

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE PROPERTY

REPORT FOR THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF BURLINGTON



NOVEMBER 12, 2001

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INTRODUCTION

For the past several months, Mayor Peter Clavelle has asked that a group of City staff and Boards work together in order to develop an Administration position regarding the conservation and re-development of the Catholic Diocese properties on North Ave. This report is the result of those efforts, and includes the following:

- ❖ A set of principles that would be used to guide the Administrations position on the development of the Catholic Diocese property;
- ❖ Information about the site, including zoning, infrastructure and utilities, as well as natural, archeological and historic preservation issues;
- ❖ Minutes from the public meeting and the charette; and
- ❖ Several concept drawings that could guide any future redevelopment of the site.

It should be noted that the report does not:

- ❖ Test the feasibility or marketability of any development;
- ❖ Determine the exact number of housing units that should be constructed, nor prescribe the specific tenure type or the sale price or rents for each unit;
- ❖ Fully measure the costs and benefits of any development;
- ❖ Measure the specific impacts of any development, particularly traffic.

Several City Departments participated in the development of this Report and recommendations. The Community and Economic Development Office, the Department of Planning and Zoning, and members of the Conservation Commission wrote the report and facilitated this activity. The Parks and Recreation Department, the Cemetery Department and members of its Commission, and the Department of Public Works also anticipated.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIOCESE PROPERTY

The development of the Catholic Diocese property should be guided by the following principles:

- That housing of all types should be incorporated into the development, including housing that will serve a range of income types and that provide opportunity for homeownership as well as rental opportunities;
- That there be generous amounts of open space, and that the open space should be open to the public;
- That the entire waterfront area west of bikepath should be public;
- That the public should have access to the beach area and to the bike path through property;
- That the bluffs directly east of the bike path should be protected from any construction and development;
- That the development be sensitive and protect significant natural features, especially the path and tree scape on the bluffs, as well as cultural resources, such as the old orphanage;
- That neighborhood commercial uses that serve the local neighborhood be allowed and as a result, that consideration be given to allow currently prohibited uses;
- That development of this property should enhance revitalization of Old North End (specifically commerce along North Avenue);
- That the development should support alternative modes of transportation in order to minimize traffic impacts; and
- That a modest amount of cemetery expansion may be allowed.

GENERAL SITE CHARACTERISICS

The land under consideration for redevelopment by the Catholic Archdiocese in Burlington includes 31+ acres of (largely) undeveloped land and two buildings: a single family home with detached garage (currently being used as a social service facility) and a 4+ story, early 19th century brick building that was home to an orphanage, with a 1940s addition off of the south end. The building is located on the west side of North Avenue, adjacent to a city cemetery. Of note is the sense of pastoral serenity and the magnificent and expansive views of Lake Champlain from all parts of the site.

The site consists of three individual parcels, all owned by the Archdiocese. The parcels include: 351 North Avenue (14.47 acres), 329 North Avenue (9.57 acres) and 311 North Avenue (7.32 acres), for a total of 31.36 acres. See map below. The neighborhood in which this building sits is predominantly low density residential, with a combination of single-family homes, and a few businesses (Yankee Medical, The Vermont Women's Health Center, and a gas station) immediately across the street to the east. To the north is a City Cemetery and to the south is a ravine and a railroad tunnel connecting Burlington and Winooski. The western edge, bounded by the Burlington Bike Path, consists of steep slopes that are forested with a combination of red oak, red maple, white birch and white pine, as well as scrub growth and a variety of common local flora.

The general topography of the site consists of lightly rolling hills and extensive forestation to the south. An informal footpath runs from the southeastern edge of the site (accessed from North Avenue), west towards the lake and along the western edge of the combined parcels. The path is highly used by North End residents for dog walking, as well as direct access to the Burlington Bike Path.

ZONING

The site is zoned as Waterfront Residential Medium (WRM), allowing for the site to be developed with a total of 20 units/acre. This amounts to 627 units PLUS 94 inclusionary units for a total of 721 units. Other permitted residential and non-residential uses are allowed on the site. Other housing types including boarding and convalescence, and non-residential uses including: agriculture, daycare, funeral homes, aquarium, bike path, community centers and clubs, hospitals, libraries, rail, parks, police station, post office, recreational facilities and places of worship.

