

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

The project benefits from having a diversity of interests represented on the Project Advisory Committee, as well as from numerous public engagement opportunities, but to ensure the project team is hearing from as many interests as possible, we identified other stakeholders from whom we wanted to better understand Winooski Avenue through their particular lens. As part of the Existing Conditions process, conversational interviews were conducted with people from the following entities:

- University of Vermont
- Howard Center
- Champlain College
- Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association (CATMA)
- City Market
- Burlington Fire Department
- Burlington School District Transportation
- Parents at Integrated Arts Academy
- Green Mountain Transit
- Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV)
- North End Studios
- Vermont Department of Health
- Radio Bean/ ¡Duino! (*Duende*)
- Old Spokes Home
- Local Motion
- African Market
- Shinjuku Station
- East West Cafe

Several themes emerged from these conversations. We heard that Winooski Avenue is viewed as a central corridor that provides access to and from the City, but the four-lane section between Main and Pearl streets is challenging for all users (walkers, bikers, transit, autos). It sends the message that you're getting to someplace else and serves as access to other places, rather than being a "place" or destination of its own. People like the vibrancy and sense of place of the Old North End and its diversity of people and businesses. The businesses on North Winooski are "in the spirit" of the Old North End, and there's a desire to build community and culture around them and their unique aesthetic. There wasn't a lot of strong sentiments expressed about the residential neighborhood south of Maple Street. People like that it feels "calm, peaceful, quieter" than the four-lane section between Main and Pearl, and that it has two-way bike facilities, although the contraflow lane (heading northbound) might cause confusion to people driving. One person, however, noted that the section between Main and King streets "feels weird" like you're not supposed to go into that southern neighborhood. That section of Winooski Avenue has parking on both sides of roadway, then transitions to one-way southbound with two-way bike traffic.

Discussion of specific themes and issues are summarized as follows:

Vehicle parking

People expressed diverging interests in either the need to keep on-street parking or remove it to provide additional roadway space for other uses like bike infrastructure. As one person put it, "This study will come down to a trade-off between on-street parking and on-road use like bike lanes." Several business people noted that keeping and adding more short-term parking spaces for customers and deliveries would be helpful. One person noted there is some ambiguity about where parking is legal or illegal. Fire Department staff noted that snow accumulation can impact roadway width, especially when there's parking on both sides of street – cars tend to creep away from the curb and into the

roadway. They've noticed less of an impact with parking only on one side. It was suggested to make the Howard Center parking lot public (operated by the City) and shared with others like The YMCA. Other shared parking agreements could be useful. If parking is removed from Riverside to Archibald (to add bike infrastructure), consider how to add parking to other nearby streets.

Bike facilities and bike parking

People generally like that there is bike infrastructure in the south and north ends of Winooski Avenue, but any bike-related changes need to be consistent throughout the corridor, such as bike lanes on both sides of the roadway, or a protected two-way bike lane on one side. Most people noted the lack of any bike infrastructure between Main and Pearl streets. We also heard that there needs to be a change in attitude so that people on bikes know that the laws apply to them. Specific challenges for people biking were noted at the Riverside/Winooski Ave intersection and downtown between Main and Pearl streets. There is interest to return the on-street bike rack in front of The Light Club Lamp Shop back to a loading zone, with the suggestion to add bike parking on the other side of street at the chained off driveway to Act One, or to put bike hitches on parking meters.

Pedestrian amenities

While there is a connected sidewalk network throughout the corridor, people pointed out that there isn't much green space downtown even though the sidewalks are wide, as well as the lack of benches. People like the landscaping in front of Howard Center, City Market, and the Ronald McDonald House, as well as the public art and murals, quirky character and aesthetics of downtown. Lighting downtown seems pretty good, but the sidewalks are next to the busy roadway which isn't enjoyable. More street trees or other things would help make the downtown section feel "denser and tighter" to reduce speeding. Flowering trees in warmer months and decorative lights in trees would add to the downtown aesthetics. People thought the pedestrian crossing times at signals may not be long enough for people with disabilities and suggested that other signs/flashing lights might make some intersections, like at Grant Street and Decatur Street, safer for people walking. People don't know that the Pearl/Winooski intersection is all-way pedestrian crossing so consider pavement markings or signal changes to let people know. Similarly, the Archibald/Winooski intersection is challenging because it's so large and intimidating; consider making it an all-way pedestrian crossing.

One-way versus two-way traffic pattern

The current traffic pattern along Winooski Avenue varies, with southbound one-way sections on North Winooski between Pearl and Decatur, and on South Winooski between Maple and Howard. The downtown section between Main and Pearl is two-way, with two lanes in each direction (four lanes total). People noted that this inconsistent configuration can be confusing for tourists and limit access to neighborhoods.

People discussed the idea of turning North Winooski from Pearl to Union into a two-way street. Some people think it would open up access to Old North End and businesses, help the northern section feel "less desolate," and would help address wrong-way bike riding. One business owner said that the traffic pattern in the one-way section between North Union and Pearl feels "slower" and feels more bike/ped friendly and if it was turned into two-way it would become the "traffic dump" to access the City of Winooski. Some people pointed out that some on-street parking might need to be removed to

accommodate two-way car and bike traffic. This might also help the Fire Department access the Old North End.

