

## **A New Day for Montpelier - Action Ideas**

The following list of action ideas is a compilation assembled from the brainstorming sessions that were part of the first public forum hosted on April 30th. A “cluster-analysis” was performed with the goal of combining very specific action ideas into broader potential areas of focus.

### **A. Issues that are already being address by major efforts**

We tracked ideas from the April 30th forum that are in process—with either a city department, volunteer lead group, or consortium of organizations working to advance solutions. While good work is going forward, some of these efforts may need more volunteers and public support!

#### **Address the plight of the houseless community in Montpelier**

Too many in our community are struggling without shelter and the basic resources needed to thrive. While solutions to these challenges are complex, a community-based approach to address the basic needs of those who are suffering is needed. Efforts can focus on ensuring that social service agencies are integrated in their approach, identifying both temporary and permanent options for housing, and also providing the support needed for people to be successful. City Council, the Montpelier Homelessness Committee, Good Samaritan House, and the regional Situation Table are each providing leadership to address the need.

#### **Build more apartments and condos downtown**

Montpelier faces double-challenges - expensive and difficult-to-find housing options, and declining foot traffic in our downtown. The construction of more apartments and condominiums could help to address both of these issues. More housing could also provide an alternative for some of the older residents of Montpelier who are looking to downsize from their single-family homes. Country Club Road, 87 State Street and the former RK Miles property now owned by the Hunger Mtn. Coop are all places where future housing may be built.

The Montpelier Housing Committee, City Staff, 87 State Street Local Development Corporation, and Downstreet Housing are all playing a role in addressing the shortage of housing options in the city..

#### **Improving walkability, bikeability and transportation alternatives**

Vibrant communities are those that don't require a car for all trips and provide welcoming spaces and infrastructure for those who get around by foot or by bicycle. Whether it is the addition of bike racks, the painting of crosswalks, or the re-designing of difficult intersections, there are many opportunities to make Montpelier a safer and more encouraging place for those who travel in and through the city on foot or by bike. Additionally, viable bus and on-demand transit options are also critical for a more livable community.

The Montpelier Complete Streets Committee is working step-by-step to advance solutions.

#### **Develop and promote the outdoor recreation economy**

Montpelier and surrounding communities are already rich in opportunities to recreate with many great places to bike, hike, paddle, swim, and convene with nature. To attract more visitors, these

amenities can be more prominently and cohesively marketed. Additional recreational opportunities should also be cultivated both on and along our rivers and in the woods. City Council, the City Parks Department and Planning Department, Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association, Onion River Nordic, and the Wrightsville Beach Rec. District are working diligently to expand and promote outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Infrastructure Repairs**

Maintaining Montpelier's public infrastructure including our roads, sidewalks, parking lots, and water systems, requires constant attention and significant expense. Efforts should be accelerated to maintain and improve Montpelier's infrastructure in a way that improves life for those living here while also making our town more appealing to visitors.

City Council and Montpelier Public Works Dept. are actively engaged in advancing repairs and long term system improvements.

### **Protect the Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Montpelier's Water Resource Recovery Facility located at the confluence of the Dog and Winooski Rivers was very nearly flooded in 2023. All efforts should be made to protect this valuable and critical infrastructure from future flooding events.

Montpelier Public Works Dept. is working to advance a preventative solution.

### **Facilitate Neighbor-to-Neighbor Connections**

Better connections with neighbors can help to fight social isolation, improve resilience and emergency preparedness, and strengthen communications.

Montpelier Neighbor Net (hosted by Foundation for a Resilient Montpelier) has engaged over 1,000 residents in building connections; there's lots of room for more volunteers!

## **B. Ideas that may come under Montpelier Alive's purview (and contribute to the strategic plan they are developing today)**

### **Celebration of arts and culture**

One of the wonderful things about Montpelier and Central Vermont more broadly is a thriving arts community. Performing and visual arts contribute to quality of life for those who live here while also attracting visitors. More can be done to leverage these assets including coordinating and promoting events and other resources that highlight local arts and culture happenings and tell the story of Montpelier as a dynamic and attractive center of the arts for tourists and Vermonters from throughout the region and state.