There is a 35' height limit within the first 200' of the lakefront – using mean high water, and the height limit is 60' beyond that. There is an exemption: you are allowed to build up to height of existing building if it is higher. Height is measured from the mean of North Avenue measured halfway up the pitched roof, and extended out in a plane. As a result, a building on the lower slope could be 115' tall. Regardless of zoning the project must still go through City master plan and design review.

INCLUSIONARY ZONING

Lot coverage is 60%, with an Inclusionary Zoning bonus increase to 72%. Maximum building height is 60 feet and 25% of the total units are required to be affordable, as defined in the City's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. The affordable units must be developed on-site.

INFRASTRUCTURE

All City infrastructure reaches this site: water, sewer, electricity. Of major concern to the City is the capacity of the site and the surrounding neighborhood to bear the impact of full development of the site.

TRAFFIC

Information gleaned from Justin Rabidoux of Burlington's Department of Public Works notes the difficulty in assuming levels of traffic and associated levels of congestion, without aid of a formal traffic study. He acknowledges that higher buildout would likely necessitate incorporation of a traffic signal at the intersection to this development because of the fact that traffic generated by this development has only one outlet – North Avenue. Public transportation runs by the site in both directions and, depending on the scale and ultimate land use (condos vs. single family homes vs. apartments) of the development, more circulation options may need to be offered. Maybe one-way traffic through the project would be helpful.

WATER/SEWER

From Steve Roy of Public Works:

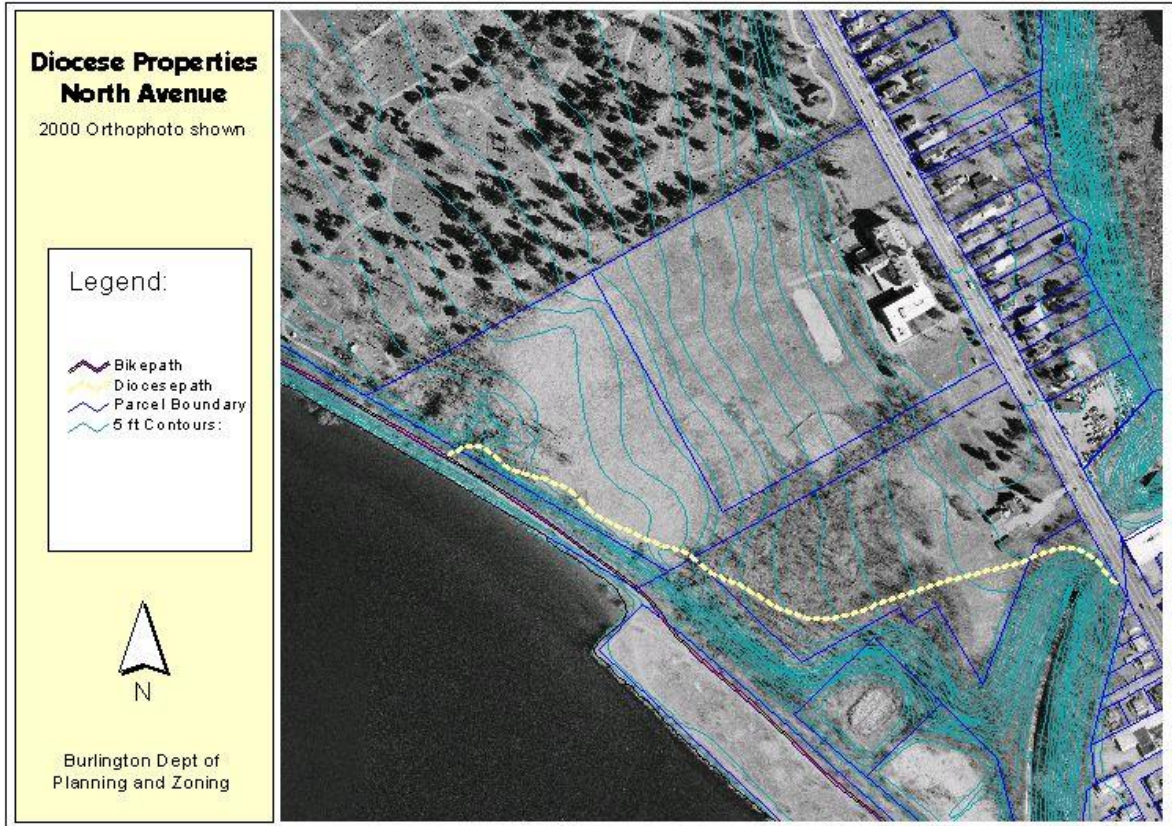
1. Water supply and distribution (to this site) is no problem. There are twin 12' water lines.
2. Wastewater would be treated at our Main plant. Available capacity from a project of this magnitude could become a concern depending on existing commitments against our reserves.
3. The wastewater collection system for this area is a 15" combined sewer pipe on North Avenue. We made it clear that they would have to install a flow monitor in this pipe for a few weeks to obtain current average and peak flows. We would use this data to model what could happen during large storm events (i.e. 1 year, 10 year).
4. A wastewater pumping station serving this site may need to have adequate storage to attenuate the peak flows typically associated with residential developments, and perhaps may require a control system to prevent pumping during storm events. Could be largest station in Burlington.
5. Metering device w/off peak sensor to discharge during the night may be an option
6. Stormwater runoff would have to be treated in accordance with the State's draft stormwater guidelines.
7. There is a million gallons of unused sewage capacity – unreserved. There is also reserved capacity.
8. Water treatment/proximity to the lake is an issue.
9. North plant has been declining in use.

