



"October Crossing," Robin LaHue

MASTER PLAN MONTPELIER, VERMONT

Montpelier Planning Commission
enVision Montpelier Stakeholders
Department of Planning and Community Development
Adopted September 8, 2010



Montpelier, Vermont

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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 13

Master Plan Process..... 13

National Citizens Survey 17

Survey Findings..... 17

Consistency with Act 200..... 18

 Background 22

Development History 22

State and Regional Context..... 25

Montpelier’s Magic..... 27

Natural Environment 28

 3.1 Natural Features..... 28

Natural Setting 28

Water Resources	28
Montpelier’s Waterways	28
Flood Mitigation.....	31
Stormwater Management.....	32
Municipal Water Service.....	34
Water Quality.....	36
Water Conservation.....	36
Sewers	36
Potential Service Areas.....	38
Natural Communities and Biodiversity	39
Invasive Species.....	42
Open Space and Recreation	42
Public Parks.....	43
Waste Management	47
Air Quality.....	48
Land and Soil	49
Agricultural Soils	49
3.2 Goals for the Montpelier Natural Environment	57
3.3 Natural Environment Recommendations.....	60
Goal A: Water Resources.....	59
Goal B: Natural Communities & Biodiversity	65
Goal C: Open Space & Recreation.....	68
Goal D: Air & Climate	71
Goal E: Land & Soil	73
Goal F: Waste Management	75
Infrastructure & the Built Environment.....	78
4.1 Montpelier’s Built Environment Overview.....	78
The Evolution of Montpelier’s Built Form.....	78
The State House, Capitol Complex, and Downtown.....	78
Architectural History and Design.....	79
Design Review	80
Neighborhoods	81
Barre Street	81

	<i>College Hill</i>	81
	<i>Berlin/Hill Street</i>	81
	<i>PleasantHood</i>	81
	<i>Stonewall Meadows</i>	82
	<i>Cliffside</i>	82
	<i>The Meadow</i>	82
	<i>Wild Wood</i>	82
	<i>North Street</i>	82
	<i>Northfield Street</i>	84
	<i>Park West</i>	84
	<i>Toy Town</i>	84
	<i>Upper Towne Hill Road</i>	84
	City Gateways and Entrance Corridors	84
	Western Entrance and Gateway	84
	Eastern Entrance and Gateway	85
	Other Entrances	85
4.2	Transportation and Circulation	85
	<i>Pedestrian Network</i>	89
	Bicycle Network	90
	Accommodating Bicycles in the Street System	92
	Montpelier’s Bridges	94
	Journey to Work Data	96
	Public Transit Services and Facilities	97
	Passenger Rail and Freight	100
	Montpelier’s Street Network	101
	Street Network Planning and Design	101
	Streets that are Public Spaces	103
	Commuter Routes	103
	Historic Bridges	103
	Neighborhood Connectors	103
	Local Streets	103
	Street Connectivity	106
	Parking	107
	Travel Demand Management	108

Air Service	108
Land Use and Transportation	109
Communications	110
4.3 Population and Housing.....	111
Consistency with Regional Planning	116
Health and Safety of Montpelier’s Infrastructure	120
Energy	121
4.4 Goals for Montpelier’s Built Environment.....	126
4.5 Infrastructure & Built Environment Recommendations.....	127
Goal A: Communications	127
Goal B: Energy	129
Goal C: Housing & Buildings	132
Goal D: Transportation	141
Economics & Livelihoods	146
5.1 The Local Economy.....	146
Current Employment	146
Employment Projections	149
Regional Employment	151
Job Imports and Exports	152
Green Jobs	153
Jobs in the Creative Economy	153
Income	154
Complementary Currencies	155
Local Food	155
5.2 Goals for the Montpelier Economy	159
5.3 Economics & Livelihoods Recommendations.....	161
Goal A: Sustainability	161
Goal B: Economic Well-Being	162
Goal C: Meaningful Work	165
Goal D: Entrepreneurial Opportunities	168
Goal E: Human Needs	170
Goal F: Vibrant Downtowns	174

Goal G: Food	177
Governance	181
6.1 Montpelier’s Governance System.....	181
Municipal Government	181
Elections	183
Civic Participation	183
Capital Area Neighborhoods! (CAN!)	184
enVision Montpelier	184
The Montpelier Community Justice Center (MCJC)	185
6.2 Goals for the Montpelier Governance System.....	186
6.3 Governance Recommendations	187
Goal A: Self-Determination	187
Goal B: Access	191
Goal C: Equity	193
Goal D: Conflict Resolution	194
Social & Human Development.....	195
7.1 The Basis of Community Values.....	195
Health, Wellness, and Treatment	197
Lifelong Learning	202
Faith, Wisdom, and Spirituality	204
Sense of Community	205
Safe Neighborhoods	205
Police Department	206
Fire and Ambulance Department	206
Cultural Opportunities	207
The Library	208
Museums	208
Arts Organizations	208
7.2 Goals for Social and Human Development	211
7.3 Social & Human Development Recommendations.....	213
Goal A: Sense of Community	213
Goal B: Safe Neighborhoods	215

Goal C: Education	217
Goal D: Resilience	223
Goal E: Health & Wellness	226
Goal F: Faith, Wisdom, & Spirituality	231
Goal G: Aesthetic Enjoyment & Creative Self-Expression.....	233
Goal H: Families & Relationships	235
Implementing the Master Plan	236
The Process	236
Adoption of the Master Plan.....	236
Regulatory Implementation	236
Act 250	237
Public Spending	237
Monitoring and Evaluation	238
enVision Montpelier Stakeholders	239
Appendix: A Sample of Neighborhood Building Forms	243
Endnotes	247