### **Improvement of Public Spaces in Downtown**

Montpelier has a vibrant and welcoming downtown that could be even better with improved public spaces, a revived or redeveloped welcome center, more parks, more benches and more trees! Things like pocket parks, benches, public bathrooms, and more trees will attract more visitors to our community and attract longer visits to our downtown core. A welcome center could also provide an excellent resource for visitors to be sure they maximize their visit to Vermont's State Capital.

## **C. Ideas that are not directly being handled by anyone today**

### **Encourage Volunteerism**

While many Montpelier residents volunteer in many ways today, many more people have skills, talents and energy that, if engaged, could make the community even more vital and resilient. Montpelier could hold a volunteer fair where organizations or initiatives could share their work plans with all community residents who want to help improve, beautify and engage together to make the city the best it can be. New projects like clean up days could help keep folks engaged. A coordinated effort could be deployed to increase and better-coordinate volunteerism in Montpelier. There are already countless volunteers and many organizations that benefit from their services. A cohesive initiative could provide easier and more inclusive pathways for volunteer recruitment and would build community cohesion by organizing frequent and consistent group volunteer projects.

### **Leverage our rivers**

Montpelier's rivers could be more of an asset, making a larger contribution to the City's beauty, vitality, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Efforts should be made to transform the riverfront in Montpelier for more public spaces, river access, better scenery, and improved flood resilience. Attention should also be paid to the impervious surfaces in town that contribute to faster run-off, more pollution, and higher river levels. Work being advanced by the City Planning Office and the Foundation for a Resilient Montpelier will be developing a River's Edge Master Plan—realizing this plan may include years of collective public, private and volunteer efforts to improve resilience even as we realize the natural assets to make the riverside in Montpelier the more beautiful, welcoming, dynamic place it can be for our future.

### **Bring together Montpelier's religious communities**

Montpelier's religious congregations and the buildings that house them play an important role in supporting their members and welcoming the whole community. As our congregations go through transitions, there is an opportunity for collaboration and collective action in a way that will impact the whole community. These efforts should be encouraged and supported.

### **Establish a makerspace**

A makerspace can strengthen a community's capacity to make and repair things in a way that increases self-sufficiency, teaches and shares practical skills, grows the sharing economy, and builds community. This also provides a venue for area residents to share their areas of expertise. Efforts should be deployed to explore the possibility of establishing a community makerspace in Montpelier.

### **Local Food System**

When considering our resilience as a community and as individuals, access to food is a critical component. There are a variety of actions that can be taken to strengthen our local food system,

from shared storage and processing to encouraging gardening at the hyper-local scale. An initiative should be launched centered in Central Vermont to facilitate more collaboration amongst food growers and to lead efforts towards greater local food production and consumption.

### **Facilitate multi-generational engagement**

A strong civic culture is one that engages all generations. Too often in Montpelier, the voices and participation of younger residents in our community are missing from public conversations and from city committees. An initiative should be launched to actively engage and include younger members of the Montpelier community in public life. This initiative could also help to facilitate activities that cultivate cross-generational connection.

### **Resilient homes**

Strategic preventative improvements to our homes can reduce the impact of disasters. This could be as simple as raising belongings off the floor in the basement, or something more complex like retrofitting home energy systems. Efforts should be made across the community to provide information and resources to encourage households to make improvements inside and outside the home to advance preparedness and reduce risk.

### **Strengthen civility and promote civic engagement throughout Montpelier**

An active, engaged, and optimistic community has greater capacity to tackle challenges and to unify for positive change. Montpelier can encourage more diverse and inclusive involvement in public life by implementing a variety of strategies including providing greater support to city committees, adding a social component (possibly including a community meal) before some City Council meetings, and a regular hosting of civic dialogues. An easier-to-navigate City website would also contribute to greater community engagement.