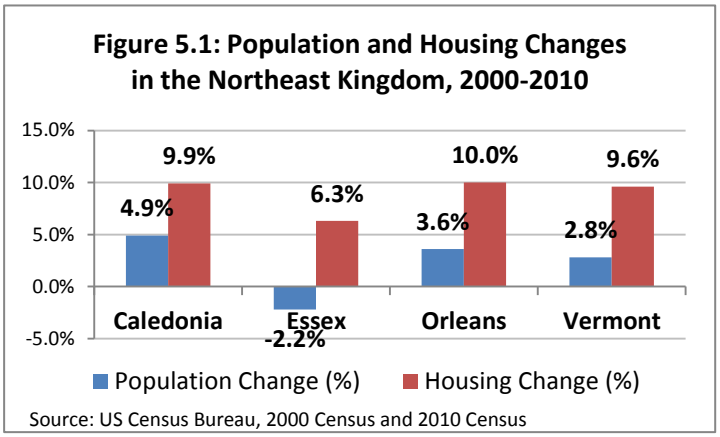
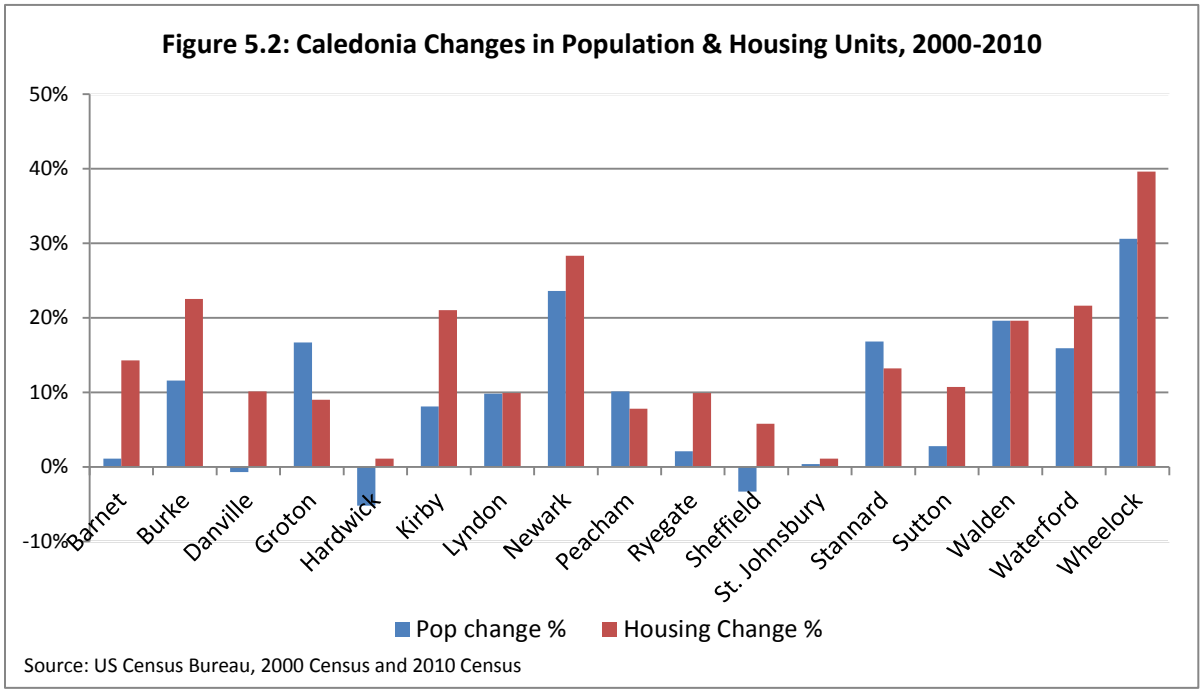
Chapter Five: Housing

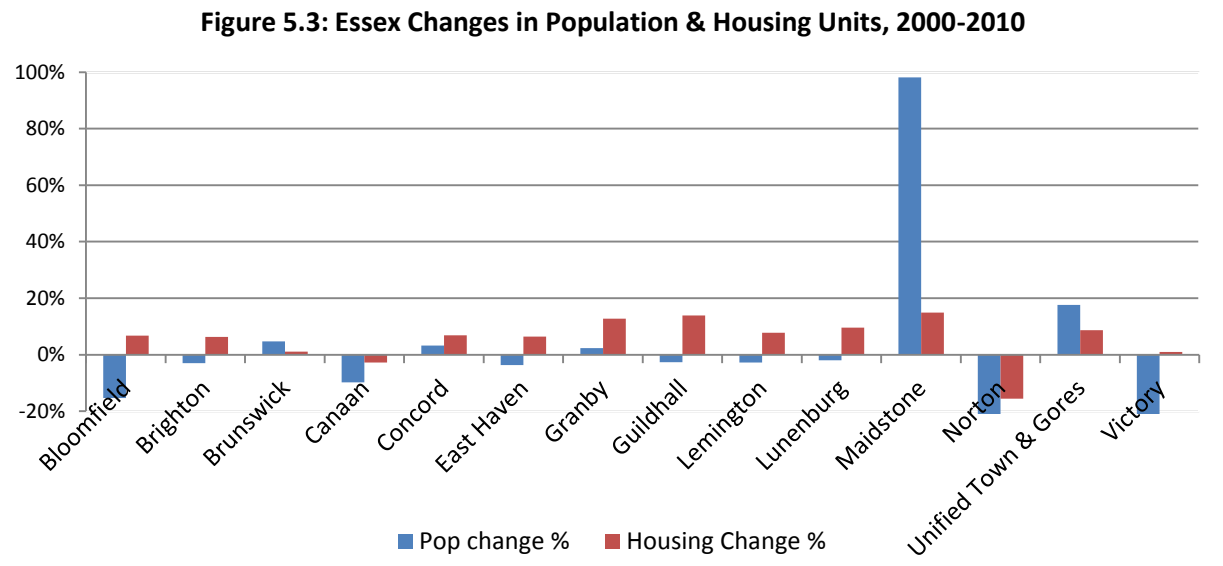
I. HOUSING OVERVIEW

According to the 2010 Census, there are 37,123 housing units in the Northeast Kingdom, an increase of 9.4% from 33,939 units in the previous decade. The Census defines a "housing unit" as a house, apartment, mobile home, group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Northeast Kingdom's population in 2010 was 64,692, which represents a modest increase of 3.6% from the 2000 Census, far slower rate of growth than the region has seen in prior decades. The increase in housing units significantly outpaced the rate of population change, even in Essex County, which saw a net loss in population. (Figure 5.1)

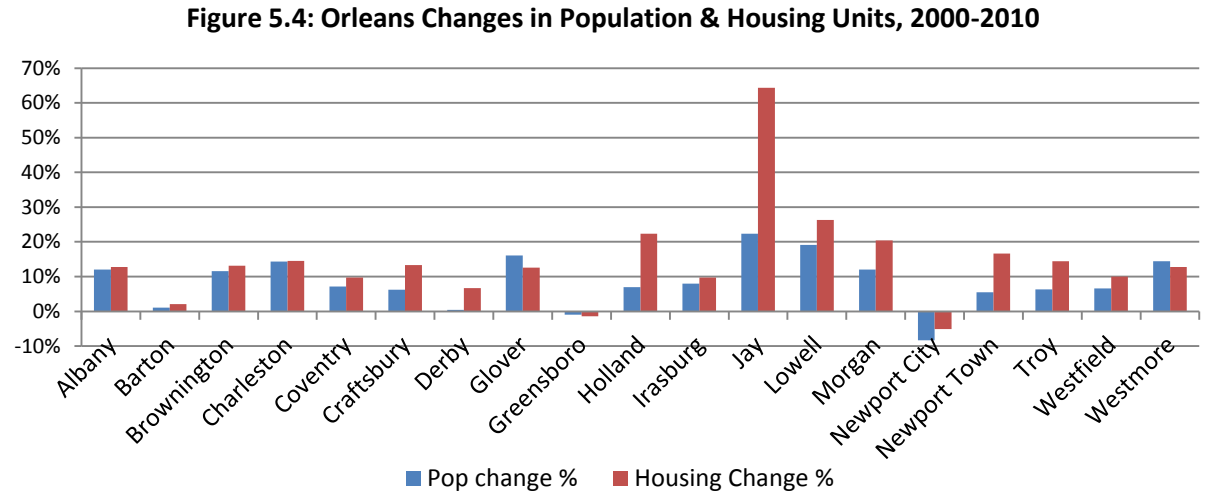


Municipalities throughout the Northeast Kingdom that lost population still saw in an increase in housing units: Bloomfield, Brighton, Danville, East Haven, Hardwick, Guildhall, Lemington, Lunenburg, Sheffield, and Victory. The exceptions to the rule were Canaan, Greensboro, Norton, and Newport City.





Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2010 Census

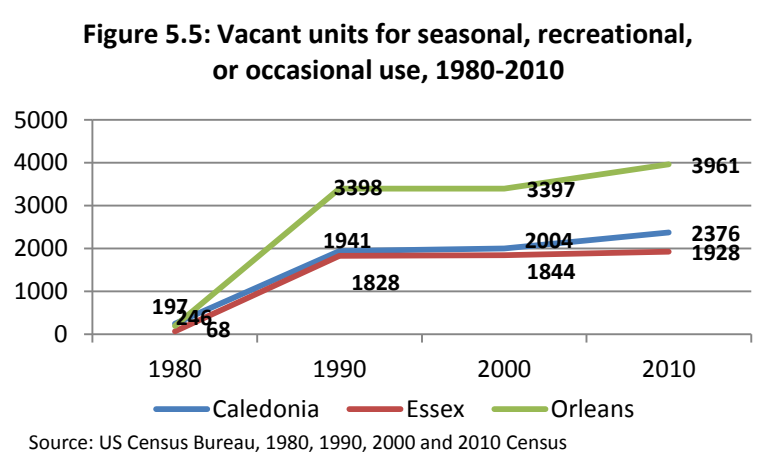


Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2010 Census

Seasonal Housing

A partial explanation for the discrepancy between population growth rates and housing units is the disproportionate share of seasonal and vacation housing. The Northeast Kingdom has traditionally had some the highest percentages of seasonal and vacation housing stock in the state. According to the 2010 Census, more than one out of every five housing units in the Northeast Kingdom is a vacant housing unit intended for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use." By comparison, the statewide percentage of vacant seasonal housing stock is only 15.6%. Like the rest of Vermont, the Northeast Kingdom saw significant growth in seasonal housing units from 1980 to 1990. Growth slowed in the following decade, but appears to have picked up slightly from 2000 to 2010. (Figure 5.5)

In Orleans County, seasonal housing accounts for more than half of the housing stock in Greensboro (53.3%), Jay (63.4%), Morgan (58.0%) and Westmore (67.9%). In Essex, seasonal units account for more than half the housing stock in Brunswick (50.0%), Maidstone (69.7%), Norton (58.2%), and the Unified Towns and Gores (90.6%). Granby's seasonal stock is at 44.3%. Historically, Caledonia has had a smaller share of seasonal housing stock (currently only 14.9% of all housing units), but seasonal units account for close to half of all units in Newark (49.3%) and Peacham (40.2%).