ARCHEOLOGICAL

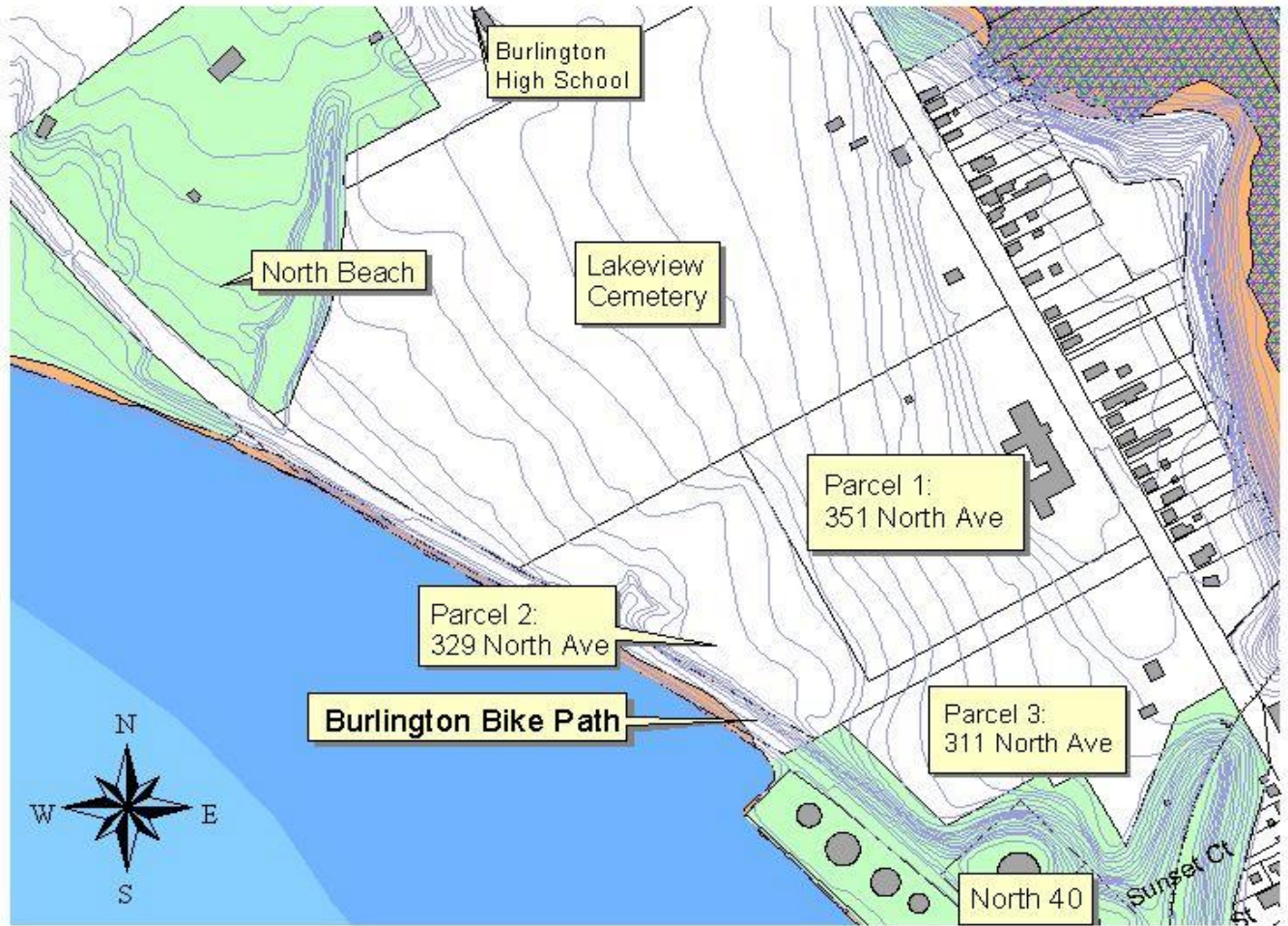
Sand was sold from a "borrow pit" all along the base of the property – therefore most archeological evidence probably destroyed. High potential for significant sites. Scott Dillon believes there is a known site but can't find the documentation. Did fill out standard ACT 250 form.

