

Case Study—Burlington, Vermont: 2017

In 2017 Burlington, the largest city in Vermont, engaged in a successful year-long effort to replace its unofficial 1991 city flag with a new flag.



Inspired by Roman Mars' 2015 TED Talk, in early 2017 Mayor Miro Weinberger directed Burlington City Arts, the city's arts commission led by Dorleen Kraft, to replace the flag by the end of the year. Staffed by Deb Caulo and Andrew Krebs and advised by Ted Kaye, the BCA's effort led to adoption of a new flag.



The BCA secured city council approval in March for the overall flag re-design concept: to hold a public contest seeking designs leading to a final proposal. It then developed a plan for the year-long process, working out the details.

The media covered the launch:

<http://www.my Champlain Valley.com/news/bca-proposes-process-to-design-new-burlington-flag/681541891>

<http://wamc.org/post/vermonts-largest-city-looking-new-flag-design>

<http://www.burlingtoncityarts.org/btvflag>

BCA staff documented the contest process in detail (following pages).

City of Burlington Flag Re-Design Contest

TIMELINE:

- Mar 27: Present plan to City Council, formally begin process
- Sept 1: Launch competition (see Marketing approach below)
- Sept 15: Committee selection
- Oct 15: Submission deadline
- Oct 16: Committee decides on 3-5 finalists
- Oct 20–Nov 20: Website launches public vote
- Nov 20: Winning design decided and announced
- Nov 27: Flag adopted by City Council
- Dec 1: Production
- Dec 31: Flag unveiled to public on First Night by Mayor and Color Guard

Budget: \$6,000 to include coordination and marketing of competition, cost of initial order of flags, \$500 honorarium (or \$250 and a membership to BCA and a flag of their own)

Submission process:

- Online only
- Format: .jpeg or .gif
- Less than 1 MB
- 2-3 or 1:2 ratio
- Template will be available
- Have libraries available for support to scan and submit
- Need ownership and copyright language
- Burlington residents or business owners only

Panel of judging committee:

Recommendations: Professional designer, City Council rep, student, diversity.

Criteria: Must be available Oct 16

Must read Ted Kaye's *Good Flag, Bad Flag* and
watch Roman Mars Ted Talk on Flag Design

Marketing approach:

- Press Release to go out immediately to city
- Facebook page
- BCA page
- City Hall page
- Collateral: postcards and posters to distribute
- FPF
- Outreach: Schools, organizations, graphic design firms, community centers, college art depts., BCA Studios, Generator

Sept 5: Submissions began

Oct 15: 138 designs final

Oct 16: FLAG DAY (Flag Judging)

Goal: Of the 138 submissions, decide on 3–7 finalists

Present: Ted Kaye, author of *Good Flag, Bad Flag*, Deb Caulo, BCA coordinator of contest

Panelists:

- Jeff Harkness: owner of HARK, branding and graphics design business in Burlington, past president of AIGI. HARK helps businesses grow through the power of design and branding
- Megan Charles: senior at Champlain College, graphic design/motion design major, president of AIGI student group
- Lila Woodard: 10th grader at BHS, president of Burlington portrait club, honors art student, TA
- Dr. Paula Willoquet-Maricondi: Dean, Division of Communication and Creative Media, comparative literature and film studies specialty
- Richard Dean: City Councilor, architect and partner at TruexCullins
- Joyce Sheely: SBHS English teacher, lives in Burlington, students designed their own flags in her curriculum

12:30 pm

Ted gave brief talk about *Good Flag, Bad Flag* concepts and educational component so all the panelists have same language. Flags represent “form follows function”.

5 principles of flag design:

- Simple
- 2–3 colors
- Meaningful symbolism
- No seals or lettering
- Distinctive or related

1:00–1:45

Round 1: 138 flags

Printed flag submissions were laid out on floor in no particular order. Panelists picked up designs that they wanted to go to the next round.

1:45–2:00

Round 2: 40 flags

Designs were grouped according to likenesses and taped to wall. For example, all flags that had mountains were grouped together. All flags with a crown were grouped together, etc.

2:00–2:45

Round 3: Panelists went through each grouping as a group with Ted facilitating and the committee critiqued each flag as to whether to keep or toss. Discussed the pros and cons of each flag. Discussed changes that would make the flag stay in. For example, “if the stars on the flag were a little bigger then we’d keep the design in the pool”.

