.
 - Lot is mostly unused on weekends.
 - Playground for kids in place.
 - This waterfront parcel is underutilized and the Farmers Market could be an attractive addition to the Burlington water front without compromising other waterfront venues and summer activities.
 - If this location was successful, perhaps plans can be developed for a year round market, similar to the markets in Montreal.

I am not a city planner, arborist or a farmer. My suggestions stem from my lifelong experience as Health Care Administrator (now retired) and as a businessman. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to provide this feed back to your group. Thank you.

Sincerely



Peter Liska