

## **SOBU SPACES 2020: Library + Senior Center + City Hall Purpose and Need Statement**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the SoBu Spaces 2020: Library + Senior Center + City Hall is to create a central place accessible for individuals to experience, learn, entertain, and share ideas and information. It is to provide resources and programming for all ages, beliefs, and backgrounds; capitalize on creative designs that maximize function and usage; increase opportunities for public engagement and growth; and cultivate a sense of ownership and civic pride while spurring growth and economic development in City Center. The City's 2016 Comprehensive Plan identifies and strongly supports this project purpose:

"The community vision for City Center calls for the establishment of one or more public amenities to serve as a focal point for the community..."

"Planning for City Center includes a new public library, city hall, and/or recreation center, a central gathering place and public events locale..."

"The presence of these community facilities is an integral component of this area. They will transform a retail area into a true downtown." (p. 3-12)

"Objective 47: Promote interconnectivity and integration of public facilities including schools ... to include safe routes for children and neighborhood residents to walk and bicycle to schools, a public library, recreation services, and other city services." (p. 3-14)

"Strategy 102. Construct new city hall, library, and/or recreation center... in centralized, walkable environments in the Central District." (p. 3-15)

"Be a recognized leader in public education offerings and outcomes;" (p. 1-1)

### **Needs:**

**1. Build attractive public spaces and a distinctive identity for City Center.** The 2016 South Burlington Comprehensive Plan states: "Establish a city center with pedestrian-oriented design, mixed uses, and public buildings and civic spaces that act as a focal point to the community" (p.1-1), but no public City buildings have been built that are consistent with the plan. Quality architecture, indoor and outdoor gathering space, and public art are needed to enhance the experience of a walkable urban center.

**2. Support a dynamic, evolving community.** Nearly 19,000 people make their home in South Burlington, a number that has increased over 75 percent since the library was established in 1971 and the city hall at 575 Dorset Street was constructed in 1980. The City also has a growing number of senior citizens but no official center to serve their needs. The City's population is projected to reach 22,000 by 2030. Since the library was established and today's city hall built, the vision of the City and manner in which services are provided has changed, and existing spaces no longer adequately meet community needs.

**3. Provide spaces where all of South Burlington's residents and visitors can meet, discuss, participate, learn, and visit.** There is a lack of meeting space available for community groups, clubs, seniors, small groups of students and/or tutors to gather. South Burlington has no community-owned performance space, thereby limiting the support of the community's cultural, public and educational activities. The City lacks dependably available space for programming during daytime hours when senior and pre-school aged residents most need social and lifelong learning activities. Opportunities for public

involvement and input are often scheduled in rooms with seating that is uncomfortable and acoustics that are inferior for multi-hour sessions. Meeting spaces predate the internet and offer no built-in recording or streaming capabilities. Current public facilities lack areas needed to offer ongoing educational programs in formal settings, activities in flexible spaces, and quiet conversation in cozy areas. These are needed due to the diversity of interests, abilities and ages within the South Burlington community.

**4. Anchor the City Center downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.** City Center is currently a collection of shopping centers and individual, detached businesses surrounded by housing. A library, senior center and city hall will provide a community gathering space, services and amenities within walking distance of existing and future neighborhoods. It will also generate foot traffic that will attract social activity, development and economic investment in South Burlington's designated downtown. Such a developed space will support collaboration within and between the business and residential communities.

**5. Strengthen the South Burlington community through abundant opportunities to learn, share and succeed.** The library requires significantly more space than its current 7,000 square feet to fulfill its mission to the community through arts, humanities and literacy programs, lifelong learning activities, and providing quality, timely and equal access to information and early childhood literacy. Library services and programs currently lack casual meeting areas as well as meeting rooms to support the gathering of individuals to share interests and knowledge.

**6. Meet community need for collections.** The library currently occupies a leased space of about 7,000 square feet with a book collection of less than 50,000 volumes. Recent research shows a continuing preference by all generations for physical volumes in addition to e-books and other library offerings such as technology and hands-on programming and maker spaces. The recommended collection size for similarly sized communities is over 90,000 volumes. The current space is too small to accommodate a larger collection or allow for growth. In addition, libraries are trending toward book cover displays to maximize browsing ability and ease of checkout.

**7. Provide quality public services; ensure transparent and accessible government.** The new library, senior center and city hall will incorporate a great degree of flexibility and adaptability as technology continues to evolve, allowing for greater participation and ease of use. It will be in compliance with accessibility standards and will encourage use by all members of the community. South Burlington lacks space for interactive community events and public voting, and city committees and civic groups to meet after hours.

**8. Improve efficiency.** Newer buildings offer efficiency and operational savings that do not exist in the current structures. Well-designed buildings that maximize natural light, use products with low toxicity and incorporate airtight, well-insulated areas with little energy or fuel dependency provide increased comfort and productivity of occupants. The building's efficiency will become an example and learning tool within the community. A co-location offers better integration of staff as well as opportunities for combining spaces for programming and the provision of services across departments.