



Foundation for a Resilient Montpelier
A New Day for Montpelier Public Forum - April 30, 2026
Breakout Session Notes

Vibrant Downtown break-out session

Facilitator: Paul Costello

Note-Taker: Katie Trautz

Questions to consider:

What do you appreciate about downtown?

What do you value about downtown?

Community comments:

- New residents are witnessing new vibrancy and increased foot traffic in the downtown
- Downtowns along rivers seem to thrive: how can we leverage our river and use riverside space more wisely and effectively? Let's change parking lots to rivers!
- KHL is a wonderful space, Norwich is an amazing partner, partnerships like these could be a resource for future projects - for example: Norwich's architecture students who built the play structure at KHL
- City Parks weighed in on outdoor economy building:
 - There are some things already in action, trailbuilding and marketing and leveraging events
 - One difficulty is figuring out who we are as we compare ourselves to Stowe and the Mad River Valley?
 - Perhaps the rivers could be our niche: let's talk about outdoor economy and the rivers
- There used to be more restaurants:
 - There is now a lack of State employees and it has made a difference (causing lack of midday foot traffic)
 - We need to encourage workers to come back to the office, too many people are working remotely
 - The State should look at repurposing the office buildings, or putting them into use!
- Our town needs infrastructure repairs:
 - Sidewalks and parking lots are in need of repaving and attention
 - How do we fund these repairs?

- The unhoused issues persist and is becoming increasingly problematic
 - We need more apartments and condos downtown
- Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility
 - We need to fix sidewalks (and maintain them in the winter)
- Businesses should stay open later, restaurants, etc.
- There should be more celebration and marketing of the arts and culture in Montpelier
 - There are world class performances here
 - Is Montpelier known for arts and culture?
 - Artwalks are wonderful!
- Public Bathrooms should be open after 5pm
 - This would relieve the pressure on the businesses who get asked all the time
- Performing Arts need to be leveraged:
 - Multi-day festivals and arts festivals should be highlighted
 - There's opportunities for brand new plays or works to be performed
 - There is regionwide collaboration that could be explored
 - We should celebrate the region's arts scene
- More walking and more biking downtown
 - Downtown is HOT: too much asphalt
 - We need more trees and more shade
 - We need more outdoor seating
 - Let's use the vacant parking lots next to the river for outdoor eating and parklets, and green space
- Expense here is prohibitive
 - Maybe businesses could offer 'recession specials', inexpensive foods for those who can't afford the full meal
 - Locals don't invite friends to visit because of embarrassment about the cost here
- Welcome Center:
 - It would be a good marketing strategy
- Montpelier is generally too restrictive
 - Too much resistance to good ideas
 - We need a more supportive community to usher ideas forward
- Bike Path
 - Needs to be maintained and marketed
 - We should be leveraging this amazing asset
- Volunteership
 - How about a volunteer fair

- More regular clean up opportunities (much like Montpelier Alive's Spruce Up Days)
 - Keep volunteers engaged
- Let's keep downtown pedestrian friendly
- We need more downtown gathering spaces: Pocket parks
 - We could close streets and have community meals
- Faith communities and churches are important spaces
 - The buildings occupy a big part of the downtown
 - Both physically and otherwise, churches hold a lot of value to the community
- We need more river and resilience education
 - More opportunities to learn
 - Maybe this could be a part of the Ramble, rediscover the downtown AND its rivers (much like the walking tours Vivian was leading last year)
- Bike Racks
 - More bike racks, creative styles, colorful
 - There is nowhere to put a bike when you want to duck into a shop or cafe quickly.
- Celebrate volunteership
 - There is plenty of volunteership in our community
 - Let's celebrate that and market it about our wonderful place
- Makerspaces have great potential here
 - Could be third space, gathering locations
- More benches
 - They should be spread around the downtown and in shady areas
- No jake-brake law
 - Trucks are too loud for downtown
 - Could there be a truck route that isn't Main St?
 - Perhaps Elm St?
- More ice cream! Another ice cream shop!
- 87 State Street: quick update from a developer
 - Building is going up for auction
 - FRM has formed a group to make a bid
 - Abatement still needs to happen, which makes it unattractive to most interested parties
- The next flood will cost us more
 - Let's be proactive now and resilient now to prepare

Main Themes and Takeaways:

- Arts and Culture should be celebrated

- There should be more river facing activity, especially eating places along the river
- There should be more third space, shade, benches
- Let's nurture a more welcoming downtown:
 - Welcome Center
 - Bathrooms
 - Better infrastructure
 - Less restrictive, more supportive of good ideas
- More pedestrian and bike friendly downtown

Resilient Communities Breakout Session

Facilitator: Sarah Jarvis

Note-Taker: Richarda Ericson

What does a resilient Montpelier look like to you?

