

South Burlington Planning & Zoning CityPlan 2024 Community Conversations Ecology, Environment, and Agriculture

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

[THESE NOTES REFLECT SUMMARIZED COMMENTS OF THE PUBLIC AT THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION, NOT ANY COMMITMENT BY THE CITY TO ANY PARTICULAR POLICY POSITION; THEY ARE NOT VERBATIM QUOTES AND HAVE NOT BEEN EDITED]

22 Attendees

Climate-Resilient

- Open land influences climate resilience; certain types of soils lend themselves to agriculture, so that land shouldn't be covered up with development
- Not all agriculture is created equally, dumping pesticides on the land isn't the same as regenerative agriculture, so we should restrict petrochemical fertilizer
- Agriculture keeping food local reduces transportation of food and promotes self-sufficiency and climate-resilience, and builds community spirit (also community gardens - high demand and low amounts on offer)
- We have Common Roots and Bread & Butter Farm
- Big agricultural area (O'Brien Farm) that is being developed
- Belter Farm is an active ag enterprise in the Winooski River floodplain; CAP calls out regenerative farming and pesticides; needed food security
- Better soils, better water quality
- Pressure on biodiversity by climate change allows support for wildlife
- The ecosystem is affected and the ecosystem has known carbon sinks
- More chemicals you use, the more you have to use
- Soil sequesters carbon, prevents flooding, etc.
- Benefits of regenerative soil practices
 - City support of agriculture through provision of land space in public lands
- Conversation with UVM about their use of glyphosate on cover crops (corn and hay properties)
- City can provide some of the open space funding for agricultural enterprises

Human-Focused

- Growing our food locally provides equity - sharing with the food shelf from agricultural enterprises; City supporting community agriculture can support social services organizations and cross-community connection and support
- City can provide information and education about plants, trees, protection/conservation, above and beyond the rules in place; best practices
- Measurable things, tree canopy analysis (6-7 years ago) and tracking tree cover in the City, soil maps of the City - what's being developed or what's available for agriculture,
- We don't have a pesticide ordinance (draft with City staff?), but it needs to be kept in line with the state; we need coordination with State standards; working with the State to do it
- Tree canopies - we need to be careful when we build; we need to focus on infill; when we allow trees to be removed, we need to have them replaced; require if you take trees down you must replant and do mitigation measures;

- Equity issue with taking down trees and not replanting; high-density housing requires more green space and plants - promote mental health and physical health for people living in multi-family settings; should have more arborists/staff; algae blooms in stormwater ponds because of pesticide use - restrictions on areas surrounding stormwater ponds
- Semi-permeable landscapes, infiltration through pavers, looking at these options as a City on City properties; using native plants for landscaping on City properties (on private property through landscape requirement?)
- Town green property/area in City Center?
- Integrate canopy conservation on private land, tree restoration, at the permitting level, including enforcement
- TIF financing for the Williston Road streetscape/pedestrian way, nothing in the TIF project for tree canopy in that area and nothing about the technical requirements of planting trees in that setting; not thinking about the human use of that area first
- Staffing levels with our growth, study of the staffing needs for DPW, arborist, other environmental workers - what does a City of our size need and how to build the municipal budget with that?
- Trees are human-scale, pedestrian focus
- We need to support the environment before we grow the City to a level the land can't sustain, what do we need for the human beings who live here now
- Capacity with respect to environment, affordability - can people afford to live in South Burlington if we expand all of these things?
- Ground-mounted solar arrays are an opportunity for pollinators, partnerships
- Partnership with No Mow May and similar
- Changes to the lawns, clover lawns, etc.
- Priority of building on developed land
- Cultural conflict with people living in Vermont or coming to Vermont want to live on acreage with a hobby farm; need a cultural shift to having people willing to live in multifamily housing in urban downtowns IN ORDER TO preserve the parts of Vermont that we want to preserve
- Need to provide people with the amenities nearby for people to live in higher density; we are an urban area now and need to think about attracting people to the urban setting; need to provide walkable amenities for people in dense housing as benefits
- Need to vision for what we want the City to be
- Does agree with some denser housing, what she sees on Spear St is a waste, houses are built too big, single-family houses could be built, but don't need 3000-4000 square feet, could have a community area, smaller lots, etc.
- 1/4 acre lots are a good size
- We can't build car culture communities, we need Smart Growth, we can't do that in Chittenden County, we can do that in the NEK, density is needed here, we need to sacrifice for Smart Growth and develop centers with open lands in between to prevent sprawl
- We are a hub for Chittenden Co, we have infrastructure, employers, etc. Smart Growth should take advantage of the resources we have
- Need to scale the municipal services and resources with planning for density/population growth
- Education and outreach to the people living the communities affected by changes in density
- Support density, but support the services and infrastructure
- Sprawl has failed, but we need the pleasant environment to support housing density that will make it pleasant and livable
- We can rezone, we can have high density development with green space and shade

- Foundation set about what the City is doing and what can we be doing, set out the facts of what the City has done and what you can be doing
- Have architects design the buildings
- Measurability of inclusive, fair, and just; what % of the population lives with 1/4 of a mile from transit or open space