



southburlington

PLANNING & ZONING

MEMORANDUM

TO: South Burlington Planning Commission

FROM: Paul Conner, Director of Planning & Zoning
Kelsey Peterson, City Planner

SUBJECT: 2024 Comprehensive Plan

DATE: May 24, 2022 Planning Commission meeting

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan is right around the corner. We're very excited to take this update on.

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 spent a good deal of time on the 1-page "Vision and Goals" that was ultimately specifically approved by the PC 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. Details on the proposed schedule are discussed below.

Vermont Municipal Planning Manual and Statutory Requirements

The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development has developed a [Municipal Planning Manual](#) and accompanying resources. We encourage Commissioners to take a look through it as we prepare for the

2024 Comprehensive Plan. It contains ideas on how to approach a topic, the statutory requirements for municipal plans, and examples.

A Plan under Vermont law must, at a minimum, include 11 components and must demonstrate consistency with 17 statewide planning goals. This includes a new requirement as of 2017 to plan for forest blocks. A municipality that wishes to have its input on renewable energy facility siting be granted “substantial deference” before the Public Utilities Commission must additionally include certain specific elements related to energy siting.

Update of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan for 2024

As noted above, the 2016 Plan was a major overhaul and re-write. As such, staff recommends that the 2014 Plan be looked at as an update rather than “starting from scratch.”

As an update, the 2016 Comprehensive Plan’s vision, goals, and priorities would be used as the starting point for any changes / enhancements / additions. The Commission and City Council should feel free to make changes, re-assess priorities, emphasize and de-emphasize as needed, but would not necessarily re-evaluate each single summary, analysis, or implementation strategy.

Key components to a 2024 Plan Update:

- Affirm the City’s Values, Vision and Goals
- Sharpen pencils & streamline plan
- Assure consistency among objectives
- Establish measurable targets within each area
- Resolve unaddressed elements in the 2016 Plan
- Address emerging topics and areas not (sufficiently) covered in 2016 Plan
- Meet new statutory obligations

Staff-recommended approach

First and foremost, staff recommends 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.

Staff recommends that the Plan update 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.

Staff is recommending 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. This may include changes to the existing Vision & Goals, and/or addition of areas of importance not addressed in the 2016 Plan.
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.,

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.
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.

Detailed Proposed Schedule and Approach

Below is a first draft of the Plan schedule. In terms of the Planning Commission, we are anticipating and recommending an approach where, for the bulk of the work, the Commission spends one meeting each month on the Plan, and one meeting on other work in your FY ‘23 Work Plan. That will help staff to prepare work in a consistent manner, create predictability for committees and the public, and importantly, help Commissions by not “bouncing” between topics within a given meeting.

The approach below relies heavily on Commissioners having robust policy debates and discussion, synthesizing community input and staff analyses, and making clear policy decisions (with the Council, as appropriate) at key points along the way. It relies on staff to prepare the mapping, analyses, and draft text of the Plan, its objectives, targets, and implementation strategies in a timely, consistent, and easily readable manner for review. Both Commissioners and staff will have a significant role in seeking community input.

Next up, schedule-wise, will be a breakdown of the Commission schedule by topic area. We anticipate rolling this out once the Commission gives its broad thumbs up to an overall approach.

Comprehensive Plan Preparation Schedule

Action	2022								2023								2024					
	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February
Establish Schedule																						
Establish public outreach, Equity Plan																						
Confirm Plan Structure																						
Review statutory requirements																						
Complete Initial CCRPC Review																						
2016 Plan Implementation Review																						
Committee Implementation Review																						
Affirm Values, Policy Priorities	*	*																				
Initial Community Discussions			*	*																		
Affirm Common "Knowns" for Plan																						
Review of Completed Reports																						
Identify key topics to be addressed																						
Identify needed data and analysis																						
Establish Preliminary Targets																						
Committee / Dept review of Targets																						
Existing conditions, analysis																						
Consolidated review of Targets									*	*												
Key Topic focus and actions									*	*												
Implementation strategies by topic											*	*										
Future Land Use Map and discussion													*	*								
CCRPC Final Review															*							
Public Hearings and Adoption																*		*	*			
Key																						
Staff / City Departments																						
Planning Commission																						
City Council																						
City Committees																						
Community Outreach	*																					

WORKING DRAFT

Public Outreach Plan

This year we have an exciting opportunity to deploy a coordinated public outreach strategy across multiple important projects, and to do so in a way that is meaningful to the community. Big projects this year include completion of the Climate Action Plan, the use of one-time American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the Comprehensive Plan. Staff from P&Z and the City Manager's Office have been developing an outreach strategy. Broadly speaking, the proposed approach is to begin with broad feedback & education and move towards specifics over time. Outreach will strive to reach those voices who don't traditionally bring themselves to the table, and is proposed to use an equity rubric based on the work of the State's Climate Action equity model.