The high proportion of seasonal and vacation housing creates complicating factors in the region's housing scenario. Seasonal homes consistently command higher prices on the real estate market (Table 5.1). Also, as Vermont becomes a more attractive destination for retirees, long-time seasonal residents may be more likely to become full-time residents. This appears to be the case in Maidstone, where the population practically doubled over the past decade, the community's share of owner-occupied housing *increased* by more than 13% and the share of seasonal *decreased* by more than 13%. Growth in seasonal units over the past decade was largely concentrated in Barnet, Burke, and Jay (a net of 81, 97, and 200 units respectively).

Table 5.1: Average and Median Real Estate Values in the Northeast Kingdom and Surrounding Counties

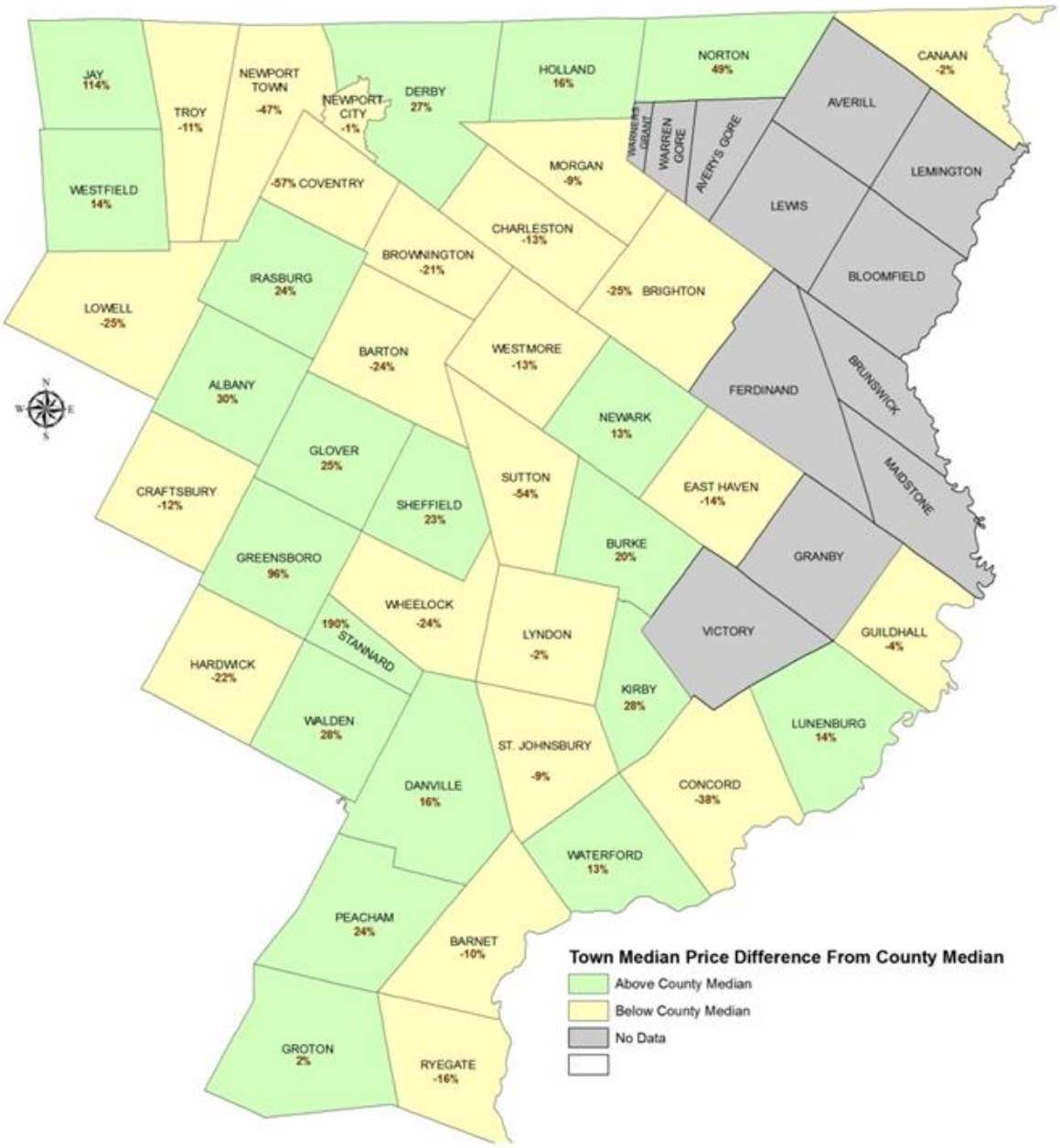
	Primary Residences Sold		Vacation Residences Sold	
	Average	**Median**	**Average**	**Median**
Caledonia	$144,047	$130,000	$217,986	$178,000
Essex	$100,615	$89,250	$147,238	$120,000
Orleans	$142,371	$119,000	$200,212	$162,500
Franklin	$190,051	$183,000	$155,824	$135,000
Lamoille	$286,820	$200,000	$447,374	$299,900
Washington	$208,795	$178,000	$284,332	$231,000
Orange	$172,608	$150,000	$214,007	$140,000
Vermont	$227,635	$200,000	$303,720	$220,000

Source: Vermont Department of Taxes, accessed from Housingdata.org. Median figures include single family residences, mobile homes with land and condominiums sold in 2013.

The relatively lower cost of vacation homes in the Northeast Kingdom in comparison with the rest of the state is likely an ongoing attraction to potential seasonal home buyers. In all cases the median – the "middle" selling price of all residences when prices are sorted in ascending order – is lower than the average. This indicates that outliers -- sales of extremely high-priced homes -- are skewing averages upward.

The following figure shows the median price of single family home primary residences sold in 2013 in each municipality in the region.

Figure 5.6: Median Single-Family Home (Primary Residences)* Prices by Municipality, 2013



Source: Vermont Department of Taxes. *Sales of mobile homes with land and condominiums can skew median figures at the town level, so they were omitted from this analysis.

Even though the average and median prices of primary residences in the Northeast Kingdom may be lower than statewide, real estate is not necessarily a bargain for those who live and work here, because median and mean (average) household and family incomes are lower than statewide incomes (Table 5.2).

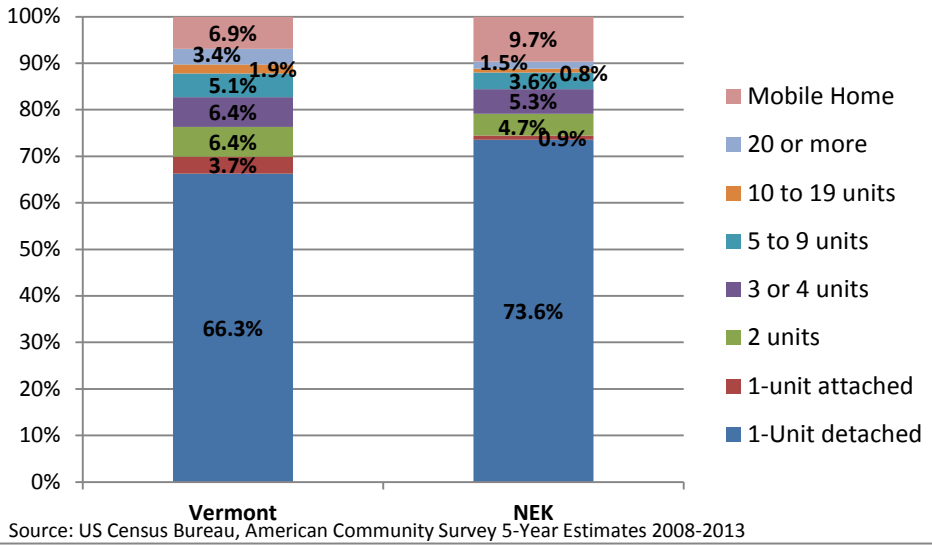
Table 5.2: Median and Mean Incomes in the Northeast Kingdom and Surrounding Counties				
	Household Income		Family Income	
	Median	Mean	Median	Mean
Caledonia	$45,395	$57,426	$54,941	$68,228
Essex	$37,679	$46,190	$45,500	$54,463
Orleans	$41,953	$52,730	$52,235	$63,174
Franklin	$56,240	$69,784	$68,408	$81,089
Lamoille	$52,686	$65,629	$64,500	$75,640
Washington	$57,281	$70,028	$74,640	$84,083
Orange	$52,480	$65,350	$63,253	$75,798
Vermont	$54,267	$69,716	$68,111	$83,752
Source: US Census Bureau- American Community Survey 5 Year Averages, 2008-2013				

Housing Supply

The Northeast Kingdom's supply of housing primarily consists of single family dwellings (1-unit unattached). Compared with statewide figures, single family homes and mobile homes account for a greater share of the overall housing stock. Multiunit dwellings and attached 1-unit dwellings (such as accessory dwelling units and apartments over a commercial use) account for a smaller share. (Figure 5.7) More than half of the region's housing units have three or more bedrooms. (Figure 5.8).

