



135 Church Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
P 802.865.7166  
F 802.865.7044  
BURLINGTONCITYARTS.ORG

For more information:

**CONTACT** Eric Ford  
P 802.865-5355  
E [eford@ci.burlington.vt.us](mailto:eford@ci.burlington.vt.us)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Burlington City Arts Receives Our Town Grant From the National Endowment for the Arts**

Burlington, VT: (July 13, 2011) Today, Burlington City Arts (BCA) announced that it will receive an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), one of only 51 grants awarded nationwide. BCA will receive a \$50,000 grant to develop an inspired and functional master plan for City Hall Park, a green space at the heart of Burlington's economic and civic life, a plan which has great potential to build and expand the public use of this downtown treasure especially at a time when community support for park improvements and community use has significantly increased.

Our Town is the NEA's new leadership initiative focused on creative placemaking projects. In creative placemaking, partners from both public and private sectors come together to strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.

The goal of BCA's project is to engage the community to develop a master plan for City Hall Park. It is the central platform where the elements of Burlington's identity coalesce, across agriculture and business to culture and recreation. This park is the front yard of City Hall, the BCA Center and the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts. It is also a stone's throw away from the bustling Church Street Marketplace, Burlington's thriving pedestrian mall and the hub of economic activity for the City and the greater metropolitan area.

BCA will work with the community during information gathering sessions consisting of traditional town meeting methods and visioning events, enlisting the skills of landscape architect David Raphael of Landworks in Middlebury, Vermont, and Jeffrey Hodgson of the H. Keith Wagner Partnership in Burlington, Vermont; siting locations for new and existing public art; and expansion of festival and ongoing cultural activities to test new uses and landscape/design requirements. Expansion concepts include adding more vending opportunities for artist market artists, youth performances, artist's demonstrations, new park performances for established downtown festivals like Festival of Fools and

Discover Jazz, bi-weekly lunch hour performances by local artists and temporary public art commissions. BCA will conduct outreach in collaboration with our partners and consultants, including the City Hall Task Force, the Burlington Business Association, Flynn Center for the Performing Arts, Merchants Bank, Preservation Trust of Vermont, King Street Center and the City of Burlington: Parks and Recreation, Burlington Police Department, The Department of Public Works, Planning and Zoning, the Church Street Marketplace, Community and Economic Development Office. Departments will work together to ensure planning meets existing guidelines, is sustainable, and includes broad public input.

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Landesman said, "Communities across our country are using smart design and leveraging the arts to enhance quality of life and promote their distinctive identities. In this time of great economic upheaval, Our Town provides communities an opportunity to reignite their economies."

"City Hall Park is one of the most under-realized resources in Burlington – it is a center of discourse (and yes sometimes discord), social engagement, economic vitality and sheer fun - and this grant will allow us to re-vision the forgotten jewel in our midst," said BCA Executive Director Doreen Kraft.

"This is an important opportunity to enhance City Hall Park as a place for everyone in the community and central to economic, artistic, and civic activity in Burlington," said Burlington Mayor Bob Kiss.

"Merchants Bank is pleased to be partnering in this important initiative. City Hall Park is our community's town square," said Tom Leavitt, Executive Vice President, Merchants Bank.

"Green space is essential to Burlington and its downtown. Thanks to this NEA grant we will work together to create a beautiful, useful green space at City Hall Park. A space for all of Burlington to share and enjoy," said Kelly Devine, Executive Director of the Burlington Business Association.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.

The Our Town NEA grant is an important part of Burlington City Arts, celebrating 30 years of supporting the arts, 1981-2011, which is dedicated to the promotion of excellence, experimentation, and education in all forms of contemporary art. For more information about gallery exhibitions, special events, classes and workshops, please call 802.865.7166 or visit [BURLINGTONCITYARTS.ORG](http://BURLINGTONCITYARTS.ORG).

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