

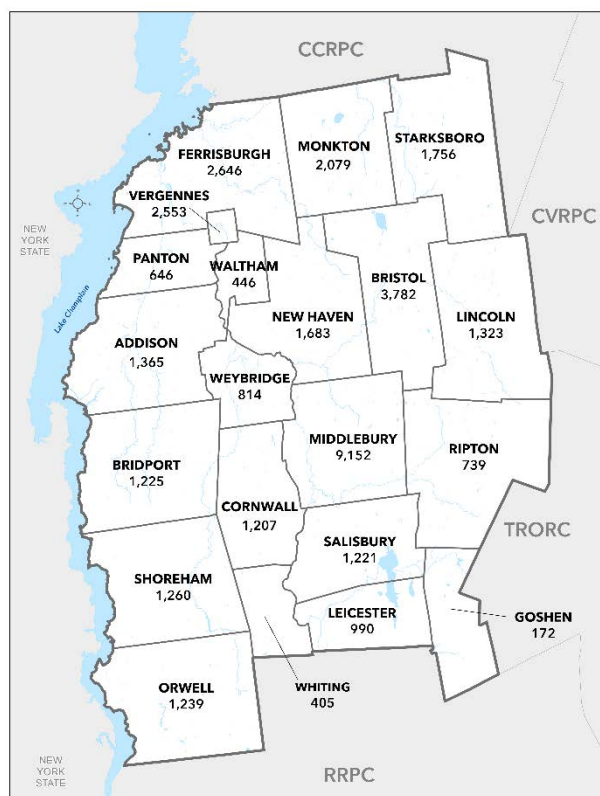
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## Our Region's Population

In order to plan for the appropriate allocation of resources, infrastructure, education and services it is necessary to consider the demographic make-up of a community, its settlement patterns and rates of growth. Understanding the region's population and housing profile provides a foundation from which all other elements of this Regional Plan take shape. Age distribution, household size, housing stock and income are all factors that determine a region's housing needs and inform future planning. When population characteristics and housing trends are understood, public investments and policies can be thoughtfully and appropriately allocated to our communities.



According to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census,<sup>1</sup> the Addison County Region had a total population of 36,703 in 21 municipalities ranging in size from 172 individuals in Goshen to 9,152 in Middlebury.<sup>2</sup> The region's four most populated municipalities – Middlebury, Bristol, Ferrisburgh and Vergennes – account for approximately 48% of the total population. Each of these communities is connected to a thriving downtown or village center that has supported its population over time. Middlebury, the county seat, is a commercial, institutional and cultural hub of the region, with a population twice that of the next largest town, Bristol (3782).

Approximately half of the population of Bristol lives in its village center, a compact, mixed-use grid of walkable streets, and the rest in the surrounding countryside.

**Figure 1: Addison Region Towns and Populations**

Ferrisburgh's 21 miles of Lake Champlain shoreline and its proximity to Chittenden County and Burlington contribute to its population total (2,646) which is very similar to Vergennes' total (2,553). Vergennes, which is only 2.5 square miles, was carved out of Ferrisburgh, Panton and New Haven in 1788 to form a city, the oldest and smallest in Vermont. Vergennes now serves as

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/about/schedule.html>

<sup>2</sup> The towns of Granville and Hancock, while located in Addison County, are part of the Two-Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission and are not included in these population totals.

a regional commercial and employment base for the surrounding towns. The eastern mountain towns and small central farming communities have the lowest populations in the region. Western farming towns are slightly more populous due to vacation and second homes on the shores of Lake Champlain.

## **Settlement History**

Otter Creek, flowing north through the Addison Region from Leicester to Lake Champlain in Ferrisburgh, is Vermont's longest river and integral to swamps and marshes throughout its basin. Human habitation along Otter Creek can be dated to between 10,000 and 11,000 years ago. Abenaki and Iroquois hunted, fished, gathered herbs and fruits, grew crops, and settled in this valley.<sup>3</sup> Fertile soils, abundant fish and game, and a network of tributaries serving as trade and travel routes supported these early populations. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, French traders, explorers, and settlers migrated to and through the Otter Creek valley, drawn to the promise of productive farmlands and navigable waters. New agricultural and farming practices as well as settlement patterns introduced by the emigrants would forever transform the landscape and cultures of this region.

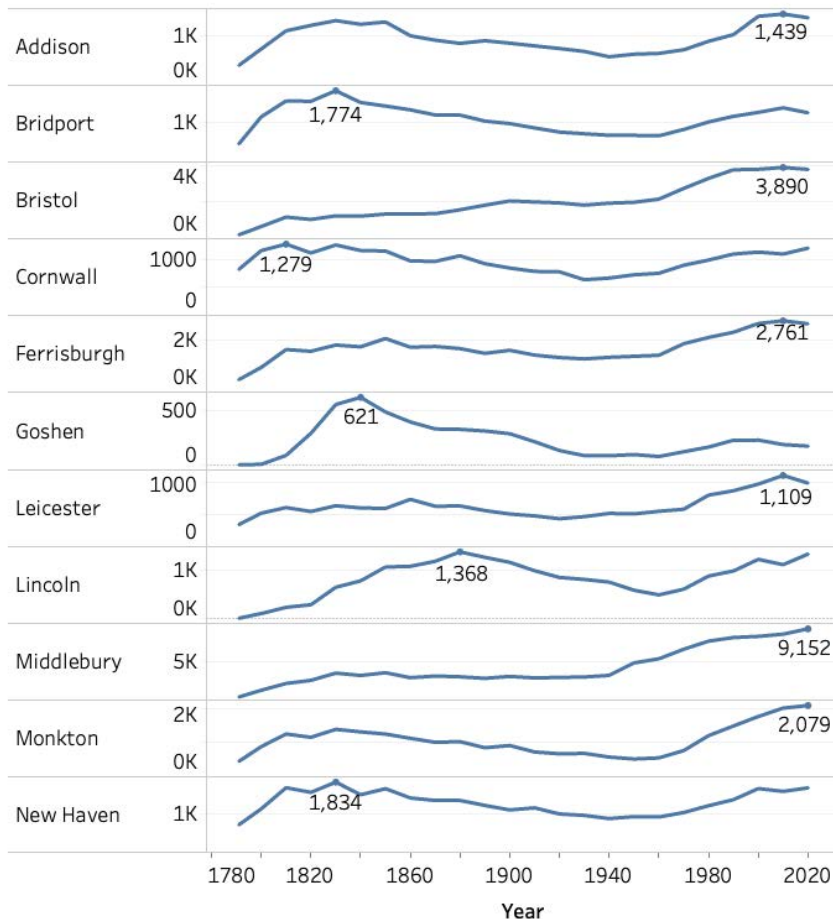
In 1791, the first year of the federal census, there were 7,081 people living in the Addison Region. The most populous towns, ranging from 701-825 residents, were the early agricultural settlements located in the Lake Champlain Valley of **Cornwall, New Haven, Orwell and Shoreham**. The region's population doubled in the next decade to 14,401, with all communities growing at a steady rate, and continued to increase until the middle of the century. In the early 1800s Merino sheep were introduced to the Region, setting off a farming boom that lasted for decades. By 1830, a total of **25,630** people were living in the Addison County region. During this period, Middlebury's population grew to **3,468**, making it the most populous town. Due to its central location and proximity to the Middlebury Falls, the town developed into an industrial hub for the region. Manufacturing mills for cotton, grain, paper, lumber and marble were constructed in great numbers along the river, powered by the falls. In 1800, Middlebury College was established, further diversifying the economic base of the community and providing employment and industry beyond agriculture. Hydro-powered mills and factories in Vergennes, on the Otter creek, and Bristol on the New Haven River grew local economies and supported the development of these communities. By 1840, the population growth of many rural

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ottercreekconservation.org/your-watershed/otter-creek/>

**Figure 2:** Addison Region Change in Population by Town

Source: US Census Bureau



communities in the region began to level off. The towns of Cornwall, Shoreham, New Haven, Bridport, Orwell, Whiting, Weybridge and Goshen had reached their peak populations to date.

During the mid-and late 1800s, rural areas throughout the northeast began to see an export of people to the Midwest for better farming and economic opportunities. The population in Addison County and Vermont also saw a decline, as families left for a promise of rich soils and “greener pastures”, leaving the “hard scrabble” farming life of New England behind.

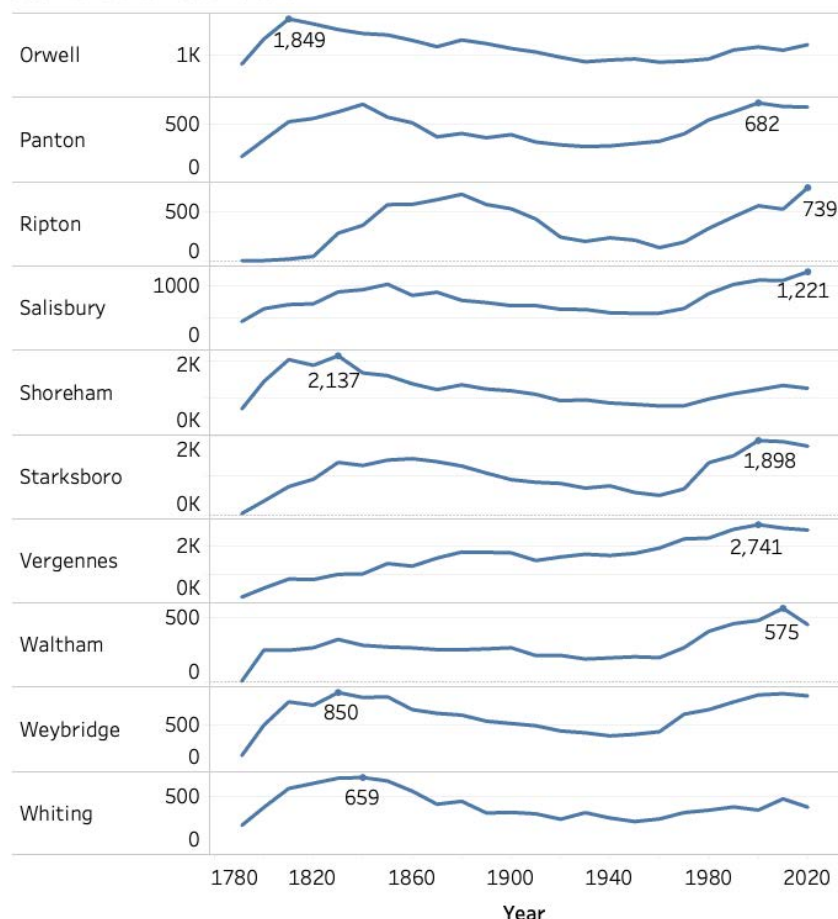
Successful Merino sheep farmers, wanting to expand their flocks and pastureland, bought up their neighbor’s farms resulting in increased land prices adding to the struggle of farming in Addison County. Between 1850 and 1860 the region lost almost 3,000 residents. Farming communities whose growth had peaked in the early 1800s lost families at the greatest rates. Between 1830 and 1860, Shoreham and Bridport saw 35% and 26%, respectively, of their population leave Addison County.<sup>4</sup>

The towns of Bristol and Vergennes, however, experienced population growth due to a diversity of economic opportunities in these larger mill towns. Vergennes grew at a rate of 28% during this period.

<sup>4</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2021/03/28/then-again-youthful-exodus-from-vermont-actually-began-in-the-early-1800s/>

**Figure 3:** Addison Region Change in Population by Town

Source: US Census Bureau



The region's overall rapid drop in population subsided by 1870, but a slow decline in growth continued, in most communities, until the 1950s. Significant global events of the period, such as World War 1 and 2, the Great Depression and the 1918 Spanish flu, undoubtedly contributed to the pattern of economic stagnation and negative population growth in the region.

### Recent Patterns

Around 1960, the nation saw a dramatic population shift occurring as people began to migrate into rural areas from suburban and urban centers. For the first

time in a century and a half, rural America grew faster than the nation's cities. From the 1960s to the 1990s, Vermont's population grew by 56%, faster than most states amid booming interest in rural life and the trend to get back to the land.<sup>5</sup> By 1980, the population in the Addison Region had exceeded its previous peak of 25,630, seen in 1830, and reached 28,784 people. In 2000, the population reached 35,289, an increase of 81% since 1960.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the 2000's, population growth slowed again to a rate of 3.5%. Between 2013 and 2018, the most recent ACS 5-year estimate, the growth rate has basically leveled, fluctuating between 0.1% and -0.1%, a pattern similar to that of the 1940s. Lincoln, Middlebury and Starksboro were the only towns that grew by any significant amount during this time, 300, 200 and 100 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2019/03/02/rise-fall-most-european-state-union/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=2000%20addison%20County&tid=DECENNIALDPSF42000.DP1>

## Why Populations Change

When planning for the future, it is important to understand the components of population change. Population change is typically attributed to two factors:

- **net natural increase or decrease** (the difference between births and deaths) and
- **net migration** (the difference between in-migration and out-migration)

In the decades from 1970 to 2000, nearly all towns in the region experienced a net natural increase with more births than deaths. Over the same period, most towns saw more people moving into town than moving out, net in-migration.<sup>7</sup>

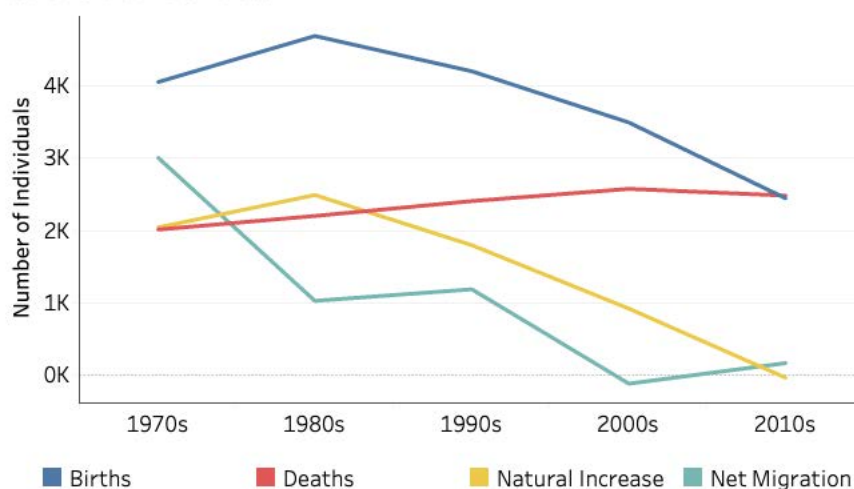
In the 1970s, growth occurred due to in-migration and in the 1980s, it was a high level of births that drove the population's natural increase. During the 1990s, the two forces were evenly paced, resulting in a steady population increase of 9.2%.

