

**Sustainable Montpelier 2030 Design Competition
Team Bridges
Executive Summary**

It's about more people, fewer cars, and a better lifestyle

Montpelier needs more people and fewer cars and when these needs are met, people living and working here will benefit from a better lifestyle. Our specific goals are to provide sufficient housing and jobs for an additional 3,500 residents and to reduce the average number of vehicles owned by each household so that there is no overall increase in the total number of vehicles in the city. Much of the parking in the downtown area and all parking for new downtown development will be provided in satellite lots on the edge of town. With a larger, more diverse population to support a wider variety of housing at a range of prices, more local choices for shopping and entertainment and inviting new parks, paths and art, life in Montpelier will be better than ever.

Sustainability and the regional context

The competition's focus is downtown Montpelier. Team Bridges maintains that the downtown is an integral part of larger natural, economic, political and social systems. We call this network of overlapping systems the Capital Corridor. Its five constituent municipalities – Waterbury, Middlesex, Montpelier, Berlin and Barre City – feature a rail line running the entire length of the 20-mile corridor and offering the potential for linking together the 1.5 million square feet of State facilities (48% of which are located outside Montpelier) within the Capital Corridor. Our proposal looks in detail at all of Montpelier, and describes how the same approach can be adopted throughout the Corridor resulting in all communities realizing their full potential, as well as Net Zero status.

Making the most of Capital Corridor connections

The Capital Corridor's network of State offices and related businesses and organizations creates a myriad of connections that increasingly knit the five towns closer. By initiating passenger service on the existing rail lines, we can offer residents and employees a safer, cheaper, faster and more environmentally friendly way of getting to work, running errands and enjoying all the region offers. Initially, we propose that streetcar service be established along the 3.4 miles of track from Montpelier Junction to the Route 2 roundabout. Eventually that streetcar service would be extended to downtown Barre, and rail service will connect Montpelier Junction to Waterbury, Burlington and St. Albans. In Montpelier, the streetcar line, which hugs the banks of the Winooski River, would provide a new spine of transportation, open space and neighborhoods.

Spine of transportation

Reducing the reliance on private cars and providing everyone with a multitude of alternative modes of transportation is essential if Montpelier is critical to achieving Net Zero status. The spine of transportation will offer 3,000 satellite parking spaces mostly at the far eastern and western edges of town. Connecting those spaces to downtown and the new and existing neighborhoods along the rail line will be new shuttle bus routes, a pedestrian/bike path, streetcar service, an aerial tram to the National Life campus, and a network of shared bikes and vehicles. By distributing new development along this spine, we will avoid overcrowding downtown with too much density or traffic. The new Montpelier will be able to accommodate many more people, better support local businesses, and offer everyone a wide choice of housing, shopping, employment, entertainment, and transportation – all with fewer cars and less traffic.

Parks, paths and public art

By turning its focus back to the rivers running through its center, Montpelier will provide vastly expanded access to those rivers, featuring a series of new parks, a bike/pedestrian path paralleling the river and a necklace of public art strung along its entire length. With a year-round Farmers Market (that will be designed to host a wide range of events and activities at other times), a carousel, kayak and canoe launches, and public art installations and exhibits, residents, employees and visitors will all find a way to connect with nature in the heart of a vibrant city.

New neighborhoods within walking distance of transit

Montpelier has always taken great pride in its neighborhoods. Our proposal aims to strengthen those existing neighborhoods and create new ones within walking distance of the streetcar line. We have identified locations for over 2,000 new housing units (without including the potential of three large, vacant parcels at the eastern end of the city). If Montpelier is going to grow (initially by recapturing those who are commuting long distances from rural towns and later people currently living outside the region), it needs to provide not only more housing but housing that meets the needs of all segments of the population (e.g., seniors, Millennials, empty nesters, young families, single person households, and those with special needs) and that fit the budgets of households at all income levels.

Sustainable economic vitality

Already a major employment center, the proposed Pioneer District will add a center for innovation that can build on the region's experience and expertise in areas such as public administration, the arts, food and agriculture, and tourism. It will offer makers and thinkers and inventors and artists affordable places to live and work while pursuing their dreams and realizing their visions. The extra 3500 residents result in \$410

million being added to the tax rolls and \$65 million of new spending in the local economy each year. This is critical because no community is sustainable without a broad tax base, affordable housing and ample job opportunities.

To ensure that this economic growth is environmentally sustainable, we propose reducing reliance on fossil fuels largely by reducing dependence on the private automobile. In addition, we recommend generating renewable energy locally and purchasing renewable energy being generated elsewhere. Longer term, we envision a regional program of carbon storage that would make use of tens of thousands of acres of Vermont forests and create a new symbiotic relationship between those living in Vermont's cities and rural landowners.

Moving forward - a path to implementation

We recognize this is a design competition. Our interest and proposal, however, go beyond good design ideas. The real prize is to transform these ideas into reality and for this to happen there needs to be a detailed strategy for implementation. We have identified a handful of key stakeholders including the State of Vermont, National Life, VCFA, City of Montpelier and a new regional development authority – the Capital Corridor Partnership – that will spearhead the initial round of actions from 2017-2021. We have identified a series of specific steps that need to be taken to generate the momentum and confidence required for private parties to assume primary responsibility for the next round of actions that will guide Montpelier to its Net Zero goal by 2030 and forge closer relationships among the five towns of the Capital Corridor.

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