



Agenda

Special City Council Meeting

Montpelier Senior Activity Center, 58 Barre St., Montpelier, VT 05602 & Zoom
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84134477055?pwd=azF4pSv4lclsr8x67UbnS1GchbdY3g.1>

Meeting ID: 841 3447 7055; Passcode: 204266

One tap mobile: +13126266799,,84134477055# US (Chicago), +16469313860,,84134477055# US

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

5:30 P.M.

1. Call To Order By The Mayor
2. 2026-178. Meeting Logistics and Remote Introductions
 - Display your first and last name if you are joining remotely.
 - When speaking, state your name and where you live.
 - Keep comments to about three minutes so others have the opportunity to speak.
 - If you have several questions, please ask them together.
 - Focus comments on the agenda item under discussion.
 - Direct remarks toward policies, decisions, and ideas, not individuals.
 - Avoid comments about a person's character or intent.
 - Wait to be recognized by the Mayor before speaking.
 - Follow the rules of procedure included in the agenda packet, which guide how the meeting is conducted and may be applied as needed to maintain orderly discussion.
3. 2026-179. Approve Agenda
4. 2026-180. General Business and Appearances
5. 2026-181. Proposed Executive Session - per 1 V.S.A. § 313 (1) (F) confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body;
6. 2026-182. Homelessness Actionable Plan Discussion
7. 2026-183. Other Business
8. 2026-184. Public Comment
9. Adjournment



CITY COUNCIL Agenda Item Cover Sheet

Date: April 29, 2026

Consent _ **Discussion** _X_

SUBJECT: Special Meeting on Homelessness

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Review and discuss Actionable Plan on Homelessness and direct staff on action items and policy direction.

RELATED COUNCIL GOAL/PRIOR ACTION (Highlight as many as needed):

1. Housing
2. Infrastructure
3. Economic Development

EXPENDITURE REQUIRED:

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Council has approximately \$25,000 remaining from \$50,000 allocated in the FY26 budget and an additional \$10,000 budgeted for FY27.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS: N/A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

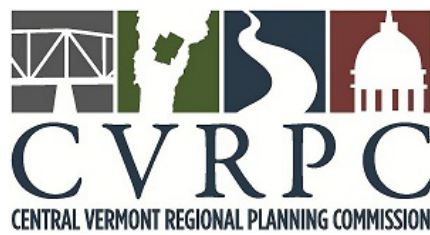
- Attached City Manager Memo on Actionable Plan.
- [Homelessness Implementation Plan](#) – City Plan, Chapter 12, Community Services
- Current encampment policy: [City Encampment Response Policy. Amended 08.13.2025 FINAL](#)
- Parker Advisors Report.
- CVRPC Roundtable Report of Prioritized Actions and Urgent Needs
- White Paper - *Homelessness and Housing in Montpelier: What the City's Plans Already Say*
- Good Samaritan Haven Street Outreach – What We Do
- Encampment Data YTD 2026

INTERESTED PARTIES: City Council, Public Safety Team, Planning & Community Development, Homelessness Committee, Stakeholders, Community Members

CITY MANAGER'S APPROVAL:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly McMichael-King".

26MP003091	Encampment on Public Land	04/27/26 09:57	04/27/26 09:57	04/27/26 09:57	Blanchard Park, Montpelier
26MP002988	Encampment on Private Land	04/23/26 19:15	04/23/26 19:15	04/23/26 19:15	57 Barre St, Montpelier
26MP002949	Encampment on Public Land	04/22/26 16:33	04/22/26 16:33	04/22/26 16:33	203 Country Club Rd, Montpelier
26MP002945	Encampment on Public Land	04/22/26 16:11	04/22/26 16:11	04/22/26 16:11	55 Barre St., Montpelier
26MP002942	Encampment on Public Land	04/22/26 15:56	04/22/26 15:56	04/22/26 15:56	Granite St Bridge, Montpelier
26MP002908	Encampment on Public Land	04/21/26 14:17	04/21/26 14:17	04/21/26 14:17	203 Country Club Rd, Montpelier
26MP002886	Encampment on Private Land	04/21/26 09:33	04/21/26 09:33	04/21/26 09:33	87 Barre St, Montpelier
26MP002811	Encampment on Public Land	04/18/26 14:31	04/18/26 14:31	04/18/26 14:31	Blanchard Park, Montpelier
26MP002772	Encampment on Public Land	04/17/26 13:18	04/17/26 13:18	04/17/26 13:18	55 Barre St, Montpelier
26MP002674	Encampment on Private Land	04/13/26 14:00	04/13/26 14:00	04/13/26 14:00	87 Barre St, Montpelier
26MP002621	Encampment on Private Land	04/11/26 15:19	04/11/26 15:19	04/11/26 15:19	6 Saint Paul St, Montpelier
26MP002349	Encampment on Public Land	04/01/26 08:17	04/01/26 08:17	04/01/26 08:17	119 Barre St, Montpelier
26MP002347	Encampment on Private Land	04/01/26 07:36	04/01/26 07:36	04/01/26 07:36	64 State St, Montpelier
26MP002336	Encampment on Public Land	03/31/26 17:47	03/31/26 17:47	03/31/26 17:47	203 Country Club Rd, Montpelier
26MP002269	Encampment on Private Land	03/30/26 15:03	03/30/26 15:03	03/30/26 15:03	100 State St, Montpelier
26MP002261	Encampment on Private Land	03/30/26 14:19	03/30/26 14:19	03/30/26 14:19	Dog River Commuter Lot, Montpelier
26MP001979	Encampment on Private Land	03/19/26 14:17	03/19/26 14:17	03/19/26 14:17	7 Green Mountain Dr, Montpelier
26MP001958	Encampment on Public Land	03/18/26 15:51	03/18/26 15:51	03/18/26 15:51	Taylor St / Bike Path Shelter, Montpelier
26MP001793	Encampment on Public Land	03/12/26 10:40	03/12/26 10:40	03/12/26 10:40	7 Green Mountain Dr, Montpelier
26MP001773	Encampment on Private Land	03/11/26 10:20	03/11/26 10:20	03/11/26 10:20	4 Main St, Montpelier
26MP001718	Encampment on Public Land	03/09/26 13:04	03/09/26 13:04	03/09/26 13:04	Taylor St / Bridge, Montpelier
26MP000770	Encampment on Private Land	02/02/26 08:27	02/02/26 08:27	02/02/26 08:27	89 Main St, Montpelier
26MP000521	Encampment on Private Land	01/21/26 13:48	01/21/26 13:48	01/21/26 13:48	89 Main St, Montpelier



On October 14, 2025, a group of service providers and interested parties came together at Central Vermont Medical Center for a Central Vermont Regional Homelessness Meeting focused on conducting a community-led discussion to better understand our region’s strengths, challenges, and unmet needs in addressing homelessness. Below are the priorities identified by the group as next steps.

Prioritized Actions and Urgent Needs:

1 Emergency Cold Weather Beds – THIS WINTER:	40
Plus permanent family shelter	
2 Campaign to Mitigate Immediate Housing Adjacent Needs:	26
Safe parking, rest rooms, food, places to go, substance use disorder care	
3 Educating and Building a New Narrative:	16
Debunking Myths, school and public service forums, Montpelier monthly summits w/lunch!, include cost:budget analysis	
4 Congregate Housing:	15
Dorm-like – shared kitchen & bathroom, small house development, “HomeShare” specifically for those exiting homelessness	
Inventory of potential congregate housing sites	
5 Paid Cross-sector Regional Coordinator Position:	13
Federal/State funding navigator, at Washington County housing Coalition	
6 Exploring Shared Funding Options	6
7 Overcoming Legal Obstacles:	5
Appeals on housing development – cost to community analysis, landowner liability	
8 Wrap Around Services:	4
Not just Housing First	
9 Leveraging Volunteers:	0
Circles of Support for Accountability (COSA) model	

Next Steps

- All Stakeholders should participate in the Washington County Housing Coalition meetings. Consider adding schools and Libraries to the distribution list.
- Communicate the dire conditions and need for cold weather beds to the public through a jointly signed letter to the editor or to legislature/Governor



March 16, 2023

Dear Members of the Montpelier City Council:

Attached you will find the “Montpelier Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Plan” which you contracted with Parker Advisors to complete.

Over the last five months, we have had the pleasure of working together with a broad range of City officials, local non-profit organizations, and Montpelier citizens, both housed and unhoused, to explore this issue and develop comprehensive, actionable recommendations to address homelessness in our community.

As you are aware, housing instability and homelessness has been a growing challenge in Montpelier in recent years. Rising rent and home prices, low vacancy rates, and the disruptions caused by the pandemic have increased the number of local people experiencing challenges around housing. This in turn has put added stress on first responders, law enforcement, and social service providers as the community has struggled to meet the evolving needs. We have worked hard, in concert with city and community partners, to identify some concrete steps you can take to pro-actively address this growing challenge in our community.

If, after reading the report and hearing our presentation, you have additional questions or want more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Daniel Parker Towle

Daniel P. Towle, President
Parker Advisors, LLC

Montpelier Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Plan

Presented to Montpelier City Council – March 22, 2023



Parker Advisors, LLC – 1 First Avenue, Suite 3, Montpelier, VT 05602
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Daniel Towle, President

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Montpelier Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Plan

March 2023

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Executive Summary

In recent years there has been extensive research, community debate, and government and non-profit work aimed at addressing the challenge of unhoused people in Montpelier, Washington County, and Vermont as a whole. There has been in-depth research carried out on the issue, as well as numerous articles developed from a variety of perspectives regarding existing services and needs. These documents, which we have drawn on extensively for this plan, are listed in the Appendix A, and several key ones are attached to this report in Appendix C. This needs assessment and action plan, commissioned by the Montpelier City Council, is an attempt to move beyond the previous research and ongoing discussions to identify tangible, sustainable, cost-effective approaches the City Council can take to help reduce the number of people experiencing housing instability and assist those who are currently unhoused in Montpelier.

The Scope of Services for this initiative is contained in Exhibit A of the original project proposal:

- Gain a better understanding of the existing service landscape for those experiencing homelessness in Washington County with focus on the City of Montpelier.
- Obtain input from unsheltered individuals on how best to serve their needs.
- Interview organizations and stakeholders that work with those who are homeless.
- Identify the needs and gaps in services for this population.
- Recommend approaches for addressing the identified needs and gaps, in the context of best practices, including highest leverage and cost-effective existing and new:
 - Services/approaches
 - Needed infrastructure/buildings.
- Provide estimated costs to accomplish recommendations.

The five-month process has included an intensive review of previous research, individual and group interviews and meetings, community listening sessions, evaluation of existing services, and discussions with unhoused individuals and social service providers (please see Appendix B for a comprehensive list of these stakeholder meetings). After much discussion with stakeholders at every level, the one thing virtually everyone agrees upon is that homelessness is a complex, multifactorial problem that defies easy solutions. This is evidenced by the fact that, despite being one of the wealthiest nations in the world, the United States has continuously struggled with the issue of homelessness for over four decades, and despite Vermont being consistently in the top ten of states in many health and social indicators, we continue to have a significant number of people experiencing housing instability, as well as unhoused citizens. The pandemic caused an acceleration in homelessness, despite a large influx of federal funds. Now as these American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) and other federal moneys dry up, the unhoused problem deepens including dramatically reducing hotel and rental subsidies. With recent trends contributing to a growing housing shortage in the state and in Montpelier, it is reasonable to conclude the problem will continue to worsen without effective interventions.

While in Montpelier many individual services are already in place and should be built upon, preventing community members from becoming unhoused, as well as effectively meeting the needs of those already experiencing homelessness in Montpelier, will require greater focus and coordination at the local level. In developing and prioritizing interventions, we need to recognize the different populations experiencing housing instability, including those facing episodic homelessness due to a myriad of causes: rising rents, lack of affordable housing options, eviction, divorces, family conflict and domestic violence, as well as

people who have been chronically unhoused. The needs and solutions for each population can be very different, and a pro-active system must include a spectrum of interventions and services to be effective.

To achieve a more robust and integrated system for addressing the issue of homelessness in Montpelier, Parker Advisors is proposing the Montpelier City Council cause to be implemented the following three initiatives in 2023:

1. Facilitate the creation of an integrated **Housing Master Plan for Montpelier** in order to address the current fragmentation of efforts surrounding housing and homelessness, and to ensure Montpelier is positioned to take advantage of upcoming housing-related funding opportunities at the state and federal levels. Recognizing the fundamental solution to homelessness is more housing of all types, the Master Plan should be focused on: quantifying the amount and type of housing needed in the next five years to meet local needs; reducing barriers to housing creation; incentivizing infill development and the promotion of expanded use of the existing housing stock; and improving access to community services and social supports that promote housing stability in Montpelier. The logical entity to facilitate the development of the housing master plan is the Montpelier Planning and Community Development Department, incorporating elements from the 2017 Montpelier Master Plan, and including input from a wide range of stakeholders. Throughout the process, a special emphasis should be put on **prioritizing the creation of more permanent subsidized housing units in the community**. In order to help reduce the number of local people experiencing housing instability, as part of the plan it is imperative that the City Council and local government entities set policies to identify and remove barriers to current and future subsidized housing projects in Montpelier and then oversee implementation.
2. Create a **single point of entry** in Montpelier, both organizational and physical, for those who are experiencing either acute or chronic housing instability. This would involve the establishment of a centrally located **Montpelier “Housing Hub”** with drop-in center and emergency shelter capacity in the winter. By creating a focal point for Montpelier’s efforts at addressing homelessness it will help pro-actively engage people in need of housing-related assistance, facilitate greater integration among service providers, and reduce the burden on police and first responders by providing support and resources to those in crisis. The facility would be developed in stages and would meet a range of current needs including providing: a permanent home for the winter overnight shelter; a base for the City-supported Street Outreach Workers; increased access to public bathrooms and showers; and a drop-in center for those needing acute support. To implement this effort, City Council should appropriate the unspent earmarked ARPA funds (intended to assist those who are homeless and for public restrooms) in order to facilitate the first phase of this initiative, which can then be leveraged to attract additional state and grant funding.
3. **Implement a systematic public education plan** aimed at reducing stigma and increasing the knowledge of Montpelier residents about housing instability and the issues faced by the individuals who are unhoused in our community. This initiative is vital to help ensure continued support for mitigation efforts by building understanding, empathy, and knowledge in the community. This would be accomplished through the development of a systematic educational plan, initiated and overseen by the Homelessness Task Force, that will provide people in Montpelier both direct knowledge of, as well as personal experience with, the challenges of people in our community experiencing housing instability.