CEMETERY NEEDS

Life expectancy of current cemetery system is 10 – 15 years. Cemetery digs about 145 lots/year. There are about 1000 burials/acre, and therefore one acre will last about 6.90 years. Security is an issue – has to be fenced off. Cremations still take up lot size. Homes and military funerals could be incompatible. There are few alternatives: land behind the high school is ledge, and land in Intervale is floodplain. Providing cemetery space is not a legal obligation of Municipality. Regional alternatives have not been explored.



Catholic Archdiocese Properties on North Avenue (3 contiguous parcels on west side of North Ave)



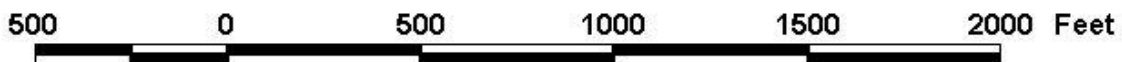
Parcel 1: 351 North Avenue
 Square Footage: □630,122sf
 Building Value: □\$6,677,500
 Land Value: □□\$310,600
 Assessed Value: □\$6,988,100

Parcel 2: 329 North Avenue
 Square Footage: □416,896sf
 Building Value: □\$ n/a
 Land Value: □□\$244,800
 Assessed Value: □\$244,800

Parcel 3: 311 North Avenue
 Square Footage: □318,918sf
 Building Value: □\$174,800
 Land Value: □□\$258,800
 Assessed Value: □\$433,600

Geographic/Environmental Features

-  5 ft Contours
-  Building Footprint (1979)
-  Significant Natural Area
-  Wetland
- Floodplains**
-  100-year
-  500-year additional



NATURAL RESOURCES INFORMATION: SITE CONDITIONS & FLORA

From the perspective of the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program, this site has several interesting to significant features. Although the sand beach is highly disturbed by human use and the rock fill for the bikepath, this is a continuation of North Beach and is still a site of statewide significance. Lake sand beach is considered a rare natural community type in Vermont, and all of our examples are degraded.