2:45–3:45

Round 4: 16 flags

All 16 flags were hung together on one wall. Again, grouped according to likenesses. Process of elimination and everyone had a chance to speak in favor or against each flag. Good discussion on each one. Narrowed down the field to 7.

Everyone was pleased with the 7 final flags for the public to rate. Each flag is very different from each other.

With the artists' permission, BCA staffer Andrew Krebbs tweaked some of the flags to go up for the public rating on Friday, Oct 20.

Oct 20–Nov 20: Rating went live on web site. Rating scale 0–10.

Nov 20: 1,427 total sets of ratings received. The committee concurred that the design receiving the highest average rating would be the winner.

Winner(s) announced: Owen and Lucas Marchessault



Artist Statement:

- Layer 1 is the sky; it represents looking back to our rich history and ahead to the unknown future with perpetual hope.
- Layer 2 represents snow covered mountains—an indelible backdrop to our city.
- Layer 3 - represents the Green Mountain State, Burlington's commitment to the environment, and higher ed
- Layer 4 - represents the breakwater protecting our spectacular waterfront.
- Layer 5 - represents Lake Champlain sustaining and enriching our community and lives.

Statement from family:

My husband, Dan Marchessault, and I are native Burlingtonians. We met at BHS after which I went to UVM while Dan worked on this family's dairy farm. We have lived on DeForest Heights for 17 years. We have a very long history and deep roots in this city that we absolutely love. I work at TD Bank on Main Street as a commercial credit manager. My twin sons, Owen and Lucas Marchessault, are in 7th grade at Edmunds Elementary School. They are solid athletes—mostly soccer— and honor roll students.

Interesting story about the flag submission—it's kind of a fluke that we even knew about it. I was going to the City of Burlington website to obtain an update on the impending teacher's strike and happened upon the Burlington City Flag contest. I showed the boys and we decided that this would be the perfect project for them to work on during the strike while out of school. We watched the TED talk together (very inspiring!) and then we drafted several ideas over the course of several days and finally agreed on a final design concept. It was truly a collaborative effort. The three of us worked together each providing input on the colors, the number of peaks, the thickness of lines, etc. and in the end we were very pleased with the final submission!

PRESS RELEASE

New City Flag Chosen

Flag to be raised during First Night on December 31.

Burlington, VT (November 27, 2017): Burlington City Arts is pleased to announce that the flag designed by Owen and Lucas Marchessault of Burlington has been selected as the new flag for the City of Burlington.

“Congratulations to Owen and Lucas Marchessault on the selection of their design, which beautifully conveys our city’s history, character, and natural environment, as the new City of Burlington flag,” said Mayor Miro Weinberger. “It is fitting that a design created by two Burlington students should be chosen to replace the City’s original student-designed flag. Thank you also to Burlington City Arts for leading a process that involved more than 100 entries and engaged over a thousand Burlingtonians in selecting a new flag. I will be honored to officially unveil the new flag at First Night, and look forward to seeing it fly over City Hall – and many other parts of the City – for years to come.”

Public online voting ended on Friday, November 17. Residents were asked to rate the design and artist statements of the seven finalists from zero to ten. 1,427 residents participated in the voting phase; Owen and Lucas’s design received the highest score.

Owen and Lucas’s design was one of 138 designs submitted for consideration. Molly Abair, Owen and Lucas’s mother, shared their creative process: “We watched the TED Talk together (very inspiring!) and then we drafted several ideas over the course of several days and finally agreed on a final design concept. It was truly a collaborative effort. The three of us worked together, each providing input on the colors, the number of peaks, the thickness of lines, etc.

The twin brothers are honor roll students at Edmund’s Middle School and

play soccer in their free time. “I was going to the City of Burlington website to obtain an update on the impending teacher’s strike and happened upon the Burlington City Flag contest,” Molly said. “I showed the boys, and we decided that this would be the perfect project for them to work on during the strike while out of school.”

