



Burlington CONNECTICUT

Library Lane Advisory Commission (LLAC)

Report to the Board of Selectmen

January 2022





Burlington CONNECTICUT

Library Lane Advisory Commission

Library Lane Advisory Commission Mission Statement:

The Advisory Commission will develop concepts and ideas for the use of property including services and businesses which will enhance the development of the center of town. The Commission should consider public/private partnerships, and other avenues of development. Special attention should be made to the plan of development previously proposed for the Town Center. The Commission should provide the Board of Selectmen with preliminary concepts and ideas within six (6) months of their establishment.

Board Members

Name	Title
Caroline Brayne	Member
Jennifer Caruso	Vice Chairman
Allan Dodge	Secretary
Vince Lambri	Chairman
Stephen Melingonis	Member
Michael NeJaime	Member
Donald Riley	Member

Library Lane Advisory Commission (LLAC)

Report - January, 2022

The Library Lane Advisory Commission was established by the Burlington Board of Selectmen on March 23, 2021. The LLAC was charged with formulating an initial strategic plan along with preliminary development concepts and ideas for an expanded Town Center. This would provide business, services and housing for the residents of Burlington. The LLAC was directed to consider the previous EDC development plans that were proposed to the town in 2005 and 2012-2014. The LLAC was also directed to deliver their report to the Board of Selectmen within six months after their first meeting.

The LLAC held its first meeting on June 21, 2021. It met monthly thereafter, until January 17, 2022. In addition to the Commission's members some of the meetings were attended by former First Selectman Ted Shafer, current First Selectman Doug Thompson, and Burlington Economic Development Chairman Tod Kallenbach. Several meetings were also attended by a representative from the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, members of the Burlington Congregational Church, representatives from Carrier Construction Corporation and Pranav Patel.

1. Overall Type of Development

The LLAC recommends that the development of Library Lane should be a mixed used development with commercial, retail, residential and community elements. This conclusion was consistent with the concepts proposed by the previous EDC development plans from 2005 and 2012-2014. The LLAC also recommends that the EDC'S 2012-2014 design proposals serve as initial guidelines for the Town Center. These proposals place commercial, residential and community development on the west side and north side properties of Library Lane (parcel ID#s 12-04-1, 12-04-1-1, 4-10-17-a) along with the prospect of expanded development on the adjacent Library Lane property owned by the Burlington Congregational Church (parcel ID# 12-04-2).

Since 2012, there have been some significant changes to Burlington and the nature of the properties on Library Lane that should be taken into account. Specifically:

- The Town of Burlington now owns 4.13 acres of land on the west side of Library Lane that were purchased by the town in December, 2020 (parcel ID#s 12-04-1 and 12-04-1-1). The town also owns 3.61 acres to the north, adjacent to this property that were purchased in 2017 (parcel ID# 4-10-17-a). This now brings total town ownership property to 7.74 acres.
- There is a private commercial development currently under construction on 1.25 acres of land on the front west side of Library Lane along Route 4 (parcel ID# 4-10-20). This property is owned by Pranav Patel and will eventually become a package store scheduled to open in the Spring of 2022 with a separate convenience store scheduled to open in the Spring of 2023.
- The current population of Burlington has increased by 2.34% from 2012 to 2020. This compares with a state of Connecticut population increase of only 0.28% over the same time-period. Burlington now has a population of 9,519 (2020 census) compared to a 2012 population of 9,301 (2012 estimate). Burlington's population now ranks 99th out of 169 Connecticut municipalities (Source: connecticut-demographics.com).

2. Survey Results

The LLAC conducted a survey of Burlington Town residents from September through December of 2021. The survey received 1,023 responses. The total number of responses was significantly greater than the total responses for the similar, 2005, EDC resident survey (338) and the 2012, EDC Central Business Zone survey (207). It was also greater than the 2021 Johnnycake Park survey total (892). It would appear from the robust response to the survey that Burlington residents are very engaged in the process of developing the Town Center at Library Lane.