The whole site above the bike path is part of the Winooski River mouth sand delta, formed thousands of years ago during the period when Lake Champlain was a much larger lake and then a saltwater sea. This delta has deep sands that were deposited in shallow water at the mouth of the formerly larger lake/sea. These deep sands are mapped as Adams Windsor B on the NRCS soil survey for Chittenden County. This is the setting for another very rare natural community type in Vermont - the pine-oak-heath sandplain forest.

The Diocese site has been highly manipulated in the past and the only place where there is a small remnant of this rare forest type is in the northwest corner of the site. Here there are red oaks, red maple, white birch and other species characteristic of the community type. This remnant is too small to be considered of statewide significance, but is interesting none-the-less and may be considered significant at the local level. Restoration of sandplain forest on this site would be a very difficult undertaking, especially considering its small size and the abundance of exotic species at the site (Norway maple, black locust, buckthorns, and honeysuckle), however sandplain characteristics would increase and persist over time.

The western edge of the delta on this property forms an impressive bluff overlooking Lake Champlain. This bluff and the adjacent top of the delta strike me as a very significant natural area for the city. This bluff is mostly forested and over time it seems that it would be possible to reduce the abundance of exotic species and encourage native trees, shrubs, and herb. There are already numerous impressive red oaks and cottonwoods, and one white oak. It seems that there is high potential to manage the western side of the delta and the bluff as a natural area that could be enjoyed by many people in the city.

Submitted By:
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CONSERVATION VALUES

- The primary importance of the property is that it is a continuous and large piece of undeveloped land in a highly urbanized section of Burlington, with few other opportunities for open space access. The property is adjacent to the HUD-designated Old North End Enterprise Community. Land features include a steep forested bank, fields, woods and ravine.
- The property serves as an important, well-used recreation corridor, allowing local residents pedestrian access to the Burlington Bikeway and North Beach¹.
- In addition to being a recreation travel corridor, other recreational uses of the land are important to local residents. These include kite flying, skiing, biking, berry picking, sledding and walking.
- Throughout the whole Burlington Bikeway, one of the most aesthetically pleasing sections is where the path traverses this property. This is because of the natural, undeveloped experience the property affords. Preserving the natural corridor surrounding the bike path is important to keeping this value intact.
- The land serves as an important viewshed from Lake Champlain, creating an aesthetically pleasing natural region².
- The land serves as a corridor for wildlife to travel between the Intervale and Lake Champlain³. Animals include fox, deer and coyote.
- The wooded area serves as a sustainable forest community and, along with the open fields, provides habitat for a variety of wildlife.
- The land has potential for environmental research and education, owing to its close proximity to user populations.
- Community gardening has been practiced on the land, and has the potential to be reintroduced.

1. City of Burlington, VT. *Open Space Protection Plan*. September 2000. Page 32.

2. Ibid. Page 27.

3. Winooski Valley Park District. *Where the Wild Things Are: Large Mammal Habitat Corridors in Burlington, Vermont*. October 2000.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INFORMATION

311 North Ave.

- Built in 1923 by Dr. Waldo Upton as a private residence.
- Building is in the Bungalow style, and is distinctive for its irregular plan, deep verandas, and field stone construction.
- Original building is listed on the State Register of Historic Places (~1978) and is likely eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Original building is ~2,300 sq.ft., with a ~2,000 sq.ft. addition added in 1982.
- Property is owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, and is currently used as a group home by the Howard Center for Human Services.



351 North Ave.

- Built in 1884 as an orphanage run by the Sisters of Providence (Montreal).
- Structure was designed by Rev. Cyril Beaudry, C.S.V. of Joliette, Qu. The stone foundation was laid in 1879 by Guy Willard. James Ross of Rutland was the General Contractor, and Cummings and Son did the masonry from bricks made by Francis LeClair of Winooski.
- Building is a large 4.5-story Victorian with a gable sided orientation and large rear ell. Original building is ~61,000 sq.ft., A 3-story modern addition added to the south in 1940, and the building was renovated in 1975.
- Building is listed on the State Register of Historic Places (~1978) and is likely eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Building originally known as the “Providence Orphan Asylum and Hospital,” and later the “St. Joseph’s Child Center.” Building was run as an orphanage until 1983.
- Property is owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, and is currently used as the Diocesan administrative offices.