The Marchessault family worked together to create a final design that includes a representation of:

- The sky, representing looking back to our rich history and ahead to the unknown future with perpetual hope
- Snow covered mountains—an indelible backdrop to our city
- The Green Mountain State, Burlington’s commitment to the environment, and UVM
- The breakwater, which protects Burlington’s spectacular waterfront, and
- Lake Champlain, which sustains and enriches our community and lives.

A committee made up of community members reviewed each of the 138 submitted designs and artist’s statements before selecting the seven finalists. All submissions were anonymous during the selection process and reviewed based on the *Five Basic Principles of Flag Design*:

1. Keep it Simple
2. Use Meaningful Symbolism
3. Use Two to Three Basic Colors
4. No Lettering or Seals
5. Be Distinctive or Be Related

Ted Kaye, renowned flag expert and the author of *Good Flag Bad Flag*, led the committee during the selection process. The committee comprised: Jeff Harkness, owner of HARK; Megan Charles, senior at Champlain College; Lila Woodard, a 10th grader at Burlington High School; Paula Willoquet-Marcondi, Dean of Creative Media at Champlain College, Richard Dean, City Councilor; and Joyce Sheely, English teacher and Burlington resident.

Burlington joined cities across the country in updating its flag to capture the

spirit and character of its community today. Mayor Miro Weinberger first announced the City flag redesign project at a City Council meeting in January. City Council unanimously endorsed the public redesign competition, and the Mayor selected Burlington City Arts, the City of Burlington's cultural planner, to lead the public competition process. In keeping with the spirit of community unity from the 1990 contest that led to the current City of Burlington flag, all residents of Burlington were encouraged to submit a design. This year's competition was also opened to those who work or own a business in Burlington.

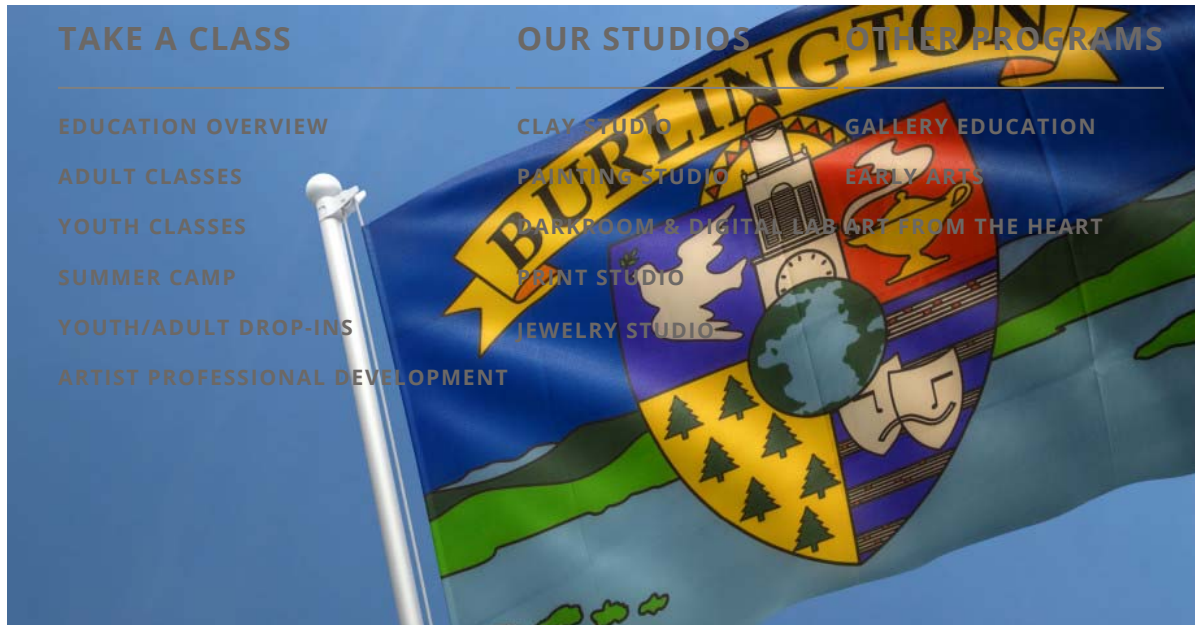
The winning design will be presented for adoption to City Council at its regular meeting on November 27. The new flag will be raised at City Hall during First Night on December 31. All are welcome to attend the flag raising ceremony. The official flag design of the City of Burlington shall be freely available for public use and reproduction.

