

**Draft Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
1/22/2024
via MS Teams Virtual Meeting**

Members Present (12):

- ☒ Alex Farrell (*Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development
- ☒ Charlie Baker, designated by the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- ☒ Michelle Boomhower (*Vice-Chair*), designated by the Secretary of Transportation
- ☒ Bruce Cheeseman, appointed by the Governor, representing local government
- ☒ Billy Coster, designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources
- ☒ Cathy Davis, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives
- ☒ Michael Desrochers, designated by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- ☐ Sarah Hadd, designated by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- ☒ Sabina Haskell, Chair of the Natural Resources Board
- ☒ Jaime Lee, appointed by the Governor, representing the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont
- ☒ Michael McDonough, appointed by the governor, representing local government
- ☒ Chip Sawyer, designated by the Vermont Planners Association
- ☒ Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members (6): Chris Cochran, Alice Dodge, Natalie Elvidge, Jacob Hemmerick, Jenni Lavoie, and Amy Tomasso.

Guests (2): Paul Conner, Director of Planning, City of South Burlington; Nate Atherton, City Planner, City of South Burlington.

Alex Farrell brought the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

Additions or Deletions to the Board Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the board agenda.

1. Public Comment Period

Alex Farrell opened the meeting to public comment; there were no comments.

2. Consent Agenda Items:

- November 27, 2023, Draft Minutes
- Village Center Designation Renewal:
 - Town of Guilford – Algiers Village Center

Charlie Baker motioned to approve the consent agenda items, and Jaime Lee seconded. Ayes: Charlie Baker, Michelle Boomhower, Bruce Cheeseman, Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Michael Desrochers, Sabina Haskell, Jaime Lee, Michael McDonough, Chip Sawyer, Laura Trieschmann, and Alex Farrell. The motion carried.

3. New Town Center Designation – 1

City of South Burlington – Renewal Application

Jacob Hemmerick presented staff findings and recommendations on South Burlington's New Town Center renewal application. The designation is for communities without a traditional downtown and recognizes areas planned to develop a walkable community center. The designation must be renewed every eight years. South Burlington's New Town Center designation was awarded in 2010 and renewed and expanded in 2016. The application was complete, and all requirements were met. Staff recommended renewing the designation.

Paul Conner, Director of Planning, and Nate Atherton, City Planner, presented on behalf of the City of South Burlington. They highlighted many of South Burlington's successes, including the completion in 2021 of the City Center Complex, which includes City Hall, the Library, and a Senior Center. Since the 2016 renewal, there has been approval/construction of 721 dwelling units, of which at least 129 are permanently affordable, and over 50,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space. The buildout of Market Street and the construction underway on Garden Street have helped create a corridor for dense housing and more walkability. There have been significant investments in City Center Park, and they are developing pedestrian connections between the park, schools, and the surrounding neighborhood. The major I-89 bike/ped bridge project is scheduled for construction by 2026 and will connect South Burlington to the UVM neighborhood over the interstate, offering a much safer route to pedestrians and bikes.

For the future, the City is most excited about community-focused events such as the recent Energy Festival, which was attended by 500. As the New Town Center matures, they look forward to a greater focus on programming, and the city council has approved money to begin funding a downtown organization. The board and staff were impressed by South Burlington's progress since their last renewal and discussed the future potential of the University Mall site.

Cathy Davis motioned to approve the renewal of South Burlington's New Town Center designation, and Charlie Baker seconded. Ayes: Charlie Baker, Michelle Boomhower, Bruce Cheeseman, Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Michael Desrochers, Sabina Haskell, Jaime Lee, Michael McDonough, Chip Sawyer, Laura Trieschmann, and Alex Farrell. The motion carried.

4. Neighborhood Development Area Designation – 1

City of South Burlington – Renewal Application

The City of South Burlington's Neighborhood Development Area renewal application reflected no changes to the NDA since it was expanded in September of 2023. There were no changes to its boundary, resource avoidance, or regulations. It continues to meet requirements for Complete Streets and bylaws and building lots. The renewal application was complete, and staff recommended renewing the designation.

Charlie Baker motioned to approve the renewal of South Burlington's Neighborhood Development Area Designation, and Michelle Boomhower seconded. Ayes: Charlie Baker, Michelle Boomhower, Bruce Cheeseman, Billy Coster, Cathy Davis, Michael Desrochers, Sabina Haskell, Jaime Lee, Michael McDonough, Chip Sawyer, Laura Trieschmann, and Alex Farrell. The motion carried.

5. Designation Reform Discussion

Chris Cochran provided an update on the Designation 2050 final report. Before the meeting, the Board received Smart Growth America's Designation 2050 Final Report, Executive Summary, Talking Points, and FAQ. Climate and Resilience Recommendations will be

completed by the end of January. These documents reflected feedback from approximately 120 municipalities and 500 stakeholders, indicating that they would like simpler designation programs that are easier to access. The initial response among legislators has been positive, and Chris believes we have champions in the House and Senate. The designation reforms will be introduced as part of a package that includes Act 250 reforms and the RPCs' Future Land Use Maps.

Board members discussed the timeline for the RPC mapping areas targeted for public investment and Act 250 relief and options to help auto-oriented areas become more dense and walkable. They discussed how to support and engage in the legislative process and thanked the CP+R team and consultants for all the hard work that has gone into the report. Chris Cochran will continue to update the Board as the proposal winds its way through the legislative process.

6. Old Business / New Business

Jenni Lavoie reviewed the new state requirement that board members participate in online ethics training. She will email additional details and links to the training. She asked that all board members provide her with certificates of completion. Board members who are not state employees will be reimbursed for their training time.

7. Adjourn

Alex Farrell adjourned the meeting at 1:59 p.m.

The next Downtown Board meeting will be on February 26, 2024.

Respectfully submitted, Alice Dodge and Jenni Lavoie