List of Tables

Table 1-1: Master Plan Consistency with Act 200 Goals in 24 V.S.A. §4302.....	19
Table 3-1: 2008 Detected Contaminants, Montpelier Water System	37
Table 3-2: Biodiversity Conservation Areas	41
Table 3-3: Areas of Land with Full or Limited Public Access.....	44
Table 4-1: Inventory of Montpelier's City Owned Bridges	95
Table 4-2: Mode of Transportation in Montpelier - Journey to Work Data	96
Table 4-3: GMTA Capital District Ridership, 2003-2009	99
Table 4-4: Passenger Data for the <i>Vermont</i> AMTRAK Line.....	100
Table 4-5: Signalized Intersection Performance Measures.....	105
Table 4-6: Un-signalized Intersection Performance Measures	105
Table 4-7: Considerations for Additional Parking	107
Table 4-8: Inventory of Off-Street Public Parking Facilities.....	108
Table 4-9: Montpelier Population, Housing Units 1940--2000 (US Census).....	111
Table 4-10: CVRPC/EPR Population Projections for Montpelier	111
Table 4-11: CVRPC/EPR Housing Projections for Montpelier	111
Table 4-12: EPR Projections vs. Net New Units 2000-2005	113
Table 4-13: Residential Projects Pending as of April 2008 (AKA "Pipeline Units")	114
Table 4-14: Government Greenhouse Gas Emissions Detailed Report, 2004.....	124
Table 4-15: Buildings in Montpelier that have Undergone Efficiency Measures*	124
Table 4-16: Buildings in Montpelier that have Undergone Fuel-Switching.....	124
Table 4-17: Montpelier's Total Electricity Consumption	125
Table 4-18: Montpelier's Total Electricity Savings.....	125
Table 4-19: Average Residential Consumption & Savings, per Household	125
Table 5-1: Employers and Employees in Central Vermont Communities, 2008.....	146
Table 5-2: Annual Job Growth in Montpelier, 1990-2008.....	148
Table 5-3: Employment of Montpelier Residents by Occupation, 2000 (Percent of Total Employed).....	149
Table 5-4: Total Employment 1978 to 2030	150
Table 5-5: Square footage needs by Employment Type	151
Table 5-6: Educational Attainment of Persons Over 25 Years, 2000.....	154
Table 5-7: Median Adjusted Gross Income for Families by Town and State, 1997 & 2007	155
Table 5-8: Number of People Living Below the Poverty Level in Central Vermont Communities, 1999	155
Table 5-9: Comparison of VT & US on imports	157

Table 7-1: Licensed and Registered Child Care Providers in Montpelier, 2010.....200
Table 7-2: School Enrollment and Utilization203

List of Figures

Figure 1: Montpelier in 1858	23
Figure 2: Montpelier in 1873	24
Figure 3: Central Vermont Regional Growth Centers	26
Figure 4: Topography and Ridgelines	29
Figure 5: Steep Slopes.....	30
Figure 6: Rivers, Floodzones, and Floodway.....	33
Figure 7: Community Facilities.....	35
Figure 8: Biodiversity Conservation Areas.....	40
Figure 9: Open Space Network.....	46
Figure 10: Agricultural Land and Farms.....	50
Figure 11: Conservation Lands.....	51
Figure 12: Wetlands and Water Bodies	52
Figure 13: Endangered Species	53
Figure 14: Natural Communities	54
Figure 15: Wildlife Habitat.....	55
Figure 16: Hazardous Sites.....	56
Figure 17: Montpelier Historic District.....	80
Figure 18: Montpelier Capital Area Neighborhoods (CAN!).....	83
Figure 19A: Transportation Plan Map — Motorized	87
Figure 19B: Transportation Plan Map — Non-Motorized	88
Figure 20A: Bike Lane Accommodation Diagrams.....	92
A1: Bike Lane Accommodation Diagrams.....	93
A2: Bike Lane Accommodation Diagrams.....	93
A3: Bike Lane Accommodation Diagrams.....	94
Figure 21: Mode of Transportation in Montpelier	96
Figure 22: GMTA Capital District Ridership, 2003-2009.....	99
Figure 23: Suggested Montpelier Neighborhood Bus Routes	100
Figure 24: Streets, Connectors, and Commuter Routes.....	102
Figure 25: Five Most Congested Intersections in Montpelier.....	104
Figure 26: Areas to Consider Increased Street Connectivity.....	106
Figure 27a: Land Use Patterns	109
27b: Street Network Patterns	109
Figure 28: Housing.....	115
Figure 29: Zoning and Current Land Use	117
Figure 30: Future Land Use	118

Figure 31: Housing Units by Heat Source, Montpelier, 2000.....	122
Figure 32: Housing Units by Heat Source, Washington County, 2000.....	122
Figure 33: Housing Units by Heat Source, Vermont, 2000.....	123
Figure 34: The Montpelier Labor Shed	147
Figure 35: Employment Projections through 2030.....	151
Figure 36: Job Importers and Exporters in Washington County	152
Figure 37: Number of Farms in Vermont, 1850-2002	155
Figure 38: Total Farm Acreage in Washington County, 1992 & 2002	156
Figure 39: Number of Farms in Washington County, 1992 & 2002.....	156
Figure 40: Washington County Farms by Size, 1987, 1992, 2002	156
Figure 41: Elements of the Central Vermont Food System	158
Figure 42: “Ready Kindergartners,” 2007	203

Introduction

The Montpelier Master Plan is a comprehensive long-range guide to growth and change in the Capital City of Vermont. This document is intended to establish a framework for accomplishing community aspirations and City development. It describes present conditions and states goals, targets or measurable benchmarks towards goals, and strategies or steps to achieving each target. In its entirety, the Master Plan synthesizes a vision for what the community can be in the future and charts a course to achieve that vision.

Master Plan Process

Citizen input has been critical in the creation of this document. enVision Montpelier, a community driven, long-range planning initiative began in 2007. Stakeholders in the process were identified as part of a large scale visioning process that engaged over 800 people in questions about the future of the city. Regular stakeholder meetings were held monthly over the first year, and bi-monthly during the second year. The planning process has followed a methodology inspired and informed by the Earth Charter, a global statement of principles for a sustainable and peaceful world. The City Council endorsed the Earth Charter in 2001, the first state capital to do so. The goal of enVision Montpelier has been to write a sustainable community plan, a plan that describes how residents can meet their current needs while also planning to meet the needs of future generations.

Earth Charter Principles: *Relevant Earth Charter principles are located in blue boxes throughout the Master Plan. The principles have served as illustrative guide posts for the planning process.*

**enVision Montpelier
30-100 Year Vision Statement**

Montpelier is a small and vibrant community nestled in the mountains of central Vermont. With foresight and determination, we are poised to do great things in the decades to come.

Our vision is to excel as a creative and sustainable community. More specifically, we seek to safeguard the natural environment and enhance our small-town setting. We aspire to strengthen community ties and expand civic participation. We aim to encourage learning and cultivate good jobs.

Together, we will strive to meet present needs and leave a worthy legacy to future generations. We hope that other communities might take inspiration from our vision and values — and the ways we put them into action.

In addition to the visioning process and the monthly stakeholder meetings, the Planning Commission convened five committees, each based on the systems in our communities that meet

our needs. The committees include Economics & Livelihoods, Governance, Infrastructure & the Built Environment, Natural Environment, and Social & Human Development. Each group held monthly meetings and worked to write goals, targets, and strategies related to their topic area. To do this, committee members met with a large number of community groups to get a sense of their priorities for the city.

Because Montpelier serves as the economic, social, and cultural center of the Central Vermont region, the Economics & Livelihoods Committee wrote goals for this area that speak to creating high quality jobs, adequate income, a healthy and vibrant downtown, regional cooperation, and entrepreneurship. In order to design strategies to achieve these goals, the stakeholder committee invited businesses to morning meetings, asked organizations who work with unemployed and low income residents, schools, community leaders, and citizens what they saw needed in the community.

The Governance Committee worked to encompass ideas of civic engagement, empowerment, equity, access to information, and the ability to resolve community conflicts adequately. To consider the goals and strategies for this area, the stakeholder committee consulted with organizations that serve populations who traditionally have problems with access, organizations that serve low income populations, and organizations that help community members resolve conflict. The committee also invited citizens, politicians, representatives of political parties, City Councilors, city staff, and many others to join the discussion.

Who We Are

Montpelier's people are drawn together by a shared sense of purpose and place. Along the banks of the Winooski and in the green hills that rise above it, the changing seasons and the landscape allow us to hike, fish, bike, and ski within the city limits. Our historic downtown is where we shop for local goods, eat healthy food from nearby farms, and chat with old friends and new acquaintances on sidewalks and street corners.

Our creative spirit is inspired by the many writers, artists, dancers, actors, musicians, and chefs in our midst. Our farmers and architects are lighting the way to healthier, more sustainable lifestyles. Our educators kindle our curiosity, add to our knowledge, and bring national recognition to our schools and colleges. We honor those who have long shaped our community, and welcome newcomers into our circle. Our children grow and thrive in a safe and friendly environment.

Our sense of what's possible spurs us to reach out to the world beyond our borders. As the state capital, we are home to government institutions, nonprofit groups, and businesses that work to strengthen communities near and far.

We are increasingly aware of our relationship with the earth, and of the urgent need to preserve its beauty and vitality. We are determined to fight prejudice and exclusion and to embrace those among us who are hungry, ailing, lonely, or different. We are intent on securing avenues for everyone—young and old, rich and poor—to have a voice in setting priorities, resolving conflicts, and shaping decisions in the years ahead.

Stakeholders in the Infrastructure & Built Environment Committee asked how we'll create and distribute energy, communications technology, housing, food, transportation, water services, wastewater treatment, waste reuse and recycling, and public facilities. To try and answer these questions, the Committee worked with energy experts, Department of Public Works staff, housing specialists, solid waste professionals, and many others.

Recognizing that increasing populations are putting a strain on limited resources all over the globe, the Natural Environment Committee created strategies to reduce overconsumption, waste, and use of non-renewable resources. For Montpelier, the natural environment section of the plan covers ideas of water quality, maintenance of habitat and biodiversity, land use patterns, flood protection, waste diversion, and other areas of interest. The stakeholder committee consulted with the Conservation Commission and many of the renowned environmental organizations in the community to determine what the most pressing environmental issues are and how to work to resolve them.

Social systems and human development is about education, recreation, health; it's about the creativity we express in the world through the arts, music, and cultural pursuits, and the shared sense of community that is so important to our small town life. The values we develop drive the choices we make, both as individuals and collectively, so the social and human development of the city is critically important. Stakeholders engaged the arts community, consulted with the school board, parents, and students, convened the leaders in the faith community, and spoke with health care providers, police, and emergency personnel to create the social systems and human development piece of the plan.

Once the committees consulted the necessary community groups and drafted goals, targets, and strategies for their topic area, another large, public meeting was held. At this meeting, community members were asked to choose their top five priorities from each topic area. In addition to the public meeting, community members had the opportunity to cast votes for their priorities on-line. Over 400 community members shared their priorities for the future.

As the top priorities for each topic area were determined, the recommendation sections of this plan began to take shape. The top priorities, those with the nearest date are found at the beginning of the recommendation sections and those that are less of a priority to the community, have farther reaching dates and are found towards the end of the recommendation sections. Responsible parties are identified for all (short, mid, and long term) strategies in the plan.

The top three (or four, in the case of a tie) priorities for each topic area, as determined by the number of votes received:

Natural Environment Top Priorities (based on 143 votes):

1. Develop and extend a wagon-wheel network of trails throughout downtown Montpelier and to other neighboring communities. For example, establish a trail at Sabin's Pasture that links to National Life and U-32 ski trails.
2. Use the rural-urban fringe to create new, living landscapes. Provide opportunities to regenerate land and develop communities using the best available knowledge in building, landscape design, and management practices.

3. Establish priorities and adopt tools for open space and natural resource protection, including fee purchase, transfer or purchase of development rights, acquisition of easements conservation overlay districts, or other appropriate zoning

Infrastructure & the Built Environment Top Priorities (based on 184 votes):

1. Implement a municipally owned fiber-optic system to extend affordable telecommunications to all residents, businesses, and institutions within the community.
2. The City of Montpelier establishes a biomass district energy CHP (combined heat and power) facility in downtown to serve downtown residents, municipal buildings, and the Capitol Complex.
3. Identify problem areas of roadways, sidewalks, and bike paths and provide maintenance when needed. Utilize reports, such as the Growth Center Designation, which identify problem roadways and provide suggestions for improvement.

Economic & Livelihoods Top Priorities (based on 154 votes):

1. Create opportunities such as, but not limited to:
 - Renewable biomass district energy;
 - Energy efficiency;
 - Energy efficient and low-impact building;
 - Public transit;
 - Waste reuse and recycling.
2. Foster an environment that attracts and retains talented and creative people by:
 - Supporting and encouraging existing innovators, such as local artists, creative institutes, and entrepreneurs;
 - Providing access to the kind of technology that facilitates communication and creativity;
 - Respecting and celebrating diversity; and
 - Increasing affordable studio space.
3. Provide more “place-based,” experiential, and out-of-school educational opportunities for all ages, including internships, work-study programs, and community service requirements.
4. Enhance programs and supports that help unemployed and low-income people achieve economic self-sufficiency. Urge the not-for-profit sector, businesses, and government to use a collaborative and shared investment approach to develop and implement:
 - Self-advocacy programs for the unemployed and low-income to address issues that perpetuate poverty;
 - Adequate training, education, life skills development, financial management, job preparation and job placement services;
 - Programs that teach cost-saving strategies relating to consumption patterns;
 - Various employment supports, including transportation subsidies, child care and eased eligibility levels for health benefits;
 - Early childhood development supports that help parents provide children with healthy environments;
 - Programs that increase access to quality food sources; and
 - Affordable housing supports, including eased eligibility levels for mortgages and subsidized interest rates.

Governance Top Priorities (based on 175 votes):

1. The City creates a model of engagement that reflects the diversity of the community, by reaching out to underserved populations through a variety of methods.
2. City Council considers voting District Changes based on both equitable population distribution and the neighborhoods.
3. The City supports restorative justice programs and alternative models of dispute resolution and community service offered by the Community Justice Center.

Social & Human Development Top Priorities (based on 108 votes):

1. Foster and accommodate social interaction and a range of activities in which Montpelier residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can participate.
2. Ensure Montpelier residents have access to a wide variety of health care services in a number of different forms.
3. Actively encourage and nurture the involvement of residents in neighborhood and community events and activities.

Once the priorities or the order of the recommendations for each topic area were determined, the enVision Montpelier Steering Committee and the Planning Commission worked to refine all goals, targets, and strategies and flesh out the implementation possibilities.

National Citizens Survey

During 2009, The City worked with the National Research Center, Inc. and the International City/County Management Association to conduct a statistically valid survey about the opinions and perspectives residents have about city government and the quality of life in Montpelier.

The survey report provides the opinions of a representative sample of residents about community quality of life, service delivery, civic participation and unique issues of local interest. Since the National Citizens Survey will be administered again in 5 years, it is a convenient measure of progress. Therefore, throughout the Master Planning process, results from the National Citizens Survey or the found opinions of Montpelier residents have been used to shape and define set targets for the future.

Survey Findings

Most residents experience a good quality of life in the City of Montpelier and believe the City is a good place to live. The overall quality of life in the City of Montpelier was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 85% of respondents. About eight in ten report they plan on staying in the City of Montpelier for the next five years.

A variety of characteristics of the community was evaluated by those participating in the study. Among the characteristics receiving the most favorable ratings were air quality, the overall image or reputation of Montpelier, quality of the overall natural environment and the cleanliness of Montpelier. The characteristics receiving the least positive ratings were the availability of affordable quality housing, amount of public parking and employment opportunities.

Ratings of community characteristics were compared to the benchmark database. Of the 31 characteristics for which comparisons were available, 17 were above the benchmark comparison, four were similar to the benchmark comparison and ten were below.

Residents in the City of Montpelier are very civically engaged. While about half had attended a meeting of local elected public officials or other local public meeting in the previous 12 months, 96% had provided help to a friend or neighbor. A majority had volunteered their time to some group or activity in the City of Montpelier, which was higher than the benchmark.

In general, survey respondents demonstrated trust in local government. A majority rated the overall direction being taken by the City of Montpelier as “good” or “excellent.” This was similar to the benchmark. Those residents who had interacted with an employee of the City of Montpelier in the previous 12 months gave high marks to those employees. Nearly all rated their overall impression of employees as “excellent” or “good.”

On average, residents gave generally favorable ratings to most local government services. City services rated were able to be compared to the benchmark database. Of the 34 services for which comparisons were available, 19 were above the benchmark comparison, ten were similar to the benchmark comparison and five were below.

A Key Driver Analysis was conducted for the City of Montpelier which examined the relationships between ratings of each service and ratings of the City of Montpelier’s services overall. Those key driver services that correlated most strongly with residents’ perceptions about overall City service quality have been identified. By targeting improvements in key services, the City of Montpelier can focus on the services that have the greatest likelihood of influencing residents’ opinions about overall service quality. Services found to be influential in ratings of overall service quality from the Key Driver Analysis were:

- Police services
- City parks
- Public schools
- Street repair
- Land use, planning and zoning

Of these services, the area deserving the most attention may be that which was below the benchmark comparison: street repair. For police services, city parks, public schools and land use planning and zoning services, the City of Montpelier is above the benchmark and should continue to ensure high quality performance.

Consistency with Act 200

The Montpelier Master Plan has been prepared with close attention to the requirements of Title 24 VSA *Chapter 117*, Subchapter 5. That subchapter outlines the content and process for approving a master plan. Specific requirements are outlined for a plan to be consistent with the Act. Briefly, those requirements include:

- *A statement of objectives, policies and programs:* All
- *A land use plan:* See Chapter 3&4
- *A transportation plan:* See Chapter 4
- *A utility and facility plan:* See Chapter 4
- *A statement on preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic resources:* See Chapter 3&4
- *An Education facilities plan:* See Chapter 7
- *A program for implementation:* See Chapter 8
- *A statement indicating how the plan relates to development trends and plans for adjacent municipalities and the region:* See Chapter 4
- *An energy plan:* See Chapter 4
- *A housing element:* See Chapter 4

Table 1-1: Master Plan Consistency with Act 200 Goals in 24 V.S.A. §4302

Goal	Master Plan
(a) General	All
(b) Continuing Planning Process	
(1) To establish a coordinated, comprehensive planning process and framework to guide decisions by municipalities, regional planning commissions, and state agencies.	All
(2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impact.	All
(3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for the region and the state, as well as the community which it takes place.	All
(4) To encourage and assist municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans.	All
(c) Specific Goals	
(1) To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.	Chapter 4, Page 113
(A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.	Chapter 4, Page 113
(B) Economic growth should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas, or employed to revitalize existing villages and urban centers, or both.	Chapter 5, Page 113
(C) Public investments, including the construction or expansion of infrastructure, should reinforce the general character and planned growth patterns of the area.	Chapter 4

(2) To provide a strong and diverse economy that provides satisfying and rewarding job opportunities and that maintains high environmental standards, and to expand economic opportunities in areas with high unemployment or low per capita incomes.	Chapter 5, 7
(3) To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities sufficient to ensure the full realization of the abilities of all Vermonters.	Chapter 5, 7
(4) To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment, including public transit options and paths for pedestrians and bicyclers.	Chapter 4, Page 82, 82, 97
(A) Highways, air, rail and other means of transportation should be mutually supportive, balanced and integrated.	Chapter 4
(5) To identify, protect and preserve important natural features of the Vermont landscape, including:	Chapter 3
(A) significant natural and fragile areas;	Chapter 3, Page 37, 43, 48, 51
(B) outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shore lands and wetlands;	Chapter 3, Page 30, 48, 49
(C) significant scenic roads, waterways and views;	Chapter 3, 4, Page 26, 48, 49
(D) important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and archeologically sensitive areas.	Chapter 4, Page 76
(6) To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources.	Chapter 3, Page 37, 48, 49, 50
(A) Vermont's air, water, wildlife, mineral and land resources should be planned for use and development according to the principles set forth in 10 V.S.A. §6086(a).	Chapter 3
(7) To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.	Chapter 4, Page 116
(8) To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors.	Chapter 3, Page 43
(A) Growth should not significantly diminish the value and availability of outdoor recreational activities.	Chapter 3, Page 113
(B) Public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, such as lakes and hiking trails, should be identified, provided, and protected wherever appropriate.	Chapter 3, Page 43
(9) To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.	Chapter 5, Page 47, 113

(A) Strategies to protect long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands should be encouraged and should include maintaining low overall density.	Chapter 3, Page 47, 113, 174
(B) The manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products should be encouraged.	Chapter 5, Page 150, 173
(C) The use of locally-grown food products should be encouraged.	Chapter 5, Page 150, 172
(D) Sound forest and agricultural management practices should be encouraged.	Chapter 3, Page 150, 171
(E) Public investment should be planned so as to minimize development pressure on agricultural and forest land.	Chapter 3
(10) To provide for the wise and efficient use of Vermont's natural resources and to facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and the proper restoration and preservation of the aesthetic qualities of the area.	Chapter 3, Page 70
(11) To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.	Chapter 4, Page 110, 112
(A) Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly for those citizens of low and moderate income.	Chapter 4, Page 110, 112
(B) New and rehabilitated housing should be safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.	Chapter 4, Page 110, 112
(C) Sites for multi-family and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.	Chapter 4, Page 110, 112
(D) Accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences which provide affordable housing in close proximity to cost-effective care and supervision for relatives or disabled or elderly care persons should be allowed.	Chapter 4, Page 131
(12) To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.	Chapter 4, 7
(A) Public Facilities and services should include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal.	Chapter 4, 7
(B) The rate of growth should not exceed the ability of the community and the area to provide facilities and services.	Chapter 4, Page 113
(13) To ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care and to integrate child care issues into the planning process, including child care financing, infrastructure, business assistance for child care providers, and child care work force development.	Chapter 5, 7 Page 192, 210

Background

Development History

Although little is known of the earliest settlement of the area by Native Americans, we do know that about 6,000 years ago, warm, dry weather encouraged the spread of population into the upper Winooski River Valley. By the year 1200, extensive settlements developed throughout the region and were linked by trading networks. The rich floodplains and relatively warm southern exposures were conducive to settlement. After the arrival of European settlers between 1600 and 1800, war, disease, and dispersal virtually destroyed Native American settlement. However, early investigators, in the mid-1800's, reported burial mounds and other evidence of Native Americans. Otherwise, material evidence is limited to three recorded sites in the Vermont Archeological Inventory. All of these were random, chance finds of stone tools and spear points. This lack of evidence is probably due to intensive development in highly sensitive areas and past flooding which wiped out remains.

In contrast to prehistoric archaeology, historic archaeology is well documented. The earliest settlement lies west of the North Branch River along Elm Street, where Colonel Davis built a log cabin in 1787 or '88. Although much of the earliest Montpelier has been replaced, significant evidence of our early settlement remains, much of it buried and waiting to be discovered.

Montpelier was originally chartered in 1781 as a grant to settlers from Massachusetts. The first settlement was established along the North Branch in 1787, during the time Vermont was an independent republic. Original grantors envisioned the main portion of the town growing on high ground around Montpelier Center, but the availability of transportation routes and mill sites attracted early settlement along the riverbanks. By the time statehood was achieved, and the settlement was organized as a town, Montpelier had a population of 113. The early years of the community saw rapid growth with an influx of settlers who built saw and grist mills, roads, schools, churches and inns.

By 1805 the town had a population of 1,200. In that year, the State Legislature sought a permanent home. Montpelier was selected because of its central location, and the support from local residents who provided land and money. A humble state house was constructed on State Street. This first legislative home was replaced in 1836 by a state house designed by Ammi B. Young, largely at the community's expense. This granite structure was gutted by fire in 1857. The present State House, designed by Thomas Silloway, was constructed on the same site in 1859.