The Marchessault family will receive a \$250 honorarium, one-year membership to Burlington City Arts, and a flag of their design.



ABOUT EXHIBITIONS EVENTS EDUCATION DONATE ARTIS
CALENDAR RESOUF

HOME / CONTEST FOR NEW BURLINGTON FLAG



RELATED

[FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FLAG DESIGN RESOURCE PDF](#)

[SUBMIT YOUR DESIGN](#)

[CURRENT FLAG SUBMISSIONS](#)

CONTEST FOR NEW BURLINGTON FLAG

The City of Burlington is seeking a new design for its 30 year-old flag. Burlington is joining cities across the country in updating its flag to capture the spirit and character of its community today.

Mayor Miro Weinberger first announced the city flag redesign project at a City Council meeting in January. City Council unanimously endorsed the public redesign competition, and the Mayor selected Burlington City Arts, the City of Burlington's cultural planner, to lead the public competition process. In keeping with the spirit of community unity from the 1990 contest that led to the current City of Burlington flag, **all residents of Burlington are encouraged to submit a design.**

"A great city deserves a great flag to mark its municipal buildings and special events," said Mayor Miro Weinberger. "I'm excited to see what the public creates in the months ahead."

Submissions will be accepted online until October 15. A small committee made up of Burlington residents will select the finalists. Public voting will start on October 20 and end on November 17.

Anyone interested in submitting should watch the TED Talk on Flag Design below.

Roman Mars
Why city flags may be the worst-designed thing you've never noticed

Your Submission should follow the *Five Basic Principles of Flag Design:**

1. Keep it Simple: A flag should be so simple that a child could draw it from memory.
2. Use Meaningful Symbolism
3. Use Two to Three Basic Colors
4. No Lettering or Seals
5. Be Distinctive or Be Related

Timeline:

- Submissions accepted online: September 1
- Deadline for all submissions: October 15
- Finalists selected and public voting: October 20-November 17
- Winning design chosen and announced: November 20
- Flag unveiling: December 31 during First Night

The winning design will receive a \$250 honorarium, membership to BCA, and a flag with their design.

Submission Requirements:

1. Your design must have a 2:3 or 1:2 ratio.
2. Designs will only be accepted online at the link below.
3. Your submission must be in a JPEG or GIF format.
4. The design should follow the Five Basic Principles of Flag Design.
5. You can submit one design. Additional submissions will not be considered.
6. You must live, work, or own a business in Burlington.
7. Designs must be original.

8. Designs must be positive in spirit.
9. Designs with religious symbols will not be considered.
10. Designs construed as hateful, defamatory, or discriminatory will not be considered.
11. Designs with references to alcohol, drugs, or illicit activities will not be considered.
12. Anonymous submissions forfeit any right to prize money.
13. In the event of significantly similar or identical designs, the artists' statements will be considered in the scoring. Should the artists' statements also reflect a significantly similar design process, the first design submitted will be considered.

Anyone without access to a computer or a scanner is encouraged to visit the Fletcher Free Library. Scanning services are free.

[Click here to submit your design.](#)

[Click here to see the current flag submissions.](#)

The current flag (shown above) was designed by then-eighth grader Cara Wick as part of a leadership project in 1990.

Once submitted, all entries become the property of the City of Burlington, and the designer relinquishes all rights to the design. The winning designer will be credited. The City reserves the right to alter, modify, or combine designs to create an official City of Burlington flag.

If you have any questions, please contact Deb Caulo at dcaulo@burlingtoncityarts.org or call 802.865.7166.

**North American Vexilloligical Association, and Ted Kaye. Good Flag, Bad Flag: How to Design a Great Flag. PDF. Boston, MA: North American Vexilloligical Association.*

ABOUT
HISTORY OF BCA
EMPLOYMENT
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
VOLUNTEER
VISITOR INFO
STAFF/CONTACT US
BOARD

EVENTS CALENDAR

RENT THE BCA CENTER

BCA CENTER EXHIBITIONS
UPCOMNG EXHIBITIONS
PAST EXHIBITIONS
VT METRO GALLERY
VMG ARTISTS

ART SALES AND LEASING
CITY HALL GALLERY
UVM MEDICAL CENTER