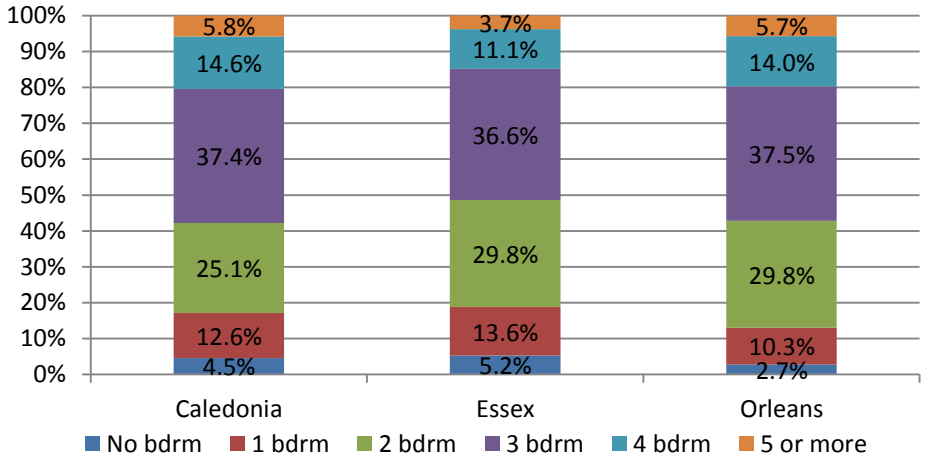
Residential development trends have favored large lot rural residential in recent years. According to the 2013 Grand List, there are 21,563 residential properties in the Northeast Kingdom (i.e. not seasonal or mobile homes). More than a third of residential properties (37.2%) are on lots that are larger than six acres. (Vermont Department of Taxes).

Figure 5.7: Housing Types -- # of Units in Structure



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2008-2013

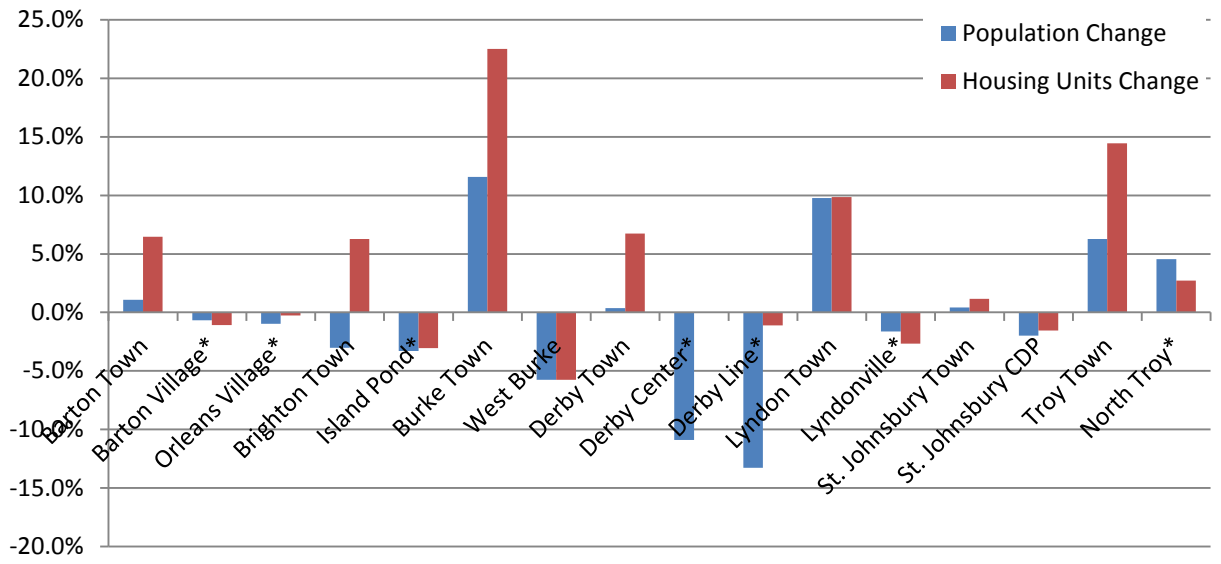
Figure 5.8: Number of bedrooms in housing units



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2008-2013

A key planning statewide planning goal is to plan development in order to maintain historic settlement patterns of compact villages and urban centers separated by rural countryside. (24 V.S.A. 4302(1)). Residential development in the Northeast Kingdom does not appear to be furthering this goal. A recent NVDA GIS analysis shows that over the past decade, more than 95% of residential development in the Northeast Kingdom has occurred outside of development centers (areas characterized by compact settlement patterns and clusters of mixed uses). Furthermore, a review of Census data from 2000 to 2010 shows a loss of population and housing units in "Census places," concentrated settled areas that are not necessarily incorporated. In Vermont, Census places often are traditional village settlement areas with the capacity to support additional housing opportunities with off-site water and sewer and provide convenient access to civic, cultural, and commercial amenities. Boundaries of Census places can change from one decennial Census to the next, so only the Census "places" with unchanged boundaries are evaluated here. Every Census place in the Northeast Kingdom with comparable historic data shows a loss of both population and housing units, with the exceptions of Derby Center (no net change in housing units) and North Troy.

Figure 5.9: Population and Housing Units, 2000-2010 in Census Places



Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Census

*contains areas served by offsite sewer and water

Real estate markets in St. Johnsbury and Newport City – both of which contain the Northeast Kingdom's regional urban centers – are underperforming against the rest of their respective counties. Single family homes in both markets tend to take a little longer to sell and command a lower sales price. This is significant because according to the Vermont Realtors Association Market Report, St. Johnsbury accounts for about 20% of all available single-family inventory in Caledonia and Newport City 18%.

Table 5.3 Real Estate Sales in St. Johnsbury and Newport City, YTD through November 2014

	Days on Market Until Sale	Median Price	Average Price	% of Original Asking Price
St. Johnsbury	169	$119,750	$134,145	88.0
Caledonia County	168	$143,000	$166,342	88.2
Newport City	186	$128,500	$162,794	87.9
Orleans County	176	$136,000	$171,925	88.6

Source: Vermont Association of Realtors, YTD through 12-2014

The Northeast Kingdom's housing stock is relatively old. With a few exceptions (Beecher Falls, Danville CDP, Derby Center, Barton Village, and Greensboro Bend) the majority of units built before 1939 are concentrated in the Census Designated Places. The deferred maintenance and energy inefficiency of these aging structures are likely to make them less attractive to potential homebuyers.

Table 5.4 Percentage of Housing Stock Built Before 1939 in Municipalities with CDPs

Town/CDP	% of Stock Pre 1939	Town/CDP	% of Stock Pre 1939
Albany Town	35.7%	Albany Village	56.5%
Barnet Town	38.5%	Barnet CDP	60.0%
Barton Town	42.9%	Barton Village	48.2%
		Orleans Village	72.9%
Brighton Town	36.3%	Island Pond CDP	47.7%
Burke Town	27.0%	East Burke CDP	70.4%
		West Burke Village	65.5%
Canaan Town	33.1%	Beecher Falls CDP	25.6%
		Canaan CDP	54.9%
Concord Town	21.8%	Concord CDP	59.3%
Coventry Town	21.8%	Coventry CDP	51.9%
Danville Town	30.6%	Danville CDP	31.0%
Derby Town	26.4%	Derby Center Village	28.7%
		Derby Line Village	52.0%
Glover Town	29.7%	Glover CDP	39.6%
Greensboro Town	45.3%	Greensboro CDP	62.0%
		Greensboro Bend CDP	25.0%
Groton Town	32.1%	Groton CDP	56.9%
Hardwick Town	51.5%	Hardwick CDP	63.7%
Irasburg Town	21.%	Irasburg CDP	52.0%
Lyndon Town	33.4%	Lyndonville Village	70.6%
Newport City*	54.0%		
St. Johnsbury Town	50.1%	St. Johnsbury CDP	54.6%
Troy Town	44.2%	North Troy Village	70.6%
		Troy CDP	63.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey 5-Year Averages, 2009-2013
* Newport City is a Census Designated Place and a County Subdivision.

Auto Dependence

Auto dependence (particularly work-related) maybe reinforcing scattered rural residential development patterns. Jobs are relatively scarce in this region, and residents are used to traveling far and wide to work. Essex, Orleans and Caledonia Counties have the state's highest percentages of residents who travel to work at least 25 miles or more in one direction. (Figure 5.10)

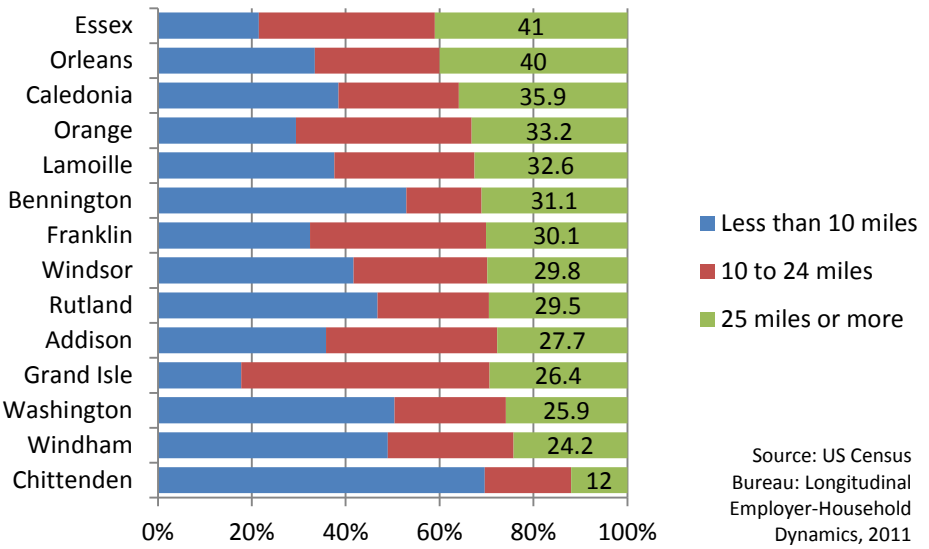


Figure 5.10: Travel Distance to Primary Job

Home Ownership

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census, of the 26,691 occupied housing units in the Northeast Kingdom, 20,046 (75.1% are owner-occupied). Of these owner-occupied units, 61.6% have a mortgage or loan, and 38.4% are owned free and clear. The Northeast Kingdom continues to have high percentages of owner-occupied housing units. However, higher owner occupancy rates are often typical of a rural area and are not necessarily an indicator of economic well-being or affordability. Rather, it may be a reflection of the relative lack of alternatives to home ownership, such as apartments and home shares. For example Essex County, which has the lowest median household income in the state, also has the second highest rate of owner occupancy in the state of just over 80%. By contrast, Chittenden County, which has the highest median household income, has the lowest rate of owner-occupancy in the state of just over 65%.