- Appreciate what city did with bridges and coming up with city of bridges. Follow up would be to be attentive to how the city looks (cared for with roads and plantings, etc.) that we are proud of; other thing is RE: Coop and expansion – combined with need for housing engage developers in combining Coop and housing; City Hall
- Resilience is the ability to respond to changing circumstances; food is something we don't want to think about now but we see a true food emergency arising in the world. Montpelier should be considering a food economy. Also we will flood again, so we need to consider reuse or repurposing buildings, and also need to recognize inflation and where people are feeling pinched. Local economy, housing.
- Important to think about that one of the highest priorities is to protect the sewage treatment plant – really impacts so much
- Resilience – noticing so few young people here. Multi generational engagement within our community, housing, and to be interconnected.
- Resilient Montpelier is maintaining in the face of adversity but also growing and getting better together; how do we go above maintaining, better than resilience – anti fragility
- Thinking about it with individuals and those in need; capstone and other services to help people be resilient; a way to help those in need become more resilient

- Experience with someone singing in CG- we all have to get out of our comfort zone- reach out to others; people who live in town with big houses and extra rooms could use home share; what are we comfortable with, what are we willing to do? Try to take the step to step in and help. That's the beginning. Practically- where do we go when it floods again?
- Homeshare is a nice alternative
- Happy to be part of this community – Hub appeared so quickly; amazed at how people helped
- Need infrastructure to support housing; don't have building the tax base to support the capital city
- Resilient community is a community of people whose needs are being met

Ways in which people are taking resilience on themselves in their homes and businesses?

- Trying to find alternatives to asphalt
- Investment in urban forestry pathways and permeable parking surfaces; city has opportunities in other areas like this
- VT Mutual was flooded and when rebuilt it, focused on materials that are easy to clean and are more adaptable to flooding; installed two large pump systems on either side to help move water if it ends up back in basement spaces, and flood resistant doorways, like a water gasket in the doorways;
- Hopes they do a better job than M&T bank – had water go in atm airway- always look at vulnerabilities;
- VT Mutual very quiet about these investments in the building, for the community
- Our riverfront in much of the city is dominated by state parking lots with no trees. Need to think about other ways of getting around – less cars, and the state needs to do something about it. Time to pick this up again, state should be a partner.
- basement full of bikes- mechanical things that we can fix ourselves and can help us get around if we need it
- Transportation is a big issue; giving people rides when you're going places;
- Resilience is when the next flood occurs, how do we make sure its not as damaging as last time. Something that's working is 5 Home Farm Way- area that can help absorb some of the flood waters; Joselyn Wilchek had a great op ed after last flood RE: fossil fuels for heating; there's lots of people who can't make changes but if you can, consider taking advantage of some of the incentives offered by EVT, etc.
- Renters don't have options like home owners; landlords don't live here, live in other states
- Is housing an option in PO building?
- Building is really not suitable for housing, bt could be an option on back lot

- Amanda- taking advantage of EVT offers. Slowly electrifying home. Took advantage of GMP residential battery program that will help in the event of power outages. Internal resilience is important. Worried about disaster fatigue as well as the same people always being involved.
- Not putting power walls in basements
- Unitarian Church has done an amazing job post flood. A place to go as emergency shelter, partly because of the work that has been done. Home- solar panels, heat pumps, etc.
- Neighbor Net is important right now because of the way of neighbors are being targeted; Shout out to Bridge and Orca for being here- communication is a part of being resilient
- There is no “they” in our community, only we –
- Savoy Theater has been great in showing films about resilience
- Churches are showing models of what we can do and how we can collaborate. Need to stop talking about those people- try to change language.
- People show up who have privilege and access. They have time and energy to show up to these events. Money allows people to come to events and show up and have a seat at the table.
- In any given year, seeing the people volunteering in other communities; neighboring communities helping one another; also about other communities surrounding us.
- Cites Hardwick’s Center for an Agricultural Economy as an example – Montpelier economy could benefit from something like that here.