Starting in the 2000s, however, as the

populace began to age out of child bearing years, the birth rate began to decline and population growth began to stagnate. The stagnation of population growth is not unique to the Addison Region. In each year since 2016, the state as a whole has recorded more deaths than births, resulting in a negative “natural rate of increase.” This could be the first time this has occurred in Vermont’s history.<sup>8</sup>

The last time Vermont’s population dropped between two censuses was in 1940, when Vermont had 400 fewer residents than in 1930. Of course, the Great Depression of the 1930s caused massive economic dislocation across the country, and Vermont was not immune from its effects. Many Vermonters left the state during this period in an attempt to find work elsewhere and escape the grinding poverty of the time. Before that, only the 1910s witnessed a

**Figure 4: Addison Region’s Changing Demographics (1970-2018)**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



<sup>7</sup> <https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/vital-records-population-data/vermont-population-estimates>

<sup>8</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2019/05/19/woolf-comes-birth-rate-everyone-vermont-beat/>

similar population decline caused by the 1918 Spanish flu. This pandemic killed between 50 and 100 million people worldwide (more than died in World War I), more than 1/2 million in the U.S., and 2,000 Vermonters in one year.

## Birth and Death Rates

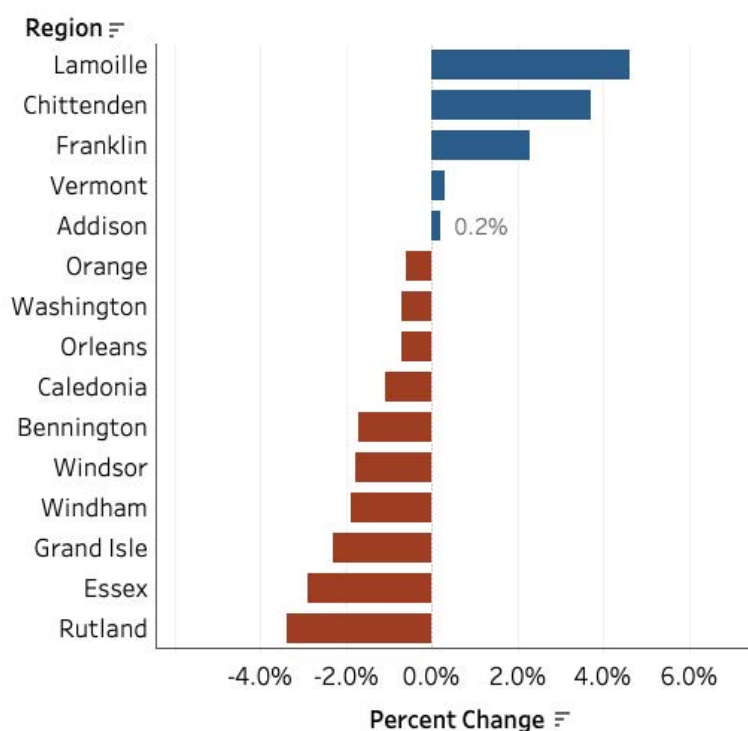
Birth and death rates are calculated in the same manner; the number of births or deaths multiplied by 1000, then divided by the total population of the region or the total number of birth or deaths out of 1000 people of a region. This value is also referred to as the 'crude' birth or death rate. The general fertility rate (GFR) indicates the births per 1000 women in the region, aged 15-44.<sup>9</sup> Births in Vermont have declined significantly since the 1980s. From approximately 8,000 births per year in the 1980s, the number of babies born to Vermont women

dropped to approximately 6,500 in the late 1990s, declining further to 6,000 by 2006. After some fluctuations in the late 2000s, the number of births remained around 6,000 into the first half of the 2010s.<sup>10</sup> In 2018 there were 5,431 babies born in Vermont, a 161-year low and well below the national average.<sup>11</sup> In comparison, there were 6,027 resident deaths in 2018, 17 more than in 2017.

Many factors, social, environmental, economic and cultural, can influence a region's fertility, birth and death rates. Often, higher levels of education will correlate with lower fertility rates. In 2016, Vermont women between the ages of 15 and 44, without a college degree, had a fertility rate 1.4 times higher than among women of the same age with a bachelor's degree. About 39% of Vermont women in 2016, 25 years or older, had bachelor degrees. Research has

**Figure 5: Population Change in Vermont Counties**

Source: Vermont State Data Center - American Community Survey



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/22/u-s-fertility-rate-explained/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/docs/issue\\_briefs\\_and\\_memos/6b77c2d42c/Birth-Rates-and-Age-of-Mother.pdf](https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/docs/issue_briefs_and_memos/6b77c2d42c/Birth-Rates-and-Age-of-Mother.pdf)

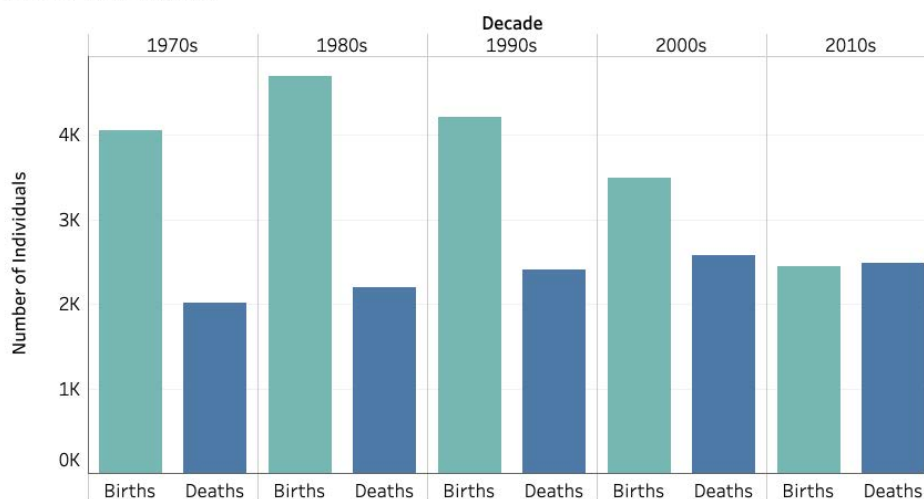
<sup>11</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2019/05/19/woolf-comes-birth-rate-everyone-vermont-beat/>



shown that families will postpone having children during economic downturns, such as the Great Recession of the late 2000s. Advances in medicine, the promotion of healthy life styles and improved health care systems has resulted in longer life spans. The death rate in Vermont steadily declined from 11.2 in 1960 to 8.2 in 1990. From 2004 to 2017, however, the death rate rose to 9.6. This increase, is not a result of poor health care but a reflection of shifting demographics as Vermont's baby boom population ages. In 2018, 82% of the deaths in the Addison region were people 65 years of age and older with the primary causes of death being cancer and heart disease.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 6: Trends in Births and Deaths Across Addison Region (1970 - 2018)**

Source: VT Vital Statistics



Historically, the Addison Region's population growth rate mirrors that of Vermont as a whole (see figure 5). Women born in 1980, the year Addison County recorded its highest birth rate, turned 40 in 2020, near the end of child-bearing years. The decline

in the number of babies born between 1980 and 1990 indicates that there will continue to be fewer women giving birth in the next 10 years. Recent trends, such as smaller families, the choice to have children later in life and more women pursuing full time careers, are trends that are expected to reinforce this pattern.

In **2018**, there were **294 births** in the Addison Region; a birth rate of 8.0 and general fertility rate (GFR) of 42.7, while in the same year **342 deaths occurred with** a death rate of 9.2.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.healthvermont.gov/stats/vital-records>

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

As of the writing of this plan, Vermont and the Addison Region are grappling with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Region's population. Death data can "provide a broader picture of what the impact of Covid-19 has been," There were the obvious causes: those who died of Covid, as well as the infections that went undetected. But it also points to the deaths that can be indirectly attributed to Covid: "There were the people who are afraid to go to the hospital or situations on the ground that people can't get emergency care because the hospitals were filled to capacity."

<https://vtdigger.org/2021/02/21/more-vermonters-than-average-died-in-2020-it-wasnt-just-because-of-covid>

### **Migration**

Between 2010 and 2019, more people have moved out of Vermont to other areas than moved into the state. In 2018, about 700 more people left the state than arrived, in 2015 net out-migration sometimes exceeded 2,000 each year. Research suggests that Vermont is losing its working-class and middle-class residents, families and individuals with low and moderate incomes. Outward migration was particularly high among 45- to 64-year-olds earning \$25,000 to \$75,000.<sup>13</sup> A 2014 University of Vermont survey asked current and former Vermonters why they wanted to stay or leave. Responses from former Vermonters ranged widely from jobs and income to diversity and the desire to live in an urban area. Some moved because of the weather. There was a clear consensus, however, among current Vermonters, as to why they have stayed. More than two-thirds cited their attachment to Vermont's natural landscape and more than half cited the state's culture, community, and family ties.<sup>14</sup>

Many residents move to Vermont specifically for the 'quality of life' it affords, regardless of potential lower salaries and financial gain due to the area's relatively low median income. Other individuals and families relocate to Vermont solely for employment opportunities. The Addison Region is home to the largest population of migrant farmworkers in the state, approximately 500-750 people.<sup>15</sup> The region's dairy and produce farmers depend on this segment of the population to successfully operate. Due to documentation and immigration concerns, this migrant population may be under counted and underserved.

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<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/fiscal/ESLFOA\\_VT\\_Taxpayer\\_Migration\\_by\\_Age\\_and\\_Income.pdf](https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/fiscal/ESLFOA_VT_Taxpayer_Migration_by_Age_and_Income.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2019/09/13/people-are-leaving-vt-in-droves-where-are-they-going/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2020/06/23/moats-migrant-farm-workers-especially-vulnerable-to-effects-of-pandemic/>

As extreme weather, wildfires, earthquakes and other events, generally attributed to climate change, have become increasingly common in recent years, Vermont's relatively low level of exposure to such events has made it an attractive refuge for people looking to leave high risk areas of the country. Every major catastrophe brings more "refugees" into our area, attracted to Vermont's inland location, availability of water resources and a higher and dryer landscape. These characteristics, as well as a perceived affordable cost of living, are reasons cited for families and individuals migrating to the state.<sup>16</sup>

## Population Projections

The current population of the Addison Region is significantly lower than previously projected. In 2000, the Addison Region's population was 35,289, with an expectation that it would increase to 42,564 by 2020.<sup>17</sup> However, according to the 2017 American Community Survey, the population has increased by only 1,536 people to 36,825. Population projections assume that conditions that occurred in the past will continue into the future, such as mortality, birth and migration rates. Using 5-year, age cohort census data (i.e., 35-39 or 40-44-year-olds), projections can be calculated by factoring known mortality and migration rates. Certain assumptions are made regarding these projections, such as advances in healthcare resulting in lower death rates. Some changes, however, cannot be predicted, such as the following.

- Changes in the birth rate from social change different than what has occurred,
- Changes in healthcare practices or epidemics that could affect the mortality rates,
- Changing economic conditions that result in shifts in national (internal) migration,
- Changes in national immigration policies.<sup>18</sup>
- Changes resulting from in-migration of refugees from elsewhere in the country.

Interestingly, as of 2020-21, some of the above 'changes' are occurring and affecting the ability to calculate population projections for the Addison Region

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.wbur.org/news/2021/04/21/climate-change-vermont-migration-population-influx>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/decennial-census.2000.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/ACCD-DED-VTPopulationProjections-2010-2030.pdf>

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

In the short term, Vermont's relative stability and low infection rate have driven an increase in-migration to the state, as those in nearby cities seek safer residence. The long-term implications of this shift remain to be seen. According to preliminary survey responses, 64% of recent arrivals fit into a demographic that the state, in its own efforts to attract residents, has been targeting: people who are still in the workforce. Data from 222 responses shows that 40% of the new arrivals are under 35, 24% are ages 36 to 50, and 35% are 51 and older. About half of the new remote workers have completed college, and another 42% of them have a degree beyond college. Almost half said their employer would allow them to stay. And a full 70% described their location as "rural" or "very rural."

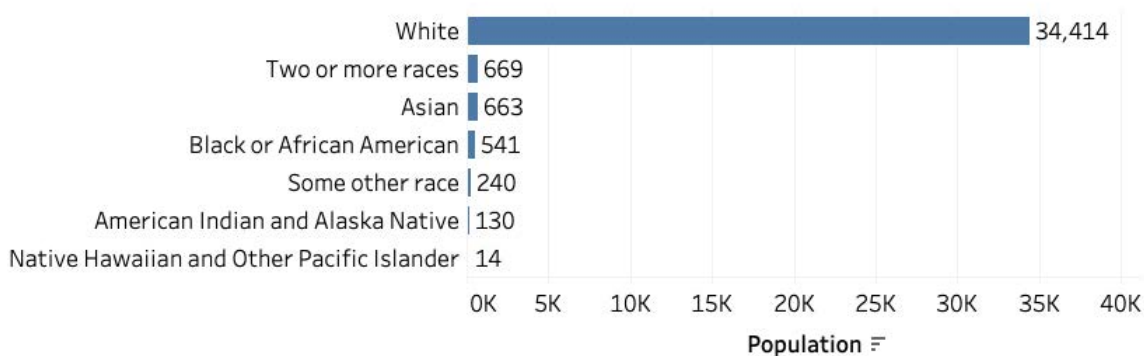
## Demographics

### **Current Population Profile**

Gender and racial demographic composition of the Addison Region mirrors that of the entire state. 50.3% of the region's population are female and 49.7% are male. 50.7% of the state's population are female while 49.3% are male. The largest segment of the population by race in the Addison Region identifies as 'White', at 93.8%. The next largest population share identifies as 'Two or more races' at 1.8%.

**Figure 7:** Racial Demographics of Addison County (2019)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



### **The Aging Population**

In 2000 about 25% of the population was school age, while about 11% was over 65. In 2010 the school age population dropped to 16.5% and over 65 rose to 13%. By 2018 the school age

population was 13.3% and the over 65 population was 18.5%.<sup>19</sup> The population of the Addison Region is aging as the **median age** continue to rise.