Table 5.5 Owner-Occupied Housing Units in the Northeast Kingdom, 2000-2010

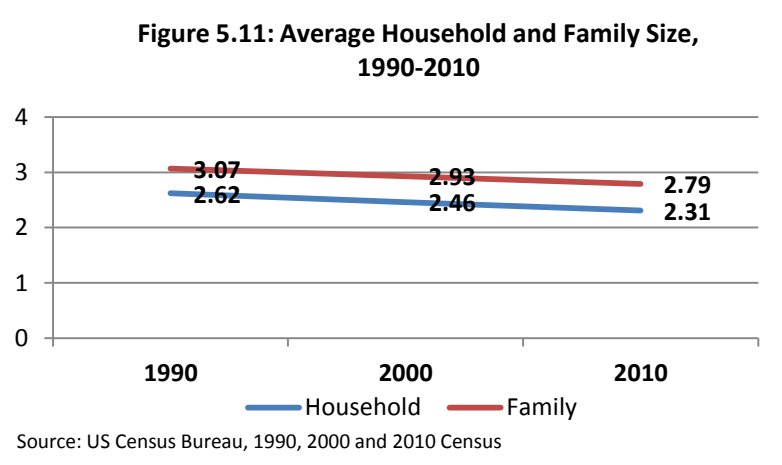
	Occupied Housing Unit Change (Absolute)	Rate (%) of change	Owner Occupied Change (Absolute)	Rate (%) of change	% of occupied units that are owner occupied, 2000	% of occupied units that are owner occupied, 2010
Caledonia	890	7.6	734	8.6	72.9	73.6
Essex	216	8.3	188	9.1	79.6	80.2
Orleans	874	8.4	816	10.5	74.1	75.6

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Census

Owner-occupancy rates are lowest in the region's urban centers, where more rental housing is likely to be found: St. Johnsbury is 56.5%, Lyndon 68%, and Newport City 54.6%. It should be noted, however, that Newport City saw a net loss of 231 occupied units over the past decade. Despite modest gains in regional owner-occupancy rates from the previous decade, many communities experienced a decrease. In Caledonia County, only Burke, Danville, Hardwick, Peacham, Sheffield, St. Johnsbury, and Sutton saw modest increase in owner-occupancy rates from the previous decade. In Orleans County, eight communities saw a drop in owner-occupancy rates: Albany, Craftsbury, Derby, Glover, Jay, Lowell, Newport Town, and Westfield.

Household and Family Characteristics

As is with the rest of Vermont, there has been significant shift in the makeup of the region's households that may have a profound impact on the region's housing supply and demand. The US Census Bureau defines a "household" as all the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. A "family" is a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Both household sizes and family sizes are shrinking in the Northeast Kingdom (Figure 5.11)



There are three drivers behind this trend: 1) a smaller percentage of family households from the previous decade, 2) a net loss of families with children under the age of 18 from the previous decade, and 3) an increase in the share of non-family households (Table 5.6).

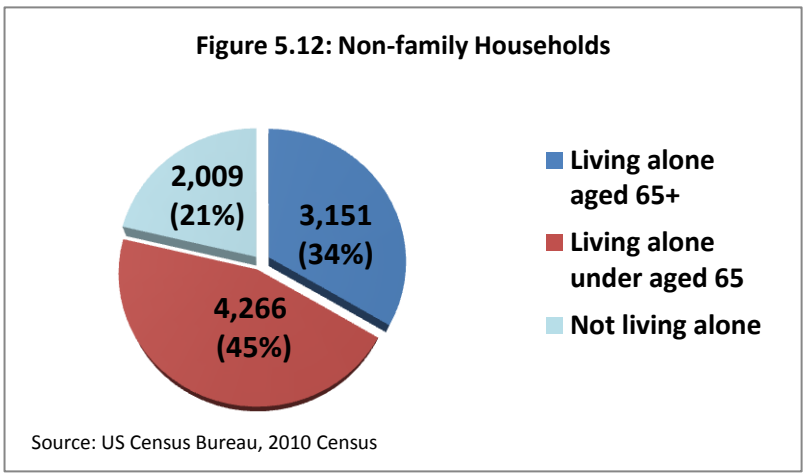
Table 5.6: Households and Families in the Northeast Kingdom, 2000-2010

	Total Households	Families	% of Households	Families with Children < Age 18	Non-Family Households	Householder Living Alone
2000	24,711	16,861	68.2%	7,962	7,850	6,248
2010	26,691	17,265	64.7%	6,898	9,426	7,417

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Census

Studies show that married couple households tends to have higher rates of home ownership due to a number of factors, such as dual incomes, better access to credit, and cost-efficiencies from sharing resources. According to the 2010 Census there are the 13,389 married couple households in the Northeast Kingdom – the same number as in the previous decade – yet they now account for less than 50% of all households.

Non-family households now account for more than 35% of all households in the Northeast Kingdom, up from just under 28% in 1990. The overwhelming majority of non-family households are individuals who live alone. More than a third of those who live alone are 65 years or older. (Figure 5.12). This sector of the region's population grew by more than 15% over the previous decade.



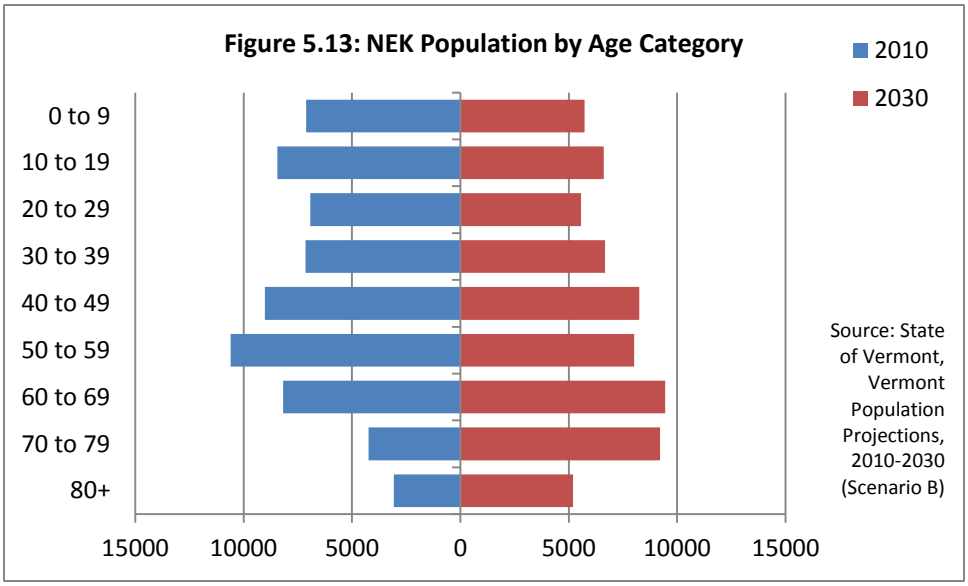
Aging Population

According to the 2010 Census, about just under a quarter of the Northeast Kingdom's population is aged 65 and older. By 2030 this age group could account for nearly 40% of the population. In 2013, the State of Vermont released two sets of population projections:

A) Based on more robust growth and migration rates seen in the 1990s, and

B) Based on slower migration rates seen in the 2000s.

Both sets of projections show a decrease in every age group under 60 and an increase in every age group over 60. This demographic shift could have a dramatic impact on future housing demands, such as smaller, lower maintenance homes that are located closer to goods and services.



Successful aging in place requires "liveable communities," ones that are characterized by safe, appropriate, accessible and affordable housing located in walkable neighborhoods with convenient access to goods and services. Newport City has taken on this challenge by receiving Vermont's first "Age-Friendly Community" designation from AARP. An advisory council has recently completed an exhaustive survey of the residents in Newport City and Orleans County age 45 and up. Among their findings:

Orleans county residents have lived in Orleans County and their town for a long time and are likely to remain there as they get older. 53% have lived in Orleans County for at least 45 years *and* 53% have lived in their current town for at least 25 years. More than a third said it was extremely or very important to stay in their town as they aged, and 71% said they are not very or not at all likely to move outside of Orleans County after retirement.[1]

Existing housing supply in the region is not likely to meet the needs of an aging population. According to the AARP Liveability Index, less than 3% of housing units nationwide provide "basic passage," which is determined by doorways and hallways that are at least 36" wide, floors with no steps between rooms, and at least one entry level bedroom and bathroom. NVDA encourages municipalities to inventory existing housing stock at the town level.

Safety of Housing Stock

Fire poses the greatest safety risk to the region's housing supply. According to the 2014 Annual Report of the State Fire Marshal, first responders were called to 317 structure fires in the Northeast Kingdom in the past year. According to statewide data, about 80% of structure fires involve residences. The region's senior population is particularly vulnerable. Over the past four years 68% of fire deaths in Vermont have involved individuals over the age of 60. There a number of factors that exacerbate the risk of fire in the Northeast Kingdom:

- **Age of housing stock**: The region's housing stock is relatively old and more likely to be noncompliant with fire and safety codes. About 36% of the region's housing stock was built before 1950, compared to just under 31% statewide. (American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates) Additionally, Vermont Housing Conservation Board reports that more than a fifth of the state's mobile homes were built before 1976, predating federal safety standards, such as prohibiting louvered windows that obstruct escape from fire.

[1] AARP Research, "Successful Aging in Orleans County: The 2014 Survey of Community Residents Age 45+ in Orleans County, Vermont," April 2015

- **Scattered rural development**: Rural low-density development is likely to lead to greater response times.
- **Long cold winters**: The State Fire Marshal reports that 43% of residential structure fires in 2014 were caused by heating appliances. Rising heating costs may force lower income individuals to turn to unsafe or improperly installed heating alternatives.

