



*Montpelier Alive*

• ENRICHING A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN •

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Montpelier Alive's Vision:  
Montpelier is a vibrant  
community center with a  
thriving downtown and  
unique sense of place.

July 22, 2010

As the designated Downtown Community Association, Montpelier Alive's mission is to maintain and enhance the vitality of our downtown district. This mission is most effectively carried out in partnership with city government.

A unique opportunity is now before the City to continue to enhance the vitality of the downtown district. The opportunity before the City is to use the approximately \$800,000 in city funds and \$5,000,000 in federal grant funds already approved for the acquisition of the Carr Lot to implement the designs of the Carr Lot Committee and the City Master Plan. Those plans include continuation of the bike path, additional parking, creation of green spaces, a park at the confluence of the North Branch and Winooski Rivers, a pedestrian bridge across the North Branch to connect the Carr Lot locations with Main Street, stabilization of the Winooski River bank near the site, and the remediation of the pollution now at the Carr Lot.

Perhaps the greatest potential impacts of moving forward on the Carr Lot project with a pedestrian bridge are the long-term positive benefits of conveniently connecting the two ends of downtown. When geographic proximity is decreased, as is the case in Montpelier by river crossings, parking problems and traffic congestion increase and the economic health of businesses at the far ends of town suffer. Maximizing the city's pedestrian connectivity is a priority that is essential to ensuring a vibrant downtown.

The time for action is now. The City is at risk of losing the federal funds earmarked for this project if no progress is made on fulfilling the purpose for which the funds were authorized.

The first step is for the City Council to authorize the acquisition of the Carr lot. If the City and Mr. Carr are unable to negotiate an acceptable purchase agreement, then the City Council should move to acquire the property and allow the courts to establish a fair price.

With the Carr Lot property in hand, the City could then use the federal funds to remediate the property and begin to realize the vision that so many have worked on for more than two decades. Additional benefits of acquiring this property, in addition to those listed above, include a permanent home for the Farmers' Market and the beautification of one of the gateways into the city.

Finally, recent reactivation of the railroad has closed the railroad bridge to pedestrian traffic and is likely to create significant access problems behind the Main Street businesses that already struggle with delivery of merchandise. Creative use of these funds to acquire property between Shaw's and the Drawing Board could be considered as a way to open up access behind the Main Street storefronts, and also provide significantly improved pedestrian access across the North Branch.

These ideas are for naught, however, if the City fails to implement those elements of the earlier Carr Lot Plan that are still permissible by state and federal agencies. We realize that there will be challenges, and Montpelier Alive is prepared to collaborate with the City to make this plan a reality before federal funds are lost and an opportunity to enhance the downtown for generations to come is forfeited.