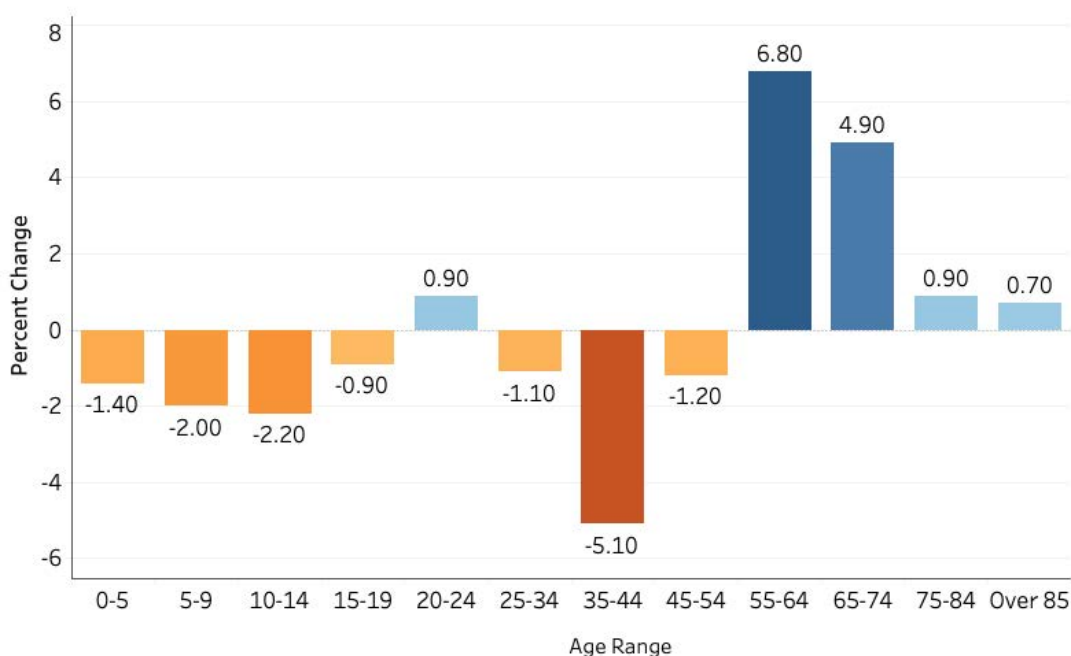
The median is one measure of the statistical center of the data. In this case, we can say that half of the population is younger than the median age and half of the population is older.

Table 1: Median Age in Addison Region	
Year	Median Age
2000	36.1
2010	40
2018	43.7

The population of working age Vermonters (25-64) decreased by 5% between 2010 and 2018. That population is expected to decrease another 9% between 2018-2030.<sup>20</sup> According to the 2020 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment, between 2020 and 2025, the median age of the head of an Addison County household will increase from 59 to 61 for owners and remain at 46 for renters. An estimated 36% of all householders in the county will be at least 65 years old and 4% will be at least 85 years old by 2025.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 8: Percent Change in Age Distribution (2000 - 2017)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



The aging of the region's population will increase the demand for supportive services needed by these members of our community, such as transportation, healthcare, personal companionship and assistance with everyday activities. As this segment of population downsizes or transitions

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/age-and-sex/data/tables.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2019/03/07/woolf-babies-gone/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>

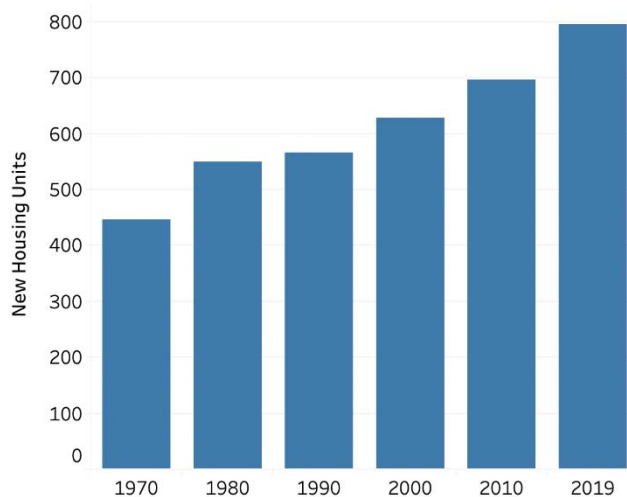
to supportive care, a significant increase in small scale homes and apartments, as well as senior and assisted living facilities will be needed to accommodate this housing shift.

## Housing

Housing is a key element of any sustainable community. The stock should be adequate to house those who live and work in the community and have the potential to expand at a rate that can accommodate future population increases and economic growth. In addition, housing should support the region's growing elderly population, and attract new families with school age children. Available housing needs to be safe, energy efficient, sustainable, and accessible for the community's aging and vulnerable populations. Although the

Region has experienced minimal population growth over the last decade, demand for housing has increased due to smaller households and an acute shortage of suitable housing. To fully understand this issue and succeed in providing sufficient housing for the population, communities must assess the current composition of households and the characteristics of the existing housing stock in the Addison Region.

**Figure 9: Number of Additional Housing Units Each Decade**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



## **Household Characteristics**

Most of the region's population lives in households. A household is composed of one or more people who occupy a housing unit, but not all households contain families. Under the U.S. Census Bureau definition, family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people. Non-family households consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals.<sup>22</sup> In 2018 there were a total of 14,427 family and non-family households in the 21 towns that make up the Addison Region.

The number of households in the Region has continued to grow but at a much-reduced rate than seen forty years ago. Between 1980 and 1990, there was a 2.2% annual growth rate in households, a rate of 0.57% occurred between 2010 and 2018.<sup>23</sup> As projected by the 2020

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.datanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/strategies-for-constructing-household-and-family-units.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs> 2015-2018

Vermont Housing Needs Study, this rate is expected to continue its decline to 0.18% between 2020-2025.<sup>24</sup>

## Small Households

Changes in household composition have occurred in the recent decades. At the State level, the number of small households, numbering one or two people, has increased to 69% of total households in 2017. At the same time, the number of households comprising three to six people continues to

fall.<sup>25</sup> An increase in small households is seen in the Addison Region as well.

Between 1970 and 2000, the average household size dropped from 3.4 to 2.56 persons. In 2000, just over one-quarter of the region's households included a married couple with children. By 2018, the average

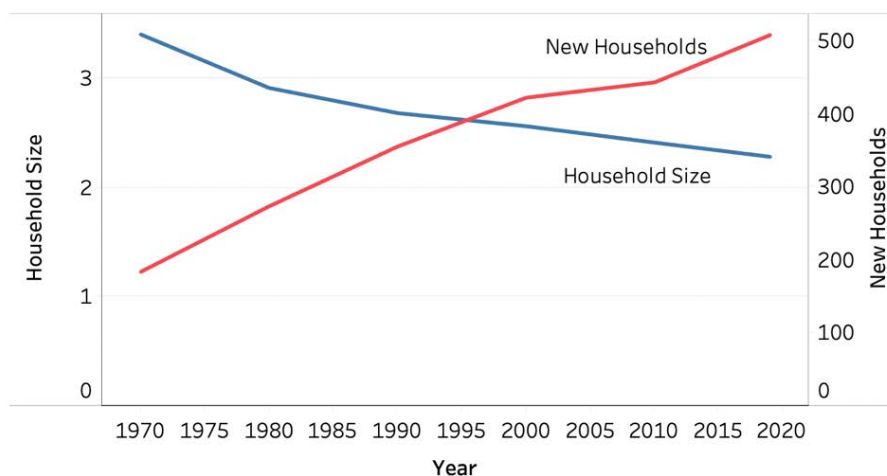
household size fell to 2.31 persons. For individual municipalities the average household size ranged from 1.7 to 2.84 persons. The greatest concentration of smaller households is seen in the region's more densely populated communities, Middlebury Village and Vergennes. Household size reflects not only the demographic of the Region's population but social and economic changes as well. An economic downturn may prolong the time adult children live at home; a rise in the divorce rate may increase the number of single-person households; longer lifespans increase the percentage of seniors living alone. Additionally, trending attitudes regarding marriage may boost the number of single parents and unmarried couples creating homes. The declining birth rate, as seen in the State and Region, also contributes to this pattern of smaller household size.

## Group Quarters

The Census Bureau classifies all people not living in housing units as living in group quarters. As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, a housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy) as

**Figure 10: Number of New Households Compared to Change in Household Size (1970 - 2019)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



<sup>24</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall. A group quarters facility houses multiple, unrelated people, in a group living arrangement that is owned or managed by an entity or organization providing services for residents. These services may include custodial or medical care, as well as other types of assistance, and residency is commonly restricted to those receiving these services. Group quarters also may have controlled access to enter or leave.<sup>26</sup>

There are two types of group quarters:

**Institutional**, such as; correctional facilities, nursing homes or mental health hospitals.

**Non-Institutional**, such as; college residence halls, military barracks, group homes, missions, shelters.<sup>27</sup>

Middlebury has the largest concentration of people living in group quarters, most being Middlebury College students; 2611. Northlands Job Corps Training Center has 220 students on its campus in Vergennes. Both Middlebury and Vergennes have several residential and care facilities for seniors, individuals with disabilities as well as temporary and emergency shelters. Currently, most communities in the region have few or no group quarter facilities. However, due to the aging of the region's population, the number of group quarters serving seniors will need to increase. As of 2021, there was a shortage of senior apartment options and wait lists could be up to two years for subsidized units.<sup>28</sup>

### **Senior Housing and Elder Care Facilities**

Depending on the level of care and services available, senior facilities may comprise housing units or group quarters and in many cases a combination of both.

*"An assisted living facility complex may have a skilled nursing floor or wing that meets the definition of a nursing facility and is, therefore, group quarters, while the rest of the living quarters in the facility are considered to be housing units. Congregate care facilities and continuing care retirement communities often consist of several different types of living quarters, with varying services and levels of care..."<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/group-quarters.htm>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Addison County Community Trust, <https://www.addisontrust.org/annual-report.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sfgu.pdf>, B-20



The following list outlines the levels of care for facility type.

**Nursing Home/ Rehab Center, Level I, II:** Nursing, medical, rehabilitation or other special care services.

**Residential Care Home, Level III:** 24-hour supervision and assistance for people who are dependent.

**Residential Care Assisted Living, Level III:** Supportive services to assist resident independence.

**Senior Apartments, Level IV:** Independent living, seniors only or mixed age.

**Retirement Community Apartments/ Cottages, Level III, IV:** A congregate living facility providing varied levels of independent and assisted living care, excluding nursing care.

**Adult Family Care Homes, Level III, IV:** Private residential homes caring for one to two elderly people.

<b>Table 2: Senior Housing and Elder Care Facilities</b>			
<b>Town</b>	<b>Facility</b>	<b>Type/Level of Care</b>	<b>Capacity</b>
Bristol	*Living Well Residential Care Home	Residential Care Home	15 residents
Bristol	*Pleasant Hills Senior Housing	Senior Apartments	16 Units
Middlebury	**Eastview at Middlebury and Meadowsweet at East View	Residential Care Assisted living, Retirement Community, Memory Care	62 Units
Middlebury	*Helen Porter Healthcare & Rehabilitation center	Nursing home, Memory Care, Rehab Center	105 residents
Middlebury	**The Otter Creek Retirement Community	Residential Care Assisted living, Retirement Community, Memory Care	44 residents 67 units
Middlebury	*Middlebury Commons	Senior Apartments	64 Units
Middlebury	*The Meadows	Senior Apartments	40 Units
Salisbury	*Shard Villa Residential Care Home	Residential Care Home	17 residents
Vergennes	*Armory Lane Senior Housing	Senior Apartments	25 households
Vergennes	*Ringer's Residential Care Home	Residential Care Home	9 residents
Vergennes	*Vergennes Residential	Residential care Home	18 residents
Vergennes	*Valley View Apartments	Senior Apartments	12 households
Vergennes	*Willow Apartments	Senior Apartments	16 Units

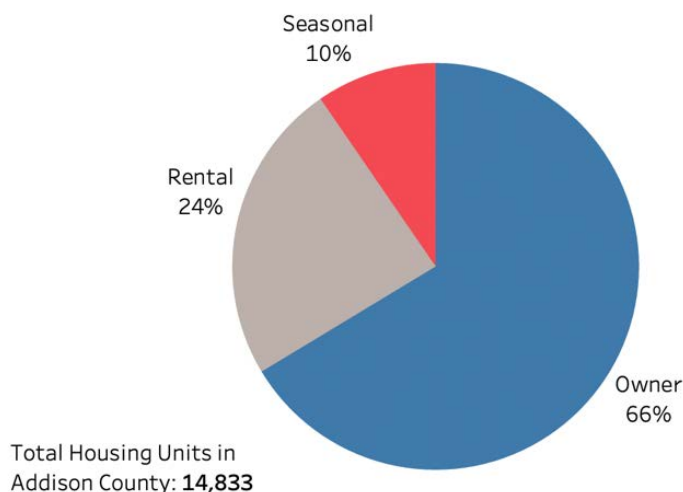
**\*Government funding subsidy payment options. \*\* Market Rate**

Many seniors are choosing to age in place, staying in their homes as long as possible or downsizing to a smaller housing unit. Moving in with family or ‘home sharing’ is an option for seniors who do not want to live alone. **HomeShareVT**, a program where two or more people share a home for mutual benefit, can provide companionship and help with daily chores and activities.<sup>30</sup> Support and Services at Home (**SASH**) is a federally funded program that staffs a wellness nurse and service coordinator to check on seniors, in senior housing or living independently or with a family member. SASH staff members refer residents to services such as medical appointments, transit services and meals on wheels. SASH services are available in Middlebury, Bristol, Vergennes and Shoreham.<sup>31</sup>

### Current Housing Stock

Housing stock is comprised of the total housing units (HU), whether a single-family structure, an apartment, a condominium, a mobile home, a boarding house room, a tiny house or an accessory dwelling unit, in an identified area. In **2018**, Addison Region’s total stock of year-round and seasonal homes was 16,461.<sup>32</sup> Households occupy the non-seasonal housing stock, equaling **14,883** units in the Region. Seasonal housing is defined as unsuitable for year-round living and therefore temporary housing and considered to be vacant by the Census Bureau.<sup>33</sup> Of the 14,883 housing units in the region 66.5% are owner occupied and 24% are rentals. Vacation homes, also considered vacant, can be seasonal or year-round. A 2019 study ranked Vermont at number two nationally for the number of vacation homes per capita.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 11: Addison County Housing Units by Type (2018)**  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



