

Members of the Burlington City Council,

Please support Council President Traverse's *Resolution Relating to a Safe and Accessible City Hall Park*.

Change is needed urgently. As a business owner stated recently, "Objectively, it doesn't feel like the current strategies are working ... I don't see any populations that are succeeding." The strength and success of our central business district **helps** us navigate these challenges. We are harming it, perhaps even beyond repair. We need our leaders to lead with solutions that live within our reality, our budgetary limits, and prioritize the safety and well-being of all who utilize our downtown.

The current state of Burlington is not serving anyone well.

- Our businesses are seeing increased taxes and fees for less service, and in most cases, facing decreased sales. They continue to ask for change at the local and state levels without seeing any.
- Our unhoused population is subjected to political rhetoric rather than sustainable solutions since the *Legislature and Governor together* scaled back the General Assistance program due to it being unsustainable without federal pandemic dollars.
- Our population dealing with substance misuse is being left to be preyed on by drug and human traffickers. We daily see open-air drug deals. This is not compassion.
- Victims of crimes are subjected to repeated harassment in the name of criminal justice reform.
- Burlingtonians are losing their community gathering place. A place that has received awards as an amazing public space.

The solutions proposed by the City Council President, including a stronger and more visible safety presence, new accountability tools, and state coordination to reduce crime, drug activity, and disorder, can help make City Hall Park safer and more usable for families, businesses, and events.

Finally, we request that the resolution be amended. The draft resolution before you requires a progress report by Sept. 29, 2025, on whether staffing and resources are enough to achieve these goals, with recommendations if gaps remain. We ask that the report additionally include a plan on how to immediately extend the measures in place for City Hall Park to the entire downtown and waterfront. While we applaud the actions taken in the draft resolution, we are

concerned that a specific focus on City Hall Park will mean that the criminal or anti-social behavior taking place in the Park will merely shift elsewhere in the downtown.

Progress on safety is within Burlington's grasp, and we call on you to act.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CZ Davis', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Catherine Z. Davis**

President & CEO

Lake Champlain Chamber

CC: Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak