

OFFICE OF MAYOR MIRO WEINBERGER

149 Church Street | Burlington, VT 05401 | [802.865.7272](tel:802.865.7272)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jennifer Kaulius
802.324.2505

Mayor Miro Weinberger Announces \$500,000 Gift from Antonio and Rita Pomerleau for City Hall Park Improvements **Philanthropic Gift Will Support City Hall Park Renovation**

Burlington, VT – Mayor Miro Weinberger, joined by Antonio B. Pomerleau, representatives of the Burlington Farmers’ Market, the Burlington Business Association, Burlington City Arts, Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, and children from community afterschool programs today announced a \$500,000 gift from Antonio and Rita Pomerleau to the City of Burlington to support the renovation of City Hall Park. The park’s enhancements will include a children’s splash fountain, new pathways in the park, improved greenspace, and new outdoor performance spaces, all of which will help cultivate a family-friendly environment. As a result of the Pomerleau commitment, the City is moving forward with design and permitting for the park renovations with a goal beginning renovations in 2017.

“The Pomerleaus’ generous gift is an investment in the renewal of City Hall Park, the functional and symbolic heart of Burlington,” said Mayor Weinberger. “The planned renovation will lead to greater use of this wonderful public space by many more people throughout the week, and stands as a sign of Burlington’s optimism and investment in the future.”

“I have always dedicated my time and money to helping kids, and it is my hope that the children of Burlington will find great joy in this fountain,” said Mr. Pomerleau. “My wife and I make this gift in memory of our daughter Anne Marie who was a teacher and devoted her life to children.”

The Pomerleaus’ gift to the City will cover a significant portion of costs to renovate City Hall Park, and the fountain at the center of the redesigned park will be engraved with the inscription “Antonio and Rita Pomerleau Fountain in memory of Anne Marie Pomerleau.” With the gift commitment in hand, the Administration intends to move forward with the next stage of park planning and design, which was informed by an extensive public process known as *Imagine City Hall Park*, with a target renovation date of 2017. The \$500,000 gift will be made to the City in installments of \$100,000 per year, with the first payment to the City scheduled for January 2, 2016. Total park reconstruction is estimated at \$2.5 to \$3 million, and the City will continue to undertake additional private fundraising efforts to cover some additional costs.

The renovation of City Hall Park is part of the City’s 10-year capital plan, which the Administration released in the spring and will release a financing strategy for by the end of the year. Additionally, the City will soon release a Great Streets Request for Proposals (RFP) that will include the City Hall Park renovation design. The Great Streets RFP is part of a voter-approved initiative to modernize

and enhance the City's downtown streetscape using tax increment financing (TIF), a capital funding program that leverages downtown investment without impacting local property tax rates. Coordinating the design of the park with the Main Street improvements will allow for better landscape design and stormwater management. TIF funding will pay for a portion of the work dedicated to the supporting infrastructure that will tie in to Main Street. Permitting through Planning & Zoning, Development Review Board approval, and building and electrical permits will be required to begin construction.

The initiative to transform City Hall Park – which suffers from inadequate stormwater management, soil compaction, and inconsistent lighting that discourages public use at night – began in July 2011, when Burlington City Arts (BCA) received a \$50,000 Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and fundraised an additional \$50,000 to engage the community in a creative planning process that would inform a new master plan for the park. These fundraising efforts included support from the Burlington Rotary Club, the Burlington Business Association (BBA), and Merchants Bank, among others. Dubbed *Imagine City Hall Park*, the engagement process was overseen by a task force comprised of the BBA, business leader Tom Leavitt and other local businesses surrounding the park, the Flynn Theater, and several Departments of the City of Burlington. The resulting master plan, completed in 2012 by BCA and Wagner Hodgson Landscape Architects, was based on input from over 1,000 community members.

"The Burlington Farmers' Market has been working with the City for more than thirty years to gather people in City Hall Park around excellent food and artisan products," said Spencer Welton, Steering Committee President of the Burlington Farmers' Market. "As the market has grown, the Mayor's Office and Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront have helped us to find creative ways to use the existing space to suit our vendors' and our customers' needs. We are excited to continue that partnership in the future and to make the park an even better place for everyone."

"The Burlington Business Association has long had a vision for City Hall Park as a smaller version of some of the best urban parks in the country, such as Bryant Park in New York City. Great cities have great downtown parks, and Burlington should too," said Kelly Devine, Executive Director of the BBA. "Thanks to the *Imagine City Hall Park* effort, that vision came to life. A renewed City Hall Park will add to the vitality of our downtown. After more than five years of work by the BBA, BCA, the City, and many supporters, it is an honor to help welcome this generous gift which goes a long way to helping us realize this vision."

"King Street Center is thrilled with the prospect of a redesigned, beautiful City Hall Park! This park will first and foremost be safe and look to connect our kids and families with a special place," said Vicky Smith, Executive Director of the King Street Center. "We must continue to allow the culture of our community to thrive in a healthy, livable space, and I'm excited that our City Hall Park will be that bright and positive image and experience for Burlington."

A renovated City Hall Park will further enhance current uses like the exceptional Burlington Farmers' Market, Festival of Fools, and Burlington Discover Jazz Festival, as well as provide year-round access and more features for children. The improvement to City Hall Park comes at a time when the City has invested millions in existing resources towards renovation of the parks system throughout the City. The Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department has overseen over 100 projects in this effort, including new athletic fields, playgrounds, resurfaced courts, and the start of the rehabilitation of the beloved bike path.

** Please see attached images:*

- *Landscape Plan*
- *Birdseye Perspective*
- *City Hall Performance Space*
- *Pomerleau Fountain*

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