



FOUNDATION

CASE STUDY

2010 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CITY AT A GLANCE

Population: 38,900
Area: 15.5 square miles
Date of Incorporation: 1865
Mayor: Bob Kiss
Burlington Legacy Project:
Jennifer Green, co-director

SUSTAINABILITY APPROACHES AT A GLANCE

Focus is on the four E's:
Education, Equity, Environment, Economics, as well as:

Inclusion of All Stakeholders:
To realize sustainability, embrace all community stakeholders, residents, non-profits, private and public organizations. Work collaboratively through active involvement of all city residents in governance and decision-making.

Promote Smart Growth:
Target denser growth in areas with public transportation, and provide alternative transportation programs so as to avoid urban sprawl. Commitment to preserving the City's physical and natural environment and strengthening quality of life.

KEY PARTNERS

- Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO)
- Burlington Parks and Recreation Department
- Mayor's Office
- City Council
- Champlain Housing Trust (CHT)
- Burlington Community Development Corporation
- Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)
- Burlington Cohousing Development, LLC (BCOHO)

Burlington, VT



Burlington has been recognized as one of the premier livable cities in the United States with a clean environment and a vibrant lifestyle. The City of Burlington has a high concentration of young adults due to the presence of a number of colleges and universities. However, like all cities, there are major challenges. Much of the housing stock was built prior to 1950. There is a shortage of affordable housing and available housing (at less than 1% levels). Homeownership is less than 50%. Commercial and industrial growth in surrounding areas has led to increasingly dense traffic and commuter times, and thus the condition of Lake Champlain is adversely impacted from urban stormwater run-off.

Burlington's objective is to improve the quality of life for all of its citizens. The City and community are working together to identify and implement selected actions in their comprehensive growth strategy called The Legacy Project.

Structure of the Plan for Sustainable Growth

The Legacy Project began in 1999 with the distribution of thousands of surveys asking for people to share their hopes and dreams for the future of the City. This resulted in a stand-alone sustainability plan called the Legacy Action Plan. It was built with input from all community stake holders. The plan was formally approved by City Council in 2000.

A Legacy Steering Committee, including private and public stakeholders, was formed to ensure broad support, to identify and break down barriers, and to oversee the continuous evolution of the Plan. In 2007, two co-coordinators were hired to lead the implementation of the Legacy Action Plan. They are in the City's Community and Economic Development Office.

Each year, the City's Department Heads review the plan and commit to specific actions that help to realize the goals of the Legacy Project.



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Sustainability Goals and Reporting

The Legacy Project’s common vision for the future includes five themes (presented in the sidebar to the right). Each is addressed in a chapter within the plan, including goal statements, priority actions, and other (non-critical) actions to achieve the overarching objectives. Additional information about the Legacy Action plan can be found at: <http://burlingtonlegacyproject.org/>

The City’s Climate Action Plan is included under the Environmental theme (see #5 in sidebar). The City is actively in the process of updating their Climate Action Plan. Goals include reducing GHG emissions by 20% below 2007 levels by 2020, and by 80% below 2007 levels by 2050.

Workgroups are focusing on:

- Policy, Research, and Education
- Energy Efficiency in Buildings
- Transportation, Telecommunications, and Access
- Renewable Energy Resources
- Waste Reduction and Recycling
- Forestry and Carbon Offsets
- Local Farms, Gardens and Food Production

FACETS OF THE PLAN

1. **Economy:** Maintain Burlington as a regional population, government, cultural, and economic center with livable wage jobs, full employment, social supports, and housing that matches job growth and family income.
2. **Neighborhoods:** Restore and strengthen Burlington’s neighborhoods, while also managing expansion. Encourage interconnectedness, increasing the quality of life, and improving housing options.
3. **Governance:** Ensure that government is responsive and encourage a wide-array of public participation programs.
4. **Youth and Life Skills:** Improve schools and provide other opportunities for lifelong learning.
5. **Environment:** Promote and improve air quality, Lake Champlain water quality, energy and resource conservation.

Example Sustainability Indicator

Neighborhoods

Priority Action: Support public-private partnerships for capitalization, construction, permitting, and inspection assistance to construct affordable housing.

Priority Action: Revise zoning regulations in targeted areas as part of the neighborhood design process to allow “building up, not out,” creating an environment that is safe, accessible, and attractive, while also allowing for scenic viewscales.

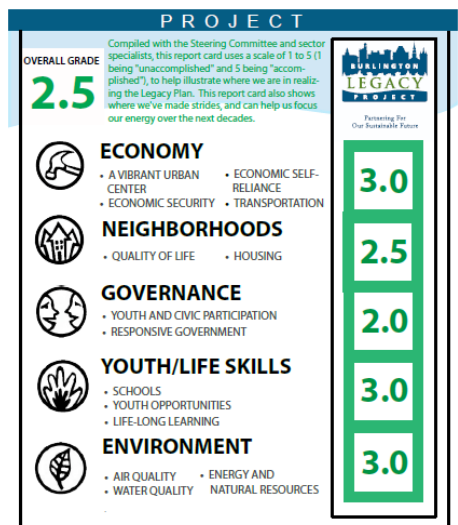
Responsibility and Reporting

The Legacy Steering Committee meets monthly. They monitor a variety of qualitative and quantitative indicators that are used to measure plan success. On an annual basis, the Legacy Project hosts a Town Meeting to celebrate accomplishments for the year and to review and update goals and metrics set out in the Plan. During the 2010 Town Meeting, a Legacy 10-Year Report Card was presented (see sidebar). This report card can be viewed at: <http://burlingtonlegacyproject.org/files/2010/03/reportcardprintable.pdf>

Partnerships

The Legacy Plan fosters and depends upon full engagement with the private and public sectors. The structure of the Legacy Steering Committee is intended to provide continuity during any future changes in leadership.