CHARRETTE MINUTES

Thursday, October 4, 2001

At the Wastewater Treatment Plant, 53 Lavallee Lane, Burlington

The charrette began at approximately 8:45am.

Attending

City Staff: Michael Monte (CEDO); Brian Pine (CEDO); Owiso Makuku (CEDO); David Charboneau (Cemeteries); Wayne Gross (Parks); Bob Whalen (Parks); David White (Planning and Zoning); Ken Lerner (Planning and Zoning); and Justin Rabidoux (Public Works)

Elected and Appointed Officials: Peter Clavelle (Mayor); Harris Roen (Conservation Board); Don Meals (Conservation Board); Dick Kieslich (Cemetery Commission).

Charette Resource People: Michael Healy (facilitator); Mark Hamlin (Landscape Architect); Jeff Glassberg (Preservation and Development Consultant); Alison Grinnell and Andrew Huff (Recorders).

Charrette Goals

The goal of the charrette was to build consensus among City departments and Commissions most directly influenced by the development of the Catholic Diocese property and to formulate a unified and coherent Administration position regarding the conservation and re-development of the Catholic Diocese properties on North Ave.

Review Information On-Site Resources

The meeting began with a review of the following site conditions, characteristics and resources, to inform all present of the influence (or potential influence) of various factors on the development of the site:

- Zoning Profile presented by Ken Lerner
- Infrastructure and Utilities presented by Justin Rabidoux
- Natural Resource Survey presented by Harris Roen
- Historic Preservation Survey presented by David White
- Archeological Assessment presented by Don Meals (checklist submitted as documentation)
- Cemetery Needs presented by David Charboneau
- Summary/highlighting of major points made during previous night's meeting with residents presented by David White

Review City Plans & Policies

David White gave a summary of pertinent City Plans and Policies including the City of Burlington's Master Plan, Open Space Plan and Consolidated Plan. David read a few excerpts directly from these plans. The Waterfront Open Space Plan was referenced by Mayor Clavelle as research that identified and addressed some of the development issues facing the site.

Brainstorm Possible Uses and City Needs

Michael Healy then led participants in a brainstorming session, during which various aspects/facets of the site and issues pertaining to the development of the site were identified that would influence its physical development. Identification and prioritization of these issues were to carry over into the creation of Guiding Principles that would help to establish the City's position on the development of the site, as well as influence the afternoon's "visualization" session for how the development of the parcels might occur.

After an exhaustive list of issues was created, each participant was given an opportunity to vote for five "priority" issues for the development of the site (emphasis was put on the overall vision for the site, rather than concentration of support for issues pertaining solely to one's professional field.)

The brainstorm list, with their priority votes, included:

- Diversity of Housing uses (rental, home ownership, condos, assisted living facility, co housing, mixed income, special needs) 11
- Protect shoreline from becoming private beach (public access) 7
- Open space – overlook views 6
- Community gardens 5
- preserve existing path as public access to beach and bike path 5
- Transportation Hub – train stop – park and ride 4
- Neighborhood Commercial uses 4
- Cemetery land 4
- Hotel – inn 3
- Large Recreation uses (ball stadium, Recreation Center, sports fields) 3
- Small Recreation uses (playground structure) 3
- Beach protection 3
- Bikepath connection 3
- Day care 2
- School 2
- Different scales of open space 2
- Preserving feature trees 2
- Protection of cultural resources (historical, archeological) 2
- Reuse of building 1
- Wildlife corridor 1
- Passive recreation 1
- Public library
- Community center
- Internal; roadway system
- Roadway connection through waterfront
- Internal pedestrian system
- Place of worship
- Catholic Diocese Property
- Light industry
- Other commercial uses (offices, corporate headquarters)