Working Public Outreach Strategy

Type	Timeframe	Purposes	Target Audiences	Comprehensive Plan	ARPA	Climate Action Plan
Online Poll	May-June 2022	-Initial contact on various topics -Feedback on direct questions -Preferences among options -Generate new ideas -Use "off-ramps" for deeper dives	-City newsletters -Front Porch Forum -Other Paper -Partner organizations	1. Feedback on Values & Goals 2. Intro to key topics 3. New goals/Values	1. Feedback on "buckets" 2. Feedback on relative priorities 3. New ideas	1. Awareness of Goals & Need 2. Feedback on Targets 3. Feedback on actions 4. New actions
Committee & Organization Initial Input	June-July 2022	-Solicit Committees' priorities -Hear from the community at the start -Welcome outside groups & individuals to share preliminary thoughts	-City Committees -Organizations operating in South Burlington	1. Hear from organizations at the start	1. Most have already weighed in	1. Opportunity to inform
Summer In-Person events (~6)	June-July 2022	-Direct person-to-person ideas -New ideas through discourse -Foster "champions" for action	-Event attendees -City user groups	1. Feedback on Values & Goals 2. Intro to key topics 3. City Priorities	1. How could ARPA funds benefit your area	1. Awareness of Goals & Need 2. Feedback on Targets 3. Feedback on actions 4. New actions
Formal Survey	Aug or Nov 2022	-Gather representative sampling of population on key issues				
Winter In-person events [~3-4]	Winter 2023	-Direct person-to-person ideas -New ideas through discourse -Foster "champions" for action	-Event attendees -City user groups	1. Feedback on Targets, Key Subject Areas, Policy Priorities	n/a	1. Possible input on implementation plans
Planning Commission Listening Sessions	Spring-Summer 2023	-Direct Feedback on drafts -Awareness of proposed policy -Opportunity to speak directly with policy-makers	-General Community -Engaged Residents & users -Community Groups	1. Feedback on Drafts	n/a	1. Feedback on drafts
Formal Public Hearings	Fall 2023	-Hear feedback before adopting City policy	-General Community	1. Formal input on draft	n/a	n/a
City Website & Feedback Form	Throughout	-Repository of information	-Highly-engaged community members			
City Newsletter	Semi-monthly	-Build awareness via continual content -Build eventual voter understanding	-City newsletter subscribers			

Possible Additional Forms of outreach:

In addition to the above, below are some additional possible forms of outreach. These are not presently resourced but we will continue to look at opportunities.

Additional Possible Outreach

Type	Timeframe	Purposes	Target Audiences	Comprehensive Plan	ARPA	Climate Action Plan
Art show(s) at City Hall	?	-Provocate and dialogue on issues of importance in the community	-Broad community	Indirect	n/a	Indirect
Library Discussion Series	?	-Community conversations on topical issues -Raise awareness & engagement on community issues -Build sense of community	-Library patrons -Book club participants -Those who might not engage directly in policy-making	1. Facilitate discussion on important subjects	n/a	1. Facilitate discussion on important subjects
Other Paper columns	?	-City policy-makers share their viewpoints	-Residents -Businesses	1. Engage directly with community	N/A	1. Engage directly with community
Kiosk at Library	?	-Provide regular updates in a visually-engaging manner	-Library users	1. Regular updates	n/a	1. Regular updates

For Commission Discussion and Possible Action:

Thoughts? Does the Commission concur with the proposed game plan? What changes are needed? What are we missing?

When the Commission is ready (this or a future meeting), the Commission is invited to approve the planned approach:

Possible Commission action: “I move to approve the proposed approach to completing the 2024 update to the Comprehensive Plan.”