The Addison County Region and Vermont has seen a steady decrease in residential construction in the past 40 years.<sup>35</sup> Since 1980, the average annual growth rate of housing units has

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.homesharevermont.org>

<sup>31</sup> <https://sashvt.org/>

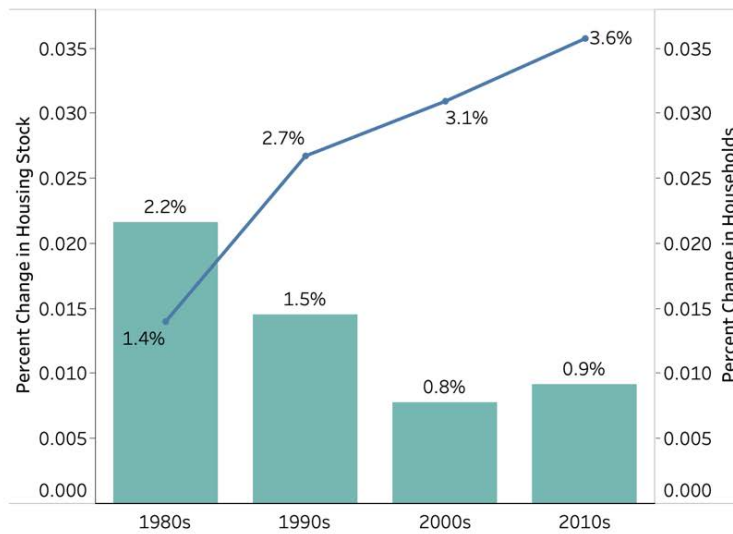
<sup>32</sup> This is the total Housing Units (HU) in Addison County minus the HU in Granville and Hancock.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>34</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2019/08/05/study-vermont-is-no-2-nationwide-for-second-home-ownership/>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 12:** Percent Change in Housing Stock Compared to Change in Number of Households Over Time  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



decreased by 1.38%, dropping to 0.78% during the 2000-2010 time period. Between 2010 and 2018 there has been a slight uptick in growth to 0.92%.<sup>36</sup>

The rate of growth has varied widely amongst towns in the Region, however, with some municipalities seeing an increase in their housing stock. Bridport, Leicester, Orwell, Panton, Vergennes and Weybridge have returned to or slightly exceeded the rates of growth seen in the 1980s, whereas, Cornwall, Goshen, New Haven, Salisbury,

Shoreham, Waltham and Whiting have experienced negative rates of growth and the loss of existing housing stock.<sup>37</sup> A decline in home building ultimately reduces the availability of housing options for moderate and lower-income households by increasing the competition for the existing stock of affordable housing. New single-family home construction is often unaffordable for many households.

An Increase in stock will, however, allow for some households to move to a larger or more expensive home, freeing up smaller, moderately priced housing units. Smaller scale housing growth, such as the creation of accessory apartments or duplexes from existing single-family homes, can provide options for a wider range of homeowner and renter incomes.

## Housing Occupancy

Total housing occupancy is defined by the vacancy rate: the number of homes for rent or purchase compared to the total number of homes used or intended for renter or homeowner. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2013-2017, the rental vacancy rate for the Addison Region was **3%**. This rate is higher than the State as a whole but lower than what is considered healthy, 5%. In contrast, the vacancy rate of owned homes was 2.1%, which is considered healthy. These rates, however, have a considerable margin of error due to a small sample size and the potential inclusion of substandard housing units.<sup>38</sup> Overall, residential vacancy rates have come down significantly in the past decade since the Great Recession. In 2010, Vermont had a 7% rental vacancy rate which dropped to 3.4% in

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>38</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>

2018. Low rates make it difficult for renters and homeowners to find affordable housing and creates upward pressure on prices.

### **Covid-19 Pandemic**

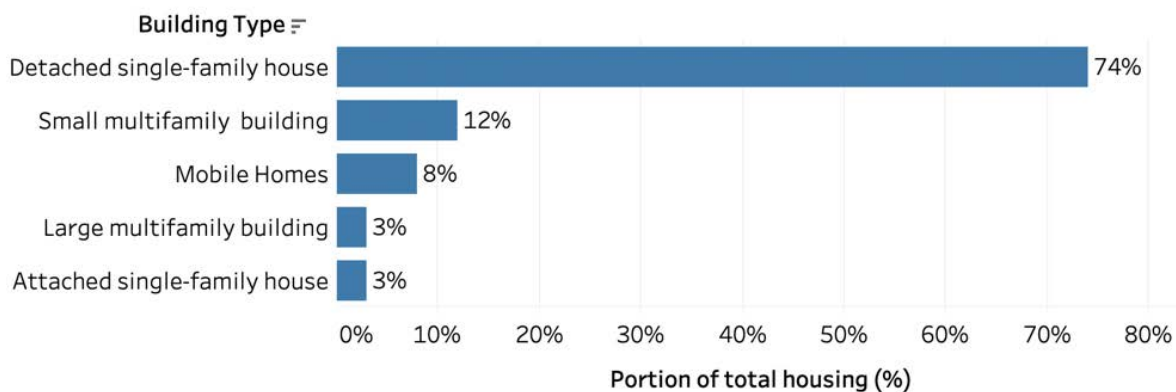
*Since the beginning of the pandemic, vacancy rates have continued to decrease and home prices have sharply risen, creating an increasingly tight housing market. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis<sup>39</sup>, the Vermont rental vacancy rate dropped from 4.4% in 2019 to 3.3% in 2020 and the ownership rate from 1.3% to 0.7%, respectively. Both of these rates are below what is considered healthy for the housing market; 5% for rentals and 1.3% for home ownership. Addison County's vacancy rates are typically slightly higher than the State numbers but have dropped significantly since March 2020.*

### **Types of Homes**

The type and location of housing developed in a community has a direct effect on the pattern of the built environment and the cost of municipal services. Historically, housing in the Region was primarily single-family homes, located in compact village centers, where people lived, worked and could walk to services. Homes outside village and town centers were typically farms and other agricultural industries, often including housing for workers. Residential construction that occurred from the mid-1900s to the present, however, is scattered throughout the landscape. An increase in personal transportation (the automobile) removed

**Figure 13:** Housing Units by building Type (2018)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



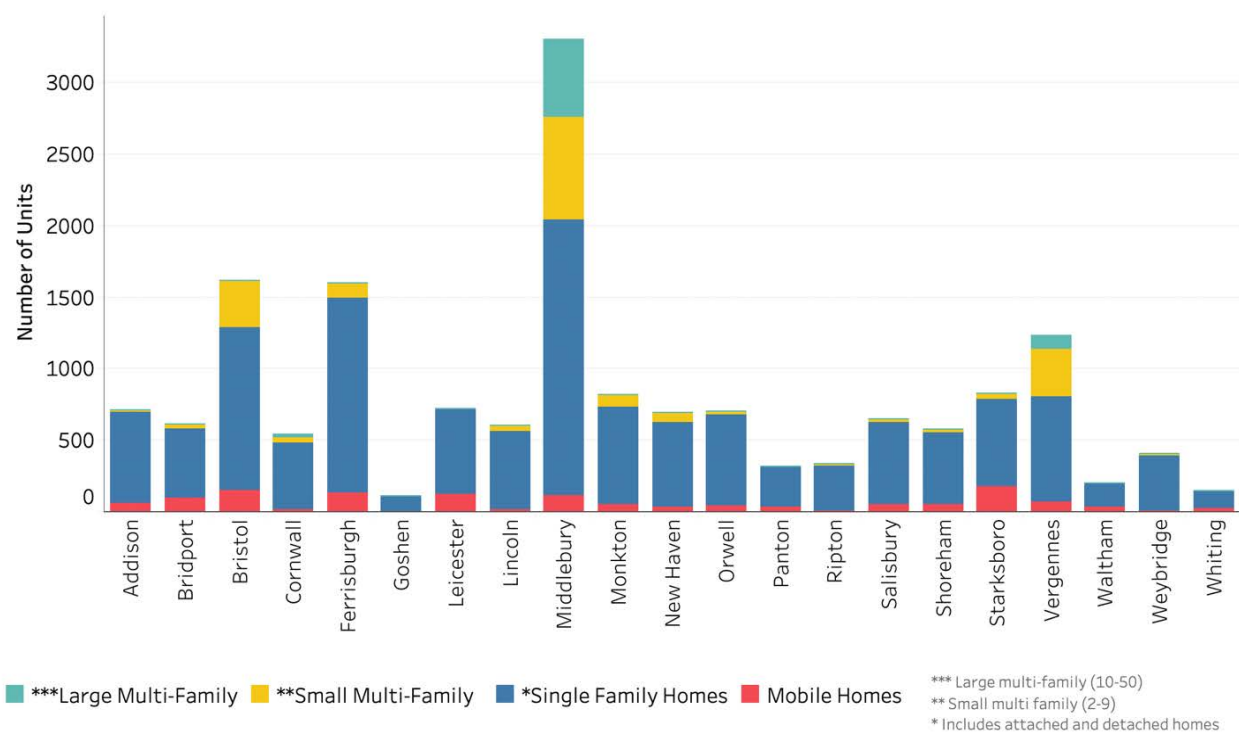
siting constraints on new housing development. State housing policy is aimed at reversing this trend by incentivizing housing development within the region's historic villages.

<sup>39</sup> <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/>

This plan supports housing in compact village centers but also recognizes that not everyone desires to live in densely settled areas. In 2018, single-family homes were still the most prevalent type of housing (74%) followed by small multifamily buildings of 2-9 units (12%) and mobile homes (8%). Larger multifamily units, 9-50 units (3%), are typically located in the denser population centers of Middlebury, Vergennes and Bristol, communities that have accessible services and degrees of public infrastructure (Figure 16). Infill construction of small or multifamily homes in rural villages and towns is often deterred or prohibited by outdated zoning and infrastructure constraints such as water and wastewater.

**Figure 14:** Housing Units by Town and Type

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**Mobile homes** exist in every town but Goshen, representing the third highest percentage of housing units in the region. Mobile homes are a significant part of the Region's housing stock and provide affordable options for many households. However, the age and poor energy efficiency of many mobile homes significantly adds to a household's overall housing costs. In 2018, there were 1350 mobile homes in the Region. Approximately a quarter of these mobile homes are located in the region's 15 mobile home parks.<sup>40</sup> Mobile home parks, most built 50 years ago or more, face a range of challenges; financial, operational, infrastructure and market conditions, that puts their sustainability at risk. Critical concerns facing parks in Addison County Region include parks located in 100-year flood plains, parks at risk due to poor quality and vacant units, infrastructure issues including water and wastewater systems and large-scale capital improvement needs.<sup>41</sup> Addison County Community Trust (ACCT), a non-profit housing developer, owns and maintains 9 of the 15 parks totaling 340 lots. As part of ACCT's mission,



**Figure 15:** McKnight Lane, affordable, net-zero energy, modular homes in Waltham.

they are committed to addressing these critical issues so that the parks can continue to serve as viable housing community alternatives in the region. For example, in 2017, ACCT collaborated with housing partners to repurpose an abandoned mobile home park in Waltham and install affordable, net-zero energy, modular homes (Figure 15).

<sup>40</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/mobile-home-parks/registry>

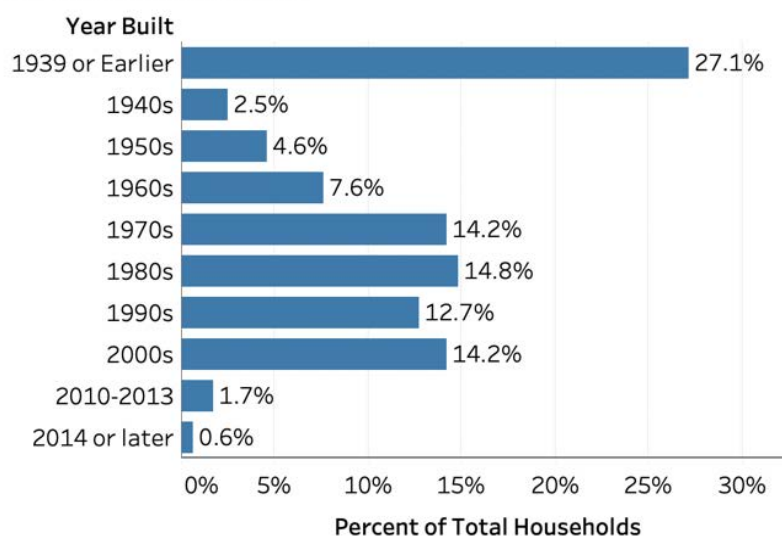
<sup>41</sup> <https://vhcb.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/MHP-Study-2019.pdf>

## Housing Age and Size

Older homes are an important part of the character and historical record of the villages and towns in the Addison County region. Just over 27% of the current housing stock was built prior to 1939.

After 1939, however, the region and state saw twenty years of slow growth, a 2-4 % rate of housing construction, until the building boom in the 1960s and 70s (Figure 16). It was during this time that many of the mobile home parks in the region were constructed.

**Figure 16:** Estimated Age of Housing as Proportion of Total  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



The median age home in the Addison Region was built in 1976.<sup>42</sup> In Bristol, 50% of the houses were built prior to 1939, while in Vergennes, 36.5% fall into that category. Despite their charm, older homes are not the best fit for many households today. High energy and property maintenance costs can be financially burdensome. Accessibility issues for older and disabled persons may exist if homes have not been maintained, updated or retrofitted.

Older village homes can be large, constructed at a time when the average family size was much greater than it is today. Historic farmhouses were designed to house extended families and workers with numerous bedrooms and living areas. Similarly, single-family homes built for the 'nuclear family' (two parents and their children) do not match the needs of the growing number of smaller households. Counter intuitively, home size has increased 50% since the 1960s.<sup>43</sup> In 2019, the majority of existing housing units in the Addison Region were single family, owner occupied, three-or-more-bedroom homes, often on large village or rural lots. In 2018, 30% of households were one-person, but only 11% of the housing stock was a studio or one-bedroom unit. During the same period, 32% of households were composed of three or more people, but 62% of the housing stock had three or more bedrooms. Our current housing stock does not match the current needs of the Region.

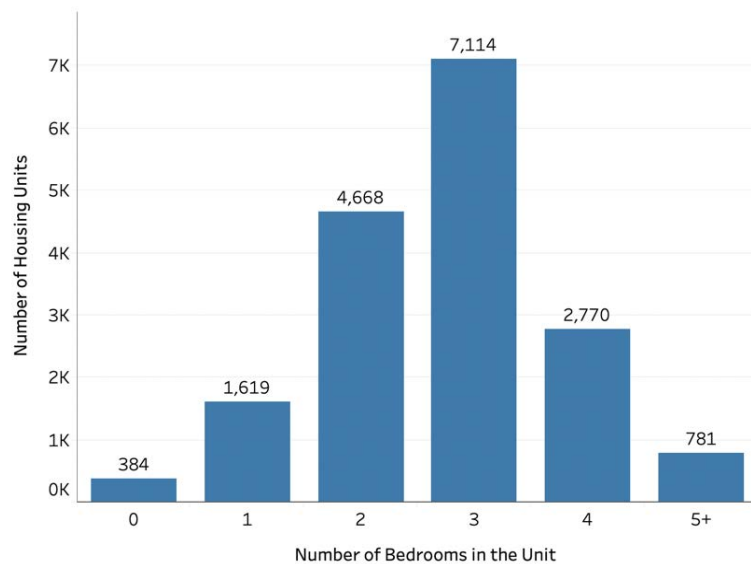
<sup>42</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



Since new construction is significantly more expensive (per square foot) to purchase than the existing housing stock, repurposing our existing housing stock is one of the best ways to meet our housing needs.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 17:** Estimated Occupied Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau via VT Housing Data



### Accessory Dwelling Units

This traditional home type is reemerging as a housing option that is compatible with the growing number of smaller households. There is no region-wide data of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), but the existing stock of large older homes, with barns or carriage houses, lends itself to this housing type.



**Figure 18:** Detached ADU

ADUs, historically known as Granny Flats, are efficiencies or 1-bedroom apartments, subordinate to the primary structure and located within an owner-occupied home or detached on the same lot. ADUs, typically, cannot exceed 30% of the size of the primary home, must obtain water/wastewater permits and, if detached, meet the required dimensional standards of the zoning district.

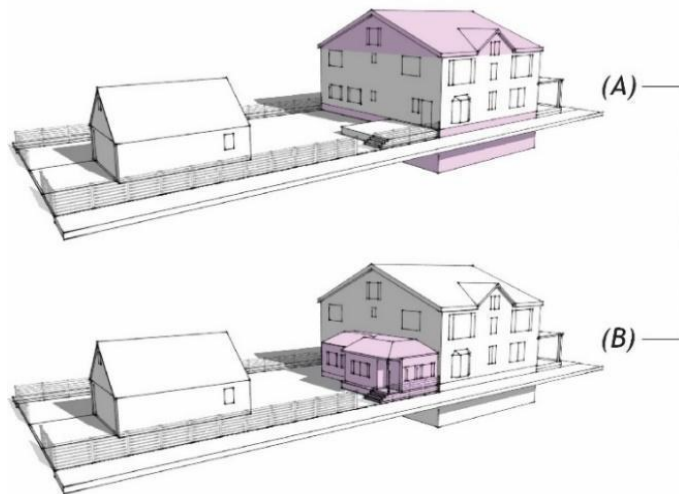
Renovating larger, older homes to create ADUs adds to the existing housing stock of an area and benefits homeowners by providing rental income or flexible living arrangements to meet the needs of multigenerational families.

<sup>44</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2020/10/25/affordable-housing-vermont-ideas-solutions/>



Due to their decentralized nature, ADUs can create additional housing units without the overhead of larger developments. The benefits of ADUs are well known around the country as a practical means to increase housing options, however, financing of ADUs can be difficult for many homeowners, due to borrowing limits based on their primary home mortgages.<sup>45</sup> The Brattleboro Area Affordable Housing (BAAH) has an innovative program that provides technical support and small design and construction grants to assist in the creation of ADUs, which in turn will provide affordable units and additional income for the homeowner.<sup>46</sup>

1. Attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)



2. Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

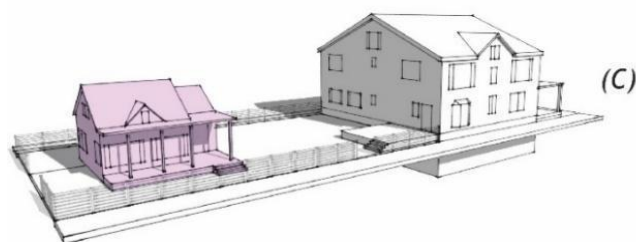


Figure 19: Attached versus detached ADUs.

<sup>45</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/planning/adu>

<sup>46</sup> <https://baahvermont.org/our-programs/apartments-in-homes/>

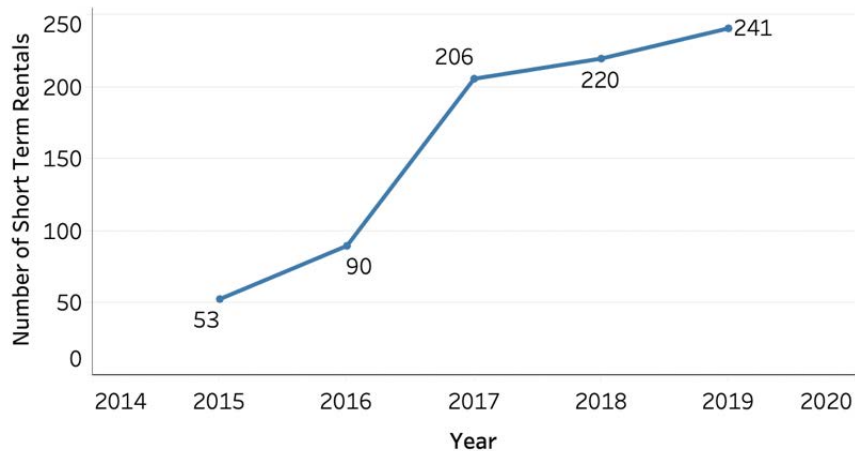
## Short Term Rentals

Short-term rentals (STRs) are housing units that are rented typically as vacation rentals. Compared to the rest of Vermont, Addison County has a small percentage of STRs, about 3% of the state total. In 2018, 220 homes were consistently used as short-term rentals, approximately 1.3% of the housing stock. In 2019 that number increased 10% to 241 homes, (Figure 20).

If a short-term rental is a secondary use for a resident, a weekend or seasonal rental, the housing unit is considered owner occupied and part of the housing market, providing the homeowner with additional income. If a home is primarily used as a short-term rental, however, that housing unit is eliminated from the available housing stock. If the total number of STRs increases to a significant percentage, they can lower the region's vacancy rate and increase competition in the housing market.

**Figure 20: Change in Total Short Term Rentals (2015 - 2019)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Homes purchased for use as permanent short-term rentals can drive up regional housing costs, impacting “affordability,” and availability of long-term rental housing.<sup>47</sup> A high percentage of short-term rentals can have a detrimental effect on neighborhoods as well, replacing year-round families with transitory

occupants and/or vacant homes. In Addison County, it is estimated that most of the short-term rentals fall into the category of seasonal homes, uninsulated camps and cottages that are not suited for year-round use.<sup>48</sup> Although, they do not currently pose a threat to the market, there are an increasing number of year-round STRs in neighborhoods in and around Middlebury that cater to families and alumni of the College. Not surprisingly, the regions in Vermont with the highest numbers of short-term rentals are home to large ski resorts and other significant recreational amenities that draw visitors year-round. Given the relatively low percentage of housing stock used exclusively as short-term rentals, their overall impact on the affordability of the housing market in the Addison Region is limited. Additionally, the negative impact is

<sup>47</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2020/06/11/affordable-housing-advocates-worry-about-rise-in-short-term-rentals/>  
10/8/21

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

outweighed by the beneficial added income many residents can achieve by leveraging their property in this manner.

## Housing Affordability

Housing values have been rising steadily in Addison County over the past twenty years, mirroring the pattern of the State as a whole. This trend, combined with twenty years of low home construction rates (driven in part by high construction costs), an increase in total households and a reduction of household size has resulted in a critical shortage of adequate housing for a growing percentage of the Region's population.

Adequate housing can be defined as;

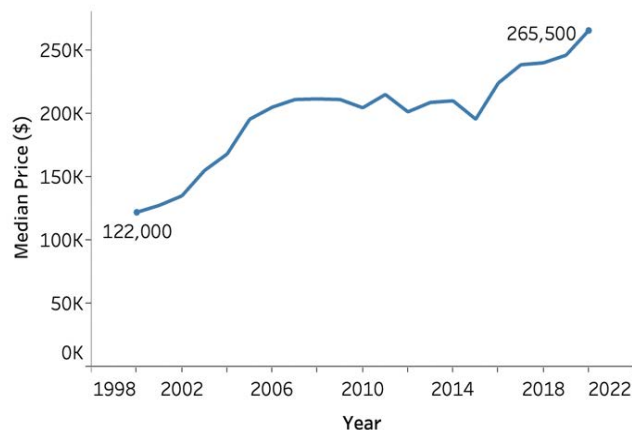
- Homes that are affordable for community members.
- Homes for single person households and first-time homeowners.
- Homes desirable for new families to move to the area, enroll their children in our schools, and fill jobs that support our economy.
- Homes that are appropriate for our elderly population to age in place in their community with their families and friends.
- Homes that are close to employment centers and/or public transportation.
- Homes that are safe and energy efficient.
- Homes that are appropriate for vulnerable populations.

## Home Ownership Costs

From 2000 to 2020 the median housing price in the region rose by **117.6%**, from **\$122,00** to **\$265,500**. After the financial crisis of 2008, prices stagnated, fluctuating up and down slightly until 2016 when prices began to rise again (Figure 21).

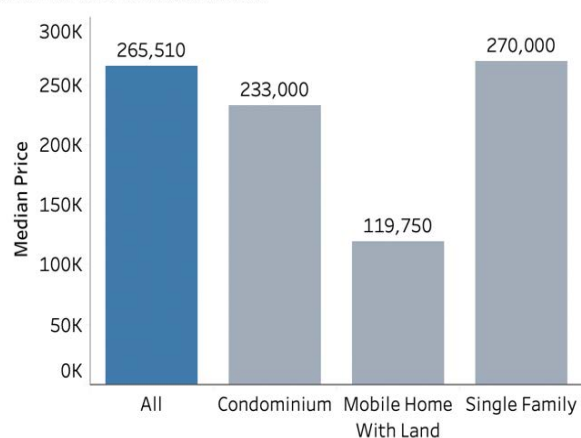
**Figure 21:** Median Home Price Over Time

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**Figure 22:** Median Price per Home Type (2019)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



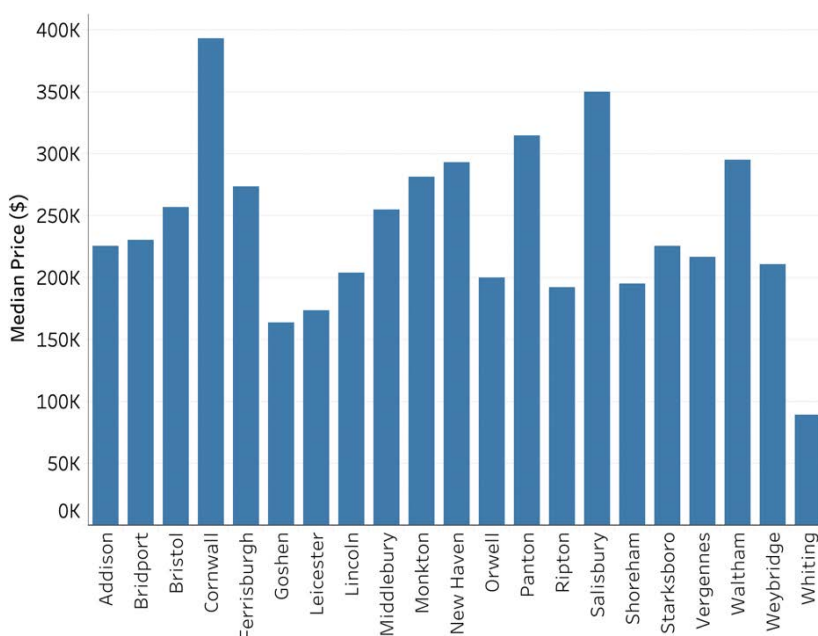
It is important to note that the median price value is the middle price, of all types of homes in the region or municipality, when listed from lowest to highest. Figure 22 shows the median price for several types of housing in Addison County; mobile home with land, condominium and single family and the overall median price when all the homes are combined. Figure 23 illustrates the range of median housing prices across municipalities in the Region. These home values are also indicative of the demand for housing in each community.

In 2019, the median housing price in Cornwall was \$393,000 compared to \$89,000 in Whiting. Cornwall's proximity to Middlebury makes it a desirable location for year-round and second home buyers attracted to the amenities of Middlebury village or with connections to Middlebury College. The greater demand for large single-family homes in Cornwall drives up the cost of all housing in the town and region, reducing affordable options for many. In Whiting, despite a low median home price, housing may be less desirable due to hidden costs, such as access to services, transportation or property maintenance issues. Fluctuation in the price of housing can be attributed to many factors. The costs of building materials and construction wages, zoning and permitting for site development, second home construction and short-term rental conversions all affect the market price of housing.

Zoning bylaws that require large minimum lot sizes, two acres and higher, increase the cost of housing and discourage developers from building smaller, less expensive units on these lots. Over time, one factor may have a greater impact than another depending on the current social, environmental or economic climate. High demand for housing in Chittenden County creates pressure for nearby Franklin, Lamoille, Addison and Grand Isle counties. These counties have the highest median home sale prices and rents in the state, next to Chittenden County.