There are some specific results of note from the survey.

- 91.7% of Burlington residents responded in favor of some type of Town Center development at Library Lane.
- There was a consistency in the type of commercial, retail and community developments residents would like to see in the Town Center. Like the 2005 and 2012 surveys, the 2021 survey indicated that the most popular developments would be a grocery store, followed by small retail store such as a coffee shop, bakery or specialty foods store, a restaurant and a community center.
- Residents were especially concerned about increased traffic at the intersection of Route 4 (Spielman Highway) and Library Lane.
- Residents preferred a smaller type of development that does not contain any "Big Box" stores.
- A significant portion of residents were not in favor of large tax increases to pay for infrastructure improvements.

The complete survey is included with this report. The LLAC recommends that the survey's residents' comments be thoroughly reviewed to better gauge resident preferences and sentiments with regards to the Town Center development at Library Lane.

3. Architecture and Design

The design and appearance of the Library Lane Town Center development was of paramount importance to the LLAC members, the Burlington Congregational Church, the Burlington Chamber of Commerce and a significant portion of residents' survey comments. There was general agreement that:

- All development architecture and design should reflect the rural/agricultural character of Burlington. Examples would be farmhouse/barn type structures similar to Hogan's Cider Mill or WestWind Realty at the Red Barn located adjacent to Library Lane at 278 Spielman Highway. The design and architecture should also compliment the new commercial buildings under construction on the parcel located at the intersection of Spielman Highway and Library Lane.
- There should be broad pedestrian sidewalks to encourage foot traffic for businesses and leisure activities.
- An expanded, landscaped town green/park should be included in the development plan.
- Design and architecture preferences should be clearly communicated with all potential developers.
- There should be additional charging stations for electric vehicles.



4. Infrastructure Improvements

It is anticipated that any development of a Town Center at Library Lane would necessitate infrastructure improvements to the development site. There would be an increase in motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic associated with the construction of new commercial, residential and community Town Center developments. The LLAC recommends the following:

- A traffic signal light at the intersection of Library Lane and Route 4 (Spielman Highway) to safely regulate motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic.
- Expansion of turning lanes at the intersection of Library Lane/ and Route 4 (Spielman Highway) to facilitate entrance into the Town Center at Library Lane and to reduce traffic congestion on Route 4 (Spielman Highway).
- Extension of the streetscape sidewalk and lighting from the west end of Library Lane to the Burlington Commons Shopping Plaza (CVS). This would facilitate pedestrian traffic and improve accessibility to existing business and any new Town Center development.
- Improved street and pedestrian lighting on Library Lane. The design should reflect existing street lighting and be incorporated into the overall Town Center development plan.
- Possible extension of Library Lane to provide an additional exit out to Covey Road. This would also improve Town Center traffic flow. Currently this property is owned by O & G industries.
- Pedestrian and or motor vehicle connections between the Library Lane development and the adjacent shopping plazas. This would help promote existing businesses and help create a true Town Center.
- A possible bus stop on Route 4 (Spielman Highway) near Library Lane.

5. Traffic, Engineering and Marketing Studies

The Town should initiate and complete relevant studies to assess the feasibility and costs of all infrastructure improvements associated with the development of the Town Center at Library Lane. There should also be a thorough review of the previous studies done in conjunction with the EDC's prior Town Center development plans.

- A Traffic Management study should be done and submitted to the Connecticut Department of Transportation. It should assess:
 - Traffic patterns and anticipated traffic volume generated by all Library Lane Town Center development.
 - Feasibility and cost to extend Library Lane to Covey Road. This would provide an alternative exit from the development and reduce traffic congestion at the Route 4 and Library Lane intersection. A traffic signal light may be needed at this new intersection.
 - The last traffic study (2014) was done by the former Central Connecticut Regional Planning Authority (CCRPA), the regional planning agency at that time to which Burlington was a member. The study was funded with grant money the CCRPA had available to allocate to member town projects. It may be possible to fund a new study financed by the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) to which Burlington now a member.

