



# The Burlington Anchor

A monthly publication of Main Street Burlington & the New London Neighborhood Alliance

Welcome to The Burlington Anchor, a collaboration of Main Street Burlington (MSB) and the New London Alliance (NLA), devoted to keeping the community informed of issues impacting downtown and ways to get involved. You can find the latest issue on our website at [msbnj.org/news](http://msbnj.org/news).

## Building a Safer Burlington City: A Collaborative Approach



Burlington City is not just a great place to live. It is a town united toward preserving the well-being of families and friends in a safe, historic, and beautiful setting. In fact, in the most recent poll posted on social media by Main Street Burlington and The New London Alliance, nearly all respondents reported they live in Burlington City because of their lifetime roots, the historic vibe, and the beauty of the Delaware.

One of the cornerstones of establishing safety in Burlington City has been the Community Policing Program. In this issue we polled residents and talked with Chief John Fine about safety and safety perceptions, as well as collaborative approaches to improving both.

**Addressing Drug Abuse.** When it comes to safety perception, or "feeling safe in the city," the top concern for residents we polled is drug abuse and its associated threat of gun violence. Where guns are involved, arrest is warranted and swift, said Chief Fine. However, arrest for nonviolent drug activity has proven to be completely ineffective and leaves a community with friends and neighbors

incarcerated, families broken, people unable to get decent jobs, and continues a cycle that leads to the bottoming out of a community. By offering drug rehabilitation programs, transitional housing programs, food pantries, emergency sheltering, and job placement in place of arrest, lives and families can be saved. **This approach, alongside community policing and swift action against violent crime, has led to a decrease in drug-related incidents and crime.**

Yet safety concerns linger whenever residents perceive illegal drug activity is taking place, whether in abandoned buildings, alleys or parking lots, or in poorly lit public areas. The following ideas were offered in the online poll.

- **Targeted Patrols.** Residents overwhelmingly requested increased police presence in "hot spots" known for drug use and crime. Studies support the effectiveness of targeted foot patrols in reducing crime. In our safety poll, residents requested instituting foot patrols on the Promenade at night, in the parking lots and alleys day and night, and on High and Broad Street at night. In contrast, random foot patrols, which involve officers patrolling in areas regardless of crime rate, have been shown to have no crime reduction effect. Yet, these also have a purpose beyond immediate crime reduction. Regular town foot patrols increase a sense of community, safety, and provide the police an immediate pulse on the city. By fostering positive relationships and gathering intelligence, law enforcement and community members can work together to address emerging safety concerns effectively.
- **Improved Lighting.** The second most effective crime reduction tactic is effective and strategic lighting. Improved lighting leads to a whopping 21% reduction in crime according to online studies. In addition to the same areas identified for foot patrol, our poll respondents also prioritized East and West Federal
- **Tackling Abandoned Properties.** Approximately 40% of the recent poll respondents said they see fixing the abandoned property problem an important tool toward improved safety and a reduction in crime. And they are correct. According to the studies of abandoned properties and crime statistics, visible signs of neglect and disorder in a neighborhood, such as litter, boarded doors and windows, unkempt lawns, and broken windows, create an environment conducive to criminal activity and the perception of being unsafe.
- **Smart Technology Investments.** Burlington City utilizes technology like surveillance cameras and ShotSpotter to deter serious threats. Chief Fine noted that improved communication systems like Nixle ensure swift response times, promoting a sense of security.

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- **Community Engagement leads to reduced crime and increased feelings of safety.** When police, residents and store owners all know each other and come together to discuss topics or have neighborhood gatherings, deeper connections are made and people look out for one another. Police and residents meeting together for informal talks impacts safety and trust positively. Community talks on safety initiatives, the needs of the business owners, how citizens can help the police monitor the neighborhoods, and how to reduce car theft and porch pirate theft can be done in backyards, at neighborhood events, even over a BBQ! The Burlington City clubs and organizations could take the lead in starting these informal neighborhood chats with the police, Mayor, and Council on a list of topics important to residents and store owners.
- **A United Front for Safety.** Burlington City's safety hinges on a collaborative effort. By implementing these initiatives – continued community policing, targeted patrols, improved lighting, abandoned property rehabilitation, technology investments, and strong community engagement – Burlington City can solidify its reputation as a safe, historic, and welcoming place for all.

