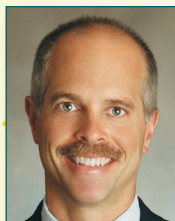




Tom's Impressions



Wicked Good Times

We all know that Burlington is a *wicked* good city. I'm lucky to have grown up here; part small town comfort and familiarity, and part big city culture and flair. For today's residents and visitors, Church Street is a bustling pedestrian thoroughfare filled with shops and restaurants. Back in the early 70's before the Church Street "Marketplace" existed, I walked it too, in the annual Memorial Day Parade as a drummer in the Rice Memorial High School marching band. But the rest of the time, cars cruised the street forming our version of the iconic American Graffiti strip.

Before there was a Radisson Hotel (now the Hilton), a Courtyard Burlington Harbor, a Macy's, or even a downtown mall, there was our own *Little Italy* neighborhood. Winter weekends found families sledding down the steep hill in front of the Mary Fletcher Hospital (now Fletcher Allen) and coming to a screeching halt just before flying over the snow bank into traffic on Colchester Avenue. The Flynn Theater was a movie theater along with the Strong and the State theaters, before they burned down; and Memorial Auditorium handled everything the Sheraton Conference and Miller Expo Centre's handle today. Church Street department stores like Magrams, Abernathy's, Woolworth, and JC Penney were the downtown anchors. While you could count the number of fine dining restaurants on a couple of fingers, there was never a lack of bars to hang out in or listen to music; and the waterfront was pretty much a ferry dock surrounded by rail lines and oil tanks.

Clearly, Burlington has changed!

So what makes Burlington such a wicked good place? For me, two things – *nature and people*. First, being sandwiched between the shoreline of Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains, Mother Nature has dealt us a strong hand. All year round, locals and visitors enjoy our mountains and our lake.

Second, people who live, work, run businesses, and govern here generally do so because they really *want* to be here. Our culture of community, fun, creativity, giving, passion, and pride fuels all that goes into making Burlington a *wicked* good place to be. Of course, as with any community, there are always issues and challenges; but coming together to address them and work towards solutions is what we do.

As board Chair for the Burlington Business Association (BBA), I have the distinct pleasure of being part of an organization that supports, encourages, and celebrates Burlington every day. No surprise then that the theme of this year's BBA dinner and meeting on April 3rd is "**Annual Dinner 2014 -a wicked good time**". Notable awardees include outgoing President of Champlain College David Finney, Burton Snowboards, and Hotel Vermont in the respective BBA leadership awards of people, business, and architecture. The BBA Annual Dinner has developed a life of its own over the past few years and 2014's will be another wicked good celebration.

Many thanks to the BBA and a really vested membership, Mayor Miro Weinberger, our city services, and to the citizens, organizations, institutions, and business at large for making Burlington such a *wicked* good place and for a wicked good time!