In 1811, the growing town was selected to serve as shire town for Washington County. In 1828, the financial service sector was established by the Vermont Mutual Fire Insurance Company. In 1848, the National Life Insurance Company was established, followed by the Union Mutual Fire Insurance company. Also by the mid-1800's, the railroad arrived which stimulated the business of the town. Thus, by the mid-nineteenth century, the principal economic components of the community, which continue to this day, were firmly established.

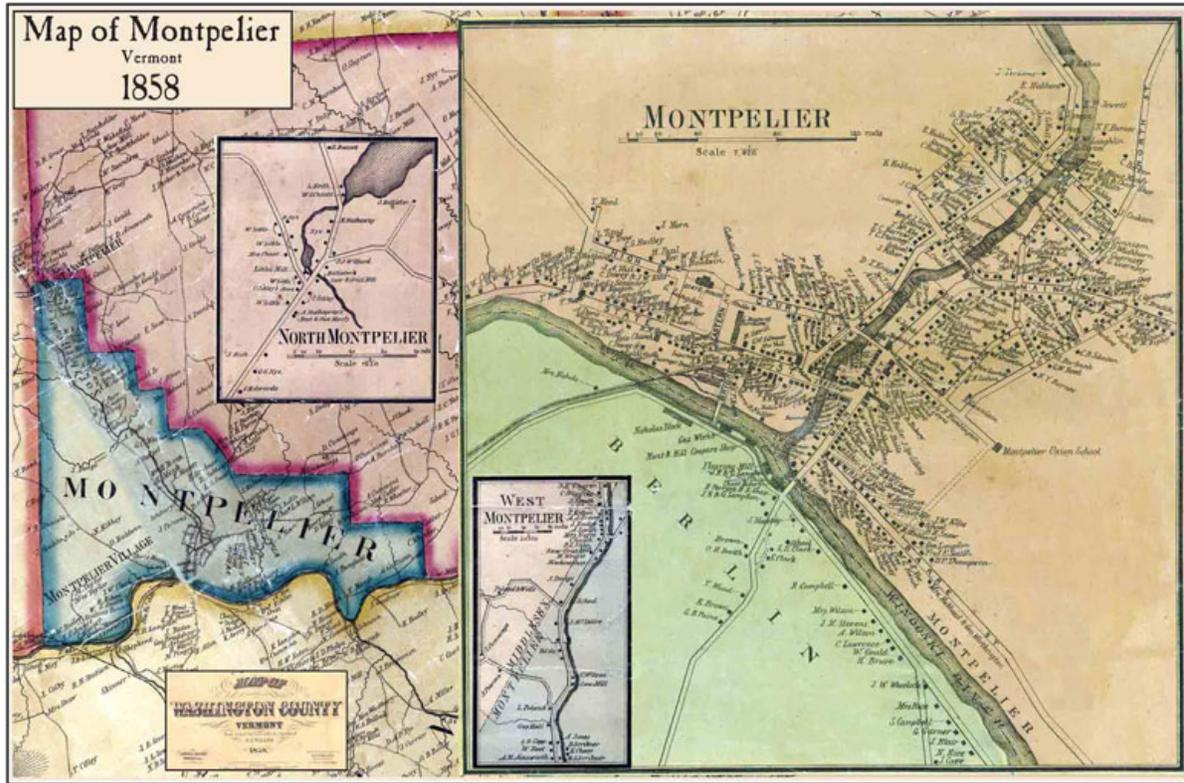


Figure 1: Montpelier in 1858

The configuration of the early village was strongly influenced by geography. As early as 1799, a bridge was constructed across the Winooski to Berlin. By 1858, the form of the main streets paralleling the rivers was developed. The downtown street pattern has changed very little since that time.

In 1849, Montpelier Village separated from the rest of the town, which was reorganized as East Montpelier.

After the Civil war, the antecedent of Vermont College moved to Montpelier from Newbury, Vermont, and became known as Montpelier Seminary. In 1936, it became Vermont Junior College, and in 1953 it was converted to Vermont College for Women. In 1972, the college was acquired by Norwich University.

As the bottom lands along the rivers became developed, homes were established along the surrounding hillsides, frequently on land claimed from the incredibly steep slopes.

Several natural disasters figure prominently in the development of the City. In 1875, a large fire destroyed many downtown buildings. In 1927, a great flood brought twelve feet of water at State and Main Streets and did great damage. Nearly all bridges connecting the banks of the North Branch and Winooski rivers were replaced after the flood. Many of these steel truss bridges are now considered landmarks in the community.