Priorities and Principles

Nine issues emerged as "priorities" and specifically addressed in the subsequent process of formulating the principles that would guide the development of the site. Priorities included:

1. Large and small recreational uses
2. Transportation hub/transportation links to Burlington and region
3. Neighborhood commercial uses
4. Open Space (overlook, views)
5. Protect shoreline from becoming a private beach, ensuring continued public access
6. Community gardens
7. Widely used North-Ender path through the site
8. Cemetery Land
9. Diversity of housing types and uses

The principles were articulated as follows:

1. Can consider currently prohibited uses (e.g. cemetery expansion onto this WRM zoned property).
2. Protection of bluffs (no building zone).
3. Public access to beach through property.
4. Entire waterfront of property is public (west of bikepath).
5. Pay attention to significant natural features, as well as cultural resources.
6. Housing --> mixed income, mixed tenure.
7. Open space of developed diocese property open to the public.
8. Neighborhood commercial uses serving local neighborhood.
9. Development of this property should enhance revitalization of Old North End (specifically, commerce along North Avenue).
10. Support alternative modes of transportation.
11. Modest amount of cemetery expansion may be allowed.

Site Walk

From approximately 12:30 to 1:30pm, charrette participants took a walking tour of the Catholic Diocese property and adjacent sites including the cemetery and the beach.

Site Planning

Upon return to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, the principles were reviewed and the hands on design process started, with Mark Hamlin helping participants to "visualize" the aforementioned principles.

Five different design iterations were produced of the site, with different "interest" groups taking a lead role in highlighting the facet of the design/development of the site that was of greatest import their interest.

The charrette adjourned at approximately 3:30pm. For further information, please contact Owiso Makuku in the Community & Economic Development Office at 865-7177.

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

A public meeting was held on October 3 to discuss resident opinions about the potential development of the Catholic Diocese property. After welcome and introductions, those attending were provided with information about the site including Site Characteristics, Zoning, Natural, Cultural, and Recreational Resources. About 20 people attended, mostly from Ward 3 & 7 NPA's, and mostly from the surrounding neighborhood.

Summary:

- More preservation of open space as you move closer to the lake
- Development concentrated near the road
- People would like a common play ground
- Most people like development on the orphanage parcel.
- Mostly residential supported
- Not much response to other uses.
- Some mention of shared parking uses.
- More open space.
- Minimum: bike path/lake; Maximum: Sliding/Woods
- None advocated any new development or full development
- The existing walking path goes thru areas they like.
- Access to lake is critical
- Wild experience – Natural
- View corridors
- Concerned about traffic

A more detailed description of the public comments follows.

General

- Residents of O.N.E. have access to this natural area.
- Respect uses of area but have a community of housing. Lots of green around area too. Also considers cars → keep in one area.
- Can't always consider what people/residents want. Need to consider owner of land & greater community.
- Mini-mart in that community.
- Public land, but some people only know that land in terms of a natural area (for low-income residents) develop it and it's gone.
- Are there parts more used/more important green areas?
- If build high income housing, low income may not use it anymore.
- Will end up with a compromise but, it is a bad idea for quality of life for current residents. Make it inviting to all.
- If Burlington → Essex RR, Intervale and this area will be used by that.
- North Avenue traffic from Burlington College to Sherman Street in the morning.
- If developed, more traffic.
- Question idea of dense development here will stop sprawl. This won't change that. Open field is rare!
- Like mixed residential and open space.
- Question: Other green space around?
Answer: No.