Detailed background information and rationale for these proposed initiatives, along with preliminary estimates of the costs, are contained in the body of this report.

Background Information

The Process

In developing this action plan and arriving at the proposed initiatives, the team from Parker Advisors began by reviewing existing research, articles, and resources related to homelessness in Montpelier, Vermont, and other parts of the US. The documents we reviewed and utilized are listed in Exhibit A. We then sought to better understand the structural and individual factors that lead to homelessness in our community from the perspective of local stakeholders at all levels, including people experiencing housing instability themselves as described below. The groups and individuals we met with are listed in Exhibit B. Finally, we conducted a comprehensive review of existing data relating to housing and homelessness to better understand the structural issues contributing to the problem and then shared and discussed our recommendations to selected key stakeholders as described below.

1) Stakeholder Outreach

The most labor-intensive part the project was outreach to the stakeholder community. A comprehensive list of those with whom we met since the start of the project in October is included in Addendum B. The following is a summary of the different groups we consulted in Washington County, as well as the number of representatives in each group:

Stakeholder Group	Number
Homeless Individuals	21
Housing and Social Service Providers	11
Business Owners and Landlords	6
Mental Health Agency Representatives	5
City of Montpelier Officials	4
First Responders (Police/Fire/EMS)	4

While the primary focus of our stakeholder outreach was groups and individuals within Washington County, we also met with representatives from state agencies (e.g., Office of Economic Opportunity and Agency of Human Services) and organizations (e.g., VT Coalition to End Homelessness and Balance of State Continuum of Care – now called Washington County Housing Coalition) across Vermont and the U.S. (Veterans Association National Center on Homelessness).

In addition to individual meetings, we also utilized community listening sessions, presentations, and panel discussions to elicit ideas, input and feedback including:

Stakeholder Group	Method – Location	When
Montpelier/Washington County Residents	Presentation - In Person (Kellogg Hubbard– Beth Burgess and Rick DeAngelis)	November 2022
Montpelier/Washington County Residents	Focus Group – Zoom	December 2022
Montpelier/Washington County Residents	Focus Group - In Person	December 2022
Faith Community	Zoom	December 2022
Downtown Business Owners	Focus Group - In Person	February 2023
Montpelier/Washington County Residents	Presentation/Panel - In Person (Kellogg Hubbard– Colby Lynch and Matthew Waylen)	February 2023

2) Socializing Recommendations

Once we had developed a draft of our major recommendations, we conducted meetings with several key stakeholders to gain additional input and feedback including Montpelier’s City Manager, Police Chief, the Homelessness Task Force in addition to the Executive Directors of Good Samaritan Haven and Another Way.

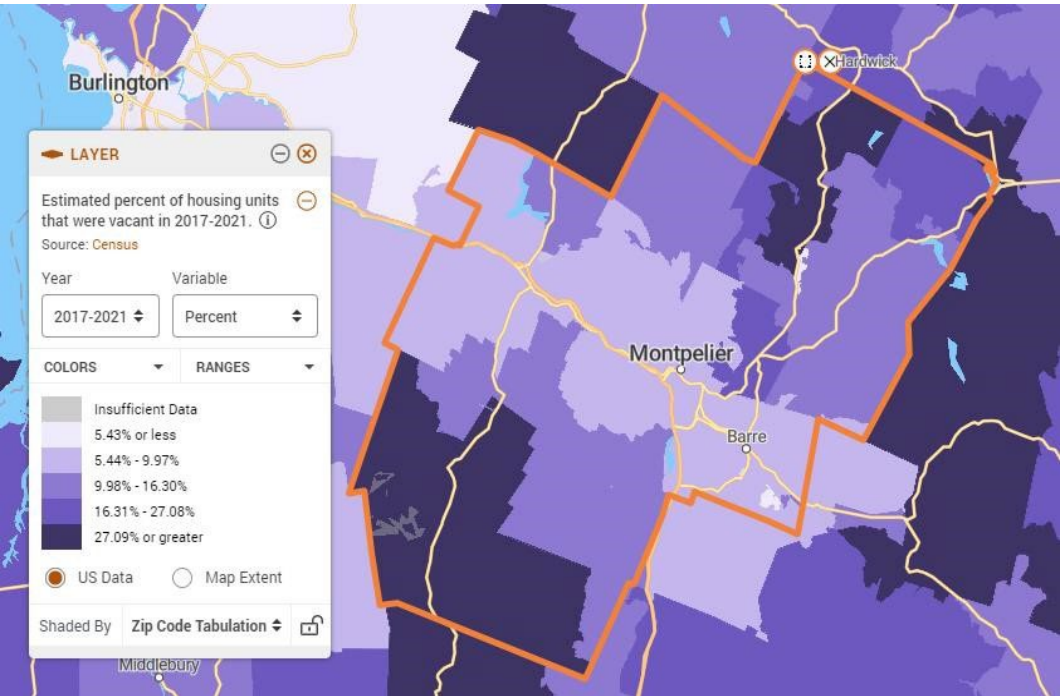
Through this socialization process we gained valuable feedback. The final step in the process was to submit a complete draft to members of the Montpelier Homelessness Task Force for additional feedback and input.

In addition to gathering ideas and information from key stakeholders in the community including those most directly impacted by housing instability and homelessness in our community, we consulted available data to better understand some of the root causes of the problem.

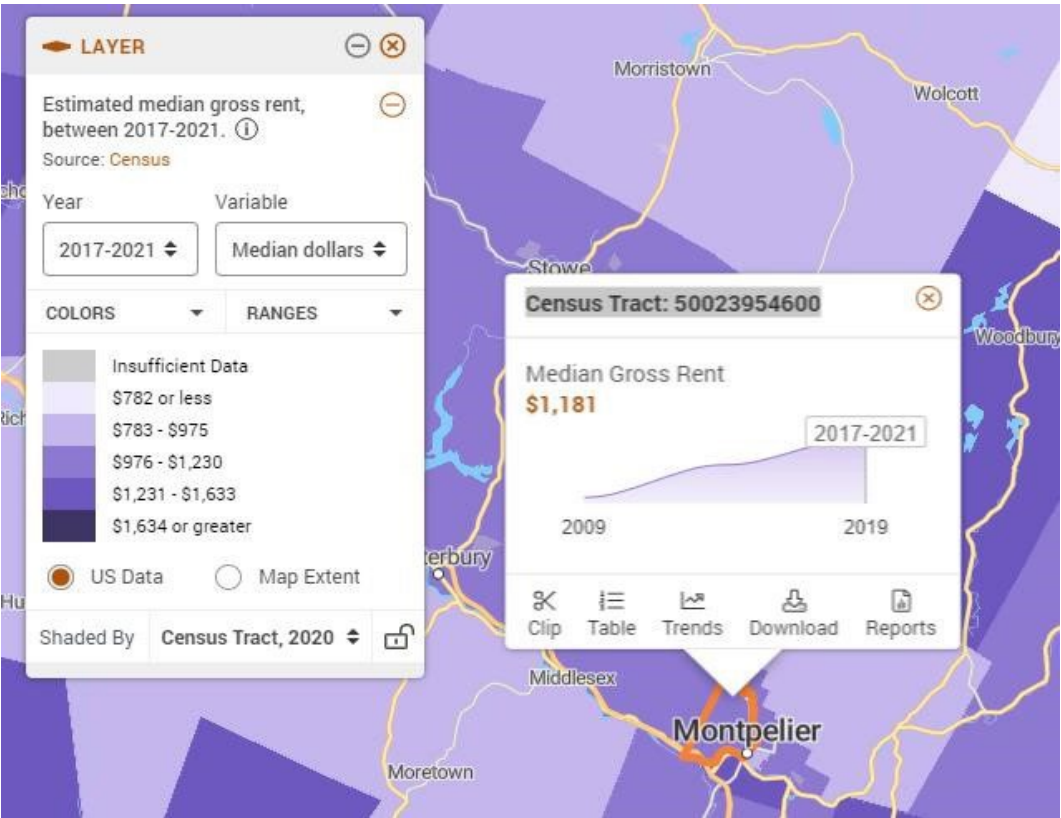
Empirical and Qualitative Data Regarding the Structural Causes of Housing Instability in Montpelier

The data are clear, with the median rental cost in Montpelier rapidly rising over the last several years, more and more low-income and fixed-income citizens are experiencing housing instability for structural reasons. The following data illustrate that local reality.

The baseline housing vacancy rate in the Montpelier area is currently extremely low:



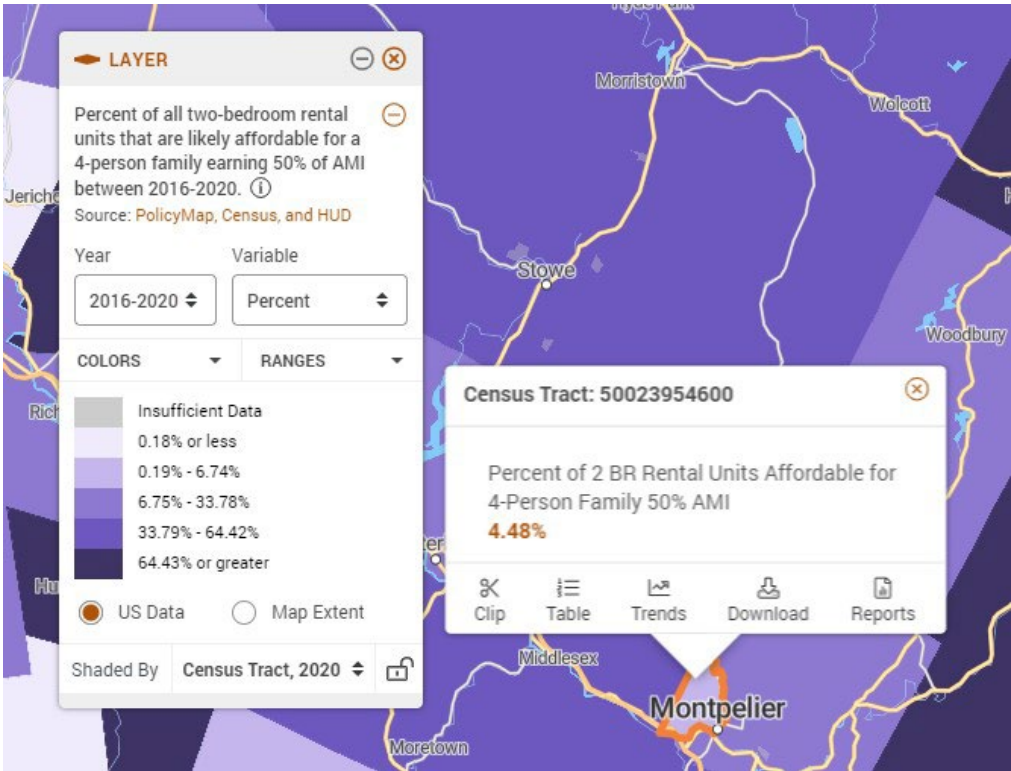
As the vacancy rate has fallen, the average cost of rental units has steadily increased in recent years, with the median gross rent in Montpelier rising to \$1,181 by the end of 2021:



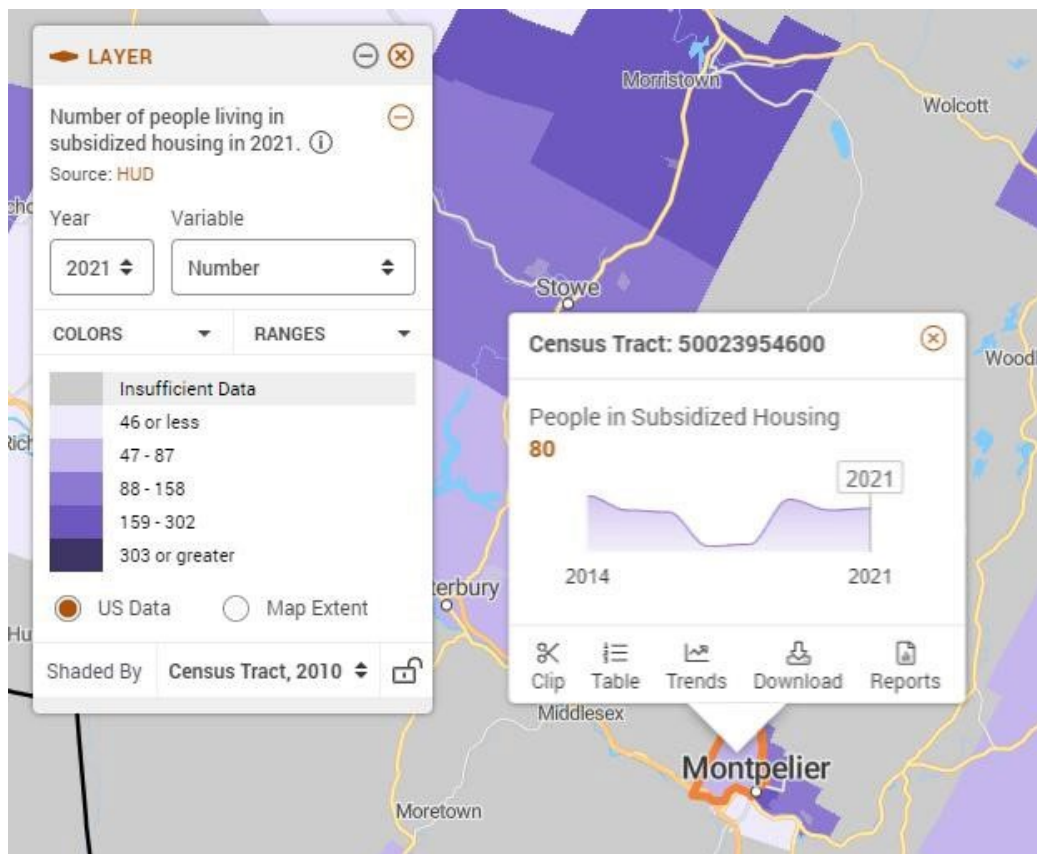
As a result high of demand and low housing inventory, home purchase prices have also rapidly increased in recent years. According to Property Transfer Tax data processed by Vermont Housing Finance Agency (to look only at sales of arm's length transactions), the

median value of a primary residence sold in 2000 was \$97,500. By 2008 (pre-recession), the median selling price of a single-family home in the capital was \$197,000. The median cost increased further to \$207,000 by 2016, and by 2022 the median price for homes sold in Montpelier reached \$370,000. This represents a 279% increase in median purchase price over the last 22 years.

