



Testimony of Dan Cahill re: VHCB
House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee
01/30/2020

Chairman Stevens, and Members of the House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the City of Burlington, in support of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. In my role as Land Steward with the Burlington Parks Recreation and Waterfront Department, I have the great privilege to work with VHCB at a variety of Conservation lands throughout the City. Specifically, six sites in total, four of them owned by the City, and two sites owned and managed by partner organizations, The Winooski Valley Park District and The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont. All of these sites provide vital services to the community and the environment, and without the support of VHCB, their permanent protection would not have been possible.

I'd love nothing more than to discuss the values and attributes of each of these six projects, so if you are interested lets grab coffee... However, for my time with you today, I will be focusing on one site, 311 North Avenue. This park land was purchased with VHCB support, among a variety of local, state, federal and private funding sources.

This parkland acts as a gateway from Burlington's most densely populated neighborhood, to the shores of Lake Champlain and the Burlington Bikepath. It provides connectivity for people, as well as wildlife. We have been tracking and documenting wildlife on site, and it's quite remarkable the number and diversity of mammal species passing through. Also the site has provided a meaningful location for regenerative climate work in the form of planting native trees and plant species as well controlling invasive species. The site is also home to one of Burlington's 14 community garden sites. Lastly, the property contains a historic stone cottage, which now hosts Burlington's Conservation program staff and storage.

What is most notable about this park land, is that it is coupled with the development and build out of the Cambrian Rise project. This development project aims to build close to 800 new homes by its completion, and one quarter of these will be affordable units. It's probably no surprise, and many of you may be aware, that VHCB has been a significant contributor to the affordable housing being built at Cambrian Rise, as well as the Conservation property I've been speaking about. It's very special to find the dual purpose of conservation and housing in action for a VHCB project.

By the numbers, since 2016 VHCB has helped ensure the following at 311 North Ave:

- 7 different mammal species moving though the property
- 12 acres of protected land
- 30 new community garden plots
- 800+ units of housing (25% affordable)



- 1500 restoration trees planted
- 2000+ hours of volunteer work performed
- 1.7 million dollars in matching conservation acquisition funds

It takes a diversity of funding sources for these projects to occur. One of the most vital sources for this project, and all the others I referenced, is the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Please help Burlington and other communities in Vermont through ensuring that VHCB is available for project and acquisition support now and into the future. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Dan Cahill, Land Steward
City of Burlington, Vermont