Towns do have the authority to address unsafe housing conditions by enforcing rental housing codes. Typically enforced by a town health officer or fire chief, local codes may address fire safety hazards, in addition to lead, mold, sewer, and water. Lyndon and St. Johnsbury have local rental housing codes.

Junky yards, accumulation of household debris, and hoarding create nuisances and reduce property values, but they also pose public health hazards and threaten drinking water supplies. NVDA regularly receives requests from municipalities for assistance with enforcement, which can require a degree of tenacity and perseverance. In 2009 the regulation of salvage yards – the outdoor storage of junk, motor vehicles, metal scrap, appliances, etc. – was delegated to the Agency of Natural Resources. ANR's criteria for jurisdiction is *any* place or outdoor storage or junk, regardless of whether the activity is connected with a business.

Municipalities may adopt salvage or junk ordinances that meet or exceed ANR standards. They may also request enforcement assistance from ANR's Dept. of Environmental Conservation Salvage Yard Program. ANR will evaluate and prioritize requests based on a number of factors, including whether of the municipality has a duly adopted salvage yard ordinance in place. To date only a handful of communities have such ordinances: Concord, Ryegate, Barton, and Burke.

Flooding and flood-related losses can be financially ruinous for any homeowner, but the region's lower income populations may be most vulnerable. Older housing, which is often located in traditional centers of development, may be more likely to be located near rivers. To date, NVDA has assisted two communities with FEMA buyouts of two repetitive loss properties. Mobile home dwellers are also more prone to flood-related losses. Statewide, about 15% of all properties affected by Tropical Storm Irene were mobile homes. Two mobile home parks in the region –in Lyndon and Concord – have lots that are either located in mapped inundation areas or in areas close to rivers and streams prone to fluvial erosion. Most of the region's flood maps are paper, which makes it difficult to quantify the extent of risk to residential properties. NVDA is likely to develop better data as individual communities develop Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. (See Flood Resilience Chapter.)

EB-5 Investments and Potential Impact on Housing Demand

In the fall of 2012 an infusion of funds from the federal EB-5 Visa program created the potential for significant economic growth in the Northeast Kingdom. Current project include:

- AnC BIO Vermont: An 84,000 square foot biotech manufacturing facility located on a 40 acre research campus in Newport City is currently under construction. At full capacity, the employer is expected to about 500 people, of which 150 will earn salaries of $75,000 and up.
- Expansion to the Newport State Airport in Coventry. Associated with the airport expansion are plans to construct warehousing facilities, as well as a 50,000 square-foot airplane assembly plant at the airport, which is expected to bring a number of skilled jobs to the region.
- Resort development in Jay and in Burke. A 116-unit hotel and conference center is planned for Burke Mountain, which will draw increased numbers of tourists. Similarly in Jay, new ski amenities, as well as a 100 new housing units and an 84-unit hotel, will draw more visitors to the region.
- Renaissance Block: An entire city block in Newport City was recently demolished. In its place will be a four-story mixed-use development with anchor businesses on the first two floors and short- and long-term residential suites on the upper two.

While these developments will invariably bring more people to the region, it is difficult to accurately predict the total expected in-migration and resulting demand on housing. Early estimates for total direct, indirect, and induced job creation indicated about 2,000 direct jobs, 3,000 total jobs (which includes indirect and induced jobs), and a net migration to the region as high as 4,500. A workforce development study released in July 2013 attributed about 1,100 new hospitality and tourism jobs related to ongoing resort development and the Renaissance block. The majority of these jobs would be hourly, pay less than $20.00 an hour, and require minimal post-secondary education.

The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development studied the impacts of Jay Peak investments from 2008 to 2013 (a value of about $250 million). The study did not find evidence of net migration (in fact current population estimates indicate a net loss). However, there were indicators that more wage income was coming from Orleans County[2]. The next level of development, however, involves the creation of skilled manufacturing and technology jobs, which may lead to net migration. Where newcomers might choose to live remains unclear, but the region will see an increased demand for housing at all income levels, more visitors, and increased spending power. So far the region has not experienced an increase in annual housing starts based permitting figures on privately owned residential housing units from the U.S. Census Bureau, those figures are highly unreliable because of inconsistent reporting from towns. A review of recent Act 250 permitting activity related to housing shows that as many as 409 new housing units have either recently been created or may be established in the next 10 years in Orleans County. The majority of these units created are market rate, with about 20 identified as affordable. Much of the development involves the creation of single-family units with some major exceptions:

- Newport City: Renovation of a 1920 hospital structure into 23 units.
- Newport City/Derby: 126 townhomes and 123 single family homes.
- Derby: 44 senior housing units in 8 buildings on a 12.2 acre tract off Route 5.
- Derby: Five multi-family residential buildings with four units each.

II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM

A household's total housing costs should be 30% or less of the household income in order to be considered affordable. While the 30% rule applies to housing costs for all income brackets, Vermont statute defines **affordable housing** as households with an income below 80% of their county median household income who pay no more than 30% of their income on total housing costs. By statutory definition, housing costs for home owners include principal, interest, taxes, insurance, and association fees. For renters, costs include rent, utilities, and association fees. For a housing development to be considered affordable, at least 20 percent of all the units or five units (whichever is greater) have to be considered affordable and must be subject to covenants or restrictions to keep the units affordable for at least 15 years.

In the Northeast Kingdom, traditional forms of affordable housing are mobile homes, multi- units dwellings (three units or more), and accessory unit dwellings.

[2] Impacts of Growth on the Northeast Kingdom, October 3, 2014

Mobile homes and Mobile Home Parks

Mobile homes are the more prevalent form of affordable housing in the Northeast Kingdom. Overall they comprise roughly 10% of the region's housing stock (compared to 7% statewide), but even higher concentrations can be found in the most rural communities with very small or no centers of development.

Table 5.7: Mobile Homes as a % of Total Housing Units, (20% or more)					
Caledonia County		Essex County		Orleans County	
Municipality	%	Municipality	%	Municipality	%
Stannard	28%	East Haven	23%	Coventry	34%
Sutton	23%	Lunenberg	20%	Brownington	23%
Sheffield	20%				
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey					

Although mobile homes are a significant source of affordable housing in our region, the lower price tag may come at the expense of energy efficiency: Vermont Energy Efficiency Investment Corporation estimates that mobile home owners spend about 66% more of their income on energy costs than owners of stick-built properties. The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) recently concluded a pilot project to site Vermod high-performance single-wide mobile homes. When equipped with a solar panel, these energy efficient homes are nearly net-zero. To date there are two Vermod homes in the Evergreen Manor Mobile Home Park in Hardwick.

Vermont statute defines a **mobile home park** as a parcel (or contiguous lots) of land that contains three or more mobile homes. Subdivided lots with more than two mobile homes are also a mobile home park when the lots are owned or controlled by the same person even if there are only one or two mobile homes on each lot. There are 22 mobile home parks in the region. All lot rents run well below the statewide median of $310 (Caledonia $255, Essex, $200, and Orleans $225), and vacancy rates run above the statewide average of just under 5% (Caledonia is 7.5%, Essex 7.1%, and Orleans 7.8%) When a park is slated for closure, Vermont law requires the owner to give sufficient notice to residents so that a purchase of the park – coordinated among the residents or with a non-profit housing provider – may be established in order to keep the park open. There are four such parks in the region now operated by non-profits.

Table 5.8: Mobile Home Parks in the Northeast Kingdom						
County	**Town**	**Ownership**	**Lots**	**Vacant Lots**	**MHs Owned by MHP**	**MHs Owned by Lease-holder**
Caledonia	Burke (Glenwood)	For-profit	33	3	0	6
Caledonia	Hardwick (BCP MHP)	For-profit	7	0	0	6
Caledonia	Hardwick (Evergreen Manor)	Non-profit (Lamoille Housing Partnership)	32	3	2	20
Caledonia	Hardwick (Strong's MHP)	For-profit	3	0	1	2
Caledonia	Lyndon (Maple Ridge MHP)	Non-profit (Rural Edge)	41	0	0	41
Caledonia	Lyndon (Northern Hill Estates)	For-profit	29	0	1	28
Caledonia	Lyndon (Riverview Estates)	For-profit	33	1	5	28
Caledonia	Lyndon (Woodland Heights)	For-profit	34	0	1	33
Caledonia	St. Johnsbury (Green Lantern MHP)	For-profit	51	14	0	35
Caledonia	St. Johnsbury (McGill Avenue MHP)	For-profit	10	2	6	2
Caledonia	St. Johnsbury (Mt. Pleasant MHP)	For-profit	92	0	31	61
Caledonia	St. Johnsbury (Oak Street MHP)	For-profit	8	5	0	2
Essex	Canaan (Canaan MHP)	For-profit	18	0	0	18
Essex	Concord (North Concord Trailer Park)	For-profit	24	3	2	19
Orleans	Barton (Fairview Estates)	For-profit	32	4	4	26
Orleans	Coventry (Nadeau MHP)	For-profit	16	9	0	7
Orleans	Coventry (Nadeau MHP)	For-profit	8	2	1	5
Orleans	Derby (Derby Center Mobile Court)	For-profit	11	0	11	0
Orleans	Derby (Derby MHP)	Non-profit (Housing Foundation)	96	1	0	95
Orleans	Derby (Shattuck Hill MHP)	Non-profit (Rural Edge)	47	1	0	48
Orleans	Derby (Tetrault MHP)	For-profit	2	0	0	2
Orleans	Irasburg (Piette's MHP)	For-profit	6	0	1	5
		Total	**633**	**48**	**66**	**489**

Source: Vt. Dept. of Housing and Community Development: Vermont Mobile Home Program 2013 Registry and Mobile Home Parks Report (Published January 2014)

Multi-unit housing

According to latest American Community Survey 5-year estimates, multi-unit housing stock is largely concentrated in the Northeast Kingdom's population centers. Jay and Burke also have a high concentration of multi-unit dwellings, but these are generally associated with resort populations. Multi-unit dwellings are relatively scarce in remaining municipalities, and many have none at all.

Table 5.9: Multi-Unit Dwellings as a % of Total Housing Units, (10% or more)					
Caledonia County		Essex County		Orleans County	
Municipality	%	Municipality	%	Municipality	%
St. Johnsbury	34%	Brighton	13%	Jay*	34%
Lyndon	21%	Canaan	10%	Newport City	23%
Burke*	19%				
Hardwick	10%				
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey *Likely associated with resort populations.					

Accessory dwelling units

Accessory dwelling units (also called "mother-in-law suites") are dispersed throughout the region. In 2004 a change in statute required accessory unit dwellings to be treated as a permitted use of an owner-occupied single family dwelling. However, not all towns in the region have zoning, and these developments may be inconsistently tracked and reported in lister data. Most recent American Community Survey five-year estimates indicate that the majority of "1-unit attached" dwellings are located in Caledonia and Orleans County (132 and 109 respectively) and that there are only 10 such units in Essex County.

Subsidized housing

The term **subsidized housing** refers to government-sponsored economic assistance to help alleviate the cost of housing (usually rental) for people with low to moderate incomes. Funding typically originates from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and follows one of two models:

1. Project-based assistance: Where the subsidy is assigned to a specific housing unit built, developed, and/or managed specifically for the purpose of accepting low-income tenants.
2. Tenant-based assistance: Where the recipient receives financial assistance (usually called a **voucher**) to help cover the costs of any qualified housing unit. The housing unit may be privately developed and it does not have to have been specifically developed for housing low-income tenants. Because vouchers provide low-income recipients with a range of housing choices, they may, in theory, support efforts to integrate disadvantaged families into mixed-income communities. This mobility may help to break the cycle of poverty for future generations. A recent study has indicated that young children (about 8 years old) whose families had been given housing vouchers increased the child's total lifetime earnings by about $302,000.[3] Private landlords may refuse to accept vouchers, but landlords who have received low-income housing tax credits (see below) are required to accept them. How tax credits are allocated may ultimately determine (or restrict) housing choices for voucher recipients.

[3] Chetty, Hendren, and Katz: "The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment," Harvard University, May 2015

Table 5.10: Subsidized Housing Units by Town											
Caledonia County				Essex County				Orleans County			
	Family	Senior only	Vouchers*		Family	Senior Only	Vouchers*		Family	Senior Only	Vouchers*
Barnet	0	0	1	Brighton	23	32	19	Albany	0	0	1
Burke	0	15	3	Canaan	0	12	1	Barton	24	52	12
Danville	0	12	4	Concord	0	10	2	Coventry	0	7	0
Groton	18	9	2	East Haven	0	0	1	Craftsbury	0	24	1
Hardwick	29	30	20	Guildhall	0	0	1	Derby	23	11	29
Lyndon	41	61	19					Glover	0	12	2
Newark	0	0	1					Greensboro	0	10	1
Peacham	0	6	2					Irasburg	0	10	0
Ryegate	7	0	2					Newport City	55	76	61
St. Johnsbury	195	114	134					Newport Town	0	0	2
Waterford	0	1	0					Troy	0	14	7
TOTAL	**290**	**248**	**188**	**TOTAL**	**23**	**54**	**77**	**TOTAL**	**102**	**216**	**116**
Source: Vermont Housing Data (www.housingdata.org), accessed May 2015; *Vermont State Housing Authority, April 2015											

Workforce Housing

Workforce housing is a term that has been used increasingly by planners, governments, and organizations that advocate for housing policy. It is typically used to describe housing for those who are gainfully employed in occupations that are essential to a community, such as teachers, healthcare workers, first responders, as well as occupations that may pay relatively lower incomes, such as food services, retail, hospitality and tourism. Workforce housing typically does NOT include age-restricted developments. Rather, it is:

- affordable to the local workforce (with or without a subsidy);
- sited in or reasonably near the place of employment; and
- usually available to households that earn up to 120 percent of the area median income.

Most HUD programs are limited to low-income recipients (up to 80% of the area median income), which precludes opportunities for funding workforce housing.

Affordable Housing Partners

The Northeast Kingdom is served by two non-profit housing development corporations. Rural Edge (formerly known as Gilman Housing) serves all three counties and currently manages about 500 flat rate and income-based housing units throughout the region. Its Homebuyer Education Program provides financial literacy counseling to about 200 individuals a year. Lamoille Housing Partnership also develops and rehabilitates properties for rent or purchase by low- to moderate-income residents. Based in Morrisville they also serve Hardwick. Both non-profits manage mobile home parks in the region.

Additionally, Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA) provides assistance with locating emergency housing, electrical disconnect, and crisis fuel assistance throughout the NEK in Newport, St. Johnsbury, Canaan, and Island Pond.

Housing Tax Credits

Housing Tax Credits (also known as federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) have produced most of Vermont's affordable rental housing developed since the program's inception in 1987. Credits reduce federal tax liability for a 10-year period. Qualified recipients must agree to certain operating restrictions and reporting and monitoring requirements for at least 15 years. Vermont's allocation of federal credit is capped at $2.68 million. Vermont also has state affordable housing tax credits, and $400,000 is available annually for affordable rental housing projects. Both federal and state tax credits can be sold in order to create equity. Tax credits are awarded through a highly competitive process administered by the Vermont Housing Finance Authority. Funding rounds are consistently oversubscribed. Allocation is based on the annual Qualified Allocation Plan, which establishes priorities for awarding credits. Since 2004 nearly $1.5 million in tax credits have been awarded to projects in the Northeast Kingdom to acquire, develop, or rehabilitate 187 housing units, in St. Johnsbury, Hardwick, Newport, Glover, and Groton. Local partners and sponsors have been Rural Edge, Lamoille Housing Partnership, and Housing Vermont.

Table 5.11: Housing Tax Credits in the Northeast Kingdom, 2004 to Present

Year	Project	Local Partner/Sponsor	Location	Type	Credits	Amount	# Units
2004	Moose River Housing	Gilman Housing Trust*/Housing Vermont	St. Johnsbury	Acquisition, Rehabilitation	28	$163,594	28
2006	Groton Redevelopment	Gilman Housing Trust*/Housing Vermont	Groton	Rehabilitation	18	$44,000	18
2007	Passumpsic North & South	Housing Vermont	St. Johnsbury	Acquisition, Rehabilitation	28	$95,000	28
2007	Hardwick Family Housing	Lamoille Housing Partnership/Housing Vermont	Hardwick	Rehabilitation	8	$39,065	8
2007	Bemis Block	Lamoille Housing Partnership/Housing Vermont	Hardwick	Rehabilitation	14	$98,000	14
2007	Glover Senior Housing	Gilman Housing Trust*	Glover	New Construction, Rehabilitation	12	$75,755	12
2009	Newport Senior Housing	Gilman Housing Trust*	Newport	Acquisition, Rehabilitation	13	$95,655	13
2011	Newport Family Housing	Gilman Housing Trust*/Housing Vermont	Newport	New Construction, Acquisition, Rehabilitation	21	$390,000	21
2012	St. Johnsbury Historic Green Rehab	Gilman Housing Trust*/Housing Vermont	St. Johnsbury	Rehabilitation	29	$350,000	29
2013	Maple Street Senior Apartments	Housing Vermont	Hardwick	Acquisition, Rehabilitation	16	$54,200	16
2014	Maple Street Senior Apartments	Housing Vermont	Hardwick	Acquisition, Rehabilitation	16	$61,199	16
2014	Maple Street Senior Apartments	Housing Vermont	Hardwick	Acquisition, Rehabilitation	16	$25,000	16

Source: Vermont Housing Finance Authority. (*Now called Rural Edge)

Applications for credits are evaluated according to a two-tiered weighting process. Top-tier priorities are rehabilitation or infill new construction where vacancy rates are 3.5% or less; family housing, location in a designated downtown or village center; and removal of blight. Mixed-income housing development is considered a second-tier priority.

III. CHALLENGES TO AFFORDABILITY

Affordability in the region is measured through American Community Survey, and through housing wages determined by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition. HUD also provides a methodology that factors in the cost of commuting. By any measure, the region's supply of affordable and workforce housing is inadequate to meet the needs of the region. Lagging incomes, scarcity of jobs, and aging housing stock are contributing factors. Additional challenges are identified below.

According to most recent American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, more than a third of homeowners in the Northeast Kingdom pay more than 30% of their income on costs for properties with a mortgage, and at least 20% pay more than 30% on a properties that are owned free and clear. More than half of renters in the region pay more than 30% of income on housing. Compared to statewide averages, housing in Orleans County is more likely to be unaffordable, and rental housing throughout the region is more likely to be unaffordable.

Table 5.12: % of Housing Units That Exceed 30% of Household Income

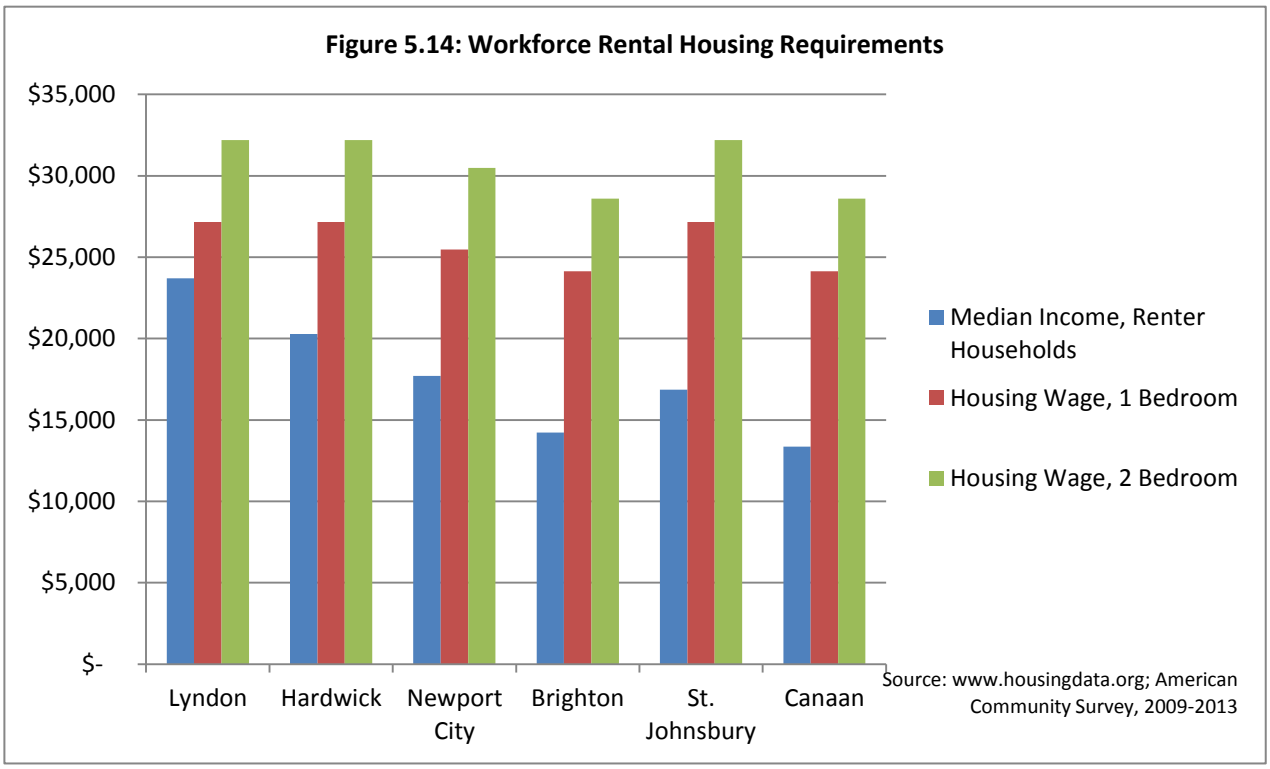
	Selected Monthly Owner Costs* as a % of Household Income		Gross Rent**
	Housing Units w/ Mortgage	Housing Units w/o Mortgage	Occupied Units Paying Rent
Caledonia	34.6%	20.1%	60.2%
Essex	37.4%	21.1%	59.6%
Orleans	40.3%	27.6%	54.9%
Vermont	37.0%	22.9%	52.4%

Source: US Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-Year Averages, 2009-2013

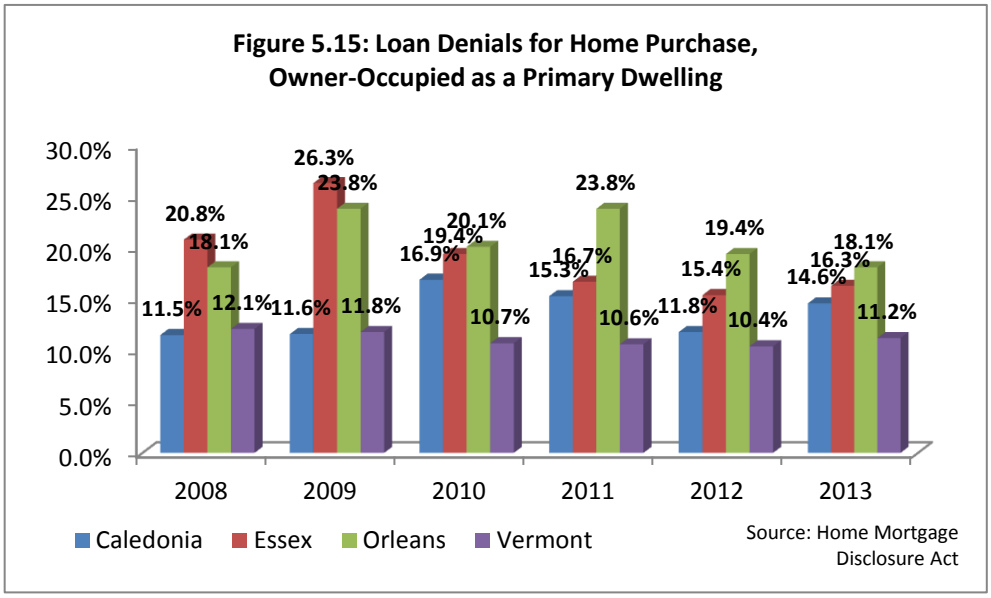
* Selected monthly owner costs are the sum of payments for mortgages, deeds, contracts to purchase, or similar debts on the property. It also include property taxes, insurance, utilities, fuels, and where appropriate condominium and association fees or mobile home costs.

** Gross rent includes the estimated average monthly cost of utilities and fuel.

Median household incomes for renters fall short of housing wages, the income needed to afford an apartment at HUD's Fair Market Rate (FMR). HUD's FMRs are published annually by bedroom size and are for a modest apartment, costing about 10% less than the area median rents. Note: Figure 5.14 includes only communities where multi-unit structures account for at least 10% of housing stock and excludes Jay and Burke, where multi-unit housing is more likely to be related to resort development.



Credit Access: Homebuyers – particularly first-time ones – may face considerable barriers to get out of the rental cycle. To afford a home costing $130,000, the average homebuyer would need a household income of $38,470 and $11,279 cash on hand at closing.4 Lending programs vary, but in general, a 20% down payment is required to avoid private mortgage insurance, and debt-to-income ratios are capped at 43%. Manufactured housing can be harder to finance because they depreciate faster. Loan terms for a used manufactured unit, for example, will be limited to 10 to 15 years. According to five years of data from the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, prospective home buyers in the Northeast Kingdom are more likely to be denied a mortgage. The most cited reason was debt-to-income ratio.



[4] Home Mortgage Calculator, www.housingdata.org.

The Hidden Cost of Rural Living: Travel is another cost driver for housing in the Northeast Kingdom. Travel from households to destinations (like work) varies on the location of the home, and is considered affordable when it accounts for 15% of household income or less. Combined, housing and transportation costs are considered unaffordable when they account for more than 45% of household income. According the HUD Location Affordability Index, transportation accounts for about a third of household income in the region. Even in St. Johnsbury/Lyndon and Newport City – the regional urban center – transportation accounts for 28% and 32% of household income respectively.

Table 5.13: HUD Location Affordability by County (for Renters and Owners)

County	Annual Income for Median-Income Family (4 people, 2 commuters)	Average Cost of Housing as a % of Income	Avg. Cost of Transportation as a % of Income	Location Affordability
Caledonia	$44,435	**26% --** $11,553	**32% --** $14,219	**58% --** $25,772
Essex	$40,842	**25% --** $10,214	**37% --** $15,116	**62% --** $25,330
Orleans	$41,618	**26%** -- $10,821	**35%** -- $14,566	**61%** -- $25,387

Source: HUD Location Affordability Portal, Version 2 (http://locationaffordability.info/)

Mismatched housing supply: The region's housing stock is mainly single-family with 3 bedrooms or more, with more than a third sited on large lots. It falls short of the needs of financially strained first-time buyers and aging baby boomers, who may be looking for smaller homes located near jobs, services, and amenities. The region's downtowns and village centers could provide opportunities for more dense development and lower land costs, but most of the region's village centers lack off-site water and sewer to support dense development.

Perceptions about affordable housing: One of the most common objections to affordable housing development is that it will decrease values of surrounding properties. For the most part these concerns are unfounded. The Center for Housing Policy has reviewed numerous studies on the impact of affordable housing on property values. Developments that are well managed and maintained and attractively designed to blend with surrounding neighborhood properties are more likely to have no effect or even a positive effect on nearby properties. Rehabilitation of distressed properties for affordable housing may positively impact property values as well. However, large concentrations of affordable housing should be avoided. Several researchers have found that concentrated affordable housing developments were more likely to have a negative impact on neighboring properties. *As long as it is not overly concentrated,* siting affordable housing developments in strong neighborhoods with high home values and low poverty rates is unlikely to have adverse effects on neighboring property values.

These findings affirm the trend toward mixed income housing and communities.[5] Mixed-income housing is central to any smart growth strategy because it can support a more diverse population and achieve a more equitable distribution of households of all income levels.[6]

NVDA supports the development of affordable housing that is well managed and maintained and is context-sensitive to existing concentrations of poverty and surrounding property values. Mixed-income housing offers numerous social and economic benefits to a community by preventing residential segregation and promoting vitality of urban and village centers. The vast majority of residential development in the Northeast Kingdom has occurred outside of established development centers over the past decade, running counter to the long-

[5] The Center for Housing Policy. *"Don't Put it Here!" Does Affordable Housing Cause Nearby Property Values to Decline?"* Insights from Housing Policy Research (Policy Brief Series published between 2008 and 2011.)
[6] Smart Growth Online (http://smartgrowth.org/smart-growth-principles/)

range planning goal of maintaining the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside. Reversing this trend will require a sustained effort that supports a range of attractive housing opportunities and choices – for all income levels and age groups -- both in and immediately adjacent to our region's downtowns and village centers. NVDA supports housing policies and programs that incentivize mixed-income housing development, avoids concentrations of poverty, and supports vibrant and livable neighborhoods that are near existing services, amenities and employment opportunities.

IV. TAKING ACTION: TOOLS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO PROMOTE AFFORDABLE AND WORKFORCE HOUSING

Affirmatively furthering fair housing: The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, family status, or disability in the sale, rental, or advertisement of housing. Vermont statute extends this prohibition to include discrimination based on age, marital status, sexual orientation, or reception of public assistance. 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, the statute that regulates planning and zoning, contains requirements and provisions to protect and promote affordable housing. 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.
- Residential care and group homes serving up to eight individuals must be considered a single-family residential use of property unless it is located within 1,000 feet of another such home.
- Accessory dwelling units (one-bedroom apartments 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.

Promoting density: Enabling dense, compact development near downtowns and village centers may reduce land costs for new housing. Although density may be limited by lack of off-site water and sewer, municipalities with zoning should not require minimum lot sizes larger than what is necessary to accommodate on-site water and septic systems in areas in village centers. Traditional opposition to dense residential development is often based on preconceived notions of crowded, monotonous development with little or no privacy. These objections can be overcome with attractive, context sensitive site designs that fit with a rural setting. Design charrettes and buildout analyses might help residents better visualize appropriate housing development.