Strong Civic Culture Breakout Session

Facilitator: Lauren Hierl

Note-Taker: Paul Carnahan

- There are many talented people in Montpelier, we need to tap into the talent that we have, have it incorporated in our official offices and documents.
- What does an engaged community look like? Neighbors taking care of each other, helping each other. Work that churches are doing is amazing. Worried because buildings are older and may not be standing the test of time. How do faith communities work with the larger community? How do we support each other.
- We are doing a fairly good job helping unhoused individuals, but we see them all on the street looking for money. We don’t want this to evolve into a “we/them” situation. How do we help them?

- Reads from AI definition of Civic Culture. “Set of attitudes, norms, behaviors, etc.” Has an interest in MSAC, which is at a pivotal point; MSAC is sitting empty more than she would like to see; wants people to think about using MSAC
- Condense the definition of civic culture to: show up with an attitude of “how can I help” rather than “what can I criticize”
- Have a community dinner before city council meetings; people might stay for the meeting, but if not it was an opportunity to gather and talk to each other; Burlington has Ward meetings which generates sense of community
- Kettering Foundation promotes civic dialogues, Cythina worked for it and at Hofstra University, need to have civic dialogues on issues and come up with proposals for solutions to issues here in Montpelier, we lead rather than follow city council or state leadership
- Get organizations who have been already set up to sponsor these dialogues rather than groups trying to start from scratch
- Shout out to MNN; this can only strengthen our community and generate civic conversations; he encourages people to join a neighbor net
- Important to have united social service agencies, produce better services, there are people who care in Montpelier and Barre but sometimes the gears don't always mesh
- our neighborhood really cares for each other, it is the best neighborhood in city; diversity of ages in our neighborhood is important; people in our neighborhood look out for each other which lets people stay living in their neighborhoods
- Not a lot of young people at this gathering; what is our community going to look like in a few years? To keep this community going we need to attract more young people; Vermont is #1 in decline of birth rate according to this week's *Seven Days*, we need to work on this now; think actively about involving young people
- On Saturdays we have group of young people who come in and volunteer at the food shelf, it is an incredible atmosphere of people coming together to do fun and meaningful things; we need to create opportunities for intergenerational volunteerism to happen
- Commit to an idea that his father had: “attack the idea, never ever the person;” legislators can argue like cats and dogs during the day but then go have dinner together; we need to take this to heart; people who step up in this community are getting pilloried when they take a position and that discourages people from stepping up
- Those of us who are involved in other organizations need to get the word out to young people who might want to be involved; lots of organizations are led by people with white hair
- We are here because we care; she was demotivated when things are discussed on a city committee but never changed; so many volunteers are showing up to

staff city committees; funds were set up to help people to volunteer at \$50/meeting, but it was never used. What about language access? City does not abide by federal law to make sure people who speak other languages can access government services

- She works for AmeriCorps; young people want to volunteer but they are intimidated to do so, how can we formally or informally invite these young people; is there a database where people can find out about volunteer opportunities?
- City website is very hard to navigate; if there is a database it would be hard to find. Can we fix the city's website? Nice to put a volunteer to work on it; Get an AmeriCorps volunteer to set up database for volunteerism
- endorses getting volunteers to help fix the web site
- maybe it is something that a FRM Vista worker could do; it fits with FRM emphasis on neighborhood net
- ABLE in Barre should be contacted about accessibility
- have a volunteer job fair every year and hold "speed dating" between organizations and volunteers
- Grew up in Montpelier and recently moved back, has been reflecting on why she moved back here. Loves living here. You don't necessarily need a lot of young people to attract young people; she values intergenerational activities; post flood activities were the best feeling of community, but it shouldn't take a disaster to get people involved.
- Friend said: "You should never have a meeting if you don't have a party"; post flood this has been true; having a database is fine but you need to have a time to get together in person to promote volunteerism and feeling of community
- We are fortunate to have FPF and The Bridge newspaper; maybe The Bridge could highlight volunteer opportunities
- After the flood everyone had a common mission or focus, it would be helpful to have a yearly theme, something for us to all rally around each year; there are too many activities that could use our help for anyone to sort it all out.