Residents’ income and wages have not kept pace with rising housing costs. As a result, it is increasingly difficult for the average family to afford the average home in Montpelier. But even with high prices, there are still homes selling above the asking price because of the competition for scarce housing in the city. This has **contributed to a housing affordability crisis for lower income people in Montpelier**, with only 4.5% of four person families earning half the average income in the community being able to afford the cost of a two-bedroom apartment (an affordability gap persists in all family sizes, including for individuals, for anyone earning less than 100% of the average income in Montpelier):



At the same time, relatively few subsidized housing units are available to low-income individuals and families, and the number of units has not increased in recent years:



With the median home purchase and rental costs rapidly rising in Montpelier over the last several years, **more low-income and fixed-income citizens are going to experience housing instability unless the supply of subsidized housing increases.** In addition, more housing of all types needs to be created through the construction of new units or expanded use of existing housing stock to address the overall imbalance between supply and demand in the community.

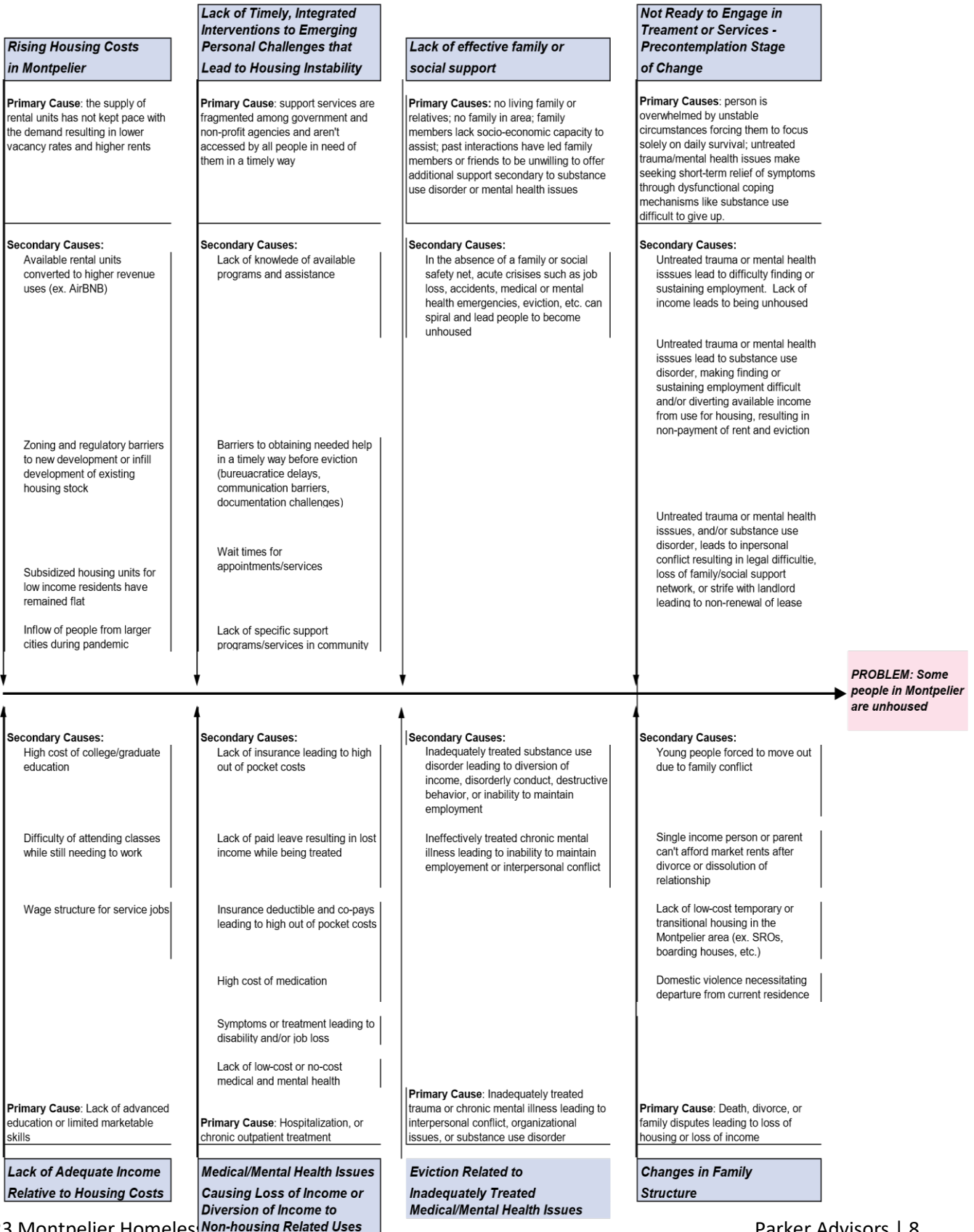
Root Causes of Homelessness in Our Community from the Individual Perspective

To better understand the multi-factorial nature of the problem on a granular level, we utilized a tool called an Ishikawa/fishbone diagram to identify root causes of homelessness among individuals in our community. Originally developed as part of the LEAN process in Japan, an Ishikawa diagram is designed to help visualize the root causes of a problem or event, with the main problem or challenge being in at the center of the diagram on a horizontal axis, and primary and secondary causes of the problem branching off the main problem above and below like a skeleton of a fish. This diagram was developed over the course of several brainstorming sessions with a variety of stakeholders - while it is not exhaustive and could be further developed, it serves as a good starting point for understanding root causes of the problem in our community and how proposed interventions to assist people in our area who are facing housing insecurity may (or may not) address the root causes:

ROOT CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS IN MONTPELIER

Causes

Effect



Gaps in Services and Unmet Needs

There are an impressive array of government and non-profit organizations active in our community that seek to address homelessness, or who target some aspects of the needs of people who are unhoused or are experiencing housing instability that could lead to homelessness. A quick review of Exhibit B will reveal over two dozen groups that are active in these areas. The vast majority of these efforts have discrete funding sources, processes for obtaining assistance, and disparate missions and visions. A missing piece at the local level is a **unifying source of guidance to help coordinate and integrate planning, as well as a mechanism to promote communication** and collaboration among groups and service providers.

Practically speaking this unmet need is manifested in many ways and at many levels in Montpelier. At the planning level, there is a greater need for a unified vision to guide groups such as the City Council itself, the Montpelier Housing Committee, the Montpelier Homelessness Task Force, and non-profit organizations and developers who are seeking to create new housing opportunities. At the level of service provision, there is **no functioning focal point for discussions about reducing siloed efforts and eliminating barriers to services, or a mechanism to discuss and coordinate services** to individuals who may be receiving support from multiple agencies. Finally, at the level of the person experiencing housing instability or who is unhoused, there is no single entity or place to go to obtain the information and support they need to successfully address their situation.

Another unmet need in the community over recent years identified by many of the people interviewed for this effort was a **stable, consistent location for people to obtain emergency assistance and shelter in the winter** when other shelter options are full or not appropriate. Over the last 5 years the emergency overflow shelter has been held in three different locations, none of which are viable going forward. This lack of a permanent location has led to a lot of wasted time, energy, and resources each year expended in trying to locate, permit, and implement service provision at different church sites. The transitory nature of the situation also makes it harder for people to locate services and hinders the development of a solid foundation of knowledge, expertise, and resources that could be built upon year-to-year without starting from scratch every fall.

Finally, another crucial gap identified in this process was the **lack of a mechanism to implement and sustain educational efforts in the community about the issues faced by the unhoused and those experiencing housing instability**. While there are currently sporadic educational efforts occurring from time-to-time, there is no coordination of these efforts or systematic plan for sustaining them. This is a vital unmet need because knowledge and understanding on the part of community members is crucial to continued local support for efforts and initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rationale for Proposed Interventions – Why Change is Necessary

Housing instability and homelessness has been a growing challenge in Montpelier in recent years. Rising rent and home prices, low vacancy rates, and the disruptions caused by the pandemic have increased the number of local people experiencing challenges around housing. There are currently a variety of local government and non-profit committees and organizations in Montpelier and surrounding communities working on various aspects of the homelessness issue and supportive services delivered to this population. These include committees/departments such as the Montpelier's Housing Committee, Homelessness Task Force, Department of Planning and Community Development and Police Department; and coalitions such as the Washington County Housing Action Team (WCHAT), Washington County Housing Coalition, Washington County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care within the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness.

In addition, there are several area government and non-profit organizations involved in providing homelessness supportive services such as the Good Samaritan Haven, Another Way, Capstone Community Action, Downstreet Housing and Community Development, Washington County Mental Health Services, Pathways to Housing Vermont, Central Vermont Substance Abuse Services (CVSAS), Treatment Associates, Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, Vermont 2-1-1, People's Health and Wellness, Washington County Economic Services District Office, Washington County HireAbility (Vocational Rehab), various congregations within the faith community, and local government entities such as the Montpelier Police and Fire/Ambulance Departments whose first responders are often on the frontlines of assisting those experiencing homelessness in our community.

Given the wide array of organizations and “silos” they represent, it is not surprising that current efforts to address homelessness can often appear fragmented at the local level, not the least to those experiencing housing instability in need of services and support. With no single identified location to obtain assistance, it is difficult for individuals to know where to get help or how to obtain it. This can result in people waiting until they are experiencing an acute crisis, and then utilizing emergency services through 911, unnecessarily involving EMT and law enforcement in the process.

The following proposed initiatives are intended to help create a more integrated and systematic approach to the issue of housing instability and homelessness in Montpelier by creating an overarching vision and roadmap for the individual groups and organizations involved, as well as establishing a local focal point for social service providers and those in need of assistance.

Initiative 1 - Develop a Housing Master Plan for Montpelier

Current efforts aimed at addressing housing and homelessness in Montpelier are fragmented, and often reactionary, due to the lack of a pro-active plan to guide and unite the various actors and initiatives. As a community, we lack a unified vision for the future that all parties can contribute to and help achieve. To use a musical analogy, we currently have many dedicated and capable groups and individuals playing their instruments and producing individual sounds - we need a shared score and a conductor in order to move from a cacophony to a symphony.

The first step in addressing this gap/unmet need is the creation of an updated Housing Master Plan for Montpelier. The logical entity to facilitate the creation of the housing master plan is the Montpelier Planning and Community Development Department. The plan should incorporate basic elements from the readopted 2017 Montpelier Master Plan (see extracts in exhibit below) and include input from a wide range of stakeholders in the community. In addition to helping guide the development of new housing initiatives, services and supports aimed at assisting those experiencing housing instability, having a current plan will help ensure Montpelier is well positioned to take advantage of upcoming housing-related funding opportunities at the state and federal levels.

Extract From Montpelier Planning Commission Report – Housing Goals
Date: September 20, 2017
• To ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing for all Vermonters.
• Housing should be encouraged to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each Vermont community, particularly those citizens of low and moderate income.
• 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.
• Sites for multifamily and manufactured housing should be readily available in locations similar to those generally used for single family conventional dwellings. Multifamily housing and manufactured housing are not expressly discussed but is inferred in many places such as promoting high density development within the growth center (2c.1 on page 139) and integrating subsidized housing throughout the city with a mix of rental, owned and mixed income tenures.
• Accessory apartments are encouraged in the master plan in strategy 2c.5 where the city “encourages accessory dwelling units and home sharing through various means including renovation loans to homeowners who need assistance modifying their homes to better accommodate additional occupants”.