BURLINGTON LEGACY PROJECT





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Example Implementation of the Plan Burlington Cohousing East Village

The Burlington Cohousing Group had a vision for sustainable and affordable housing that aligned with the goals of the Burlington Legacy Plan. The City secured the property (one of the last undeveloped parcels in Burlington) in order to ensure that it was used for affordable housing, and to protect the neighborhood’s character. East Village is Vermont’s only urban co-housing community. It includes residents with diverse cultures, mixed incomes, and multiple generations. Of the 32 independent private homes, nine are subsidized to be perpetually affordable. The homes are a mix of one, two and three-bedroom apartments, two and three-bedroom townhouses, and two single-family homes. All common areas are fully wheel chair accessible. All townhomes are also accessible by wheelchair.

On 3.5 acres of land next to Centennial Woods Natural Area, the homes are structured (legally) like condos. Each household owns the floors, walls, and ceiling of their unit. Additionally, they collectively own the common areas and grounds. A community building is available for optional group meals, relaxing with friends, as well as a large outdoor green space for play, socializing, and gardening. There is a large organic community garden as well as many fruit and nut trees.

Overall Design: “Smart Growth” principles were built into the overall design, including diverse, affordable housing options, protection of farm and forest land, transportation options with less dependence on the automobile, public services and promotion of social interaction with neighbors. It is a quiet neighborhood that has safe bicycle and pedestrian access, and is close to bus routes, stores, and schools.

Site Design: The property is a natural infill of a former farm site within an existing neighborhood and adjacent to a nature preserve, Centennial Woods. The project protected and expanded Centennial Woods by 3.2 acres. It also expanded the backyards of neighboring Bilodeau Courts providing a natural buffer between the neighborhoods. To protect endangered chestnut, as well as elm and spruce trees and Centennial Brook, an elaborate stormwater management system with 2 holding tanks, leech field was incorporated into the design.

Materials: The best possible “green” materials were selected for construction. New construction buildings have flat roofs to allow for rooftop gardens (currently planned for main building).

Energy Efficiency: Advanced framing and cold climate insulation was installed. Tight construction with impermeable foam insulation sealing was used. Hot water radiant heating is supplied by three ultra high-efficiency Munchkin boilers. Ceiling fans and casement windows allow for summer cooling, and the buildings are oriented to maximize passive solar gain in winter. All spaces are sound rated (Sound Transmission Class-STC 56) to preserve acoustic privacy.

Indoor Environmental Quality: A ventilation system provides constant air exchanges to minimize exposure to indoor air pollution. Living units are plumbed to accommodate central vacuum systems.

EAST VILLAGE AT A GLANCE

Project Type: 32 Cohousing units, with 9 perpetually affordable
Completion Date: 10/1/2007
Project Size: 3.7 acres

Project Team

Developer: Burlington Cohousing Development, LLC, with the assistance of numerous non-profit agencies and professional consultants

Architect: William Maclay Architects

Contractor: Wright and Morrissey, Inc.

Costs

Materials Costs:	\$ 6.3 M
Acquisition/Soft Costs:	\$ 2.0 M
Total Costs	\$ 8.3 M

Affordability

Area Median Income:	\$43,127
% of AMI (avg.):	60–120
Number of Units:	32



View of green common area, with large community vegetable garden located at the far end of the property.



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“The Legacy Steering Committee is an amazing resource of expertise...with this common goal of making Burlington a sustainable place to be.”

— Jennifer Green, Co-Director of The Legacy Plan

“What co-housing does...it brings a community of people who are like-minded but also have their own homes and live their own lives, and yet can share resources and support each other in a wide variety of circumstances.”

— Michael Monte, CEO/CFO, Champlain Housing Trust



Burlington's 7.5 mile recreational waterfront bikeway

Examples of Sustainability Accomplishments

- Educate city staff to recycle 1/3 of trash
- Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Program (EPP)
- Encourage use of natural gas and renewable energy
- Promote energy efficiency projects
- Special tax assessment district to allow access to funding
- Transition city employees to buses, biking and walking
- Grants for Car Share VT memberships for municipal employees
- Develop 1.5 – 2 MW PV rooftop power for 5- 6 schools
- Increase urban tree cover to 50%
- Bringing local foods to school cafeterias and support local farms

Key Contacts

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Challenges and Lessons Learned

For the City, the chief obstacle to implementation of the Legacy Plan is the lack of funding for the various overarching actions. For example the creation of the “eco-park” that would create jobs tied to local agriculture and natural resources is pending until sufficient funding is available. Assistance from congressional leaders is required as well. The Community and Economic Development office helps to solicit and leverage funding for many of the actions.

A second obstacle is the regional nature of many actions identified in the plan. Regional stakeholders must come to the table to work together on the shared vision. For example one goal of the 2030 Plan is to provide Burlington residents with diverse, seamless multi-modal transportation. A great deal of coordination is needed to connect multiple transportation options across multiple neighboring municipalities. Non-profit partners such as Local Motion and CarShare Vermont have been very helpful in addressing this need.