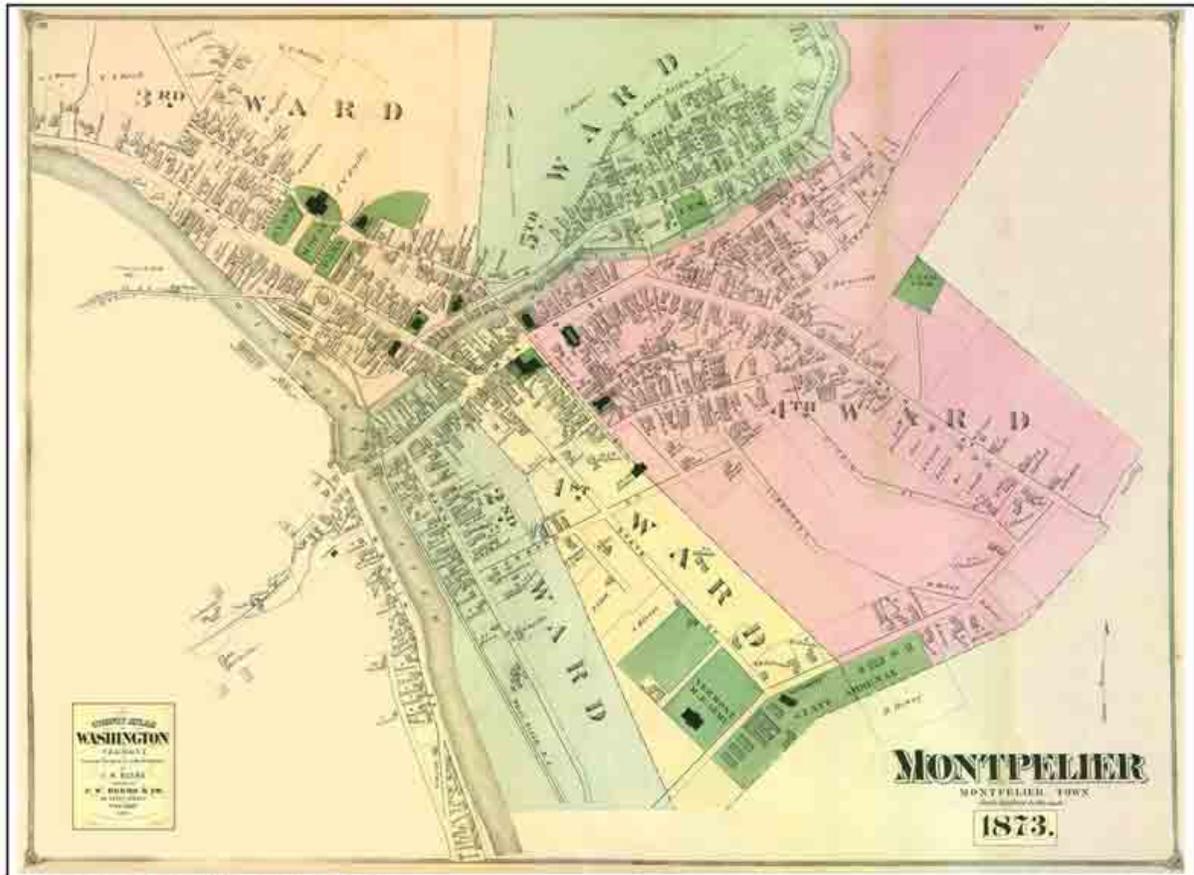


Figure 2: Montpelier in 1873

Montpelier in 1883 was a compact village with many features which exist today - the State House, County Courthouse, the Pavilion Hotel, many churches and the retail buildings of downtown. The view indicates that stone working was established in the town, as were tanneries and other small manufactories. By 1925, nine granite works were established in the City to refine stone from the famous quarries in Barre.

In 1895, Montpelier reorganized as a city. In 1898, the northern portion of the Town of Berlin on the southern bank of the Winooski chose to be annexed, and the present form of the city became established. At that time, what we now call Berlin Street was in actually in the town of Berlin and the Berlin Opera House was located near School Avenue.

In 1899, the City was given 134 acres of land by John E. Hubbard for use as a park. In 1911, additional land was donated where the present Hubbard Park tower stands. The park was expanded to its present size through a donation of 50 acres in 1991 by the Heney family.

The city grew slowly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century during the period of intensive out-migration from the state to new lands in the West, or to industrial centers elsewhere in New England. Montpelier was already established as a government, market, service and industrial center in the region. When the automobile arrived, new state highways were routed to

the city limits, and traffic then circulated through the original streets. In 1954, a new bridge was constructed at Bailey Avenue which linked to an extension of Winooski Avenue, now Memorial Drive, and diverted some of the traffic from the downtown area.

Remarkably, Montpelier's residential population has been stable at a little over 8,000 residents for the past 60 years. This is a significant factor in explaining why Montpelier has maintained its small and friendly character, making it the special community we cherish as a place to live, work, and raise our families. However, during the same period, the number of people employed in Montpelier has grown from 3,800 in 1940 to about 9,000 in 1999^{*}. This influx of commuters who come to work in Montpelier is a significant factor in explaining the changing character of the city, bringing increased traffic congestion and increased demand for parking and housing.

At the same time, Montpelier's role as a regional center for arts and entertainment continues to evolve. We have attracted many new restaurants to our community that are heavily patronized by our daytime workforce and many people from the surrounding communities into the evening hours. This has enriched the vitality of the downtown area.

State and Regional Context

Montpelier has a unique role as the capital of the State. Host of the state capital since 1805 the character of the community has been shaped by state government, which resides in the city and the people who work for the judicial, legislative and executive branches of government. In addition, several prominent insurance companies make their headquarters in Montpelier, drawing workers and visitors from around the region and the country. As the host of several institutions of higher learning, Montpelier has a flourishing culinary and cultural arts scene in the downtown. These institutions attract individuals from around the region, state and country.

As host of state and county government, as well as an employment and education center, Montpelier serves the region, and her population swells to 20,000 during the day. The regional role adds to the liveliness of the community and creates challenges in accommodating the daytime population and paying for the cost of services. The City of Montpelier has in common with a handful of other regional service centers in the state a demand for municipal services beyond what most communities of 8,000 provide.

As a result of these demands on the City, a number of different efforts to partner with adjacent towns to efficiently provide services have been undertaken. Consideration of regional fire and ambulance services were conducted in the mid 1990s; voluntary purchasing agreements and sharing of equipment were evaluated in 2003; consolidation of the school district with the surrounding district has been reviewed a number of times; Barre City, Berlin and Montpelier discussed creating a common water district in 2008; and an effort is underway in 2010 to merge the emergency services of Montpelier, Berlin, Barre City and Barre Town.

Regional commercial growth is accommodated in Montpelier as well as in other towns in the region, most notably Berlin. Resort development is located in the Mad River Valley towns of

^{*}Vermont Department of Employment & Training, 1999.

Warren and Waitsfield to the west, and Stowe to the North. Residential development is dispersed throughout the region.

The map below shows Montpelier's regional relationship with respect to growth in the region. The concentration of state offices and insurance companies in Montpelier is balanced by the significant manufacturing sector in Barre.

With the opening of the interstate highway along the important transportation corridor of the Winooski River to Burlington, the Central Vermont region has begun to share the many regional functions with prosperous Chittenden County. Today a significant number of commuters from Montpelier travel daily to the employment centers of Chittenden County. In addition, many Vermonters commute to Montpelier for employment.