The plan should prioritize the creation of more subsidized housing units in Montpelier given the stark economic and demographic trends faced by the community. To help reduce the number of local people experiencing housing instability in the future, as part of the plan it is **imperative that the City Council and local government entities identify and remove barriers to current and future subsidized housing projects in Montpelier.**

During the development of this report, stakeholders and published articles have identified at least a half dozen initiatives at various stages of planning that could result in the creation of new housing in the community (including affordable/subsidized housing):

- Christ Church downtown property involving up to 30 units.
- Habitat for Humanity initiative on Northfield Street involving up to 115 units.
- Development of housing at the Country Club Road property including subsidized (243 units total based on *Test Case C - Balanced Housing and Recreation*)
- Isabel Circle development aimed at creating housing for the “missing middle” (56-unit “cottage cluster” development)
- Heaton Street property owned by WCMHS.
- Vermont College for Fine Arts property

There are a number of other area properties currently on the market that could be utilized to help meet short-term and transitional housing needs in Montpelier, including the Econo Lodge on Northfield Street and Hilltop Hotel in Berlin. These properties could be developed in a public-private partnership with non-profit housing agencies in order to fill unmet needs for housing identified in the master plan.

The plan should identify ways to facilitate the creation of dispersed, permanent, subsidized housing for low-income individuals and families by partnering with groups such as Downstreet Housing and Community Development, Habitat for Humanity, and housing developers creating larger projects. **Supporting these efforts by assisting the organizations involved in addressing barriers and securing necessary permits and funding is vital to appreciably increasing the supply of low-income housing in the coming years.**

Needless to say, any subsidized housing is going to need federal and state funding and that the City is going to have to be pro-active in going after such funding and will need to invest in infrastructure to support it, and perhaps even provide financial tax incentives.

The Montpelier Housing Master Plan (“Master Plan”) should also seek to:

- Quantify the amount and type of housing needed in the next five years to meet local needs.
- Identify barriers to local housing creation and ways to address them.
- Incentivize infill development and the promotion of expanded use of the existing housing stock.
- Improve access to community services and social supports that promote housing stability in Montpelier such as: affordable childcare; transportation; mental health services/counseling; smoking cessation; substance use treatment and support services; food and nutrition services; and access to educational and vocational training to expand earning potential and broaden future housing options.
- Consider regulation of short term rentals (e.g., Airbnb and Vrbo) to disincentivize and/or make more costly conversion of a property to a short term rental as well as creating a registry of short and long term rentals. A study of short-term rentals in Morrisville found that 15% of active rentals were Airbnb or Vrbo as of December 2021 and is growing at 7% per quarter. Meanwhile, in Lamoille County almost 10% of homes are used for short term stays. Over 14 communities in VT have taken steps to regulate this practice including Burlington, Killington, Greensboro, Woodstock and Chester.

- Assess the true capacity of the city's water and sewer systems, including the state of Berlin Pond, and a calculation of how many housing units can actually be added to those systems.
- Evaluate other city-related issues – including capacity and suitability - such traffic, transportation and schools.

To successfully implement the Master Plan, it must include clear goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART).

We recommend the Master Plan cover several key reforms and initiatives including:

- Use of subsidies, tax incentives, and permit and zoning reforms that facilitate the creation of low-income housing.
- Expanding permanent supportive housing in the community for people with chronic mental health conditions and disabilities by partnering with agencies such as Washington County Mental Health Services.
- Creating transitional housing with active case management services for the elderly, people coming from incarceration, hospitalization, or experiencing acute crisis by partnering with such entities as the VT Department of Mental Health, Department of Corrections, VT Division of Substance Use Program, hospitals, and public/private insurers, all of which end up incurring high costs when these groups of people are kept in institutions past the time necessary for treatment because no housing is available.

In the past the City in collaboration with public and private entities have led to changes/developments in public policy on housing related issues that taken together, have helped foster additional housing development in the City such as Downstreet's development of Taylor Street and French Block affordable housing. As part of this recommendation, we support these policy initiatives that have included:

- Recent statutory changes to Vermont's Planning and Development Act (Chapter 117) liberalizing rules for accessory apartments (i.e., Accessory Dwelling Units – ADUs) and the City's full compliance with the same. In response to these changes Montpelier has amended its zoning to allow accessory units "by right". While these changes represent ADU progress, additional steps to make it easier and less costly for homeowners to develop new ADUs.
- Montpelier's receipt of Growth Center Designation and the benefits that come with that program. The Designation was approved in 2009 and amended in 2016 and is designed to help Montpelier continue to develop as a vital, walkable, mixed use community. The Growth Center envisions new areas for housing and commercial uses to be developed at higher densities which will help support our existing downtown.
- The establishment of the Montpelier Housing Trust Fund. This account (established in 2006 with an average annual appropriation of approximately \$52,000) is used by the City to award grants to non-profit organizations to preserve, construct, or rehabilitate affordable housing.
- The contribution of annual city funds to support street outreach workers and motel vouchers to help stabilize and assist citizens experiencing acute housing instability.

In discussing the issue with the Montpelier Community and Economic Development Specialist, he **estimated that \$20,000 - \$30,000 is needed to facilitate the development of an updated housing master plan** for Montpelier.

Initiative 2 - Create a Montpelier “Housing Hub”

Montpelier currently lacks a focal point for the delivery of services to people in the community in need of assistance related to housing. This creates issues on several levels, making it challenging for those in need of support and services to identify what is available and how to access services, impeding the coordination of services across agencies and service providers, and creating a serious administrative and logistical challenge each winter when attempting to operationalize the emergency winter overflow shelter in Montpelier. To address this unmet need, we recommend the **creation of a single point of entry in Montpelier**, both organizational and physical, for those needing assistance related to housing. This would involve the establishment of a centrally located Montpelier “Housing Hub” with drop-in center, emergency shelter capacity, and onsite housing case management and street outreach services to help engage people in need of assistance, facilitate greater integration among service providers, and create a gateway to assistance for community members experiencing both acute or chronic housing instability. The facility would also allow struggling community members to receive social and emotional support by connecting with each other and supportive staff.

Due to current funding limitations, the Montpelier Housing Hub would be developed in stages and could meet a range of current needs including:

- Providing a permanent home for the winter overnight overflow shelter.
- Creating a base for the city-supported street outreach workers.
- Increasing access to public bathrooms (and showers) in the downtown area.
- Creating a drop-in center for those needing acute support and/or healthy social interactions.
- Developing a temporary shelter in inclement weather and extreme temperatures.

In subsequent stages, as funding allows, additional office space would be created for use by rotating social services agencies, housing case managers, mental and physical health practitioners, and other resources needed by people experiencing housing instability: accessing transportation, medical, dental, and mental health/counseling, domestic violence support, substance use disorder treatment, affordable housing options, as well as assistance with identifying and obtaining government and non-profit assistance appropriate to individual circumstances (ex. how to apply for Section 8 Housing, Vermont Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, etc.)

Onsite assistance that reflects needed ancillary support for issues contributing to housing instability would be provided by street outreach workers, housing case managers, and rotating social services staff. These providers would offer information including:

- How to access transportation, medical, dental, and mental health/counseling, domestic violence support, substance use disorder treatment,
- Affordable housing options,
- Assistance with identifying and obtaining government and non-profit assistance appropriate to individual circumstances (ex. how to apply for Section 8 Housing, Vermont Supplemental Nutrition Assistance),
- Where local food banks and soup kitchens are located
- Area homeless shelter programs including availability and how to seek entry.

Eventually, as funding allows the addition of a small number of transitional housing units for the hard to house could be added to or near the facility. **The goal of the initiative is to build over time a one stop location that will increase access to services and provide a focal point for Montpelier’s efforts at addressing homelessness.**

The following considerations have a substantial impact on the timing and implementation of this initiative:

- Need to have some aspects of the facility functional before next winter to avoid ongoing logistical and administrative challenges to operating the seasonal emergency overflow shelter.
- Importance of a central location in town for a population with transportation and mobility issues.
- Limited funding currently available through the earmarked ARPA allocation (\$425,000).
- Availability of feasible buildings/sites in town (including potential community reaction to potential locations for a facility of this nature).

One of the key steps of his recommendation entails **identifying a location** followed by making necessary improvements to the physical infrastructure and beginning the process of permitting. In our discussions with key stakeholders, most notably the unhoused people, the outreach workers and an array of Washington County not-for-profit organizations, state agencies and other entities providing services to the populations to be served, a recurring theme was the need for the facility to be in downtown Montpelier. With many folks unhoused not owning vehicles, walking, and being given rides by others is their primary method of transportation. Therefore, **proximity to the other locations and services used by unhoused people is imperative.** The facility, we were told, needs to be centrally located near regular venues such as the library, Another Way, the grocery store, and transportation nodes. Access to supplemental sources of food, such as provided downtown by the faith community and the Food Bank, is also an important consideration.

We also repeatedly heard what we refer to as the “reverse field of dreams” scenario, i.e., just because we build it doesn’t mean they will come. Based on stakeholder feedback and experience with folks who are homeless, providing spaces for the unhoused individuals must consider their psycho-social dynamics and needs. **The facility must be convenient, comfortable and provide value-added services** to the various subpopulations experiencing housing instability to be fully utilized. For example, the group sometimes referred to as “rough sleepers” need places they can socialize and obtain peer support, access phones, bathrooms, and showers, and avoid inclement weather, but many times are not suited or interested in more permanent congregate settings. The ideal facility would be centrally located but have the capacity to create different spaces for different groups who could then gather or separate, as needed, due to interpersonal conflicts and safety concerns, including for single women and those with a history of trauma.

The proposed housing hub will not only serve currently unhoused people and families, but also **assist people experiencing housing instability at all levels including new residents moving to the community seeking housing, existing community members encountering problems with their current housing, and those experiencing challenges that are impacting their ability to stay housed** (e.g., transportation problems, day care issues, family dissolution, domestic violence, medical or mental health crisis, employment issues, medical or substance use disorder treatment, etc.). This approach will provide a one-stop shopping environment and help address stigma by creating a positive, normalized service delivery environment. Finally, it will provide a central location where existing

service providers can deliver services onsite on a rotating basis, and meet regularly to discuss individual cases, new and emerging resources, and address barriers to assisting clients in need.

To “put a face” to this, a member of our community working on the homelessness issue offered the following comment about the need for such a hub among those who are unhoused:

“...how difficult it is to get out of the situation [homelessness], how hopeless and discouraged people become, how many hours they spend on the phone to get a "no" answer, and how a central connection point, with the participation of all the different agencies and counseling services, could potentially ease that transition.”

After extensive discussion with stakeholders regarding the key attributes needed in a facility of this nature, and analysis of the above considerations, two viable locations for the facility were identified for consideration by the City Council. Regardless of the ultimate location, this effort will need to be implemented in stages over several years with the short-term goal of putting in place a foundation on which a robust and sustainable program can be built over time.

Two locations determined to be feasible are 55 Barre Street, which currently houses, the Montpelier Recreation Center and it’s offices; and a separate annex attached to Another Way. Both locations are on the lower stretch of Barre Street, which already has a variety of facilities serving disadvantaged populations including:

- St. Augustine Church’s Friday soup kitchen (16 Barre Street)
- Sunrise Recovery Center, a mental health drop-in center operated by Washington County Mental Health Services (34 Barre Street)
- Two low-income apartment buildings operated by Down Street Housing and Community Development (39 Barre Street, 47 Barre Street)
- Two mental health overnight crisis beds operated by WCMHS (34 Barre Street)
- Montpelier Senior Activity Center which includes low income housing (58 Barre Street)
- Single Steps, a mental health recovery residence operated by WCMHS (62 Barre Street)
- Another Way, a drop-in center for psychiatric survivors (125 Barre Street)

This existing concentration of non-profit service providers and affordable housing in the area serving low-income and disadvantaged populations makes community opposition to placement of a facility of this nature less likely. In addition, the proximity to town and access from both Barre Street and the Siboinebi multi-use path helps address accessibility issues. No site is perfect given the many needs and limitations cited above, and both potential locations have several pros and cons discussed below.

Regarding other options, we looked at models across the country and found that as organized religion declines, churches have been repurposed for this type of use. However, none are currently on the market in Montpelier. Another suggestion was to utilize an existing state government property that may currently be underutilized in the post-pandemic climate. However, we did not receive positive feedback from Vermont’s Department of Buildings & General Services regarding state-owned properties downtown. Given the tight timeline and need to move quickly, we ruled out the possibility of new construction.

Proposed Site A – Montpelier Recreation Center

Background:

The Montpelier Recreational Center is located at 55 Barre Street, across the street from the Montpelier Senior Activity Center. The Recreational Center has two floors and a street level basement. There is public parking on Stone Cutters Way which runs behind the building on its west side. The main entrance on Barre Street is accessed by stairs to and inside the first floor. On the south side of the building the other means of egress connects to an exterior staircase. The two floors and basement are connected by interior staircases. The basement level contains multiuser toilet room, changing area and shower area, and extensive storage space. The first floor has a gymnasium with a basketball court, stage, a game room, a drinking fountain, the Montpelier Recreational Center main office, a single user toilet room and a classroom. The second floor has a single-user toilet room with shower, and several rooms including offices.

Key Accessibility/Safety Issues:

For use as the hub, two key elements need to be addressed in the short run: accessibility and safety. Issues regarding these elements include:

Entrance and Egress: lack of an accessible entrance and means of egress.

Interior Accessible Route: lack of an interior accessible route between floors and lack of an accessible route to the stage in the gymnasium.

Stairways: lack of rail extensions and insufficient railing height (29.5”) at the central staircase, and lack of railings on one side at the main entry stairs, and on both sides at the stairs to gymnasium stage.

Bathroom/showers: lack of an accessible urinal at the multi-user bathroom in the basement, and no current access without the use of stairs.

Roof Integrity: the roof is currently leaking in several places.