Transit

Existing Green Mountain Transit (GMT) service only uses a portion of Winooski Avenue, and GMT staff noted that they would prefer to utilize Winooski Ave more as a north/south route. One-way streets such as parts of North and South Winooski aren't insurmountable for transit service but they're not ideal for passenger pick up/drop off. Lane width can be tight for transit between Cherry and Main streets, and stopped vehicles on narrow Union Street delays transit service.

Main Street to Pearl Street

There was significant discussion about the four-lane section between Main Street and Pearl Street. Some of the issues brought up include: left turning vehicles on Winooski Avenue block the inside travel lanes; other drivers weave to get around those vehicles; SSTA vehicles block the lane in front of Howard Center; there is no bike infrastructure downtown; it doesn't feel welcoming to people walking; gas stations feel out of place; it feels like an alley for other businesses; the curb cuts are large and wide; the parking garage and City Market add to challenges; left turns out of City Market and Howard Center are challenging; vehicle conflicts entering/exiting the alley between Howard Center and Roxy Cinemas; people don't cross at signalized intersections near City Market; truck deliveries block lane near corner of College Street; buses have to change lanes between College and Main.

People expressed concerns about adding new bike lanes on South Winooski, especially on the City Market side given the existing challenges (turning traffic, delivery trucks, proximity of signals, jaywalking, SSTA blocking a lane, etc.).

People offered potential solutions including:

- Make City Market entrance from Winooski Avenue one-way, make parking lot spaces angled, exit onto Union Street, then make Buell Street two way to get back to Winooski Avenue
- Consider opening up the entrance to Orchard Terrace from City Market parking lot
- Connect City Market parking lot to UPS lot and make four-way signalized intersection at Bank Street
- Incorporate roundabouts throughout the Winooski Avenue corridor
- There was a desire for artistic structure or something else at the corner of Winooski and Main Street to convey it as a gateway intersection to the central business district.

Other general suggestions are the need to consider traffic flows with future developments like CityPlace Burlington, UVM's multipurpose center and the new YMCA. There is a desire to use pop-up projects to get real -world experience and feedback on project recommendations. These need to be in place long enough to gauge their functionality and to maintain public and stakeholder interest between the planning study and actual construction.

One question asked of stakeholders was, "What is the first word (or 3) that comes to mind when you think about Winooski Avenue?" Here are the responses:

- Traffic; neighborhood; disconnected. Non-continuous.

- It's interesting that the corridor goes through different zones, commercial and residential.
- I think of Winooski Ave as lots of different corridors rather than one long one.
- Connection to downtown, pretty easy connection to downtown because signals work pretty well, and sometimes when coming out of downtown take Union to Winooski to Riverside because it's more bearable than Colchester Ave; it's a growing area with more restaurants and housing, it's a positive changing environment; and mentally Winooski Ave ends at Main St; and diverse with colorful houses, new developments/apartments, food.
- It's the gateway to our part of the city (ONE), going in and out.
- Traffic flow is convoluted. It's the way people get in and out – but they can't.
- We lived here right before it became one way about 20 years ago or so.
- Since the change to one-way it's been clear that unless you know your way around, it's confusing. Not intuitive.
- Emerging, in terms of development patterns. It's not getting the full benefit of being a corridor.
- Diverse in terms of land use patterns, parking, bike lanes.
- Centralized, sectional, emerging.
- How different it is along corridor
- nerve-wracking downtown on a bicycle
- from Pearl to Main is hairy and scary.
- Confusing, dangerous, ugly. Desire/potential for continuity.
- Start/stop, dangerous
- Growing. Artsy. Community, neighborhood-y
- Connection. Access. Connecting Winooski, Burlington, South Burl. Inconsistent, patchy. Very, very patchy.

Open Streets BTV Summary

The project team also had a public information table at Burlington's Open Streets event (<https://www.openstreetsbtv.com/>) on September 30, 2018. We were on North Winooski Avenue at the intersection with North Union Street and Decatur Street in the heart of the Old North End. We talked about the project with people as they enjoyed Open Streets activities in the public space, asked them what they liked about Winooski Avenue and what they would change about it, and asked them to write comments and draw on maps and paper. Comments are available on the project website (tiny.cc/WinooskiAveStudy).

People commented that they liked the sense of community in the Old North End, being close to neighborhood schools, the proximity and diversity of businesses and restaurants, the newly created Old North End Greenway and planters, street trees, and the bike lane on North Winooski. They noted that Winooski Avenue between Main and Pearl streets is difficult for people walking and biking.

People we talked to would like to see a protected bike lane the length of the corridor and safe intersections for bikers, consideration of roundabouts, the need to keep parking available for residents and for more Community Health Center parking at Riverside, as well as the need for more affordable housing. People also offered suggestions to slow down traffic through the neighborhood and the desire for more trees and grass.