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October 27, 2021

City of South Burlington  
Planning Commission  
South Burlington City Hall  
180 Market Street  
South Burlington VT 05403

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

As a 44 year resident of our great City of South Burlington I have a realistic perspective on the past half century of land use/development, as well as most recent land development regulations and a perspective on what will ensure a successful and sustainable future for South Burlington's residents and businesses. As you likely know, I was a member of our City Council when Interim Zoning was once again enacted; I'm going to share a select few thoughts as the City prepares to come out of IZ shortly.

At the outset, I'll state that to date (historically), while there have been a few missteps in planning and development, when compared to similar communities elsewhere across the land, South Burlington looks pretty darned good from a planning and growth perspective. We enjoy wonderful public spaces for leisure / recreational use, we have a bike/ped path system that is the envy of other communities, we have a gorgeous and functional new library and city hall in a first-ever City Center, etc. We have little to complain about.

However, the future must ensure continued responsibility (sustainability) for ensuring the best planned growth of our city possible in the face of housing demands and needs for commercial and professional space to ensure economic vitality in SB. These needs come at a time when the world-wide climate is challenged and, small a part as it might be, we should all look to a future for South Burlington that we can proudly state meets the needs of our society and economy, while doing our part to mitigate the severe impacts of climate change.

Selecting just a few of the proposed adjustments to the LDR's, please accept my comments, not as criticisms, but as input I believe is important as final adjustments are considered.

Greater buffers should be required around (some) wildlife habitats. I believe Arrowwood also made that recommendation, but I do not see it specified. When I was in the ski industry quite a few years back, I learned about the importance and practical application of adequate wildlife buffers along trails, which are plentiful on ski mountains. Sufficient buffers were a proven practice to ensure wildlife living in ski mountain forests were supported by best practices in ski area trail planning. The same holds true in South Burlington.

I was not aware of the minimum density requirement for developments in the SEQ; must be a relatively recent addition to your recommendations. This is not logical. Why should anyone be required to build a MINIMUM number of homes per acre. When we purchased our lot many years ago, I considered buying an extra lot in case we wanted it for family use in the future. If that had occurred, I would definitely not want to be told I had to accommodate at least four housing units on the acre; makes no sense! MAXIMUM density limits per acre are far more meaningful when it comes to responsible land use.

It appears an area of forested land proposed for removal from protection is within the Great Swamp land block, a critical wildlife habitat / natural area. We already created extra stress for wildlife in this area by not requiring the South Village developer to provide a wildlife passage tunnel under Midland Avenue, thus offsetting the detrimental effect on wildlife created by the construction of the road. This “saddens” me every time I ride my bike through the area. Let’s not exacerbate the earlier “error” by eliminating more critical wildlife habitat.

Then there is our role to acknowledge the climate crisis through responsible planning. I heartily commend the Planning Commission for the very deliberative and extremely time-consuming work you’ve done over the past few years to amend the LDR’s so that they “work better” for guiding the balance of development and land preservation in South Burlington. It certainly has not been easy and you’ll never please everyone, but you’ve made one heck of an effort. As you finalize the amendments for Council review and approval I encourage you to make a final assessment of each of your recommendations to ensure every single one contributes to ensuring SB is doing our very small part to mitigate climate change.

Thanks for reading; I hope this selection of comments has been helpful.

Best Wishes, Dave Kaufman