Regulatory Issues:

The City will need to review the current zoning status and determine if any additional changes are needed for the proposed use. Further clarification is needed regarding the issue of the necessity of a sprinkler system if the gym area is utilized for temporary overnight habitation during the winter. Opinions currently seem to vary on this given that the gym has a very high ceiling, and that non-sprinkled spaces in churches have been used in the past for the emergency winter overnight shelter. In addition, it appears as if because most of the downstairs area would not be utilized for anything other than storage during Phase One (see below), lead and asbestos mitigation efforts would not need to be addressed in the initial phase.

Implementation Plan and Timeline:

Phase One (April – December 2023):

Step 1. Develop a cooperative use agreement with the Montpelier Recreation Center staff to establish expectations and protocols for dual use of the facility until the recreation function is

relocated to the Country Club Road location which is evolving as one of the top 2 uses of this property (along with housing). Initial discussions with rec center staff revealed an openness to this possibility, and there is precedence with the use of church spaces in recent years for the emergency winter overflow shelter in various dual use church spaces.

Step 2. Put out a request for proposals from contractors to do the basic modifications necessary to meet the code requirements for this initial use. These would include:

- Meeting ADA accessibility requirements for the building through the addition of a ramp or lift. This work would also benefit those using the space for recreation purposes during the co-location period.
- Repairing active leaks in the roof.
- Creating an outside entrance to the street level bathroom/shower area. This will not only improve access for unhoused individuals but will create another accessible bathroom in the downtown area for public use. This will require both the creation of a ground level door in place of an existing window, and the installation of lockable doors to control entrance to the area when the building is unoccupied and to keep people from accessing storage areas in the basement when entering the bathroom area from the outside.

Reconfiguring and renovating the bathroom/shower area to be suitable and safe for members of all genders would likely also require asbestos mitigation or containment in this area (but this would not require such mitigation beyond that area at this time), so depending on costs, this street level entrance might need to be part of Phase Two, funded from other sources.

Cost Estimate:

It is not possible to secure a current quote for the above modifications until the City Council indicates an intent to potentially utilize the space for this initiative, but a previous estimate to address ADA accessibility throughout the entire building by IDH Design in November 2018 (in Exhibit A) came in at \$161,000. Two other studies of Rec Center have been done over the last 7 years but for both the scope was much broader than our Phase 1 plan (see Breadloaf and Reserve Plus reports in Exhibit A. While recent inflation in building and construction will undoubtedly add to this total, it is reasonable to expect Phase One could be comfortably completed within the \$425,000 in ARPA funds already designated for homelessness and public bathroom efforts.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Montpelier Recreation Center Site:

Advantages:

- The location is ideal, close to downtown with access from both Barre Street and the Siboinibi multi-use path, in an area that would not pose problems to area businesses and would likely engender minimal community opposition (the site is bordered by a property owned and operated by Downstreet Housing, and in an area with a high concentration of service providers for disadvantaged populations as previously noted).
- As a city owned building, implementation of Phase One could therefore take place quickly, with the goal of using it as the emergency overflow shelter next winter.

- Costs associated with Phase One are within the constraints of already allocated ARPA funds. GB Architecture and VT Center for Independent Living representatives have reviewed the various studies of the Rec Center and opined positively regarding the feasibility of doing Phase 1 within the ARPA budget of \$425,000.
- The building has a large amount of potentially usable square footage, making the creation of discrete spaces for different populations and the addition of new services feasible with further renovation.
- Parking on Stone Cutters Way.

Disadvantages:

- Some City officials have expressed skepticism about the long-term viability of this structure calling it a “money pit.”
- The building is old, and additional modifications necessary to expand its use as a drop-in center, transitional housing apartments, or other services would be costly, especially in light of the poor insulation, outdated heating systems, and necessary lead and asbestos mitigation efforts.
- Some concerns have been raised about the potential impact on seniors utilizing the Montpelier Senior Activity Center located across the street. However, the location provides an opportunity to involve willing seniors in volunteer service activities that would generate goodwill and understanding between the two groups.
- Recreational Center staff have expressed some concern that if the building is too well updated, they would be forced to remain at the location rather than being relocated to the Country Club Road facility.

Proposed Site B – Renovating an Existing Structure on the Another Way Annex

Background:

Another Way is a private, non-profit organization that currently operates a drop-in center for psychiatric survivors located at 125 Barre Street. The property abuts Stonecutters Way and the bike path on the back side. The physical structure consists of 2 main sections:

Main operating and administrative space: This main part of the physical plant, consisting of 3 floors and a basement houses the space for programming and administrative office. There are bathrooms on the first 2 floors, a commercial kitchen for making community meals, kitchen for use of clients and shower. Clients have use of a large TV and computers located in the 2 common areas on the first floor. The second floor has music therapy facilities and fitness equipment. The administrative offices are also located on the second floor. The 3rd floor has renovated office/programming space. Egress is through 2 doors on first floor and at basement level. There is a wraparound porch on the east and north side of the 1st floor.

Annex space (Orange room and workshop): Attached to the back (south) side of the main structure is the 2nd floor annex space which is separate from the operating/administrative section with no mutual access. The lower level consists of the workshop with power saws and equipment accessed by a door and garage door. Above the workshop is the “orange room” – an open community space that has been used for meetings and programming (e.g., yoga and acupuncture). The southeast corner of this room is a green house. The orange room is accessed by 1 entrance via a staircase from the outside.

In addition, between the annex space and bike path is a small amount of open space used for a large garden and sitting/outside function area with picnic table and grill.

Preliminary discussions were held with Another Way’s Executive Director about the possibility of renovating the Another Way annex space for use as the Housing Hub. He has in turn raised the topic with his Board of Directors for preliminary discussions, although no decision about this proposed idea has been reached at this time.

Key Accessibility Issues:

Use of the annex for the Hub would require a build out to meet the needs outlined above. Accessibility issues for use of this AW space include:

Entrance and Egress: the first floor has adequate means of egress with 2 entrances while the second floor lacks a second entrance.

Interior Access Route: currently interior access between the 2 floors requires exiting the first floor outside to access the outside door to the stairs. The site plan will determine the need and how to address internal movement within this facility.

Stairways: the stairway to the 2nd floor meets code for current use. Site plan will address any need for modifications.

Bathroom/showers: while there are adequate bathrooms in the operating/admin space, the annex currently lacks both.

Structural/Regulatory Issues:

Immediate Facility Maintenance Issues: the annex currently has no major structural or maintenance issues.

Regulatory Issues: The plan to convert the annex for use as the Hub will require an assessment and modifications, as needed, by the City and state permitting and zoning authorities.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Another Way Site:

Advantages:

- Like the Rec Center the location is ideal, close to downtown with access from both Barre Street and the bike path, in an area that would not pose problems to area businesses.

- The fact that Another Way currently offers daytime services used by some segments of the homeless population including meals, showers, and programming (art, music, support groups, etc.) would make community opposition less likely.
- Oversight and support of staff at the Housing Hub could be provided by the Another Way leadership team who have years of experience working with unhoused clients.
- The property has sufficient square footage to allow for the creation of discrete spaces for different populations and the addition of new services with renovation.
- The annex is currently an underutilized space.
- Parking on Stone Cutters Way.

Disadvantages:

- The major disadvantage and threshold issue is the debate within Another Way regarding its mission. The tension is between the psychiatric survivor and homeless communities. The resolution of this dynamic might preclude Another Way being a suitable site for a homelessness services hub.
- the need for Another Way Board approval to use the annex for the Housing Hub. This is currently subject to additional discussion and approval by the Board. Another Way's existing mission is to serve the needs of psychiatric survivors with lived mental health experience. While some unhoused people are psychiatric survivors, and the majority are experiencing mental health issues including trauma and depression, the Board would need to assess the unique needs of these two groups and determine if they are willing to re-envision their current mission to embrace this expanded role.
- A change in permitting/zoning would be needed to allow the Annex building to be used for a housing hub.

Cost Estimate:

Preliminary plans would need to be developed and an estimate obtained by a contractor to determine the cost for Phase 1 following approval by the Board for use of the space. The fact that Another Way is a non-profit social service provider largely funded by the State of Vermont (Department of Mental Health) opens the possibility of accessing current and future federal/state funding targeted mental health and substance use solutions which are a stated priority by both VT's governor and the legislature.

Initiative 3 - Create a Systematic Public Education Plan To Increase Awareness and Take Steps to Reduce Stigma Around Homelessness

A systematic public information campaign is needed to increase the knowledge of Montpelier residents about housing instability and the issues faced by individuals unhoused in our community. This is vital to help **ensure continued support for mitigation efforts by building understanding, empathy, and knowledge in the community**. This could be coordinated by the Homelessness Task Force to provide people in Montpelier both direct knowledge of, as well as personal experience with, the challenges of people in our community experiencing housing instability.

The Homelessness Task Force has already engaged in some preliminary efforts in this area, including facilitating a public presentation by a person with lived homeless experience at the public library, and the publication of her story in local news outlets. In addition, the task force has facilitated volunteer opportunities at the Winter Overflow Shelter, giving many Montpelier residents the opportunity to experience firsthand the realities of the unhoused folks in our community. It is these kind of experiential opportunities that are vital to expanding awareness and building empathy in the community.

Another important part of this effort is ensuring that those with **lived experience**, both directly and as frontline service providers, play a key role in the future planning and implementation of local housing-related initiatives. This will help ensure that those participating in initiatives can draw upon real world experience and consider the diverse sets of needs and experiences that contribute to housing instability when prioritizing and developing new interventions. This will **help individual organizations and groups reframe their perspectives and better identify the impact of proposed initiatives on those receiving services, while also reducing stigma** around unhoused people by giving them an active role in program development and decision-making.

Components of this effort should include:

1. Creation of a Homeless Peer Council (“HPC”)

The first step in comprehensively engaging the unhoused individuals as key players in policy and decision making is establishing a “peer” council comprised of and run by individuals with current and past lived homeless experience – “unhoused peers.” We have had exploratory conversations with a few key unhoused peers who are enthusiastic about this idea. However, one important piece of feedback from these peers is that recruiting and active involvement of others is predicated on the HPC having real authority and not being set up as token “rubber stampers.” For example, one leader in the unhoused peer community stated that if this is set up and called an “advisory” council or group they would likely not get involved.

Implementation Plan:

Phase One:

- Identify and recruit the founding membership (“Founding HPC”)
- Discuss skill set and training with these founding members to ascertain training and mentoring they believe would facilitate them to operate effectively.

- Work with Founding HPC to create charter and by laws with a guiding principle that all actions by the HPC be predicated on minimizing bureaucracy and maximizing creativity.
- Have HPC identify and, with support as requested, reach out to establish collaborations with entities with complementary missions.

Structure of HPC

To succeed the HPC should have meaningful authority and responsibility in all issues relating to the unhoused folks in Montpelier as well as the broader community. As such the structure should reflect the following:

- **Size:** ideally 6 to 9 unhoused peers.
- **Reporting relationship:** initially the HPC could be formed by the Montpelier Homelessness Task Force (“MHTF”). One problem with this approach is that MHTF is an advisory body to City Council and therefore creates an obstacle for the HPC to garner real authority.

Potential activities of the HPC

- Provide input and advice to MHTF and Montpelier City Council.
- Conduct outreach across Washington county to:
 - gather input from marginalized communities in our region.
 - serve as “ambassadors” and role models within homeless communities.
- Work with the MHTF to conduct community outreach and awareness raising activities to work toward normalizing the community of those unhoused and the issues with which they contend.
- Serve as liaisons and spoke persons for the unhoused community in the legislature and state agencies. For example, write and tell their stories and encourage their peers to do the same.
- Be available for press/public relations.
- Create homeless peer support groups. Entities such as NAMI Vermont could be tapped to provide facilitator training.

Potential Issues to Address

Meaningful and Purposeful Authority and Responsibility: Establishing an HPC with true authority is a threshold issue in its successful implementation. Vermont’s leadership in the social service sectors (including homelessness, mental health, and substance use) have unfortunately demonstrated a pattern of behavior when it comes to truly involving and actively listening to those “peers” with lived experience in the subsectors they serve. While these peer communities espouse “nothing for us, without us,” all too often the state policy and decision makers talk of how vitally important peer input is, they frequently end up minimizing their roles.

Transient Nature of Unhoused Population: A good portion of those homeless individuals in our community move in and out of the area. The HPC should be set up to accommodate this transient pattern.

Public Perception: Stigma and discrimination of the unhoused folks remains a recurring problem even in our community, in the progressive state of VT. Creation and ongoing activities of the HPC will likely face skepticism and resistance from both those in power and the public. Leaders in our community – MHTF, City Council, head of social service agencies, our legislative delegation, etc. – must be on board to consistently, actively, and vocally support the work of the HPC.

Cost Estimate: Costs to implement the HPC are: 1) opportunity cost of staff time or contractor fee for facilitation of start-up activities if outsourced (contractor fee should be under \$3,000) and 2) compensation to HPC members.

2. Community Outreach

Reducing stigma, raising awareness, and normalizing the unhoused population within Montpelier will require active community outreach and public educational opportunities. One of the most important steps in this outreach effort is telling stories. Appealing to people's emotions, and not their intellect, when it comes to shifting social norms and attitudes is far more effective.

We recommend the Montpelier Homelessness Task Force develop and coordinate a systematic program of community outreach and education. Specifically, we recommend:

Partner Collaboration: Working with community partners such as Good Samaritan Haven, Another Way, WCMHS, Capstone and Downstreet alongside the Homeless Peer Council to create a communication plan to slash stigma and elevate awareness. This communication plan could include:

- Identify target audiences.
- Develop specific plan that address the unique characteristics and needs of each target audience.
- Implement targeted plans.

