This plan combines the Regional Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) into one integrated plan.

For a healthy, inclusive, and prosperous community.

Adopted 6/19/2013

Chapter 2.6
2.6 Recent Accolades and Concerns for the Future

Accolades
As we look to the future, Vermont, Chittenden County, and Burlington have gained a national reputation for our high quality of life. These can be summarized by looking at some of the accolades that we have received over the past few years. For more detail, please see the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce webpage at http://www.vermont.org/About_Burlington/accolades.aspx.

- 2012 - Vermont is second most peaceful place to live
- 2012 - Forbes: Burlington is One of America's Best Downtowns
- 2012 & 2011 – Healthiest County in the US, Univ. of Wisconsin Population Health Institute County Health Rankings
- 2011- Burlington ranked #1 place for guys by Men's Health
- 2012- Vermont ranked #1 healthiest state by the United Health Foundation for 4th year in a row
- 2011- Top 10 Cities for Outdoor Recreation - Outside Magazine
- 2011- Top 10 for "Volunteering in America"
- 2011- HUD’s HOME Program "Door Knocker Award" for exceptional contribution to affordable housing
- 2011- #1 "Top Ten Small Cities" State of Well-Being
- 2011- Top 10 Real Estates Markets to Watch in 2011 - Inman News
- 2010 - Kiplinger’s (Magazine) Best Cities 2010: Burlington, Vt.
- 2010 - New England’s Most Enjoyed Secret - Vitality Cape Cod Magazine
- 2010 - Burlington, Vermont rated #2 in the best college towns survey by MSN Local Edition.
- 2010 - Burlington, Vermont receives Home Depot Foundation Award of “Excellence for Sustainable Community Development”
- 2010 - #1 Bass Fishing Capital - Outdoor Life
- 2010 - Prettiest Town in America - Forbes.com
- 2010 - Arbor Day Foundation: Tree City USA
- 2010 - One of Best Cities for New Jobs This Spring - Forbes.com
- 2010 - Top 100 Places to Live in America - RelocateAmerica.com
- 2010 - First Wave City - Carbon War Room
- 2009 - Burlington, Vermont named the number 1 healthiest place by women
- 2009 - Children’s Health Magazine has named Burlington the #1 place to raise a family.
- 2008 - #2 in “Greenest Small City in America” contest by Organic Gardening magazine.
- 2008 - Church Street Marketplace named one of 10 Greatest Places in America by the American Planning Association.
- 2008 - BusinessWeek magazine named Burlington Vermont one of the best places to raise your kids & Family Circle named South Burlington one of the 10 best towns for Families.

These accolades reflect many of the positive things we see in our community and our neighbors. They highlight many of the reasons why so many of us love this community and want to keep seeing it improve for ourselves and future generations.
Concerns

While we celebrate the positive aspects of our community, we also owe it to our children and their children to look to the future and work on addressing problems and aspire to do better. There are many questions that we heard from our community reflecting real concerns for the future. These questions include:

- Will my children and their children:
  - Be able to find good paying jobs here?
  - Be able to afford a home here?
  - Enjoy a cleaner Lake Champlain, streams, and rivers?
  - Breathe cleaner air?
  - See and use our rural landscape, farms, and mountains?
  - Have more transportation options?
  - Have to drive twice as far and long to get to their jobs?
  - Want to live in this community?
  - Be part of an equitable community?
  - Retain our small town neighborliness?
  - Be healthier?
  - Be better educated and successful?

These questions reflect many of the concerns that were identified in developing Chapter 2. These concerns require improvement to realize our goals. These are not prioritized, but rather follow the outline of the topics as discussed in Chapter 2 above. We should all understand that these concerns are based on today’s assessment of trends rooted in our current values and will change over time; either as we improve in certain areas or as our values shift over the generations. The current concerns are grouped by broad goal area below.

Natural Systems

1. Habitat Loss - We are experiencing a loss of habitat quality and quantity due to roads, invasive species and development patterns.
2. Unstable Rivers - River corridors are unstable due to alterations and encroachments leaving us susceptible to costly damage from flood events
3. Non-point Source Water Pollution - While we have addressed point sources of pollution, non-point sources are still contributing pollutants to our water bodies.
4. Climate Change - Climate change is a global phenomenon with local impacts. Our region’s climate is already changing; warmer, wetter conditions are expected to increase this century. These changes will adversely impact forest and aquatic communities, water quantity and quality, public health, agriculture, winter sports businesses, and buildings and infrastructure in flood and fluvial erosion hazard areas.
5. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions - Chittenden County emits 1,177,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases (measured as carbon dioxide equivalents). Fossil fuel consumption for transportation and heating accounts for almost 88% of our emitted greenhouse gases.
6. Climate Health Impacts - We can expect hotter summers that increase the frequency and severity of heat-stress illness and vector-borne diseases (such as Lyme disease, West Nile virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis).

