



Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

January 13, 2014

Open Letter to the People of Burlington,

Happy New Year!

Thank you again for your trust and support over the last 21 months – we will be working hard to continue making good on that confidence throughout 2014.

This past year included two of the most inclusive and transparent planning processes our City has ever attempted: PlanBTV and the Public Investment Action Plan (PIAP). PlanBTV, a vision of the future worthy of our dynamic, vibrant, committed City, involved two years' research, more than 100 public events, with more than 1,200 participants from our community – residents, workers, business, and nonprofits, and resulted in an award-winning plan. PIAP – an implementation effort designed to move PlanBTV elements from concept to reality – generated 120 initial proposals that have been winnowed to nine detailed final proposals.

Together, these two initiatives have generated new ideas and energy, and clarified our current opportunities for progress in the City's long-term effort to reclaim the waterfront from its historic, industrial past. Today, I am pleased to announce my support for a slate of six projects totaling up to \$7.5 million in new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) investment plus \$2.1 million in reauthorized TIF investment.

Collectively, this slate of investments will accomplish a number of key waterfront goals, without impacting municipal property tax rates:

- **Strengthen existing waterfront resources.** The slate includes investments in beloved elements of today's waterfront: the Community Sailing Center, ECHO, and Waterfront Park.
- **Resolve the use of the abandoned Moran site.** The proposed slate will both determine the use of the land immediately surrounding the Moran building, and define a path to near-term resolution of the future of the building.
- **Increase public access and use of the waterfront and Lake Champlain.** All proposed projects include public elements that will bring more residents and visitors to the waterfront. Some projects include features that will increase the public's access to the lake itself.
- **Protect Lake Champlain and continue Burlington's leadership in water quality efforts.** The proposed projects include important new public infrastructure that will protect Lake Champlain from stormwater run-off, improve public education about lake protection, and continue Burlington's leadership on stormwater issues.

- **Leverage additional investment that creates economic opportunity and grows City revenues.** The proposed \$9.6 million of project investments are conceptually anticipated to leverage approximately \$33 million of non-municipal direct investment. In addition, municipal tax revenues are projected to grow annually, with indirect economic activity increasing by \$15 million.

I am respectfully requesting that the City Council approve ballot language supporting the following slate of public investments at their January 27, 2014 meeting, and that Burlington voters approve this item on Town Meeting Day. The proposed slate consists of the following projects:

- **New Moran: up to \$6.3 million for a mixed-use redevelopment of the building with a focus on green energy innovation, local foods, and a multi-purpose arts and events space.** The proposed investment includes \$4.2 million of new TIF investment and reauthorization of a \$2.1 million investment previously approved by the City Council in 2011. Key elements of this investment include:
 - New Moran will be developed and managed by a new, independent non-profit that will assume the project's pre-development, construction, and operating risk. The City will invest its TIF funds only after the New Moran team has secured tenants and the balance of the financing for the approximately \$25 million project and taken steps to guarantee the long-term financial viability of the project.
 - The local New Moran team has presented a proposal that represents an exciting vision for the building – arguably the most exciting vision proposed in 30 years of redevelopment efforts – and has garnered an enormous amount of support from other significant, credible, local individuals and organizations.
 - The New Moran proposal represents the last hope for the many Burlingtonians who, like me, see value in the existing structure and would like to see it redeveloped successfully.
 - The New Moran team's plan is ambitious, complex, will take time to accomplish, and success is not guaranteed. Because we cannot return to the years of uncertainty and minimal progress that marked the last redevelopment effort, my support for New Moran is conditioned on the team achieving critical milestones and demonstrating steady progress.
 - After three decades of efforts, it is time to resolve the uncertainty regarding the future of the northern waterfront. If New Moran proves infeasible, it will be time to acknowledge that the building has become an obstacle to waterfront progress. In the proposed PIAP ballot language, I am requesting the authority from voters for resolution: in the event the Administration and City Council determine that New Moran cannot be completed in a timely manner, the City will use TIF funds to demolish the building.
 - A vote for the PIAP slate is a vote for resolution of the Moran building and site.
- **Waterfront Park Upgrades: \$800,000 for improved electrical and water infrastructure to enhance Vermont's most visited public park.** These Waterfront Park upgrades will enable the City to better serve waterfront events while mitigating the impacts of events on neighbors and other users of the park and Bike Path.
- **Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center (CSC): \$500,000 to support site improvements for a permanent home and new building for the CSC.** It is time for the 20-year-old Community Sailing Center to have a permanent home on the waterfront. The proposed TIF investment will leverage approximately \$4.5 million of independent investment by the Sailing Center and allow the Sailing Center to expand its programs and services that allow hundreds of Vermonters from all backgrounds to enjoy the Lake every summer.

- **Burlington Harbor Marina: \$500,000 to create a marina on our northern waterfront to meet the burgeoning need for boats slips in our harbor.** The proposed TIF investment will leverage approximately \$4.5 million in private investment, create jobs, and generate substantial new revenues to the City. The proposed marina would include public piers stretching into Lake Champlain, and serve as breakwater protection for both the marina and Community Sailing Center. The proposal also includes public bathrooms, a variety of currently lacking marina amenities, and water taxi service to increase public access along the entire waterfront.
- **ECHO Center Sustainability Park: \$500,000 to support creation of new outdoor amenities, educational installations, and lake protection facilities on land surrounding ECHO.** New plantings, a boardwalk extension, stormwater mitigation, and educational installations all would be constructed in a first phase of what ultimately is envisioned to be an approximately \$3.8 million enhancement to the ECHO site, with the balance to be funded without further direct City investment.
- **Waterfront Access North: \$500,000 for increased access to the northern waterfront, landscaping, environmental remediation, lake protection, and utility relocation.** Waterfront Access North currently is in construction after support by the voters last fall. This additional investment will enable the project to support the use of the Moran site, a permanent home for the Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center, and a marina.
- The proposed total TIF authorization also includes \$500,000 to support the City's management of the TIF district during the years ahead of project implementation.

The Perkins Pier Marina and the Cherry Street Promenade PIAP proposals are both exciting, important projects that the City will continue to explore. However, because of limited funding and timing considerations, those projects are not being included in my recommended PIAP slate at this time.

One year ago, we could not have anticipated the extraordinary amount of energy, creativity, and partnership created by the Public Investment Action Plan. I want to thank the hundreds of Burlingtonians who participated in the PIAP process, the members of the Public Investment Team, and the many City employees who worked very hard to get us to this point. I have never been more excited about the future of our great City.

Sincerely,

Miro Weinberger
Mayor