Community Interaction: Create opportunities for the community to interact in positive, constructive and appropriate ways with folks who are unhoused:

- Do presentations and panel discussions with people unhoused and housed side-by-side.
- Develop opportunities for those housed to engage in volunteer activities with unhoused individuals such as the team of volunteers successfully working at the Christ Church winter overnight shelter to cultivate relationships, normalize homelessness and reduce stigma.

Cost Estimate: As with the above recommendation, cost to implement this recommendation is opportunity cost of staff time or contractor fee for facilitation of communication plan if outsourced. If outsourced, fee should be under \$5,000.

3. Perceptions – Community

One of the major obstacles in overcoming homelessness stigma, is negative perceptions in the Community. Unfortunately, many jump to conclusions regarding negative behaviors on the street. They confound behaviors of individuals (e.g., aggressive panhandling, violence, and public intoxication) with generalized identities of groups (e.g., “the homeless,” criminals, and “drunkards”). They conveniently forget that at some point in their lives most people (including themselves) have committed a crime, but that does not make them criminals. They ignore the fact that many people occasionally drink too much, but do not have substance use disorder. Furthermore, they do not seem to understand that the vast number of people who are experiencing housing insecurity in our area now are probably not chronically homeless. See “Colby Lynch Report” in Exhibit A for the story of 2 folks – Colby and her husband - who are working fulltime but homeless.

Countering the narrative of the unhoused population as being dangerous is a critically important component of the Education Plan. One of the themes that surfaced in our stakeholder discussions, most notably from the downtown businesses, was negative perceptions that arose in part from negative interactions with people on the street who were perceived as being homeless. This is not only an issue for owners and their staff but also a deterrent to tourist visitors. Here is an illustrative excerpt from comments from a downtown business owner:

*“The main thing I have observed is the first reaction I am getting from other business owners is **fear and anger**. Less than a year ago my first response was 100% empathy for the homeless population. After being in business for over a year my response is definitely not empathy. I think a lot of this comes from feeling like we are dealing with the issues that come up around homelessness without support. I hope that this will change.*

One morning around 4:30 or 4:45 I was on my way to work when I saw a man swaying a little...A few minutes later, I looked outside and realized he had followed me around the corner ...and I was all alone...I was about to call the police when my coworker called me to tell me that he could see someone spying through the window... I felt very unsafe and so did my coworker. In another instance one of employees opened the backdoor to bring out the trash and ran into someone urinating on our back door...In another instance we had a clearly inebriated person in the store who fell asleep, panicked when they woke up, tried to leave out the back door with unpaid merchandise but without their own belongings. We don't think he was trying to steal, we just think he was confused and inebriated.”

Excerpts from downtown business owner who attended the Montpelier Alive Listening Session

In addition to awareness raising sessions, part of beginning to breakdown this negative perception is to assess and address the external conditions that contribute to this stigma reinforcement. Among these issues raised by business owners:

Lighting – owner complained of dark and blind spots downtown that could be more adequately lit. They mentioned that some seasonal lighting should exist year-round. More broadly, they speculated that both spot and systemic malfunctions in the City electrical infrastructure also contributes to the illumination problem. An example they mentioned was lighting around Rabble Rouser.

Business Owner Information Sharing Sessions – The business owners expressed an interest in continuing the dialogue on homelessness specifically suggesting we follow-up with them and schedule information sharing sessions as the Homelessness Action Plan is implemented.

Bathrooms – They reinforced the need for properly maintained and monitored public bathroom(s) downtown that are suitable and available for use by all.

Employee Housing – another area of concern for business owners is on the broader issue of lack of housing in general. Specifically, they mentioned the difficulties attracting and retaining employees due to high costs and lack of available housing.

Additional Recommendations

1. **Continue to Support Street Outreach:** In recent years the City of Montpelier has provided financial support for two part-time street outreach workers who are integral to the process of assisting residents experiencing housing instability. This vital funding should be continued.
2. **Continue to Support the Emergency Motel Fund:** To provide additional resources to help manage worst case scenario situations, the City has traditionally contributed to a small “motel fund” each year to help ensure nobody is left without a safe place to sleep when all other alternatives have been exhausted. This is an important part of the Montpelier safety net and should be continued.
3. **Pursue Additional Funding:** The City has currently allocated a total of \$425,000 of ARPA funds for homelessness and public restrooms. As the above recommendations are implemented, we suggest the City actively pursues additional State and grant funding in order to leverage the existing resources and allow for full implementation of the action plan over time. Some potential sources of funding include:
 - **State Funds:** Office of Economic Opportunity, State Budget
 - **Federal Funds:**

Congressional delegations have helped other municipalities to land such grants (e.g. Barre’s restoration of “The Aud”), but that this would require the City to be proactive in seeking such grants.) Specific funding opportunities include:

 - **Current:** American Rescue Plan Act (\$1.05 billion), Covid, Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Agency, Section 8, HUD
 - **Future potential:** New legislation (Runaway & Homeless Youth & Trafficking Prevention Act – \$300 million)
 - **New City Tax:** Hotel tax (e.g., 1% of hotel revenue)
 - **Foundations:** private (e.g., MacLeay Foundation, Dreamers Fund), business (e.g. National Life)
 - **Philanthropists:** individuals (e.g., Funders Together to End Homelessness - funderstogether.org)
 - **Donor Advised Funds:**
 - **VT:** VT Community Foundation
 - **National:** Fidelity Charitable
 - **Specialized Social Change Investment:** Calvert Impact Capital
 - **Special Purpose Debt:** Private placement bonds with recoverable grants

The City should consider actively collaborating with local non-profit partners to access larger pools of funding.

4. **Develop a Vacant Property Inventory:** Develop and maintain an inventory of vacant properties/spaces including residential, commercial, retail and upper floors in old buildings. This initiative could be best done by the Housing Committee working with the right City department(s) (e.g., Planning and Community Development Department). This inventory would then be used to begin a dialog with owners to see how those spaces can be used for housing of any type.

Exhibit A - Primary and Secondary Source Material

The following documents and articles were referenced in the development of this plan:

#	Document	URL or Source
1	2017 Roadmap to End Homelessness	https://www.google.com/search?q=2017+Roadmap+to+End+Homelessness&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS926US926&oq=2017+Roadmap+to+End+Homelessness&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i160.721j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
2	2022-Vermont-Point-in-Time-Report	https://www.google.com/search?q=2022-Vermont-Point-in-Time-Report&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS926US926&oq=2022-Vermont-Point-in-Time-Report&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i546l2.796j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
3	Barre Winter Preparedness Meeting - 10 11 22	Document - Parker Advisors
4	Barriers-to-Housing-Committee-Report-PDF 2011	https://www.google.com/search?q=Barriers+to+New+Housing+Committee+Report+November+9%2C+2011&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS926US926&oq=Barriers+to+New+Housing+Committee+Report+November+9%2C+2011&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i299l2.980j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
5	Bridges to Housing - Accelerating Progress on Homelessness in Vermont - February 2023	https://www.vtaffordablehousing.org/
6	California's Homekey Program_ Unlocking Housing Opportunities for People Experiencing Homelessness - Turner Center	https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/blog/homekey-unlocking-housing-opportunities-homelessness/#:~:text=Developed%20in%20the%20midst%20of,or%20at%20risk%20of%20homelessness.
7	City of Montpelier January 7 2020 Recreation Center Public Forum Presentation (1)	https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1084/Recreation-Center-Renovation-Options
8	City of Montpelier Master Plan --- Required-Report-for-2017-Readopted-Plan-revd-09-22-17	https://www.montpelier-vt.org/974/20172018-Master-Plan-Re-adoption
9	ColbyLynchReport	Document by Unhoused Individual (Colby Lynch)
10	Community Listening Session - flyer - w Zoom link	Document - Parker Advisors
11	H-0068 As Introduced 02 01 23 - VT House of Representatives	https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.68#:~:text=68-,An%20act%20relating%20to%20removing%20State%20and%20municipal%20regulatory,fair%20zoning%20and%20housing%20affordability
12	Homelessness Winter Coverage & Gaps Data Updated 10_5_22	Peter Kelman Document
13	Housing in Vermont update – From Eva Dayon - Department of Mental Health	Document from Dept of Mental Health
14	Housing Programs Operated by the Montpelier Housing Authority	https://www.montpelier-vt.org/434/Housing-Authority#:~:text=The%20Authority%20operates%20a%20wide,Street%20Apartments%2C%20and%20Prospect%20Place
15	Listening Sessions - Agenda - 22 12 22	Document - Parker Advisors
16	Listening Sessions - Minutes - In Person 12 22 22	Document - Parker Advisors

17	Listening Sessions - Minutes - Zoom 12 22 22	Document - Parker Advisors
18	Listening Sessions - Notes - In Person 22 12 22 (1)	Document - Parker Advisors
19	Listening Sessions - Notes - Zoom 22 12 22 (1)	Document - Parker Advisors
20	Master-Plan-2017 - Excerpt: 4.4 Goals for Montpelier's Built Environment - Goal C - Housing and Buildings	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpgclefindmkaj/https://www.montpelier-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/4789/Master-Plan-2017-Adopted-December-20-2017?bidId
21	Master-Plan-2017-Adopted-December-20-2017 - City of Montpelier	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpgclefindmkaj/https://www.montpelier-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/4789/Master-Plan-2017-Adopted-December-20-2017?bidId
22	Mayor Miro Weinberger Releases Action Plan to Fulfill the Promise of Housing as a Human Right in Burlington	https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/Press/mayor-miro-weinberger-releases-action-plan-to-fulfill-the-promise-of-housing-as-a-human-right
23	Mayor Miro Weinberger's 2021 Action Plan to Fulfill the Promise of Housing as a Human Right in Burlington	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpgclefindmkaj/https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/Mayor%20Miro%20Weinberger%E2%80%99s%202021%20Action%20Plan%20to%20Fulfill%20the%20Promise%20of%20Housing%20as%20a%20Human%20Right%20in%20Burlington.pdf
24	Montpelier-Recreational-Center-American Disabilities Act Transition Plan-Nov 2018	https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1016/ADA-Transition-Plan
25	Overview of Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Client Services	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpgclefindmkaj/https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/State-of-Texas-Overview-of-ESG-Client-Services.pdf
26	Press Advisory - Homelessness Awareness Day Wash County 2023.docx - Google Docs	Document - Parker Advisors
27	Press Release - Parker Advisors launching Listening Sessions Thursday Dec 22 - final	Document - Parker Advisors
28	Rec-Center-FINAL-Capital Needs Assessment March 2016	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpgclefindmkaj/https://www.montpelier-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/3386/Rec-Center-FINAL-CNA?bidId=
29	Short-Term Solutions to Vermont's Housing and Homelessness Crises - White Paper - Will Eberle	Will Eberle Document
30	Stakeholder Summary - The Unhoused Feedback	Document - Parker Advisors
31	The Guardian - Homelessness & Libraries	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/24/us-libraries-homeless-crisis-social-workers
32	Unwittingly Unhoused - Introduction – Kellogg Hubbard Library February 27, 2023	Carolyn Ridpath Document
33	Update on Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Plan 12 16 22 v1	Document - Parker Advisors

34	VT Coalition to End Homelessness-Coordinated-Entry-Policies-Procedures-Rev-11.19	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/VCEH-Coordinated-Entry-Policies-Procedures-Rev-11.19.pdf
35	W~Erhard Mahnke~Vermont Roadmap to End Homelessness Final Presentation - 2017~1-16-2019	chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/WorkGroups/House%20Human%20Services/Homelessness%20and%20Housing/2019/W~Erhard%20Mahnke~Vermont%20Roadmap%20to%20End%20Homelessness%20Final%20Presentation%20-%202017~1-16-2019.pdf
36	Washington County Continuum of Care - Homelessness Research Project - PowerPoint	Wash Cty CoC Document
37	Washington County Continuum of Care - Homelessness Research Project Report Absolutely FINAL	Wash Cty CoC Document

Exhibit B - Stakeholder Meetings

Over the course of the project, meetings were held with the following individuals and groups:

Entity	Person	Category/Title
AHS/DCF, Secretary's Office	Sarah Truckle	State Entities
Another Way	Ken Russell	Peer Entities
Another Way	Ericka Reil	Peer Entities
City of Montpelier	Kelly Murphy	Asst. City Mgr.
Barre City Government	Nicolas Storellicastro	Barre City Staff
Barre Congregational Church	Leigh McCafferty	Faith Community
Barre Interfaith Group	Earl Kooperkamp	Faith Community
Barre Police Dept.	Chief Braedon S. Vail	Law Enforcement
City of Montpelier	Michelle Savary	Building Inspector
Capstone	Ramsey Papp	Social Services
Capstone	Sue Minter	Social Services
Hillstead Museum Philanthropy	Kathann Wray	Funding
CIT Steering Committee	Rebecca Goldfinger	HL Consultant
City of Northampton, Dept. of Community Care	Sean Donovan	Other Services
CV Regional Planning Commission	Christian Meyer	Quasi Gov't Entity
Downstreet	Angie Hardin	Housing Providers
City of Montpelier	Josh Jerome	Community & Economic Development
Ethiopian Community Development Council's Multicultural Community Center	Joe Wiah	Refugee Community
Family Center of Washington County Vermont	Kathi Partlow	Children/Families
Fidelity Charitable	Suzy Laidlaw	Funding Agency
Good Samaritan Haven	Rick DeAngelis	Homeless Housing
Good Samaritan Haven	Julie Bond	Homeless Housing
Good Samaritan Haven	Dawn Little	Homeless Housing
Harvard University	Indra Acharya	NFP Consultant
Heney Realtors	Tim Heney	Landlord/realtor
Homeless Individuals	20 Unsheltered Individuals	Homeless
Bernie Sanders Office	Erhardt Manke	Housing Expert
MadFreedom	Wilda White	Mental Health Consultant
Montpelier Alive	Katie Trautz	Downtown Businesses
Montpelier City Council / State Rep	Conor Casey	Municipalities / VT
City of Montpelier	Bill Fraser	City Manager
Montpelier Fire Dept.	Robert Gowans	Fire Department

Montpelier Police Dept	Diane Mathews	Law Enforcement
Montpelier Police Dept	Chief Peete	Law Enforcement
Montpelier Police Dept	Chief Nordenson	Law Enforcement
NFP Consultant	Cecile Green	Downtown Businesses
Pathways Vermont	Sandra Jenkins	HL Service Provider
Pathways Vermont	Hilary Melton	HL Service Provider
Rights and Democracy	Tom Proctor	Advocacy
City of Montpelier	Arne McMullen	Recreation Director
The Haven (White River Junction)	Shelter Manager	Shelter
Turning Point	Bob Purvis	Substance Use
Unhoused Individual	Colby Lynch	Unhoused person
VAMHAR/Recovery VT	Will Eberle	Substance Use
Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness	Martin Hahn	Advocacy
Vermont Community Loan Fund	Jose Aguayo	Housing Funders
VT House	Michelle Bos-Lin	Legislature
Wash Cty CoC	Beth Burgess	Academia
WCMHS	Mary Moulton	MH Agencies
WCMHS	Zach Hughes	MH Agencies
WCMHS	Jackie Jones	MH Agencies
WCMHS	Keith Grier	MH Agencies
White & Burke	David White	Real Estate Consultant

Exhibit C – Key Reference Documents

The following key documents will be included in the hard copy of this report. Each can be found electronically via the URL in Exhibit A.