**Figure 23: Median Home Price by Town (2019)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



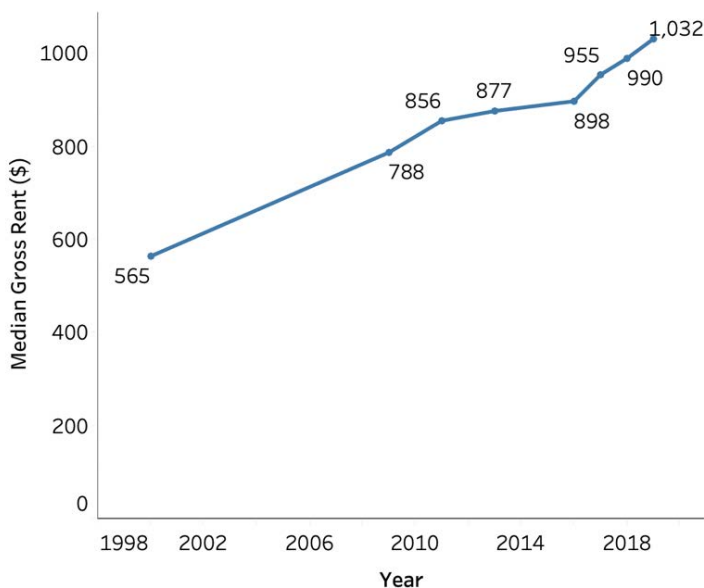
## Rental Costs

Rental housing costs are, in turn, impacted by the current price and availability of owner-occupied homes. The pool of available housing in the rental market shrinks as potential buyers choose to rent due to a lack of ownership options. In 2019, approximately 24% of households in the region rented their homes. Gross median monthly rental rates for a one-bedroom have increased **83%**, from \$565 in 2000 to \$1,032 in 2019. The median gross rent equals the contract rent along with all the monthly utility and fuel costs. Rents in Addison County are the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the state after

Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties.<sup>49</sup> In 2020, Vermont experienced an influx of new residents due to the pandemic resulting in an increase in the demand for housing and the median price of available properties.

**Figure 24:** Median Rent Over Time

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



### *Covid -19 Pandemic*

Throughout Vermont, home prices rose sharply during the summer of 2020 as people migrated to the state due to the Covid-19 pandemic, exacerbating an already tight housing market. Heightened interest from out-of-state buyers, a low vacancy rate, and favorable interest rates have all contributed to increased housing prices. Most of the real estate transactions involved higher priced homes of \$500,000 and up. Even so, the increased demand for housing has impacted the market at all levels, further limiting affordable options for local and first-time buyers. According to the Northwest Vermont Real Estate Market Report, the median price of single-family homes in Addison County rose to \$275,000 during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020, April to June. A recent report states that there was an increase of more than 1,000 residential property sales to out-of-state buyers in 2020 compared to in 2019, an increase of 38%, and the amount of money those buyers spent was up by 79%.

<https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/money/2021/04/13/property-transfer-data-reveals-38-jump-out-state-homebuyers/7204925002/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>

## Household Income

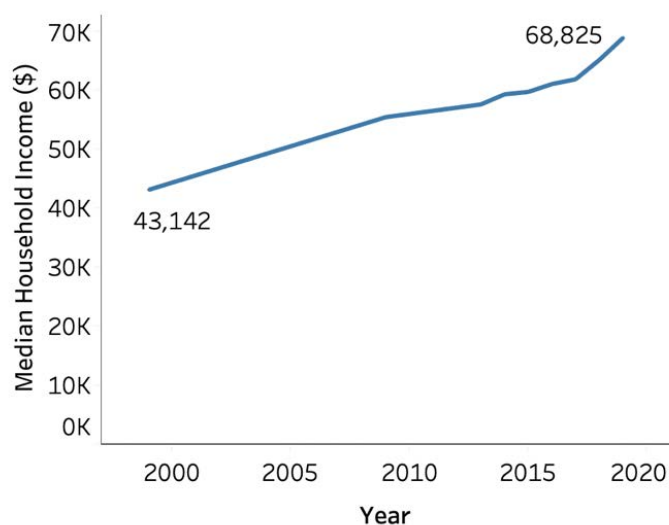
Household income is the combined gross income of all members of a household who are 15 years or older regardless of relationship status. Family income is defined as income generated by people in the same household that are related by marriage or civil union and file their taxes jointly. This document will be looking at household income. According to the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census the median income of the region's households was \$43,177 and \$57,937 respectively, a 34.2% increase over ten years. The 2014 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment projected that the

Region's median household income would decline to \$51,138 by 2015 due to residual effects of the national recession, reduced income of baby boomers retiring and growth among low-income households.<sup>50</sup> However, this figure gradually rose to \$68,825 by 2019, a 18.8% increase from \$57,937 in 2010. (Figure 25).

As seen in figures 22, 24 and 25, the cost of housing in the Addison Region has increased at a greater rate than household income. Between 2000-2019, the percent increase for median home prices was 101.6%, and 83.3% for median monthly rents. In contrast, the percent increase of median household incomes, for the same time period, was 59.5%.

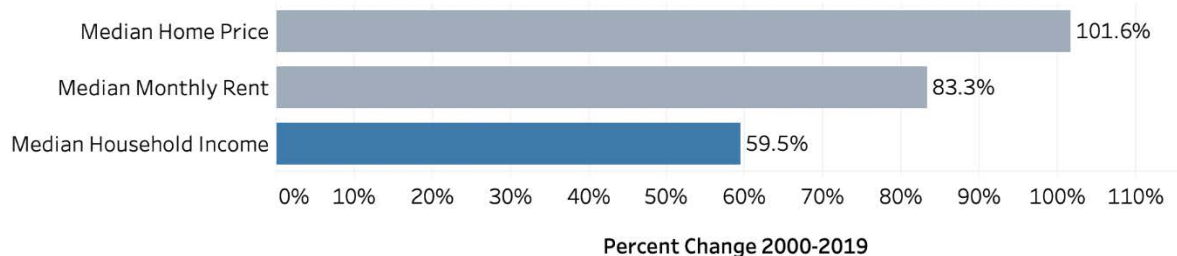
**Figure 25: Median Household Income**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**Figure 26: Change in Housing Cost and Household Income (2000-2019)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



<sup>50</sup> <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/age-and-sex/data/tables.html>

In 2019, the average annual wage of an individual in Addison County was \$49,632.<sup>51</sup> Many small households, 20% in the county, have only one salary or wage earner contributing to the total household income. **Table 3** breaks down median household income by town and tenure, tenure being the legal status by which a household occupies its home. This categorization further illustrates the income distribution in the region. In 11 out of the region's 21 towns, renter incomes were below that of the average individual wage for the county (\*), a trend that is prevalent throughout the state.

**Table 3: 2019 median household income by town and tenure<sup>52</sup>**

Town	Owner	Renter
Addison Region	78,029	46,188
Addison	89,167	79,583
Bridport	66,250	47,083*
Bristol	74,444	39,531*
Cornwall	97,946	76,875
Ferrisburgh	97,500	54,357
Goshen	77,969	N/A
Leicester	60,250	70,417
Lincoln	69,821	31,125*
Middlebury	76,685	45,506*
Monkton	89,063	93,851
New Haven	90,179	44,615*
Orwell	64,643	45,469*
Panton	78,083	46,250*
Ripton	72,143	N/A
Salisbury	81,641	57,583
Shoreham	61,389	36,696*
Starksboro	74,766	54,688
Vergennes	82,500	34,475*
Waltham	80,000	58,750
Weybridge	97,206	41,250*
Whiting	58,250	34,375*

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

## Income Groups

Household income groups are categorized by a percentage of the Area Median Income (AMI) earned by households. Using a projected AMI of \$69,023, from the Addison County 2020 Housing Needs Assessment, table 4 illustrates the income range in each income group in the county.<sup>53</sup>

<b>Table 4:</b> Household income range associated with income groups based on area median income	
<b>Income Group</b>	<b>Household Income Range</b>
≤30% of AMI: extremely low- income	\$20,707 or less
>30% to ≤ 50%: very low-income	\$20,708 - \$34,511
>50% to ≤ 80%: low-income	\$34,512 - \$55,218
>80% to ≤ 100%: moderate income	\$55,219 - \$69,023
>100%	> \$69,024

A region's '**workforce**' are the people in occupations who provide goods and services essential to their community and local economy. The household incomes of the region's workforce generally range between 60-120% of the AMI, \$41,414 - \$82,827. '**Workforce housing**' is defined as housing affordable for this population group.<sup>54</sup>

## Housing Affordability Gap

Affordable housing, as defined in state statute (24 V.S.A. § 4303 (1)), **is affordable if the total housing costs do not exceed 30% of the combined income of the household. For owner-occupied housing, household income cannot exceed 120% of the area median income (AMI), for rental housing household income cannot exceed 80% of AMI.** Housing costs include, but are not limited to, rent, mortgage, taxes, insurance, utility and heating costs. When households spend more than 30% of their income on housing it often becomes difficult to pay for basic living expenses, such as food, utilities, transportation, health care and childcare. According to U.S. Census Bureau 2018 estimates, more than one in three Vermont households pay an unsustainable percentage of their income towards housing costs.<sup>55</sup> The gap between what a household can afford and the income necessary to purchase or rent a home continues to grow in the Addison County region. In 2020, it is difficult for households that make the area median income (AMI) to afford median priced housing. From 2010 to 2018 the median home price increased by 17% while the median household income rose by 11%.

<sup>53</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> <https://urbanland.uli.org/industry-sectors/residential/affluent-communities-need-workforce-housing/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>



This **affordability gap** increases the potential for moderate and lower-income families to become burdened by housing costs.

## Housing Wage

The housing wage is indicative of whether wages are keeping pace with housing costs in a region. A housing wage is the combined wage a household must earn, working 40 hours a week, to afford a rental housing unit at HUD's Fair Market Rent (FMR), without paying more than 30% of its income towards housing costs (Table 5).

Table 5: Housing Wage		
# Of Bedrooms	Hourly Housing Wage	Annual Income Needed to Afford*
One-bedroom	\$16.85	\$35,040
Two- bedroom	\$20.40	\$42,440
Three-Bedroom	\$25.48	\$53,000
*The annual income assumes not more than 30% of wages going towards household costs		

**Figure 27: Percent of Total Households, Household income range, and Affordable Housing Costs Per Income Category**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Fair Market Rents (FMRs) are the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile of gross rents for typical, non-substandard rental units in a regional housing market.<sup>56</sup> In the Addison Region, as of 2018, the FMR for a 1-bedroom apartment was **\$875**, a 2-bedroom apartment, **\$1061** and a 3-bedroom apartment, **\$1325**.<sup>57</sup> To afford a two-bedroom apartment a single renter would need to earn a wage of **\$20.40** and an annual income of **\$42,440**. Currently, the average (mean) renter wage for

<sup>56</sup><https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>57</sup> <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/vermont> Out of Reach 2020: Vermont, National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Addison County households is **\$15.92**, leaving a rental wage gap of **\$4.48**. This gap especially impacts single people living alone, in particular single parents with children. As shown in figure 27, 24.7% of households make \$34,511 or less, which is not enough to afford a one-bedroom apartment at FMRs.

A household earning \$43,037, the county median renter income, can afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment but nothing larger. The price for most rental units in the region is above what the average working individual can afford. No Vermont county has market rate rental housing affordable for extremely low-income households.<sup>58</sup> In 2020, Vermont had the 16th highest housing wage in the country.

The 2018 median priced home in the region was \$240,000. To afford this house a buyer would need an annual income of at least \$66,923 and an estimated \$22,529 available for closing costs; 5% down payment, interest, taxes and insurance. A household earning the area median income for 2018, \$65,093, would be able to afford a home price of \$232,000 with closing costs estimated at \$21,918. Both of these scenarios assume that buyers would not spend more than 30% of their income on monthly housing costs and had the additional income for closing fees.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 28: Housing Cost Burden for Owners and Renters In Addison Region (2018)**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

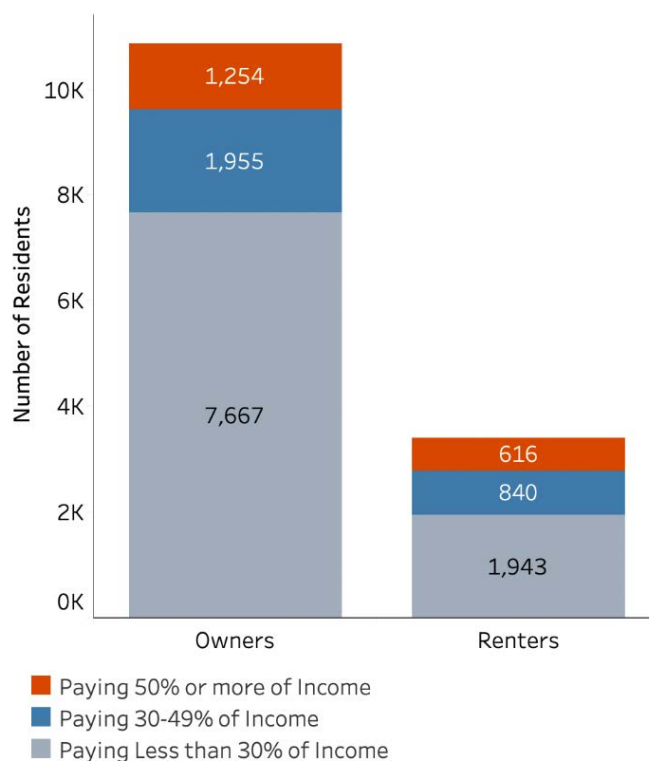


Figure 28 shows the number of households paying more than 30% of their monthly income for housing expenses which is the federal standard of housing affordability.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/node/54528> Mia Watson, March20,2019 'Vermont lacks housing for extremely low-income households'

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

In Addison County, more renter households proportionately, are burdened by housing costs than owners at both the over 30% and over 50% levels of income spending. Households spending more than 50% a month are considered severely cost-burdened.