Regulatory incentives and inclusionary zoning: Planned unit development is authorized in Vermont statute to provide for compact, pedestrian-oriented development especially in and adjacent to downtowns and village centers. It is also a popular regulatory tool for promoting affordable housing. Provisions for planned unit development may include "density bonuses" to encourage affordable and mixed-income projects. Municipalities also may provide bonuses to homes with smaller footprints (e.g. 1,500 feet or less) or universal access design. A number of communities in the region provide for planned unit development or some form of residential clustering with density incentives. There is no statutory limit to density bonuses, but experience has shown that a minimum of at least 50% density bonus may be needed to incentivize developers. Other zoning incentives may include waiver of parking requirements and permitting fees. Unlike density bonuses, **inclusionary zoning** is mandatory, and developers are required to build a percentage of affordable units in developments of a certain scale. As with impact fees, inclusionary zoning should be based on clearly stated local housing policies and well documented housing needs.

Vermont Community Development Program Grants: Municipalities with duly adopted plans may apply for Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) grants to support affordable housing, which is one of the program's top priorities for funding. Because municipalities in the Northeast Kingdom lack the administrative and fiscal resources to develop and affordable housing, they often subgrant to qualified housing partners to develop and rehabilitate affordable housing stock. Municipalities that receive VCDP grants must complete fair housing trainings that are offered throughout the year. Recent VCDP recipients include the Town of Hardwick (Maple Street Senior Apartments, 16 units) and the Town of Lyndon (Northeast Kingdom Revolving Loan Fund, 38 units).

Local incentives: In addition to low-interest loans (such as a revolving loan fund capitalized by the VCDP grant), municipalities may be able to encourage housing investments through tax stabilization or abatement programs (e.g. hold the tax rate for a rehabilitated property to its pre-construction value for five years or more).

Downtown and Village Center Designation: Qualifying municipalities may pursue downtown or village center designation. Once conferred, the designation is valid for five years. The primary benefit of the program is eligibility for state tax credits for historic rehabilitations, façade improvements, and code improvements (including installation of elevators and sprinkler systems). Income-producing properties (including mixed-use and multi-family structures) can be eligible. Unlike federal tax credits, state tax credits are relatively accessible to private property owners because they are easy to administer and sell. To date, the Northeast Kingdom has received nearly $3.1 million in tax credits for 16 projects that included some form of housing, including market-rate housing units. Although tax credits are awarded annually, the Northeast Kingdom has been under-represented in some funding rounds. It is possible that property owners are still not aware of the benefits of Downtown and Village Center designation. Additional benefits of designation include priority consideration for grant program (such as VCDP funds) and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. (For a map of existing designated Downtowns and Village Centers, see Future Land Use in the Land Use Section.)

Sales Tax Reallocation: Municipalities and developers of qualified projects in designated downtowns may jointly apply for a reallocation of sales taxes on construction materials. If awarded, reallocated funds must be used by the municipality to support the project (e.g. sidewalks, stormwater management, streetscape improvements, etc.

Neighborhood Development Area Designation: This adjunct to the Downtown and Village Center designation encourages municipalities and developers to plan for new infill housing in pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods within walking distance from the designation areas (1/2 mile from downtown and ¼ mile from village center). Incentives and benefits include exemption from Act 250 for qualified "mixed-income" projects, and for projects that don't qualify for a full exemption, a 50% discount on application fees. Waste water review from the Agency of Natural Resources can be capped at $50.00, and projects can be exempt from land gains tax. "Mixed-income" housing is defined as:

- Owner-occupied: At least 15% of the housing units have an initial price that is equal to or less than the Vermont Housing Finance Authority price limit ($300,000 for a one-unit property, $350,000 for a two-unit), OR at least 20% of the housing units have an initial price that is equal to or less than the VFHA limit.
- Rental Housing: At least 20% of the units are affordable (i.e. not costing for than 30% of gross household annual income) to households not earning more than 80% of the county median income. Affordability is secured for at least 20 years.

To qualify for a neighborhood development area designation, the municipality has to incorporate pedestrian design into local planning and zoning (i.e. "complete streets") and allow for a density of at least four detached single family dwelling units per acre. Newport and St. Johnsbury officials have explored the feasibility of new neighborhood designation. NVDA supports further exploration of this program in order to incent the

establishment of pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that offer a full array of housing choices – affordable, workforce, and market rate.

Reducing local permitting restrictions: Revisiting zoning regulations and waiving restrictions such as parking requirements and height of structures may be an inexpensive way for a community to encourage housing in appropriate areas. Permit fees may be reduced or eliminated in some cases. In some communities, where zoning permit fees are not very expensive, eliminating permitting requirements for single- or two-family homes may be appropriate for areas where dense development is encouraged.

Housing Studies: Municipalities with duly adopted plans are required to include a "recommended program for addressing low and moderate income persons' housing needs as identified by the regional planning commission." Local planning commissions can gain greater insight into housing needs through studies that quantify local housing needs, determine capacities for greater densities (through GIS-based buildouts) and examine potential impacts of housing policies on property values. Studies may also identify appropriate areas for rehabilitation and new infill housing development, such as brownfields or abandoned, derelict, or underutilized properties.

Local Housing Commissions: Municipalities are authorized by statute to create advisory commissions composed of individuals with expertise or interest in specific areas such as historic preservation, design, and housing. Such commissions can assist and advise the planning commission and other officials on housing studies, as well as policies and programs to further affordable housing and improve housing stock.

Local Rental Codes and Local Enforcement: State rental housing codes help to promote safe and healthy living conditions. Communities may take this further by enacting local codes and create local registries, or they may enforce state codes locally.

Derelict/Abandoned Buildings Ordinances: Local enforcement can help to protect neighborhoods from blight. Some communities have established regulations requiring owners of vacant properties to register them. (http://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/vacant_property_registry/index.html). Springfield, Vermont recently passed an ordinance that establishes a fund and allows the municipality to tear down properties that are either abandoned or deteriorated if the property owners has failed to take action.

Charrettes/Master Planning: Downtown master plans (like in Barre and St. Albans) may help to inspire and attract private investors to new housing opportunities. Newport City's Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team set off an intense two-day envisioning process that ultimately led to the implementation of form-based codes and removed barriers to vertical and infill development. Although planning at this level can be expensive, grant programs are available to cover the cost. (See below.)

USDA Loans and Grants: US Department of Agriculture offers home purchase and repair assistance. Individuals who earn up to $32,500 a year (or for a family of four, up to $52,700) may be eligible for the USDA Direct Home Ownership program. Loan terms can be as long as 33 years, and interest rates vary from 1 percent to 3.65 percent. No down payment is required. A family of four making up to $77,200 a year may qualify for a USDA guarantee on a bank loan, which enables a prospective homeowner to purchase a home at a low interest with no money down. USDA also offers home repair loans to make homes safer and more accessible (e.g. wiring, roof, energy efficiency, ramps and other accessibility modifications). Home repair loans are only 1 percent with a 20 year term. Seniors and very low-income individuals may even qualify a direct grant of up to $7,500 to improve livability. USDA grants and loans are made directly to qualifying individuals; however, municipalities, local planning commissions, local housing commissions, and NVDA can help to raise awareness of this underutilized resource.

Other Grant Programs: Municipal Planning Grants are available annually to communities with a confirmed planning process. Eligible activities include zoning bylaw updates, planning for downtown and village center revitalization and redevelopment. (A Municipal Planning Grant helped to cover the cost of the Newport R/UDAT.) VTrans also offers grant opportunities (Strong Communities Better Connection) to help communities integrate transportation with land use to create safe, convenient and more walkable

communities. Downtown Transportation Fund provides grant funds for public capital improvements in Designated Downtowns, including sidewalks and streetscape improvements.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR HOUSING

HOUSING GOALS

- An adequate supply of safe, attractive, and energy-efficient housing will be available to the region's residents in a proportionate balance of affordable, workforce, and market rate housing.
- Existing housing stock – particularly that located in downtowns, village centers, and older neighborhoods in existing centers of development – will be preserved.
- Overall quality, safety, and energy efficiency of existing housing stock in the region will improve.
- Housing will be available in a variety of types that meet the needs of all income groups and ages, and will be located near employment, services, commercial, civic, and recreational uses.
- Partnerships with regional housing and human service providers will be strengthened, allowing for more effective service provision.
- New housing development in downtowns and villages will conform to existing traditional patterns.
- Municipalities will be supported in determining local housing needs.

HOUSING POLICIES

- Support the efforts of local and regional housing providers and organizations, government agencies, private lenders, and developers in identifying and meeting housing needs of the region.
- Encourage innovative strategies that reverse the long-term trend of disinvestment in established development centers. Development resources should be strengthened and directed toward existing neighborhoods.
- Community revitalization and economic development plans should include the needs of all age and income groups.
- Ensure that existing housing programs and incentives promote a proportionate balance of affordable, workforce, and market-rate housing.
- Encourage the development of rental housing on a scale and design compatible with existing neighborhoods.
- Support and sustain livable communities that offer comprehensive mobility options (including alternatives to driving).
- Promote and support zoning that allows for greater densities for the purpose of providing a full range of housing choices (affordable, workforce, market-rate) in a manner that preserves the character of older neighborhoods in downtowns, village center, and other established centers of development.
- Locate affordable and special needs housing in areas with access to appropriate services.
- Support home ownership and property upkeep efforts of citizens and municipalities.

HOUSING STRATEGIES

- Work with regional housing and human service providers, including Rural Edge, NEK Enterprise Collaborative, Lamoille Housing Partnership and NEK Community Action to identify housing needs and support economically integrated communities.
- Review and comment on proposed plans and policies that will impact future affordable housing development (e.g. downtown designation, Qualified Allocation Plan).
- Assist towns to create housing policies that address the affordable housing needs of low-income residents.
- Identify incentives for the development and rehabilitation of work-force and market-rate housing in established centers.
- Assist communities interested in adopting local building codes.
- Assist communities interested in adopting and enforcing "junkyard ordinances."
- Assist communities applying for designation under the Vermont Downtown Program, Village Center Designation Program, and where appropriate, the New Neighborhood Designation Program.
- Provide outreach and education to property owners of old or substandard housing units in Designated Downtowns and Village Centers.
- Encourage the use of innovative incentives, including density bonuses or tax stabilization for mixed-income developments, universal access design, and small footprint housing.
- Help communities evaluate needs through housing studies and build-out analyses.
- Provide outreach and education on housing programs that improve housing stock and promote home ownership.
- Facilitate fair housing trainings for municipal officials and other interested groups.
- Ensure that NVDA member communities remain eligible for VCDP funds and Municipal Planning Grants