2017 Roadmap to End Homelessness
City of Montpelier Master Plan --- Required-Report-for-2017-Readopted-Plan-revd-09-22-17 (Table of Contents)
Housing Programs Operated by the Montpelier Housing Authority
Community Listening Session - flyer - w Zoom link
Listening Sessions - Agenda - 22 12 22
Listening Sessions - Minutes - In Person 12 22 22
Listening Sessions - Minutes - Zoom 12 22 22
Listening Sessions - Notes - In Person 22 12 22 (1)
Listening Sessions - Notes - Zoom 22 12 22 (1)
Master-Plan-2017 - Excerpt: 4.4 Goals for Montpelier's Built Environment - Goal C - Housing and Buildings
Master-Plan-2017-Adopted-December-20-2017 - City of Montpelier
Montpelier-Recreational-Center-American Disabilities Act Transition Plan-Nov 2018
Press Release - Parker Advisors launching Listening Sessions Thursday Dec 22 - final
Stakeholder Summary - The Unhoused Feedback
Update on Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Plan 12 16 22 v1
Washington County Continuum of Care - Homelessness Research Project - PowerPoint
Washington County Continuum of Care - Homelessness Research Project Report Absolutely FINAL
Unwittingly Unhoused - Introduction – Kellogg Hubbard Library February 27, 2023
Homelessness Winter Coverage & Gaps Data Updated 10_5_22
Short-Term Solutions to Vermont's Housing and Homelessness Crises - White Paper - Will Eberle
Bridges to Housing - Accelerating Progress on Homelessness in Vermont - February 2023

Mayor Marc Gwinn

City Council Members:

Sal Alfano
Cary Brown
Ben Doyle
Adrienne Gil
Pelin Kohn
Jim Sheridan

Kelly McNicholas Kury
City Manager

Vacant
Assistant City Manager

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 29, 2026

From: Kelly McNicholas Kury, City Manager

Re: City of Montpelier City Council Actionable Plan on Homelessness

Purpose

This memo supports Council's desire to call a special meeting on the topic of homelessness in Montpelier. The precipitating events for calling an urgent meeting include the closure of winter shelters managed by several providers in the community and the end of the state's hotel/motel program on April 1.

Council has met many times on this topic and has requested that the focus of this meeting be on how to take action. Accordingly, the below discussion is presented to consider how the council can productively respond to homelessness in the community. It also reviews actions that have been undertaken and/or are underway.

Goals for the Special Meeting:

1. Report to council and community on dimensions of influence and action items underway
2. Review of critical partnerships and areas to strengthen collaboration
3. Identification by City Council of additional opportunities to be actionable
4. Public Comment on this topic for council consideration
5. Direction to staff on action items and policy direction

Actionable Plan on Homelessness in Montpelier - 4 Dimensions of Influence:

I present four categories within which City Council can take action:

- Allocate - these are the resources council has control over; e.g. staff, space, money
- Authorize - these are the policies and permissions that council can control; e.g. encampment policy, use of City Hall as a winter shelter, etc.

- Convene - these are the ways the city can bring people together around this issue: e.g. the homelessness committee; stakeholder meetings with service providers, churches; participation in the Situation Table
- Advocate - these are the stories we tell to other decision makers to seek more tools to help with the issue: e.g. case decisions with the state's attorney and the courts; lobbying the legislature for more services

City Council's Current Record of Action:

Along these dimensions of influence, Council has already taken relevant action. In terms of funding, the city has made the following direct expenditures:

In FY25

\$4672 – encampment cleanup fees
 \$4000 – storage container
 \$1398 – support to Good Samaritan Haven
 \$279 – miscellaneous expenses
 TOTAL: \$10,349

In FY26

\$3621 – encampment cleanup fees
 \$19,522 – emergency cold weather shelter in City Hall
 \$1800 – support to Christ Church for portalets
 TOTAL: \$24,943

The City has approximately \$25,000 remaining in the \$50,000 it has allocated in FY26 and another \$10,000 allocated in the budget for FY27.

The City Plan and Strategic Plan further have adopted strategies for addressing homelessness. See the attached paper prepared by Community and Economic Development Specialist, Matt Jelacic, *Homelessness and Housing in Montpelier: What the City's Plans Already Say*.

There are additionally a number of action inventories that have been produced within recent years. The Parker Advisors report includes three specific recommendations for action. The CVRPC additionally facilitated a roundtable in October of 2025 that prioritized actions and urgent needs. Both are appended to this memo and the action items contained within them are incorporated into the table below.

The table below is intended to begin the conversation at the special meeting by grounding it in past work and conversations. Council should add any that they believe have been omitted, and remove any that do not align with its values or priorities. Each action item will need to be supported by further conversation, policy development, stakeholdering, and appropriation of resources. Accordingly, staff requests that council provide direction on which items to more fully plan out.

It should also be noted that the table below does not address many of the fundamental opportunities to influence the housing economics in the community. These are undoubtedly crucial and are included within the City Plan and staff will continue to work on these components in parallel with council's direction to take further focused action on homelessness.

City of Montpelier – Actionable Plan on Homelessness

	Current	Long term Possibilities	Short term Possibilities
Allocate	• \$ for shelter at City Hall • \$ for encampment cleanup • Purchase of storage pod • \$ for portalets	• Co-responder • Community Response Officer • Homelessness Coordinator • Dedicate Housing Trust dollars	• Services at encampments • Hire term limited security service • Fund Emergency Hotel/motel program
Authorize	• Emergency Winter Shelter • Encampment Policy	• Housing Master Plan • Safe park and ride location • Public Restroom • Day Shelter	Year round shelter at City Hall
Convene	• Homelessness Committee • Situation Table • Stakeholder Roundtable	• Housing Hub • Partners to develop congregate housing	Participate in Washington County Housing Coalition
Advocate	VLCT legislative priorities	Education Plan as proposed by Parker Advisors Report	

Vermont League of Cities and Towns Legislative Priorities to Promote Public Safety:

These below policy positions were adopted by the VLCT Board in the fall of 2025 to inform its lobbying direction for the legislative session in 2026.

- Support municipalities in delivering public safety and fulfill the state’s obligation to deliver public health and human services.
- Keep perpetrators of serious and violent offenses in Vermont state custody pending extradition, or waiver of extradition, to the state where the warrant is held
- Establish a default statewide ban on firearms in designated municipal buildings/property, from which a municipality may opt out
- Create felony charge for reckless endangerment with a firearm
- Institute flexible alternatives to the residential Vermont Police Academy training program
- Require that existing state case management personnel provide field-based services including pre-trial supervision and services by DOC
- Mandate the Agency of Human Services to re-instate public inebriate programs
- Provide stable, reliable and ongoing funding for providers of field-based and other services that support individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness

- Support the creation of emergency cold weather, temporary, and permanent shelters, including opening State buildings/land, sufficient to double the total shelter bed capacity statewide up to 1200 beds
- Provide municipalities with resources to remove hazardous materials in encampments and public spaces.

Background Information Attached to Memo:

- [Homelessness Implementation Plan](#) – City Plan, Chapter 12, Community Services
- Current encampment policy: [City Encampment Response Policy. Amended 08.13.2025 FINAL](#)
- Parker Advisors Report.
- CVRPC Roundtable Report of Prioritized Actions and Urgent Needs
- White Paper - *Homelessness and Housing in Montpelier: What the City's Plans Already Say*
- Good Samaritan Haven Street Outreach – What We Do
- Encampment Data YTD 2026



Street Outreach Team: What we do

Good Samaritan Haven provides street outreach across Washington County, focusing on Barre, Berlin, and Montpelier, with support extending to nearby communities as needed. Our team includes three outreach workers (2.5 FTE) who take a peer support approach, building relationships through consistency and nonjudgmental engagement.

A key part of our work is that support is not conditional. We don't require individuals to engage in specific services or meet certain expectations in order to stay connected with us. Where many systems pull back when someone is seen as non-compliant, we stay in the relationship as long as it is safe to do so. Our goal is to create ongoing opportunities for connection and support, so that when someone is ready, they have a trusted pathway to services.

Core Responsibilities of the Street Outreach Team

1. Engagement and Peer Support

- Build connections with unsheltered individuals through active listening, acceptance, and compassion.
- Provide support for basic needs, advocacy, and referrals.

2. Basic Needs and Service Connections

- Help connect unsheltered individuals with resources for basic necessities to support living outside.
- Create pathways to emergency shelter beds, including at Good Samaritan Haven, General Assistance motel program, Elevate Youth and more.
- Assist individuals in identifying and filling gaps in their support services,

linking them with relevant service providers.

3. Health and Harm Reduction Support

- Facilitate access to medical care.
- Provide harm reduction support and care to those in need.

4. Community Response and Collaboration

- Respond to inquiries and concerns from community members, families, providers, and peers.
- De-escalate minor crises when possible to reduce reliance on emergency services.
- Collaborate with municipal officials and departments, including the police, parks department, and public works, to address safety and community needs.

Important Limitations of the Street Outreach Team

Good Samaritan Haven's street outreach team plays a critical role in supporting people living outdoors, but it is not designed to resolve homelessness or make it less visible in the community. Our effectiveness and safety depends on building and maintaining trust with unsheltered individuals over time.

We often operate at the intersection of individual needs and community concerns. While we can help communicate and navigate situations when someone is staying in a sensitive, restricted, or private area, we can not be responsible for enforcing municipal policies regarding camping. Maintaining a clear distinction between outreach and enforcement is essential to preserving the relationships that make this work safe and possible.

What Street Outreach Is Not Responsible For:

Public Protection or Law Enforcement

The outreach team does not enforce laws, ordinances, or site restrictions. This includes providing official notice to vacate or acting in an enforcement role. Our focus remains on engagement, support, and connection—not regulation or public safety enforcement.

Housing Case Management

We work to connect people with shelter and support them in taking initial steps toward housing, including helping with applications and documentation. However, we are not housing specialists. We rely on and refer to partner agencies that are equipped to provide housing navigation and case management.

Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment

We support individuals in accessing care by making referrals and helping coordinate with appropriate providers. While we may offer short-term support at the moment, we do not provide clinical mental health or substance use treatment services.

Homelessness and Housing in Montpelier: What the City's Plans Already Say

The City Council is preparing to take action on homelessness in Montpelier. The shape of that action depends on a basic question: what is homelessness, and where does it come from?

Homelessness rises when housing gets harder to find

A growing body of research has found that regional differences in homelessness rates — why some places have many more people unhoused than others — track housing market conditions far more closely than they track individual factors like mental illness, addiction, or weather. Cities with higher rents, lower vacancy rates, and tighter housing supply have more homelessness. Cities with looser markets have less.¹ This isn't to say that individual circumstances don't matter for any particular person who loses their housing. It is to say that when a community's housing market tightens, the number of people experiencing homelessness rises with it.

This is the operating premise of this document. Under it, "what is the city doing about homelessness" and "what is the city doing about housing" are not separate questions. They are the same question.

What the data says about Montpelier

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission's 2026 Housing Assessment, prepared at the city's request, makes the picture concrete.²

The market is severely tight. A healthy rental vacancy rate is between 4 and 6 percent. Washington County is currently at about 3.8 percent, and Montpelier is below the county average. The city has 1.69 jobs for every housing unit; a healthy ratio is 1.5. To reach that healthier balance, Montpelier would need 528 additional housing units — and that is just to get to a normal market, not to grow.³

Costs have outpaced incomes. Between 2013 and 2023, median rent in Montpelier rose 30 percent. Median renter income rose only 25 percent. Home prices rose 82 percent over the same period; homeowner income rose 56 percent. In 2023, 36 percent of Montpelier renters and 20 percent of homeowners were spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing

¹ Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern, *Homelessness Is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns* (University of California Press, 2022). See also homelessnesshousingproblem.com.

² *Montpelier Housing Assessment*, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, April 2026. Prepared at the request of the City of Montpelier following the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's *Vermont Housing Needs Assessment Guide*. Hereafter "Housing Assessment."

³ Housing Assessment, Finding 1, Data Points 1.1 and 1.2 (Figure 1). The healthy 4–6% vacancy benchmark is from the 2020 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment; the healthy 1.5 jobs-to-homes ratio is from housingdata.org. Vacancy rate estimates for Montpelier alone carry a high margin of error and are reported at the county level.

— the standard definition of being cost-burdened. Inside those figures, 14 percent of renters and 10 percent of owners were spending more than half their income on housing.⁴

Homeownership has moved out of reach for most working people. A monthly mortgage on the median home in Montpelier was about \$1,311 in 2021. In 2025, it is \$2,915. The Housing Assessment maps this against actual wages in the city: dual-earner households of teachers, nurses, social service providers, retail workers, and food service workers cannot afford the median home. Together, those professions account for roughly 75 percent of jobs in Montpelier.⁵

The city is not building anywhere near the housing it has committed to build. The 2025 City Plan sets a goal of at least 75 new units per year.⁶ Between 2020 and 2025, Montpelier averaged 8.3 new units per year, and lost an average of 2.3 units per year. Net, the city is adding about 6 units a year against a 75-unit target.⁷

Homelessness has risen sharply. In Washington County, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness rose from 100 in 2019 to more than 450 in 2024. In Montpelier specifically, the count rose from 53 individuals in 2020 to 303 in 2024.⁸ These trends are connected. The Housing Assessment treats them as connected. The 2025 City Plan treats them as connected. "Constructing emergency shelters and building more housing," the City Plan says, "are both topics discussed in this housing element... Both elements are needed to achieve our goals of providing essential services while we strive to eliminate homelessness."⁹

What the city has already committed to do

Two adopted documents shape what the city has said it will do: the Council's FY24-27 Strategic Plan, adopted in June 2024, and the City Plan 2025.¹⁰ Together they contain a substantial set of commitments that bear on homelessness. References below point to specific items in each document, so readers can locate them directly.

⁴ Housing Assessment, Finding 2 narrative, Data Points 2.1 (Figure 7), 2.2 (Figure 8), and 2.3 (Figure 9). Cost-burden data drawn from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates (Tables B25070, B25091), 2023.

⁵ Housing Assessment, Data Points 2.5 (Figure 14, mortgage payment progression) and 2.10 (Figure 17, wages by employment sector). Wage data from Vermont Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2024.

⁶ City of Montpelier Plan 2025, Housing chapter (Chapter 2), Goal 1.

⁷ Housing Assessment, Data Point 1.7 (Figure 5), drawn from Montpelier Department of Planning and Community Development building and zoning permit records.

⁸ Housing Assessment, Data Point 6.1 (Figure 37). Source data from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development annual Point-in-Time count, conducted by the Vermont Continuum of Care.

⁹ City of Montpelier Plan 2025, Housing chapter, p. 2-9.

¹⁰ City of Montpelier *FY24-27 Strategic Plan*, adopted by City Council June 26, 2024. City of Montpelier *Plan 2025*, adopted 2025.

Direct services to people currently unhoused

The City Plan's Homelessness chapter (Chapter 12) contains eleven action items:

- HM.1 — Create a public education program on housing instability
- HM.2 — Plan approved locations for unsheltered individuals to congregate during the day and to camp at night
- HM.3 — Find a permanent location for the overnight-overflow shelter
- HM.4 — Continue the public restroom project, potentially co-located with a day shelter
- HM.5 — Continue and improve the public restroom program
- HM.6 — Continue to administer the encampment policy
- HM.7 — Continue the peer outreach worker program with Good Samaritan Haven
- HM.8 — Develop a new day shelter project
- HM.9 — Continue to fund the emergency hotel/motel room program
- HM.10 — Support homelessness prevention services
- HM.11 — Create a Housing Hub where service providers can meet people in one place

The Council's FY24-27 Strategic Plan covers most of the same territory under Goal 5, Strategy 5.1 ("Provide Resources for Unhoused Individuals"):

- 5.1.1 — Develop winter shelter; maintain Public Safety Plan
- 5.1.2 — Work with community partners to develop unhoused day center
- 5.1.3 — Develop resources for public restrooms and showers; consider public camping options and sanitation services
- 5.1.4 — Continue peer support outreach
- 5.1.5 — Pursue short-term shelter alternatives; pursue permanent shelter with community partners
- 5.1.6 — Pursue transitional housing with community partners

Two further items address related needs:

- The Good Samaritan Haven street outreach worker is addressed in the City Plan's Public Safety chapter (PD.2)
- Crisis Intervention Team training and mobile crisis response are addressed in Strategic Plan, Strategy 5.5

A cold weather shelter was operated in the City Hall basement during the 2025–2026 winter, providing additional shelter capacity. In March 2026, Good Samaritan Haven opened Turret House at 137 Barre Street as a year-round emergency shelter — substantially fulfilling HM.3's call for a permanent shelter location in Montpelier and expanding the city's shelter capacity from seasonal overflow to year-round operation.¹¹ Turret House is part of Good Samaritan Haven's broader network of year-round emergency housing across Barre City, Barre Town, Berlin, and Montpelier.

Producing more housing

The City Plan's Housing chapter (Chapter 2) sets a minimum target of 75 new units per year (Goal 1) and a 20-year target of 1,500 new units. The two largest sites — Country Club Road and Sabin's Pasture — are projected to deliver 600 to 950 units between them.

¹¹ Good Samaritan Haven, Turret House open house announcement, March 2026. Turret House opened March 31, 2026 at 137 Barre Street, Montpelier.

Specific commitments:

- Country Club Road project — 138 acres, 300+ units; in active execution; requires zoning revision, due diligence, private development partner, and project funding (City Plan, HO.1; Strategic Plan, 2.1.1)
- Growth Center expansion to include the CCR site (City Plan, HO.7)
- Sabin's Pasture — projected 300 to 450 units (City Plan, Chapter 2)
- 12-16 Main Street — RFP for economic development (Strategic Plan, 2.1.4)
- 55 Barre Street — planning future state (Strategic Plan, 2.1.4)
- Work proactively with developers (Strategic Plan, 2.2.1)
- Reach out to property owners of underutilized properties (Strategic Plan, 2.2.2)

Making housing more affordable

The city has committed to an interlocking set of programs to lower the price point at which housing is delivered and to preserve below-market units once they exist:

- Housing Trust Fund — target of \$200,000 in reserve plus annual program funding to support affordable housing projects (City Plan, HO.18)
- Tax Increment Finance program [CHIP] — fund public improvements needed for housing projects (City Plan, HO.5; Strategic Plan, 2.1.2)
- Tax Stabilization program — property tax relief for projects that achieve specific goals (City Plan, HO.17; Strategic Plan, 2.2.4)
- Development Agreement program — public-private agreements to incentivize housing (City Plan, HO.13; Strategic Plan, 2.2.3)
- Accessory Dwelling Unit program (MAD UP) — partnership with Downstreet using Housing Trust Fund money and the Vermont Housing Improvement Program (City Plan, HO.4; Strategic Plan, 2.2.5)
- New affordable housing project — at least one during the plan's lifetime, with stated focus on disadvantaged groups including refugees, asylum seekers, residents of single-room occupancies, persons reintegrating from incarceration, and the homeless (City Plan, HO.6)

Removing the regulatory barriers to building

The City Plan calls for *"dramatic changes"* to the zoning bylaws to facilitate housing development. Specific commitments:

- Zoning bylaw reform — shorten the subdivision process, eliminate smaller projects from major site plan review, increase height allowances, remove some application standards, eliminate shading requirements (City Plan, HO.3)
- Development fee review — cap, eliminate, or reduce fees to facilitate housing development (City Plan, HO.19)
- State law advocacy through a lobbyist (City Plan, HO.25), including:
 - Sale of underused state buildings and parking lots for housing
 - Reform of the appeals process, including eliminating the "any 20 persons" provision
 - A statewide vacancy tax
 - A charter change

Studying Housing First

The City Plan commits the city to study the value and impacts of adopting a Housing First policy (HO.23). This study is jointly assigned to the Homelessness Task Force [Now Housing Committee] and the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has stated on the record that it does not yet have enough information to recommend the policy.

Building a housing-aware Council process

The City Plan also proposes that any city decision be assessed for its likely effect on the availability and affordability of housing (HO.24) — making the connection between Council action and housing outcomes a routine part of how decisions get made. This item is currently a Low priority and is assigned to the Housing Committee.

Infrastructure that determines where housing can be built

Housing cannot be built where utility, road, and stormwater capacity will not support it. The Council's Strategic Plan includes:

- 10-year water line replacement plan (Strategic Plan, 1.2.1)
- 10-year sewer line improvement plan (Strategic Plan, 1.2.2)
- Stormwater Utility creation by July 2025 (Strategic Plan, 1.2.3)
- 2.5-year upgrade of the Water Resource Recovery Facility (Strategic Plan, 1.2.6)

These are the items that determine whether Country Club Road, Sabin's Pasture, and infill development across the city can happen at the densities the Housing Chapter assumes.

The gap between commitment and action

The most striking fact in the Housing Assessment is the distance between the city's adopted production target and what is actually being produced. The Council has committed to 75 units per year; the city is building 8 to 10 and losing 2 to 3 to demolition, flood buyout, or conversion. Over the past five years, the cumulative gap between the goal and the result is roughly 350 units — close to two-thirds of the additional housing the Housing Assessment says is needed just to bring the city's jobs-to-housing ratio into balance.

The gap is not, on the evidence, a permitting problem. The Housing Assessment found that most permits in Montpelier are issued administratively within days, that

Development Review Board approvals average 35 days, and that only six appeals were filed between 2021 and 2025.¹² Stakeholders' frustration with the regulatory process is real and worth understanding, but the data does not support the idea that permitting is the binding constraint on production.

What the data does point to is that construction itself has become much more expensive — the cost of building a comparable new home in Washington County rose from about \$307,000 in 2017 to \$620,000 in 2024¹³ — that financing for smaller and less expensive units is hard to obtain, and that the city's largest production opportunities — Country Club Road, Sabin's Pasture, and the redevelopment of underused parcels — depend on actions only the city itself can take: zoning, infrastructure, and partnership.

¹² Housing Assessment, Data Points 4.1 (permitting process narrative), 4.2 (new permits issued), and 4.6 (appeals 2021–2025).

¹³ Housing Assessment, Finding 2 narrative, drawing on Multiple Listing Service data via housingdata.org. Specific to Washington County rather than Montpelier alone.

What this means for the conversation about homelessness

A homelessness plan that addresses only encampments, shelters, restrooms, and police response is responding to the consequences of the housing market without engaging the market itself. The encampment policy, the cold-weather shelter, the day center, the peer outreach worker — these are necessary. They keep people alive. They cost real money, and the people doing the work are doing important work. None of that is in question.

What is in question is whether a plan limited to those items can reduce homelessness in Montpelier over the next five and ten years. The evidence in the Housing Assessment, and the structure of the adopted City Plan and Strategic Plan, both suggest that it cannot. The number of people losing their housing each year in this region is a function of the housing market they are losing it into. If the market continues to tighten — if rents continue to outpace wages, if production continues to fall short of the city's own targets, if the cost of building continues to rise — then no plausible expansion of shelter and outreach will keep up.

The city has already adopted a more substantial response than its current homelessness-action draft reflects. The Country Club Road project, if delivered at the densities the City Plan contemplates, would do more to relieve homelessness pressure in Montpelier than any shelter expansion. The Housing Trust Fund, the ADU program, the regulatory reforms, the state-level advocacy on vacancy tax and appeals reform, the Housing First study, and the housing impact assessment policy are all on the books and waiting to be moved.

This is not an argument against the work being done at the encampment, the cold-weather shelter, or the Situation Table. It is an argument that those efforts will be more effective when they sit alongside a parallel commitment to making housing easier and cheaper to build, easier and cheaper to keep, and more durably affordable for the people who already live and work here.

The Housing Assessment closes with a quotation from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's guidance on what comes after a housing assessment: "A housing needs assessment is intended to be a foundation on which to build a housing plan that articulates specific local goals and activities that preserve and promote affordable housing."¹⁴ Montpelier has both — the assessment, and a City Plan that articulates the activities. The remaining question is whether the city will use them.

How to find these items in the source documents

City Plan 2025. The Housing chapter is Chapter 2; action items are numbered HO.1 through HO.25. The Homelessness section is in Chapter 12 (Community Services); action items are numbered HM.1 through HM.11. The Public Safety chapter (Chapter 11) contains PD.2 (Street Outreach Worker) and PD.5 (Crisis Intervention Team).

¹⁴ Housing Assessment, Introduction, p. 5, quoting the Vermont Housing Finance Agency's [Vermont Housing Needs Assessment Guide](#).

Council FY24-27 Strategic Plan. Goal 1 covers infrastructure. Goal 2 covers housing production (Strategies 2.1 and 2.2). Goal 5 covers public health and safety, with Strategy 5.1 covering unhoused individuals and Strategy 5.5 covering mental health and addiction.

Montpelier Housing Assessment (CVRPC, April 2026). Seven key findings, each with supporting data points and figures, plus recommendations tied back to specific City Plan strategies. Findings 1, 2, and 7 — on the housing shortage, affordability, and the rise in homelessness — bear most directly on the questions in this document.

All three documents are available on the City of Montpelier website.