

MONTPELIER DOWNSIZING GROUP and the SILVER MAPLE GROUP

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Created in 2015, the Montpelier Downsizing Group is focused on providing information and community updates concerning the options for residents wishing to downsize into smaller homes. This effort was driven by a wish for primarily those over 55 to remain in Montpelier but in homes that were more senior-friendly, those of “universal design.” Because so many of the houses in Montpelier are not well suited for single-level living and aging-in-place, one or more senior-friendly, smaller home, intentional communities should be built. An over-55 community will allow those of us who want to remain vital members of our community to remain here rather than having to move farther west (Shelburne and Burlington) to find appropriate housing.

Note that building a community of smaller, affordable market-rate homes has multiple positive effects for the economic development potential for Montpelier:

1. Older, larger homes now owned by one or two older residents would become available for young families with kids.
2. New, universal design, market-rate smaller homes would bring those over-55 into the city as homeowners, taxpayers and consumers.
3. An intentional community such as this would put Montpelier on the map as a city that supports a multi-generational approach for its residents.

Note that the added benefit linked to points two and three would be to bring families together, with grandparents in the intentional community and their kids and grandkids in more traditional housing within the city. This has happened to me, with my daughter and her family moving from Brooklyn to Montpelier, bringing with them the skills and talent honed from years working in New York.

Late 2017, in an effort to drive the downsizing community initiative, a smaller group, the Silver Maple Group, was formed with its goals being: to age in place, to not be a burden to our kids and to live and grow old within an intentional community of friends. Our group has met monthly since November 2017 and has exceptional momentum, to the point where we will begin work on drawing up the by-laws for the association.

An over-55 community of 10 to 12 smaller homes could be built in the TIF district, as “pocket neighborhoods” work especially well within city limits. These pocket neighborhoods would have shared walking trails and garden space.

This types of community is unique and should be considered as a separate project within the TIF district, as it’s specifically focused on housing for residents and differs from other projects under consideration.

Once this housing project has been developed, it could serve as a model for additional similar communities, both senior and intergenerational, in Montpelier.