

The Case for A Healthy Community:

THE HISTORY OF SPRAWL IN CHITTENDEN COUNTY



A report commissioned by the Sustainability and Growth Center Team
of the Champlain Initiative.
March, 1999

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Section 1 What is Sprawl	6
Section 2 Characteristics of Sprawl	8
Section 3 Demographics of Sprawl	10
Population Growth Patterns	10
Housing Growth Patterns	10
Economic Shifts.	10
Public Investment.	12
Section 4 Phases and Signs of Sprawl	16
The Early Years: 1950–1965	16
Middle Period: 1965–1980	21
Recent Period: 1980–1998	24
Growth Center Planning and Development: Case Studies	30
Section 5 Causes of Sprawl	33
Why Has Sprawl Happened?	33
Strong Causes	33
Supportive Conditions	43
Efforts to Counteract Sprawl	48
Section 6 Effects of Sprawl	51
Transportation	51
Zoning and Land Use	51
Social Effects	54
Environmental Impacts	59
Section 7 Benefits and Burdens.	66
Section 8 Myths and Realities.	67

Case Studies

1. South Burlington residential subdivisions.....	16	6. Water service area comparison.....	15
2. Retail growth in S. Burlington and Burlington’s response.....	17	7. Sewer service area comparison.....	15
3. Residential and commercial subdivisions in S. Burlington	21	8. Shelburne Road and Swift Street intersection comparison.....	16
4. Burlington revitalization efforts.....	21	9. Scale comparison of house lots.....	17
5. Winooski Valley Park District.....	23	10. Location of South Burlington subdivisions	18
6. Green Mountain Meadows in Westford	23	11. Burlington urban renewal project.....	19
7. Jericho and Shelburne subdivisions	26	12. Evolution of strip development: location of businesses on Shelburne Road	20
8. Hinesburg growth center planning and development.....	28	13. Changing development patterns at Interstate exit 16, Colchester	22
9. Essex Town growth center planning and development.....	28	14. Changing land use patterns of Jericho.....	28–29
10. Williston growth center planning and development.....	29	15. Local and regional accessibility	34
11. Richmond growth center planning and development	29	16. Typical highway corridor under Colchester commercial zone regulations	38

Figures

1. Community designations	7	17. Comparison of single family residential lot sizes	40
2. Typical forms of development.....	8	18. Spatial separation of workplace and poverty	58
3. Compact development	9	19. Impervious surfaces and water pollution	64
4. Sprawl development	9		
5. Comparison of land uses	13		