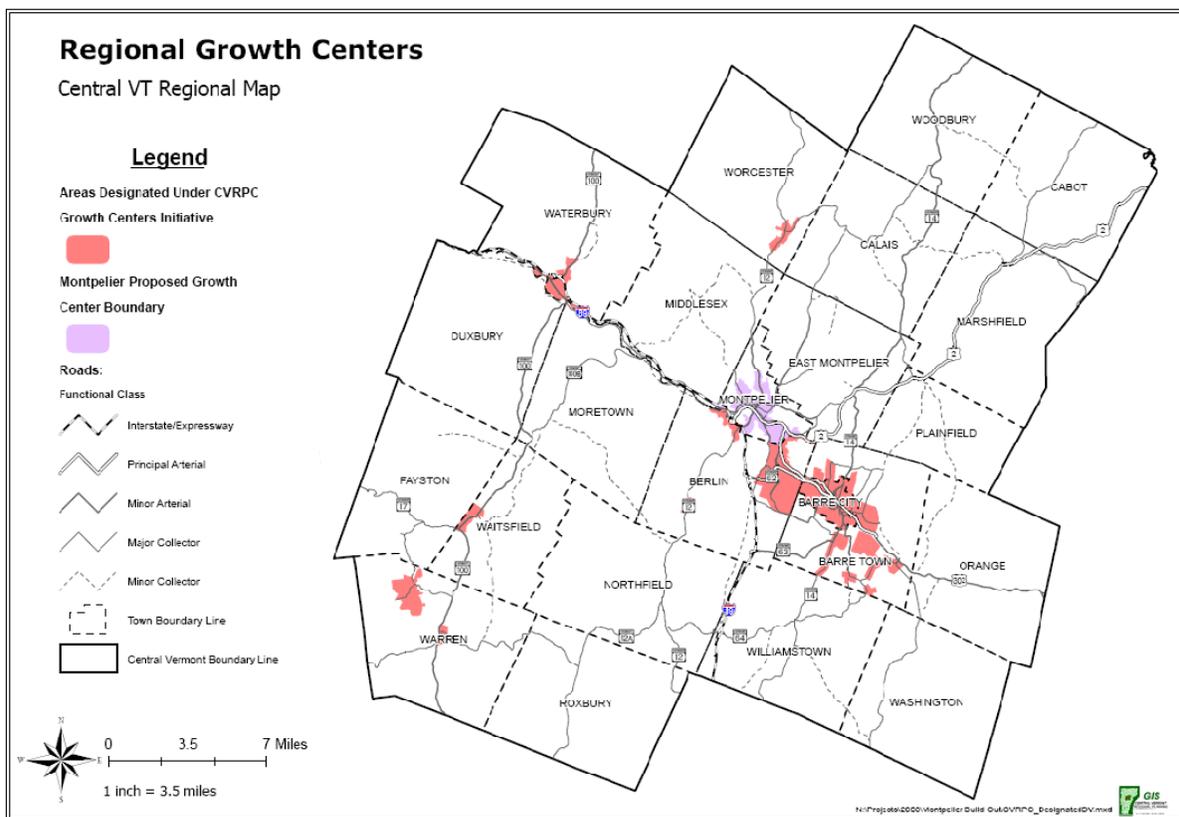


Figure 3: Central Vermont Regional Growth Centers

Montpelier, along with 22 other communities in Washington and Orange Counties, is a member of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC), created in 1967 under 24 VSA Chapter 117. CVRPC is an advisory planning agency charged with developing a comprehensive regional plan, providing assistance to communities on local planning issues and making recommendations on development. CVRPC is responsible under Act 200 for consultation, to help municipalities understand and implement the Act; and confirmation that municipalities are engaged in the planning process. Each city and town is granted one vote on the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, regardless of land area or population.

Montpelier's Magic

It is the active participation of residents in civic life that forms the foundation of Montpelier's magic. Not only do citizens participate in city government, but they also engage in a multitude of community organizations and activities.

The Montpelier Master Plan is rooted in the characteristics that make the City a special place to live, which are often taken for granted by local residents. Montpelier is unique in many ways, and these unique characteristics are worth protecting, because they embody the intangible qualities that make a place a home. The following characteristics should serve as the essential principals for growth and development in the future.

A City of Residential Neighborhoods: Montpelier's residents take pride in their neighborhood, and form lasting friendships with the people next door. Each neighborhood has a strong identity which needs support if the high quality of life in the city is to be maintained.

A City of History, Culture and Natural Beauty: The distinctive architectural quality of Montpelier's buildings and the human scale of the urban environment, in a magnificent natural setting, is a very special and unique resource. Rivers, wooded hillsides and ridges give the city unique form and character. *Arts, museums, history, and culture are also a vital part of the city.*

A Center of Government and Institutions: As state capital, county seat, and home to three institutions of higher learning, the importance of Montpelier extends well beyond the boundaries of the region, and creates a center of statewide significance.

A Center of Financial Service: As a regional center of trade, financial services have diversified the economic base which contributes to Montpelier's vitality. The banks, insurance companies, and financial advising firms that make up the financial service sector, provide the community with a number of employment opportunities and top notch services.

The 21st Century Economy: Increasingly, Montpelier is home to the Creative Economy, often housed in people's spare bedrooms, garages, and attics. Artists, computer programmers, writers, dancers, musicians, architects, designers, marketing professionals, telecommuters, and all manner of professionals work within walking distance of their bedroom and kitchen. The Green Economy has also found a home in Montpelier – renewable energy firms, design consultants, and others are locating here.

Another important economic trend, the LOHAS market*, which stands for Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability, has a strong presence. Complementary and Alternative Health Practitioners, organic food processors, and a strong outdoor recreation focus makes Montpelier a desirable location for people who want to walk their talk. These three areas will be the economic growth sector for the 21st Century, and our zoning needs to change to accommodate it more effectively.

* Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) is a demographic defining a particular market segment related to sustainable living, "green" ecological initiatives, and generally composed of a relatively upscale and well-educated population segment.