

/Draft

"~~Some~~ ^{SOME} Good Things for Burlington in '87"

By Mayor Bernard Sanders

Looking back on the year 1987 from where I sit as Mayor, I can see many good moments for the people of Burlington. Some issues and events may be more important to people than others, but I think it's worthwhile to ~~list~~ ^{REVIEW} a few of what I believe are very positive developments for people in Burlington and in our region in the past year.

1. Protecting Lake Champlain. After the disappointment and frustration of closing beaches due to sewer overflows, city and state officials worked diligently to come up with a \$52 million pollution control project. If the Legislature approves the package, we'll be undertaking a 5-year construction project to remedy a problem that has plagued us for decades.

2. Burlington Beautification. With financial assistance from the Howard Bank, we planted another 200 street trees, thousands of flowers, had a very successful Green Up weekend, and gave away tons of free mulch to city gardeners. More and more, I see a tremendous pride in how our city, through street repaving and beautification, is improving its looks.

3. Courthouse Plaza. Downtown Burlington is being graced with an aesthetically-pleasing new building (and new parking spaces) that will help keep our downtown area a dynamic one. I believe the building is a very positive contribution to the architectural

heritage of Burlington.

4. Horseback Riding. The city co-sponsored a very exciting and popular horseback riding program in the Intervale, only about one mile north of our Main Street. The Intervale, which is being re-zoned for recreation, agricultural and conservation uses, is a unique and unspoiled natural area in the city. People can now take affordable trail rides through one of Burlington's best-kept secrets.

5. Public access to the Waterfront. Our 9-mile Waterfront Bike Path will be open this spring; we improved Leddy Beach, the Mobil Oil Beach, and Perkins Pier in '87. A new bathhouse at Oakledge is under construction. Best of all, the foundation barge for the city's community boathouse arrived in early December. Next summer we'll celebrate the finished boathouse and new recreational opportunities for everyone.

6. Property tax relief for the elderly. In March, voters passed a charter change that would virtually eliminate property taxes for low-income elderly and disabled people. (That charter change will be voted on this session by the Legislature.) We also instituted a "reverse-equity" loan program with the Bank of Vermont to help low-income seniors defer property taxes until they sell or bequeath their homes.

7. Better services for your tax dollars. We have re-organized city departments to provide more efficient, improved city services to keep property taxes down. The Park and Recreation Department and the Department of Water Resources will become part of our Public Works Department. People will see better utilization of our vehicles, buildings, specialized workers, and tax dollars.

8. Southern Connector. The construction of this \$40 million-plus parkway from Interstate 189 to the downtown Waterfront has begun in earnest. The revised design that the City worked hard to achieve will harmonize with Burlington neighborhoods and existing streets. We will have a very safe, aesthetically satisfying, downscaled parkway. We still must deal with the Barge Canal area in an environmentally appropriate way, but we are moving ahead in a positive direction.

9. Leningrad Teenage Choir. When this group of young people from the Soviet Union visited Burlington and our area, I saw a renewed spirit of hope and optimism in many people. Burlington High students visiting the Soviet Union in November expressed the same feelings. They returned and said, "Yes, we can get to know each other; we can work out our differences without going to war; we can, together, create a world of peace." After the Reagan-Gorbachev summit and as Burlington now seeks a sister city in the Soviet Union, I can only hope that both nations continue to reach out towards one another.

Wrap-up paragraph?