The DOT needs to continue to be engaged regarding traffic controls and pedestrian safety. While the DOT prefers to have in place a "live" project with a timeline and a master developer at the table before offering anything specific they are open to "informational meetings" to evaluate current and planned development.

- An engineering study should be done to assess:
 - The costs and feasibility of building motor vehicle and or pedestrian connections to adjacent residential and commercial properties.
 - Feasibility of using O & G property for septic systems.
- A new marketing should be done to asses potential types of business development. The last marketing study for grocery store feasibility (2015) was done by Library Lane LLC (Brian and Gavin Soraghan), the potential purchasers/developers at that time.

6. Issue Requests for Proposals (RFP)

The LLAC recommends that the Town of Burlington issue Requests for Proposals (RFP)s to solicit additional development proposals as soon as realistically possible. The RFPs should be directed towards the following specific types of businesses:

- RFPs should be issued by the Town of Burlington to developers that have experience with commercial and residential development as well as construction experience with projects the size and scope of the envisioned Town Center at Library Lane.
- RFPs should be issued by the Town of Burlington to commercial and residential building design companies.

7. Sources of Development Funding

One of the main results of the 2021, LLAC, resident survey is a reluctance of town residents to pay significant increases in property taxes to finance any infrastructure and/or construction costs associated with the Town Center development. The 2021, LLAC, survey revealed that 37.4% of town residents did not support any increase in local property taxes, 23.9% supported a small increase of \$25 dollars, and 38.63% supported additional tax payments of \$50 or more.

It is the opinion of the LLAC that aggressive, pro-active efforts should be made by the Town to obtain Federal, State and Department of Transportation grants funding along with any additional sources of funding for infrastructure improvements to minimize the direct costs to Burlington taxpayers. These efforts should begin as soon as possible in order to obtain funds in a timely manner. Bipartisan assistance from Burlington's current State Representative, John Piscopo (R), and State Senator, Derek Slap (D), could be helpful in obtaining state financial aid. Several suggested sources of funding may include:

- Connecticut Department of Transportation grant funding from programs such as the Community Connectivity Grant Program, and the DOT Town Aid Road Program.
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds granted to the Town of Burlington.
- Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) funds granted to the state of Connecticut
- Federal and state Loan and Grant programs such as the USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program and the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy grant programs.
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) grant programs
- Private investors.
- Charitable and non-profit organizations.
- Leasing the town properties at Library Lane to potential developers. This would provide the Town with a new steady source of revenue.
- Sale of the town properties at Library Lane.
- Sale of park benches, planter garden boxes and engraved bricks to town residents.
- Establishment of a Library Lane Town Center fund to accept donations.
- Issuing of a bond.
- Property tax revenues from the new businesses in the Town Center at Library Lane.
- The formation of a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) that would own, operate or finance the Town-owned Library Lane parcels as income-producing property, as well as provide an investment opportunity as the development grows. Perhaps Town residents would be given the first opportunity to buy shares.
- Consideration of a tax abatement/deferment or tax incremental financing policies from the Town to encourage development.

8. Engagement with adjacent property owners, relevant stakeholders and Burlington residents

The LLAC focused on the development of the combined 7.74 acres on the west and north sides of Library Lane that the Town of Burlington owns. However, there are significant adjacent property owners and stakeholder along with Burlington residents that should be engaged when considering development proposals and coordinating construction.

- The Burlington Congregational Church owns 8.36 acres on the east side of Library Lane (parcel ID# 12-04-2). They have expressed great interest in working with the town to develop their land in conjunction with the development of the town's land on the west and north sides of Library Lane. The inclusion of the property of the Burlington Congregational Church with the town's property would create a potential for 16.10 acres for development of a Town Center.
- Based on the great receptivity to the latest public survey, the LLAC suggests ongoing communications with residents to keep them interested and involved as stakeholders. This could be a blog on the Town website, social media posts (possibly a dedicated Facebook page), an email newsletter and possibly a design charrette which is a short, structured meeting during which an architect or other design professional/facilitator can collaborate with the public and talk through and present and/or sketch to explore design ideas that match the perceptions or both the developers/business owners and the community at large.
- The land directly behind the current terminus of Library Lane is owned by O & G Industries Inc. (parcel ID# 4-10-23). Any extension of Library Lane out to Covey Road would need to be negotiated with them.
- Motor vehicle and or pedestrian connections to adjacent property would involve BD Properties Burlington LLC (WestWinds Realty, Evening Sky Brewery, etc., parcel ID#s 4-10-19 and 4-10-19-1), the Village Shops of Burlington (Sabrina's, etc., parcel ID# 12-04-5) and NJA and Associates (CVS, Subway, Yes Fitness, etc., parcel ID# 4-10-18).





9. Establishment of a Library Lane Development Committee

The LLAC has determined that the development of the Town Center at Library Lane will be an ongoing process that could last for several years. There will be many important evaluations and decisions that will arise during development and construction. Therefore, the LLAC recommends that the Board of Selectmen establish an ad-hoc Library Lane Development Committee as soon as possible. This committee should be charged with:

- Management of the overall development of the Town Center at Library Lane.
- Communicating effectively with town residents on the status and progress of the development of the Town Center. The committee should also coordinate all marketing to promote the Town Center development to attract businesses and increase Burlington residents' awareness.
- Initial vetting and review of developer, design and architectural proposals.
- Ensuring steady progress in development, design and construction.
- Monitoring all grant funding applications and private donations.
- Coordination of appropriate actions with the various Town Board, Commissions and Committees.
- Advising and recommending actions to the Burlington Board of Selectmen.

To facilitate this committee's responsibilities, the LLAC recommends that this committee should include a representative from each of the following:

- Burlington Board of Selectmen (possible chair)
- Burlington Board of Finance
- Burlington Finance Department
- Burlington Economic Development Commission
- Burlington Planning and Zoning Commission
- Burlington Buildings Department
- Burlington Public Works Department
- Burlington Chamber of Commerce
- Relevant stakeholders and adjacent property owners

Conclusion

The LLAC has concluded that there many factors which favor moving forward at this time with the full development of a Town Center on the Library Lane properties.

- The Town of Burlington now owns 7.74 acres of property along Library Lane. This puts the town in a position to have significant control, input and leverage into the design and make-up of any commercial, residential and community development. Furthermore, this also allows the town to offset infrastructure development costs by either leasing or selling the land to potential developers and ultimately increasing the overall commercial tax base.
- Development of a Town Center at Library Lane would bring in new business and provide local shopping and services for the community. The Town Center would also generate additional employment opportunities for Burlington residents.
- Business and residential developments at Library Lane will generate additional sources of revenues for the Town.
- There is a serious enthusiasm and support on the part of town residents for some type of Town Center development at Library Lane. While there is still some resident skepticism due in-part to the previous challenges to develop a Town Center, there were many survey comments which expressed the feeling of "get it done now".
- The population of Burlington is growing at a faster rate than the rest of Connecticut.
- There are ARPA funds now available for infrastructure and new community building construction.
- The Connecticut State Department of Transportation grant funding programs are now fully funded. However, availability is time-sensitive.
- The Burlington Congregational Church has expressed a strong desire to work with the Town of Burlington to develop their property on Library Lane as part of the overall development of a new Town Center.
- There is now highly-visible, active construction of new businesses on private property adjacent to the Town-owned properties on Library Lane.
- The Town has received grants from the Department of Housing for the creation of a municipal housing plan for Burlington. The Town Government is currently in the process of forming a "Housing Plan Steering Committee" to create this housing plan. Residential housing development as part of the Library Lane Town Center could suffice to meet these required state housing statutes.

Library Lane Advisory Commission

Vince Lambri, Chair

Jennifer Caruso, Vice Chair

Allan Dodge, Secretary

Caroline Brayne

Stephen Melingonis

Michael NeJaime

Donald Riley