**Renters:** 840 households were cost burdened; 616 households were severely cost burdened.

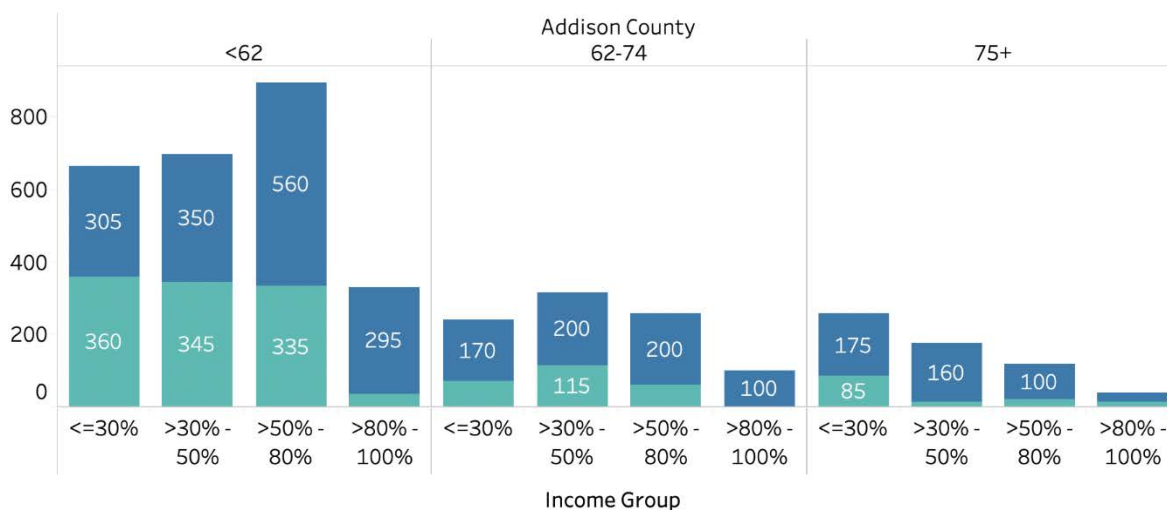
**Owners:** 1955 households were cost burdened; 1254 households were severely cost burdened.<sup>61</sup>

## Substandard Housing

The lack of adequate and affordable housing available for lower-income households can create multiple housing problems and potential health and safety issues. The housing stock that is affordable to many low-income renters is often older and of poor quality. Substandard housing problems, in addition to a cost burdened household, can include an incomplete kitchen or bathroom, coal heat or no heat and overcrowding. A household is considered as having housing problems if any of these exist. Mobile homes built before 1976, or single-family homes with a property value of less than \$75,000, also qualify as “substandard”.<sup>62</sup>

**Figure 29: Number of Households with Housing Problems in Addison County**

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2015



### Income groups

≤ 30% of HAMFI: Extremely low-income  
 > 30% to ≤ 50% of HAMFI: Very low-income  
 > 50% to ≤ 80% of HAMFI: Low-income  
 > 80% to ≤ 100% of HAMFI: Moderate income

### Household type

Owner Renter

HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) is the middle family income for four-person households in a given area.

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (Table B25070, B25091)

<sup>62</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>

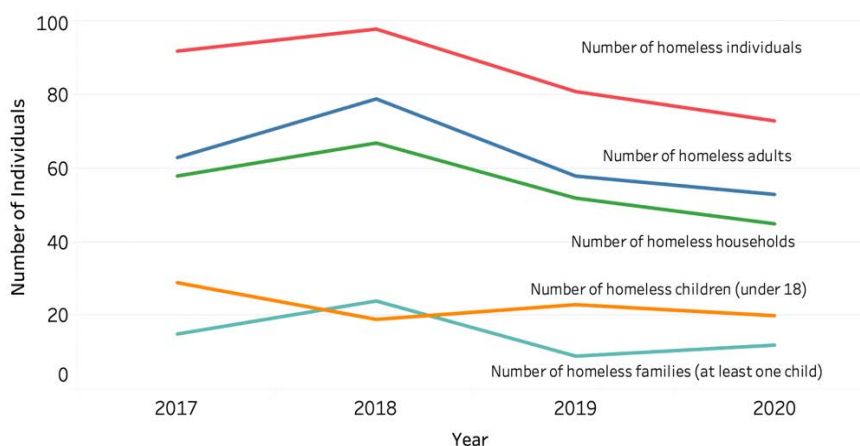
Maintenance issues tend to be more frequent with older structures, leading to additional costs and burdens. Older rental stock often lacks proper weatherization, resulting in higher heating costs and inefficiencies. For homeowners who are already cost burdened, paying for necessary home maintenance may be extremely difficult. When maintenance and property issues are not addressed, however, this can result in an overall deterioration of housing quality and potential health and safety concerns.<sup>63</sup>

Most rental homes in Vermont are not regularly inspected for health and safety conditions. Therefore, uncertainty exists regarding the potential scope of problems within this significant portion of Vermont’s housing stock. Vermont has a Rental Housing Health Code (RHHC) that all rental housing must comply with. As of this writing, municipalities enforce or fail to enforce this code. A bill to create a statewide system is currently under consideration in the legislature. Meanwhile, many tenants continue to live in substandard housing without the ability to move and potentially fearful of complaining.<sup>64</sup>

## Homelessness

Increased competition for housing, due to the shortage of appropriate, accessible and affordable homes, adds to the ongoing struggle to house vulnerable populations, such as low income, elderly, disabled and homeless households. During the 2020 Annual Point in Time (PIT) count, which takes place each January throughout one night, 73 Addison County residents were identified as experiencing homelessness.

**Figure 30: One Night Count of the Homeless Population in the Addison Region**  
Source: VT Housing Data



This total represents individuals in shelters, transitional housing, publicly funded hotel rooms and individuals living outside. Figure 30 looks at some characteristics of this population from

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/node/54528> Mia Watson, March 20, 2019 'Vermont lacks housing for extremely low-income households'

<sup>64</sup> <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/WorkGroups/Senate%20Appropriations/FY%202020%20BUDGET/12%20Advocates%20Testimony/H.542~Sarah%20Carpenter~Rental%20Housing%20Advisory%20Board~4-16-2019.pdf>

2017 to 2020.<sup>65</sup> The PIT count, however, does not include those who are at risk of homelessness or living temporarily with friends or family, inevitably underrepresenting this population.<sup>66</sup>

The majority of the homeless population in the region is being served by the following emergency shelters:

**Charter House Coalition and Warming Shelter**, a non-profit, volunteer-based organization dedicated to providing basic food and housing in and around Middlebury and the

**John Graham Emergency Shelter**, providing transitional and emergency shelter for homeless individuals and families in Vergennes.

These facilities provide services that are not available in publicly funded hotels or transitional housing and work towards minimizing shelter stays and the goal of permanent housing for families and individuals.

**Charter House Coalition Coordinated Entry (CE)** is a process that aids individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis by quickly identifying, assessing, referring and connecting them to housing assistance based on their strengths and needs. A total of 93 households obtained permanent housing in 2019 through the CE process;

- 38 found unsubsidized rental housing,
- 33 found housing with subsidy
- 21 obtained housing with friends or family.

About a quarter of these households were families with children and approximately two-thirds included a person with a disability.<sup>67</sup>

**The following advocacy organizations also work to support homeless in our region:**

**VCEH** Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

**VAHC** Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

**HOPE** Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects

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<sup>65</sup> <https://helpingtohousevt.org/pointintime/2020-pit/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/data-guide>

<sup>67</sup> Addison County CHAT data meeting 2019.

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

In the summer of 2020, at the request of the Vermont Legislature, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) managed the federal Coronavirus Aide, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to address long standing needs of increased and improved housing options for a rapidly growing number of individuals and households struggling with homelessness. Relief funds were used to secure and rehabilitate permanent housing for homeless households and make improvements to shelters around the state. At the outset of the pandemic, many shared housing facilities, such as homeless shelters, were unable to meet CDC health and safety protocols. At that time, most shelters closed, and transitioned many of the 2,000 homeless individuals in motel rooms across the state.

## **Housing Support Partners**

Many households in the Region need support to acquire and maintain safe, appropriate, affordable and permanent housing in their communities. The following federal, state and regional agencies, organizations and programs all play a role in this effort through advocacy, land use planning policy, financing and development to achieve the goal of housing for all.

### **Federal and State Partners**

The **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** provides funding for housing in the following ways:

- Project-based assistance: Where the subsidy is assigned to a specific housing unit built, developed and or managed for the purpose of accepting low-income tenants.
- Tenant-based assistance: Where the recipient receives financial assistance, usually in the form of a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) to help cover the cost of any qualified housing unit.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, due to the tight housing market, 2.8% vacancy rate, there has been an underutilization of vouchers. Vouchers are time sensitive and recipients lose a percentage of this time waiting for appropriate housing. Much of the housing that is available is above the voucher payment standard and therefore, out of reach for voucher holders.

**Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)** and **Vermont Affordable Housing Tax Credits** enable funding for rental housing development and affordable home ownership opportunities. These tax credits are awarded by the **Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)** to local housing

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<sup>68</sup> HUD.gov

developers. The credits are then sold to investors to raise the start-up capital needed for housing development.<sup>69</sup>

**Vermont Housing Finance Agency** also offers a range of home buyer programs and assistance, for income qualified buyers, to promote affordable housing throughout the state, such as;

- Low down payments,
- Down payment and closing cost assistance,
- Vermont Property Transfer Tax reductions,
- Reduce your federal tax liability
- Lower mortgage insurance premiums = lower monthly payment

**Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)** creates affordable housing and protects Vermont lands. Since 1974, VHCB has assisted in the creation of more than 13,420 affordable homes, the conservation of nearly 437,079 acres of agricultural and recreational lands and natural areas and the restoration of 74 historic community buildings.

**Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)** supports resilient communities and provides assistance and grant opportunities to enhance community development programs. DHCD coordinates and oversees the implementation of the state's housing policy, facilitates collaboration among state housing agencies and serves as a resource to housing providers. Additionally, the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) within the DHCD allocates Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for housing development to communities statewide outside of Burlington, which has its own CDBG program.

**Evernorth**, a merger of Housing Vermont (**HV**) and Northern New England Housing Investment Fund (**NNEHIF**) to create a single nonprofit organization, serves low- and moderate-income people of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont with affordable housing and community investments. Evernorth also works closely with local nonprofit and for-profit developers to help assess, underwrite, and manage a wide range of projects, including apartments for seniors, workforce housing, assisted living, and projects which rehabilitate and preserve scarce housing resources.<sup>70</sup> In the Addison region, Evernorth is a key partner in the development and rehab of these scarce housing resources through the LIHTC program, providing critical development capacity and offtakers for the tax credits.

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.vhfa.org/news/blog/vermont-housing-finance-agency-completes-successful-annual-sale-state-tax-credits>

<sup>70</sup> <https://evernorthus.org/building-communities/affordable-housing/>

## Regional Partners

### **Neighborworks of Western Vermont**

**(NWWVT)**, a nonprofit, community development organization, located in Rutland, that supports mortgage and down payment assistance and facilitates repair and renovation of affordable housing, to address energy efficiency, health and safety issues. Priority projects include accessibility, weatherization, heating, electrical, roofs and helping seniors age in place.<sup>71</sup>

### **Addison County Community Trust**

**(ACCT)**, a non-profit housing trust serving the Region since 1989, is dedicated to creating permanent, highly energy efficient, and affordable homes.

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

CARES Act funding, released to the State during the pandemic, enabled the region's housing partners to execute the following projects:

1. 3 new energy efficient homes at KTP in Bristol, including rental assistance, to house homeless families.
2. The acquisition of 4 apartments in Weybridge, including rental assistance, to house homeless families.
3. Funding for landlords, earmarked for the rehab of substandard rental units for homeless families.

As of 2021, ACCT owns and manages 334 rental apartments and 9 mobile home parks with 340 owner-occupied home sites, as well as stewards permanent shared equity grants for 75 single family homes. In addition to property management, ACCT also provides residential services through SASH program for up to 200 county seniors ensuring they can age safely at home, and through the Family Support Program to vulnerable residents who need wraparound services to successfully maintain their housing.

In 2019, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board awarded ACCT a \$20,000 technical assistance grant to create a comprehensive redevelopment plan for their mobile home parks to address their infrastructure needs and ensure they are financially sustainable.

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<sup>71</sup> <https://www.nwwvt.org/>



## Current and Future Housing Needs

### **Summary**

The current housing crisis/shortage is a complex issue. The age and size of existing stock, the cost of construction, materials and land, a lack of infrastructure in rural villages, incompatible zoning regulations and expensive regulatory processes inhibit the ability to create needed housing. Modest starter homes are unaffordable for young families or seniors wanting to downsize and age in place. A lack of *workforce housing* can result in long and expensive commutes when employees can't afford to live near their place of work. Despite an active network of housing support organizations and funding opportunities, many households in the region still do not have access to the housing they need, in many cases because it doesn't exist. In turn, the lack of appropriate and affordable housing in the region affects the region's communities in the following ways:

- Contributes to population changes as families can't afford homes in the region,
- Impacts schools,
- Impacts the economy,
- Increases housing insecurity for vulnerable populations,
- Reduction of the workforce, hard to find employees,
- Difficult for seniors to age in their homes and communities.

### **Education and Collaboration**

In addition to the complexity of the housing issue, there may be fear or misconception that affordable or subsidized housing will have a negative effect on a community. It is essential that all residents, municipal representatives and leaders understand and acknowledge the housing needs of their neighbors. The current housing crisis is regional but the strategies and solutions used to address this crisis need to be specific to each community. There is no one size fits all solution. Challenges and opportunities faced in the City of Vergennes, for example, will differ from those faced in Shoreham. Equally important, the issues faced within a town's village center may be very different from those in its rural areas. Because the issues are distinct, the solutions will be as well. It is the community's responsibility to support the creation of housing that meets the needs and desires of residents and in a manner that enhances the goals and objectives of the town's plan. Local housing plans and projects developed through a process of public involvement and education, community input, and stakeholder collaboration will produce the most successful outcomes.

## Addressing Housing Issues

### **Fair Share Housing and Fair Housing**

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, family status, or disability in matters of housing access. Vermont's Fair Housing statute includes age, marital status, sexual orientation and the receipt of public assistance to this list of prohibitions.

Vermont's planning and zoning act, 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, identifies the responsibilities and requirements of municipalities and regional commissions to promote and protect affordable housing options for its residents. For example:

- Single- and two-family homes cannot be subjected to site plan review.
- It is illegal to prohibit mobile homes or mobile home parks from a municipality.
- Municipalities must designate appropriate districts for multi-unit and multi-family dwellings.
- Accessory dwelling units (one-bedroom apartment or efficiencies) subordinate to a single-family dwelling must be considered a permitted use.
- Duly adopted municipal plans must include recommendations for addressing the housing needs of low- and moderate-income individuals, and should account for accessory dwelling units as a form of affordable housing.

### **Housing Commissions**

The first step towards overcoming housing barriers is for communities and municipal leaders to fully understand the housing issues that exist within their own town. State law allows for the creation of municipal housing task force, or commissions (24 VSA §4433(5)). These commissions have the opportunity to work independent of local Planning Commissions in areas outside of planning and regulation on solving the dilemma of providing homes that people need and can afford. Through public outreach, surveys and events, housing commissions can connect with housing advocates, developers, realtors, state legislators and residents to develop a **housing action plan**.

