



# southburlington

## PLANNING & ZONING

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** South Burlington Planning Commission  
South Burlington City Council

**FROM:** Paul Conner, Director of Planning & Zoning

**SUBJECT:** 2024 Comprehensive Plan

**DATE:** September 27, 2022 Joint Council/Commission meeting

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Preparation of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan is underway! **Sections in Red below are the focus of this joint meeting.**

#### **A brief background:**

The City has had a plan in place since the early 1960s. It must be updated and adopted every eight years in order to be valid. The 2016 Plan was a major overhaul from prior Plans. The document was completely re-structured and the goals, objectives, strategies, text, and maps were substantially overhauled. The Commission, in consultation with the Council, spent a good deal of time on the 1-page “Vision and Goals” that was ultimately specifically approved by the Commission and Council.

#### **Purpose of the Plan:**

The Comprehensive Plan is the City’s primary policy document. It is the foundation of the City’s work over its life – the next eight years – and lays out a pathway for the next generation. What the City prioritizes, invests in, and make policy about flows from the Plan. The City may only adopt (or amend) Regulations and Capital Budgets that in keeping with the Plan. Further emphasizing the Plan’s importance, in the past year, the Council and City Manager have aligned the City’s Policy Priorities by the Vision & Goals of the Plan. In the coming years, we expect to take this even further, aligning the City’s budget and reporting with these key priorities of the Plan.

The Plan serves several specific statutory roles as well: enabling the ability to apply for state grants, providing support for Federal funding, providing direction to Act 250 and Section 248 applications, and enabling the authority to adopt and amendment zoning regulations, among others.

#### **Timeline**

The Comprehensive Plan will expire on February 1, 2024 unless it is updated and adopted prior to that time. To leave room for public hearings, minor changes, and in consideration of the City Council’s annual work plan, this effectively means that the Draft Plan must be complete and ready for their formal adoption process by August 2023.

## Update of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan for 2024

In May of this year, the Commission considered and ominously approved the approach outlined below for the preparing the 2024 Plan. As noted above, the 2016 Plan was a major overhaul and re-write. With that in mind, the 2024 Plan is planned as an update to the 2016 Plan rather than looking at it as “starting from scratch”. This still leaves a lot of room to augment, and revise the City’s objectives and plans as our local and global needs evolve, our community changes, and we learn more.

### Approach to Developing the Plan

First and foremost, staff and the Commission intend a collaborative, community-heavy approach to the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. This includes an emphasis on involving and identifying the needs of traditionally under-represented populations in our community, and on having the City’s standing committees play an important role throughout.

The Plan will be updated be prepared using a “top of the funnel to bottom of the funnel” approach. Meaning: affirm values and goals up front, and develop the Plan with those values and goals established.

The approach includes the following stages of work:

1. ***Affirm the Values and Goals that will guide the Plan and City’s priorities, as a joint Planning Commission-Council effort.*** The Values, Vision and Goals set the stage for the entire Plan. They also become the framework for the work we do. As a key example, [the FY ’23 Policy Priorities and Strategies adopted by the City Council](#) last month is organized by the four primary goals of the Plan. We ask the Council & Commission to hold this thought in your heads as you consider the 2024 Draft and how it might be used.
  - This is the first major discussion point for tonight’s meeting. Enclosed please find the 2016 Vision & Goals AND, a first draft of the 2024 Values, Vision, and Goals. This 2024 draft was prepared by staff as a first cut based on discussion from the Planning Commission earlier this summer and what we’ve been gathering from the Council & Committees as priorities over the past couple of years.
2. ***Establish “knowns” to serve as a framework for the Plan.*** These would include basic elements such as “will be written as a valid Plan under Vermont Law”; existing adopted City Council resolutions, such as the commitment to meet the USA’s obligations under the Paris Climate Accord; and macro-level economic and demographic knows such as anticipated housing and job growth in central Chittenden County. This segment would kick off with a review of work that has been previously done, and a community profile of demographics, housing, resources, travel, etc. The Commission has done a preliminary review of this information and knowns.

3. **Identify key “subject area” topics needing special attention in this 2024 update to the Plan.** *These are key topics that the City identifies as being priorities to be resolved within the 2024 Plan. Identifying these key issues early will help to guide the allocation of resources throughout.*

Commissioners discussed these topics at their June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting and identified the following

- Addressing climate change
- Creating greater emphasis on people, community, equity
- Chamberlin neighborhood and its interface with the Airport
- Creating greater measurability in plan objectives
- Assuring consistency of objectives and policies within the plan
- Addressing housing affordability
- Addressing economic activity and resiliency
- Connecting neighborhoods
- Identifying neighborhoods and their characteristics

Since that time, Commissioners have begun to lay out focus area along these themes and under the various topic areas of the Plan, including the provision of affordable housing, parks & open space, climate resiliency, bicycle & pedestrian facilities, building the sense of community, and having South Burlington’s identity be strengthened.

For this joint meeting, using the items above as a starting point, staff recommend the Council and Commission identify the following

- a. **Areas of potential competing policy within the Plan**

We know there has been a lot of attention to the subject of Natural Resources in the community over the past few years. Under the Interim Zoning Bylaw, several studies were undertaken and an updated set of Environmental Protection Standards were adopted. The draft Climate Action Plan speaks to this subject as well. Staff invites the Council & Commission to discuss the extent to which this subject area should be a focus of the Plan and if there is broad direction to be provided?

Other areas of potential competing interests worthy of consideration in the Plan may include the transition from the Airport to the Chamberlin Neighborhood, transportation systems serving local and/vs regional needs, and others.

- b. **Areas of potential policy discussion within the Plan**

These are highlighted by the items bulleted above; are we missing key topics of discussion and is there broad direction the joint group would like to provide?

The remaining items are work to be done over the coming months.

4. **Apply established Values, Goals, and Knowns to all analyses, objectives, targets, and implementation strategies moving forward.** *City Committees and Staff would be charged with accounting for these priorities and knowns within all product they develop in support of the Plan. A proposed policy that does not meet advance these priorities would need to specifically address why*

*it should remain in the Plan regardless.*

5. **Prepare Measurable Targets for each applicable topic area.** *This will be an iterative process, beginning with a collaboration of staff and Planning Commission, and then being provided to Committees for consideration. [alternative: begin with Committees in areas where they have a subject area expertise]*
6. **Prepare updates to the inventory, analysis, and conclusions within the Plan.** *This will be performed by staff with support from City departments, for review and action by Committees, and the Commission.*
7. **Review, assess, and made determinations on key subject areas.** *With support from applicable parties, prepare the analyses and policy direction on the priority subject areas identified earlier in the process.*
8. **Identify implementation strategies.** *Using the 2016 Plan as a foundation, and the self-analysis performed by departments and committees on work completed to date, staff, committees, and the Commission will prepare updated implementation actions to support each target.*
9. **Update Future Land Use Map.** *Based on the findings, priorities, and policy direction prepared, revise the City's Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map is intended to bring together the various city priorities into a cohesive Plan for the City as to how land should be used in the future.*
10. **Adopt!** *Following completion of the steps above, hold formal public hearings and adopt the Plan.*