

# The Master Plan



- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- NEW STATE OFFICES
- NEW PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT
- NEW TRANSIT/ VISITOR CENTER
- RELOCATED HISTORIC BAGGAGE BUILDING

# Capital District Master Plan

## Change Over Time

The Capital District and Downtown Montpelier have evolved together over time. Since WWII, Montpelier has considered various master plan schemes. Typically, each proposal was characterized by the influential ideas of that time, and its potential for implementation was equally governed by the period's economic and political factors. During the 1970's, for example, Montpelier considered removing vehicular traffic from the downtown center in favor of a pedestrian-only promenade. On the other hand, an extension to Barre Street was entertained prior to WWII. This idea is now being reconsidered in the most recent master plan.

In spite of these attempts to change the face of Montpelier only incremental changes have actually taken place. Many buildings have been demolished along the river and some along the main avenues. But in general no comprehensive plans have been accomplished. The master plan before you follows a middle road. Both cautious, infill development, and confident, large scale design interventions have been proposed. In either case, proposed development is structured to be sensitive to the existing pattern of buildings and urban spaces while still looking forward to how Montpelier and the Capitol Complex may change in the next twenty-five years.

This plan is intended to act as a conceptual framework from which many of these projects can be coordinated in the future. This plan is unique because it is the result of a coordinated effort between the City of Montpelier and the State of Vermont. While addendums to this plan may happen over time, because this plan is the product of a comprehensive coalition of interests and governments, the primary concepts and goals should always remain at the core of any city development project. Especially since WWII, the field of planning has received a startling amount of attention as countries, states, cities and towns have struggled to keep up with economic and cultural change. Many planning pitfalls can be blamed on overly aggressive planning concepts that tried to introduce elements that were alien to their environment, such as the urban redevelopment projects of the 1970's. More recently, planners have gone the opposite direction, such as the Neo-traditionalist who have tried to backtrack, reintroducing old building patterns and forms. Montpelier, on the other hand, has never subscribed to either path. Instead, Montpelier has been able to rely upon an existing city form, the surrounding natural environment, and attention to the local residents. This Master Plan keeps this tradition alive. Also central to the Master Plan are issues of sustainability and the environment. For example, all construction takes the form of infill development or follows the existing development patterns. The scale of design consistently keeps the pedestrian in mind, avoiding big box design concepts. Also, the proposed greenway not only promotes green design concepts such as wildlife buffers, but is also the hub of a network of pedestrian links that better connect residents and visitors to various parts of the city and the natural surroundings. Perhaps the most logically sustainable aspect of this Master Plan is its attention to pollution and transportation, global issues that can be addressed in our own backyard. The Transit Center will be only the most visible example of a new transportation policy that marries economic growth with transportation. Not only will tour buses have a destination but so will commuter light rails, commuter buses, and State employee commuter shuttles.

Although this plan takes a holistic planning approach it is not a substitute for existing plans now being used by both the City and State. Instead, the CDMP is a synthesis of issues shared between the Capitol Complex and public/private interests within the City of Montpelier, including the Montpelier Downtown Community Association. Because of this understanding, the CDMP is not only a manifestation of true municipal collaboration but also a real and tangible physical response to local, regional, and state wide concerns.

## Description of Master Plan Elements

- 1. Alternative Sites for Future State Buildings-** There are several options to consider: 133 State Street could receive a mirrored partner, as envisioned by the original architect. This could be accompanied by a parking structure. On Court Street, additional offices and commercial spaces are proposed on top of an alternative parking structure. 120 State Street could receive additional space oriented towards the new Greenway.
- 2. Winooski Greenway-** This urban park will include an extension of the Winooski West and Winooski East bikepath, riverwalks, pocket parks, and overlooks along the Winooski River and the North Branch. Other activities will include a central gathering area that is covered in grass during the summer but is then turned into a public skating rink during the winter. The river's edge will provide both natural buffers for wildlife and designed access points from which to reach the water or launch a boat. Pedestrian linkages will connect to the Capitol, transit center, parking and downtown.
- 3. Transit Center-** The transit center will be combined with a Welcome Center and Museum. The transit center, a gateway to downtown and the Capitol Complex, includes a Vermont Transit Facility, future expansion potential for rail service, "Wheels" service, and a link to state employee satellite parking lots
- 4. State Street Improvements-** Pedestrian and streetscape design enhancements to State Street will include design plans more appropriate to the State House Lawn, a clearer connection between the Capitol Complex and downtown, and safe connectors to and from parking areas.
- 5. Barre Street Extension-** A new city street will link Taylor Street to Main Street. New street frontage will bring private development opportunities, vehicular and pedestrian connections, and access to the riverfront. On-street parking and sidewalks are provided.
- 6. Court Street Parking Structure-** A parking deck below Court Street will provide spaces for 450 cars on 3 levels. At the Court Street level will be mixed-use sites for state/office/commercial buildings at a compatible scale to the historic pattern of buildings on Court Street.
- 7. Gateways-** The bridge connections to the Capital District and Downtown, Taylor Street, Main Street and Bailey Avenue, will receive greater definition. Additional landscaping and lighting design will provide more emphasis to these important city elements
- 8. Langdon Street Pedestrian Link-** From Court Street area to Langdon Street a pedestrian walk will conveniently lead pedestrians from the parking deck to the downtown.
- 9. Pedestrian Links-** A formal connection from the State House Lawn to the Winooski River Greenway will remind visitors and pedestrians of Vermont's attachment to its local surroundings. This link will be only a small part of a larger network of walkways and trails leading to downtown and even Hubbard Park.
- 10. District Heating-** The city is considering two options: updating and renovating the existing plant or building a new plant outside of the city.