Redevelopment Of The Catholic Diocese Property

- Beach, Rockpoint, Waterfront. Include assisted living site – less traffic. Also, affordable, elderly, etc.
- Discussion of this land not around being selfish for land. Need to do what cities do. Context of larger city.
- Density in parcel #1. Clustered Parcels #2 and #3: Conservation land.
- Playground- neighborhood, family friendly.
- Community garden.
- Playground ☺ Rockpoint is not open to public, not a neighborhood resource
- Space open to all, not just private yards
- What about an Open Space Plan? Doesn't say every open area should be kept that. Tries to find a balance, no firm lines.
- This area is zoned residential. Open Space Plan doesn't say anything about this land.
- Parks Dept., CEDO and others are trying to work together.
- Housing with low car traffic good.
- Liability issues for owner. Some protection issues for owners re: inappropriate use by owner or users.
- Trinity and this land are being looked at for "building up".
- Public transportation to that area.
- Keep in mind rights of property owners.
- A community center.
- Parking away from buildings.
- Co-housing model involves self-governance, can decide on car issues.
- Remember McCauley Square. Issues of housing and open space were not firm before-hand and posed problems.
- Respect church owns. Neighbors pay property taxes. Church doesn't. Remember: We already live densely and it's an important resource.
- Public transportation can't be relied on to lessen traffic. Remember traffic ↑!
- "City" assesses all of these impacts beforehand, including traffic.
- Developer considers that too for property value.
- Relevant City departments review #s and assessment.
- North Avenue bus is most used bus.
- Like the trail, but need housing too. These need to be the priorities and keep access.
- Not just pedestrian access, bikes too.
- Re: traffic → crosswalks (need much improvement.) People aren't stopping for pedestrians. Stop lights? Other ideas?
- No specific project, only some opportunities.
- Tell Conservation Board, we want open space.
- Including community resources there will keep the public using it.
- If you provide services, traffic will increase.
- Design will hopefully have a 'village-like' archetype.
- Parking will include am and pm for workers.
- Assessment of property.
- No plan for redevelopment from City, no ownership.
- Goal: share info and opinions tonight.
- Question: Timeline?

Redevelopment Of The Catholic Diocese Property

Answer: Not fixed, at this point. Catholic Diocese owns property.

- Pomerleau and Gilbane- still researching zoning, etc. Hopefully by December
- See map for site being discussed
- Parcel #1: 4½ acres
- Parcel #2: 10 acres
- Parcel #3: 7+ acres
- Other site conditions: (physical) RR tracks to Winooski, Cemetery by BHS, Steep slopes
- Public transportation on North Avenue will be considered
- Inclusionary zoning – way of getting affordable housing in area
- Affordable units need to be on site at Waterfront → mixed income
- 721 is maximum units
- Asphalt and other developing can cover 72%.
- Rental - 65% of median income
- Ownership – 75% of median income
- These are affordable housing costs.

Natural Resources

- Most of property is open except mixed forest bordering water.
- Trail from North Avenue to bike path, used often by residents.
- State ecologists → found invasive species, far western corner has most natural species. Wildlife cross road to Intervale: pheasants, deer, fox, etc.

St. Joseph's Orphanage

- Out of operation in '80s.
- Now home to Catholic Diocese.
- The property extends to the shoreline, with exception of bike path.
- Question: How long is lease with Howard Center of second building?
Answer: Don't know.
- Question: Three separate parcels → three separate deeds?
Answer: They can be split.
- Question: Possible for private beach at that property?
Answer: Theoretically yes, but has been used publicly for years. (Michael Monte)
- New North End uses area often.
- Water, sewer services, etc. traffic.
- Depends on type of housing.
- Sewage from that area gets pumped to wastewater treatment plant
- Question: Archeological research?
Answer: Not now, no assessment because area has been disturbed by railroad on shoreline, findings will be disturbed

Issues and Opportunities

- Educational and financial opportunities for archeological research. (UVM, tourist, etc.)
- 40,000 square feet being used, orphanage is not being used.
- Trying to understand what the Catholic Diocese's needs are before decisions are made.

Redevelopment Of The Catholic Diocese Property

- Conservation meeting last year, no conversation with them regarding money.
- Would like to see wildlife areas on edge of property preserved.
- Fence around area may be damaged, so wildlife can pass through
- Uses be clustered to maximize open space. Develop by road
- Preserve land by Water, but remain accessible
- Think about Burlington in regards to preservation of Vermont. Develop urban areas densely for housing to save green space elsewhere.
- Need to take care of housing but this natural area is enjoyable to residents. If people are living there they may invest in and respect the land.

CONCEPT DRAWINGS

Attached