Social Community

7. Tobacco Use and Substance abuse - Rates of tobacco use have decreased from 20% in 1999 to 13% in 2008. Despite this significant decrease, exposure to second-hand smoke is high among youth and adults. Rates of substance abuse are increasing; meanwhile access to mental health services is inadequate.
8. Obesity - The prevalence of obesity is uniformly high across economic groups and has increased dramatically over the last 20 years.
9. Emergency Preparedness – Improvements need to be made in the areas of emergency planning, training, and operations centers.
10. K-12 proficiency - Improvements need to be made pre-K-12 to increase proficiency in reading, writing, math and science.
11. Workforce Development – We must support and expand existing programs to address labor pool and training gaps. We must also design a specific approach to assist current workforce education and training partners to assure that the required skill sets and workplace readiness skills are widely available to business.
12. Inclusion – There is a concern that members of underrepresented communities are not well connected and involved with governmental decisions. This includes the concern about their knowledge of the different government processes.
13. Disparities - Disparities in educational results, health, incarceration, and income exist for people of color and low income populations.
14. Aging – There is a general concern that we focus on and address the aging of our community and what that means for us in the future.

Economic Infrastructure

15. Job Opportunities – We need to keep encouraging our existing and new employers to grow so that our children have employment opportunities here and do not have to leave to find work.
16. Manufacturing Diversity - Our manufacturing sector lacks diversity leaving us susceptible to changes.
17. Industrial Sites - There is a lack of industrial sites to accommodate future economic growth.
18. STEM - We have a strong innovation economy, but increasing the labor force skills in science, technology, engineering and technology (STEM) remains a high need.
19. Housing Cost - Decreasing the cost of housing would help in attracting workers to our region.
20. Working Lands Loss- Sustaining our working lands is a challenge because there is greater monetary value in developing land than maintaining it as a farm or productive forest; in addition some local products are undervalued (i.e. milk, saw timber).

Built Environment
21. Sprawl - Over the last 60 years development trends, zoning regulations, and consumer preference have shifted growth away from metropolitan areas around Burlington to more suburban and rural locales resulting in large amounts of land consumed and high infrastructure costs. This trend seems to have reversed since 2005 and we need to stay on this new course.

22. Lack of Rental Housing – An increase of 1,000 rental housing units is needed in the County by 2015 to maintain a conservative vacancy rate of 1.4%. We will not reach that number based on currently approved developments. In addition, a healthier vacancy rate may be much higher to increase housing choices and lower rents, while maintaining a vibrant economy. This would result in a need much greater than 1,000 rental units by 2015. However, this must be balanced by a viable market – developers will build more units when most of the existing units are occupied.

23. Affordable Homes - An increase of 1,000 homeownership units in the County priced under $300,000 is needed by 2015 to increase housing choices and lower costs. This need could be met through existing permitted developments, however many are not being built due to challenges with condominium financing. For the same reason as mentioned above, the 1,000 units is based on a conservative vacancy rate figure.

24. Maintenance of Existing Housing – There is a need to adequately maintain existing housing stock to preserve it as a viable option for the future.

25. Supportive Housing - There is a need to increase the number of units of permanent supportive housing throughout the County in addition to Burlington. Supportive housing is a combination of housing and services intended as a cost-effective way to help people live more stable, productive lives. Supportive housing is widely believed to work well for those who face the most complex challenges—individuals and families who have very low incomes and/or disabilities, and/or may suffer from substance abuse, addiction or alcoholism, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, or other serious challenges to a successful life.

26. Mode Share - While our rate of driving alone to work increased by 36% between 1980 and 2000 (to 76% of all work trips), in more recent years this trend has shown improvement to 71% in 2010. We’ve also seen a nearly 60% increase in transit ridership the past decade. Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) per person is also on the decline, down 8% between 2000 and 2010. It is imperative that we maintain these positive recent trends in order to reduce congestion, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, and more efficiently utilize all of our transportation resources.

27. Road System & Funding - Roadway condition is rated poor or worse for over half of the arterial highway mileage in Chittenden County. The costs associated with maintaining and improving this infrastructure exceeds our fiscal capacity to fully address it. Nor do we have adequate funds needed to grow transit, walking/biking, and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs. Compounding our poor roadway conditions and inadequate investment, transportation funding in general is overly reliant on the state and federal gas taxes which are decreasing in value as inflation lowers purchasing power and revenues decline due to improving vehicle fuel efficiency and fewer VMT. The prospect of less funding in a time of increasing transportation investment need is a worrisome trend and needs to be addressed.
28. Energy Conservation - Vermont and Chittenden County lead the nation with respect to initiatives that support efficiency and renewable energy, however, more efficiency programs are needed for non-regulated thermal fuels and energy for transportation to keep costs down and to reduce GHG emissions.

29. Renewables Siting - With the rise of renewable energy sources, municipalities are struggling with being left out of the conversation and are making specific recommendations within their Town Plans regarding how they want the Public Service Board to review petitions in their Towns.

30. Water and Wastewater – In order for municipalities to implement their plans for future growth in their urban or village improved water and wastewater services (both on-site, community systems, and sewer) are often necessary, including financial assistance. Colchester, Essex Junction, Huntington, Hinesburg, Westford, and Williston were among the municipalities raising this concern.

31. Stormwater Investments – Municipalities are committed to making improvements in storm water quality, but are concerned about the costs and how to pay for them.

We are at a time of choice. Do we allow things to keep going the way they are? Do we take steps to achieve the best future possible?

See Chapter 3 for strategies and actions to address these concerns.