### **Solutions and Tools**

Solutions to housing barriers can be **regulatory or non-regulatory** in nature. Regulatory solutions are the result of revisions to a municipality's plan, bylaws and/or subdivision documents, specifically dimensional standards, permitted uses and process requirements. Non-regulatory solutions are derived from state and community development programs and grants, financial incentives for developers, collaboration with social services and partnerships with public and private organizations and individuals. None of the strategies proposed in this plan will address all of the region's housing needs, nor will they be appropriate for all communities. These are tools that will promote incremental increases in density, implementing a process of **gentle infill** in existing neighborhoods and creating needed affordable housing throughout the region.

## Regulatory

### Municipal Plan Goals

A town's municipal plan sets forth the overall goals for land use and development in the community. Planning goals that promote housing and include smart growth concepts such as, **compact and walkable centers, clustered development, density bonuses, transit-accessible communities and a variety of housing types and affordability**, enable proposed regulations aimed at addressing housing issues. Below are examples of zoning concepts and strategies that can be integrated into municipal bylaws.<sup>72</sup>

### Rework Density and Dimensional Requirement Bylaws

- Make the built pattern of historic villages centers, such as road frontage, building setbacks and lot coverage, the basis of dimensional standards for new development in these zones. Measure existing conditions and create dimensional standards that mirror these conditions, reinforcing the character of the area.
- Reduce minimum lot size or minimum unit size requirements. Bylaws that require a large minimum lot size (2 acres/dwelling unit) discourage the development of smaller and affordable housing, due to the higher purchase price of the land. Even when density is limited by a lack of town water and sewer, municipalities should allow small lots and encourage creative solutions to solve the infrastructure issues.



**Figure 31:** Left. Diagram of typical ¼ acre village lots, 4du/ac. Right. Same ¼ acre pattern of development but with greater allowable density, 12 DU/acre.

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.housingdata.org/profile>, Regulatory tools for community housing needs.

- Separate density from lot size. Create a zoning bylaw that permits a dwelling units/acre density pattern that is consistent to the existing character of the village neighborhood and not determined by lot size. A ¼ acre lot could allow a duplex plus an accessory dwelling unit. The minimum lot size could remain ¼ acre. Defining density separately from lot size, allows for a variety of housing types and affordability.

### Allow for a variety of housing types

- Allow duplexes and multifamily units in all residential zones. Duplexes can be allowed on the same sized lots as single-family homes. **(Figure 32, right)**
- Allow residential mixed-use and in-home business in residentially zoned areas.

### Promote accessory dwelling units (ADUs)

Although allowed by right (24 VSA §4412(E)), barriers to ADU development still exist. Municipalities can work to reduce these barriers through policy change and supporting programs that help with and technical and design assistance.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 32:** Example of duplex housing

- Simplify or reform application requirements for small scale development within existing structures.
- Waive or reduce permitting fees.
- Consider increasing the allowable size of accessory dwelling units based on the size, proportions and character of the primary structure and parcel.
- Provide design, technical and financial materials and resources to homeowners interested in creating Accessory Dwelling Units.



**Figure 33:** Examples of detached (left) and attached (right) Accessory Dwelling Units

<sup>73</sup> <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/ADU%20101.pdf>



## Adaptive reuse of buildings

- Allow the conversion of pre-existing larger buildings, like barns, schools or commercial structures, into multifamily units, where appropriate through conditional use review.
- Renovate pre-existing historic homes into energy efficient, accessible, duplexes or multi-family homes.

## Flexible parking regulations

- Reduce on-site parking requirements when projects are near public transit, services and available on-street parking.
- Waive parking requirements for mixed-use developments when commercial and residential demand peaks at different times of day.
- Allow stacked driveway spaces.

## Clustered Development and Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)

These zoning tools allow greater flexibility in the configuration of buildings on a site, encouraging smaller structures and a more creative, efficient use of that site. This process can result in lower infrastructure costs due to coordination of construction and shared utility systems. Municipalities should develop specific standards for PUD review that conform to their town plan goals and objectives.<sup>74</sup> PUDs can:

- Support development density to be determined for an entire area (instead of a lot-by-lot basis).
- Encourage small lot, clustered development with minimal side yard setbacks.
- Require affordable housing and/or density bonuses.
- Allow for innovative design and energy efficiency through share resources and walkable communities.
- Preserve open space for communal use and the protection of natural resources.



**Figure 34:** Single family home converted into two housing units.



**Figure 35:** Bristol Cohousing, an example of a PUD

<sup>74</sup> <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/24/117/04417>

## Promote Affordability

- Allow permitting fee reductions, waivers, or deferments for affordable housing development projects.
- Broaden types of housing that are allowed “by right”, thus simplifying and reducing the cost of the permitting process.
- Simplify regulations by aligning with state permitting, if no specific reason for “extra protection” of resources is evident.

## Non- Regulatory

### Collaboration with private, public and non-profit partners.

- Municipalities and developers share the costs of sewer, water, sidewalks and other infrastructure.
- Investigate opportunities to build private housing developments on donated town land.
- Grant monies awarded to municipalities is invested into public-private partnerships to create affordable housing.
- Create partnerships between senior housing facilities and healthcare and elder services to develop independent housing options for vulnerable populations.
- Encourage community members to participate in **Home Share**. Housing committees and/or local advocates should promote the concept of home sharing through education and outreach.<sup>75</sup>
- Support the work of non-profit housing organizations to maintain and improve existing affordable housing options in your communities, including mobile home communities.



**Figure 36: Weathervane United**

Beginning with a Community Block Grant to purchase one home in the center of Lincoln Village is now ten units in three homes, providing affordable housing for seniors. Sidewalks connect the community to the library, general store and town offices. Infrastructure is provided by the Town.

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.homesharevermont.org/about-us/>

**Figure 37: Stoney Hill Development.**

A mixed-use development, located within walking distance to schools and Bristol's downtown. The Town and Stoney Hill Properties, LLC initially partnered on a community development block grant (CDBG) to develop design and feasibility studies for this project. The town further invested by paying 50% of the infrastructure costs; sidewalks, water, and power with a grant the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC).



*Illustration by Cushman Design Group*

**Figure 38: Armory Lane.**

The Medicare-funded program, **Services and Support at Home (SASH)**, aimed at keeping seniors housed rather than in a hospital or nursing home, helps Armory Lane (right) offer quality care to its residents. The building has a full-time service coordinator and an on-site team, including a home health specialist, mental health specialist, and a nurse who is on site ten hours each week. This helps foster a sense of community, as it keeps residents healthy and turnover low.<sup>76</sup>



## Housing energy efficiency and weatherization programs

- Support state weatherization efforts at municipal levels. Encourage contractors, homeowners and landlords to invest in weatherization projects for existing affordable housing.<sup>77</sup>
- Support net zero-ready modular home replacement projects in local mobile home communities.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.vtaffordablehousing.org/>

<sup>77</sup> Neighborworks, <https://www.nwwvt.org/>



## Develop wastewater solutions

The state of Vermont has formed an interagency Village Wastewater Initiative Committee (VWIC) led by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The committee works to develop tools and resources for developing rural wastewater systems and coordinates between funders and service providers.<sup>78</sup>

- Create a local wastewater committee and determine needs for your community.
- Coordinate with ACRPC, the DEC and other funding sources.

## Local rental codes and local enforcement:

- State local rental codes help to promote safe and healthy living conditions. Communities can enact local codes and create local registries. **The Vermont Rental Housing Program**, a fund established in recognition that Vermont's rental housing stock is some of the oldest in the country, provides incentives (grants, loans) for private owners to make weatherization and other improvements to their properties.

## State designation programs

- **Downtown and Village Center Designation.** This incentive program enables communities to apply for state tax credits for renovation, rehabilitation and code improvements to historic and income producing properties in the designated area.
- **Neighborhood Development Areas (NDA).** This designation encourages infill, mix-income housing projects in compact walkable centers. Incentives for developers include exemption from Act 250, for qualified projects, and reduction of application fees. To be eligible for a NDA designation the project must be located in a Downtown or Village Center Designated area with municipal wastewater, ¼ acre zoning and complete streets.

## Grant programs

An array of federal and state planning, development and construction grants are available to communities working to address their housing issues. The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has a comprehensive website and is a great resource for understanding funding options. The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) assists municipalities and community members navigate grant writing and project implementation processes.

**Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs)**, small scale planning grants, can provide funding for exploring the feasibility of housing solutions in a community.

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<sup>78</sup> [https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/village\\_ww/WastewaterWorkbook.pdf](https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/village_ww/WastewaterWorkbook.pdf)

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

The 2020-21 Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the housing crisis in the Region, impacting households across income groups. A low housing vacancy rate and increased home prices were results of several factors. The influx of people moving to the state, away from urban centers, and purchasing homes often above the market price. Homeowners, previously considering relocating, postponed putting housing on the market. For many households, the loss of employment and an increased cost burden led to a loss of housing. Emergency shelters and congregate housing facilities had to close due to health risks of not being able to socially distance. A hopeful outcome of the 2020-21 pandemic has been a greater community awareness of housing issues in our region and state and how they can be addressed. CARES Act funding supported the renovation/ restoration of substandard housing units into adequate and affordable housing. Future monies from the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) are targeted for housing and supportive infrastructure such as water and wastewater systems. Municipalities will also receive ARPA funding for local needs due to Covid-19 impacts.

## Goals and Implementation Actions

### Goals

#### **1: To increase the supply of available and appropriate housing to meet the needs of the Region's Population.**

To meet this goal ACRPC shall:

1. *Explore and promote changes in municipal regulations and policies to support compact development, mixed-use and a variety of housing types in villages and downtown areas.*
2. *Support the maintenance and sustainability of existing affordable housing.*
3. *Assist rural communities in planning for water and sewer infrastructure needed for future housing development.*
4. *Help each municipality develop a comprehensive housing component of new or updated municipal plans.*

#### **2: To ensure that the region's housing stock provides for all segments of the community.**

To meet this goal ACRPC shall:

1. *Support the incorporation of 'universal design' in housing.*
2. *Encourage new and renovated housing projects that support aging in place and supportive housing programs, such as **Support and Services at Home (SASH)**.*
3. *Support new and renovated housing developments that are within walkable distance to retail, municipal services, educational and recreational facilities and public transportation.*

#### **3: Collaborate with public and private organizations to develop solutions to current housing challenges facing our communities.**

To meet this goal ACRPC shall:

1. *Support and collaborate with Addison County Community Trust (ACCT) and other non-profit, private development and financial organizations help create new housing and maintain existing units in the region.*
2. *Encourage developers and communities to create shared utility infrastructure (e.g., community septic and water systems) when appropriate.*

3. *Encourage the Dept. of Fire and Safety to review its rules and requirements impacting duplexes and ADUs. Amend such requirements (costs) so as not to exceed similar requirements (costs) for single family dwellings.*
4. *Encourage the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to review its permitting system, to eliminate duplicate fees on community systems, and amend rules that increase the costs to operate or maintain small scale community water and wastewater systems.*
5. *Encourage our rural communities to create sustainable funding sources that would support community owned, small scale septic systems for new development in existing villages and downtown areas.*
6. *Advocate for the development of financial programs to assist first-time renters and homebuyers with security deposits and down-payments.*

**4: Promote innovative and sustainable planning, design and construction of homes in order to achieve energy efficiency goals, reduction in housing costs and minimize environmental impacts.**

To meet this goal ACRPC shall:

1. *Work with member municipalities to revise their regulations to encourage housing developers to locate projects in existing village centers, on vacant “infill” lots, close to jobs, public transportation and services.*
2. *Advocate for restoration and development of vacant or underused buildings to create new housing through adaptive reuse.*
3. *Help communities work towards meeting their statutory requirements for renewable energy targets, benchmarked at 2025 and 2050. Much of this assistance will focus on supporting the community's goals as outlined within their adopted Enhanced Energy Plans.*
4. *Encourage the construction of new homes in areas planned for growth, avoiding fragmentation of productive or ecologically important farm and forest lands.*
5. *Encourage municipalities to use public assets such as buildings, land and infrastructure to help reduce the cost of new housing projects.*

## **5: Promote public awareness of and support educational and outreach efforts regarding housing challenges in the Region.**

To meet this goal ACRPC shall:

1. *Encourage municipalities to create local housing committees to evaluate and address housing needs in their communities.*
2. *Provide training and forums on housing issues, practices and opportunities for municipalities, landlords, property managers, real estate professionals and anyone involved in the sale, rental or financing of housing.*
3. *Educate municipalities on existing and future housing opportunities. Publicize successful case studies in the Region.*

## **Implementation Actions**

**ACRPC will:**

- Work with each member municipality to identify existing population centers in their community and plan for future growth that supports increased housing opportunities and compact development within these areas. Support and work with municipalities to achieve the following tasks:
  - ❖ Obtain State Designations which encourage housing density in existing centers (e.g., Village Center, Downtowns, Neighborhood Development Areas)
  - ❖ Apply for grants focused on housing opportunities.
  - ❖ Create water and wastewater solutions needed to allow higher density housing.
  - ❖ Work with the State to develop a tax incentive program that encourages development of affordable rental properties.
  - ❖ Reform existing bylaws to support affordable and accessible housing. Important topics of reform to address are:
    - Dimensional standards; setbacks, road frontage, minimum lot size
    - Allowable uses,
    - Accessory dwelling units,
    - Parking requirements
- Work with each member municipality in planning for land-use in rural areas:
  - ❖ Research and promote strategies that facilitate construction of accessory dwelling units (ADU) on existing house lots. Important topics include:
    - Water/Wastewater permitting,
    - Adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
  - ❖ Rewrite Planned Unit Development (PUD) standards that employ conservation design principals such as, preservation of agricultural land, protection of natural resources and clustered development.

- Form an ad-hoc subcommittee of ACRPC with representation from each member municipality's planning commission to coordinate a region-wide approach to housing development and to address larger-scale issues which hinder local housing options. Tasks include:
  - ❖ Develop model bylaw language adoptable by member municipalities that will support affordable, accessible and small-scale housing.
  - ❖ Offer housing forums, workshops and round tables in each member municipality on a rotating basis.
  - ❖ Research regional septic solutions including cooperative operation of a pump out facility.
  - ❖ Develop model rental codes, that municipalities can adopt and enact, to help promote safe and healthy living conditions.