**Get Involved! We invite you to share your thoughts at either the March 19 City Council meeting at 7 PM, or the Ward 1 Town Hall on April 13 at 1 PM at the Poley Center, to which all residents are invited. Together, we are creating partnerships for momentum and action based on civic engagement and common goals.**

## Mayor Conaway on a Vision for Burlington City

Mayor Conaway introduced the City Economic Development Plan on March 12 at the City Council meeting. Four main areas that form the foundation of town economies were addressed: Administrative Actions, Community Projects, Infrastructure, and Redevelopment Opportunities.

**Administrative Action:** To incentivize landlords and homeowners to invest in the upkeep of their properties, Mayor Conaway and the Council plan to reinstitute the **5-year tax abatement plan**. Abatements are special exemptions that reduce the tax burden if used for home or property improvements. The mayor also counted 200 properties that need rehabilitation in the city. These would provide much needed housing and eliminate blight if developed. The Urban Development Action Grant Program that helps revitalize distressed cities by using public funds to attract private investment in neighborhood, industrial, and commercial projects will be pursued. In addition, New Yorkshire will be designated a Conservation District, ensuring environmental resource quality and environmental justice for the citizens of Burlington City for years to come.

**Community Projects:** The following five community projects are in varying stages of planning and dedicated to being completed. The historic African American William Allen School continues development. The U.S. House of Representatives Andy Kim recently secured a \$394,400 million-dollar federal grant for this project. Major upgrades are planned along with the addition of thousands of square feet to provide enriching community spaces for children, adolescents, adults, and families. The Pipe Factory will see 18-unit condominiums and the Old Waterworks will develop into 54 new apartments. A new commercial development is in the works at the intersection of Route 130 and Jacksonville Road. **And for the Promenade Park, Mayor Conaway emphatically stated that the new bandshell will be erected.**

**Roads:** Residents and the economy benefit from well-maintained sidewalks, roads, bridges, and safe infrastructure. Streets in Burlington and on Route 130 are slated for improvement – some immediate and others reaching four years out. Several streets will be repaved. Sidewalk improvements and installations are planned for East Broad and Route 130. Parking lot paving is lined up for the Stacy St. lot. As drivers enter Burlington, they will be greeted with a freshly painted water tower to protect it from rust and corrosion. The underground railroad tunnel/alley will be repaved, bridges will be erected in Kennedy Park, and on Route 130 near the WAWA the bridge will be re-engineered and rebuilt.

**Redevelopment:** Mayor Conaway also stressed the opportunities available for redeveloping locations such as the Army Ammunition Sites and New Yorkshire Senior Housing. Lastly, as part of planning for increasing economic activity in Burlington a Central Bus District Parking Study will be conducted.

Clearly this is an ambitious and pragmatic plan. Burlington City plans to attract economic development through an updated city infrastructure with an abundance of updated housing all while retaining its historical charm. Planning for the easy movement of more people and cars as the city grows economically is sure-footed and forward thinking. Ensuring that the City has the required built infrastructure and safe, affordable housing with structural improvements will set the bones of the city in place for growth.

## Resources for Downtown Businesses

Did you catch Glassy Brown Cookies on [TV 29](#)? Owner Arlene Felder is committed to putting Burlington City on the radar of all major media outlets, and MSB is taking on the challenge of registering businesses and organizations to participate in a Fox TV 29 "Downtown Takeover." **Be sure to update your listing and register at <https://form.jotform.com/240354466849163>**



## Volunteers Needed!

MSB is currently seeking volunteers to help plan and staff our annual **Farmer's Market**. Orientation meetings are planned for Tuesday 4/16 or 4/23 at The Opportunity League. Contact Jade at [jlatham@theoleague.org](mailto:jlatham@theoleague.org) to sign up.

The **Garden Club** is in need of volunteers to water the hanging baskets that arrive later this spring. Contact Garden Club President Jeff Gorleski at [jgorleski@comcast.net](mailto:jgorleski@comcast.net) to get involved.