

# Office of the Mayor



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PRESS CONFERENCE

Five years ago, discussions began relative to the rezoning of Burlington's downtown waterfront. Following dozens of public hearings, Neighborhood Planning Assemblies and drafts and re-drafts of zoning ordinances, a proposal has emerged which will be acted upon next Monday evening by the Board of Aldermen. The zoning ordinance before the Board will go a long way toward protecting Burlington's waterfront and assuring access for the public.

This ordinance will establish standards for allowable uses, height, density, set-back, public access and design. It also establishes the "rules of the game" for waterfront development - everyone, including developers, agree that well understood rules are needed. I strongly support the adoption of the proposed waterfront zoning and hope, and expect, that this proposal will receive non-partisan support by the Board of Aldermen and be adopted unanimously. At this point I want to thank the Planning Commission which has discussed this issue extensively, the Aldermanic Waterfront Committee and the Aldermanic Ordinance Committee which have also spent much time on this issue.

I'd like to highlight the provisions of the zoning to be acted upon:

- With the adoption of the zoning, an official map will be adopted for the waterfront core. This official map is adopted pursuant to Vermont State Law; it will establish a public framework with the laying out of streets, public ways and visual corridors. On this map, Lake Street is relocated generally to the east of the

main line of the railway, a pedestrian easement will be established to link Union Station with Lake Champlain, a waterfront promenade 50' in width is established from Maple Street to College Street and a width of a 100' from College Street to the north property line of the Central Vermont Railway, a pedestrian walkway will link King Street and College Street, and visual corridors are established to preserve vistas of the lake and the mountains.

- Two new waterfront recreation/conservation zones will be established. One zone will encompass the filled lands of the property of the Central Vermont Railway to the north of the Moran Plant which are basically the properties to the west of the Railroad right-of-way. A second waterfront recreation/conservation zone will be established to the north of College Street and will encompass approximately 3½ acres. It is hoped that this property, through public trust negotiation or litigation, will become a public park. The zoning will allow for significant development activity in the waterfront commercial east district which is the property located to the west of Lake Street. Within that area, a range of uses will be allowed. In essence, the zoning proposal will allow for the creation of an urban neighborhood in that area. To the west of Lake Street in the core area there are more restricted uses allowed. Uses allowed are of a public nature and will promote for the public's use and enjoyment of this shoreland.
- The lands to the north of the Moran Station have been zoned waterfront residential and have allowed for 40 units per acre. The City, hopefully with the cooperation of the Railway, will continue to analyze the capacity of this property to accommodate development. Decisions will have to be made as to what types of development and what density should be allowed in this area. Until agreement is reached and public consensus is achieved, the land to the west of the railroad track, as indicated earlier, will be zoned waterfront recreation/conservation and the land to the east of the tracks will be zoned waterfront residential but will allow for only twenty units per acre.

I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on a number of other waterfront related issues.

- 1) It is generally agreed that waterfront lands owned by the City should be improved and made more accessible to allow for greater public enjoyment. Most will also agree that public improvement and public amenities on key City-owned properties will be required to create a more positive environment for private development on the waterfront. A study was undertaken which identified a number of opportunities to improve city-owned waterfront property and enhance public access. I will be advocating that the voters in March approve a bond issue to finance certain waterfront public improvements. The exact improvements and the amount of the bond issue are currently under review and a recommendation from the Administration should be made next week.
  
- 2) Thousands of Burlington residents over the past few months have had the opportunity to enjoy the recently completed bike path. In March, as part of the bond issue for the improvements of lakefront properties, I will be asking the voters to authorize funding for the expansion of the bicycle/pedestrian path. Specific areas will include construction of the link from the Barge Canal to the Lakeside neighborhood, improvements of the existing bike path north of Leddy Park, the integration of a bicycle/pedestrian path with the Southern Connector from Route 7 to Pine Street, and planning to complete a City-wide bike path loop which would hopefully extend in the future beyond the limits of Burlington and create one of the country's most beautiful bicycle path networks.
  
- 3) A study has been completed which identifies sites within the City suitable for a marina. City-owned properties in the area of Perkins Pier have been identified as a preferred site for a public marina. It is my intention to continue the planning and the engineering as well as undertake a financial assessment for a marina. More specific recommendations regarding the development and financing of a marina will be brought forth in the future.
  
- 4) As you know, the City is involved in very complex litigation relative

to the Public Trust Doctrine. We are currently preparing for a trial on the issue that will begin in January. I continue to be hopeful that an out-of-court settlement will be reached and we'll continue discussions with the Railroad and Alden regarding settlement of the Public Trust litigation..

In sum, I am proud of the progress that has been made on the waterfront. The completion of the bike path is a very significant accomplishment. The doubling of the size of Perkins Pier and provision of additional park space and boat moorings at that site has created one of the most utilized and enjoyed park spaces in the City. City Council action on zoning which will protect the waterfront from undesirable and insensitive development will be a major landmark. Much has been done, yet much remains to be done. I look forward to the support of all members of the Board of Aldermen and the public in moving forward in a very aggressive way to revitalize Burlington's waterfront. Lake Champlain will once again be Burlington's "front yard".