

“Vermont’s special quality of life can be traced directly to the strength and vitality of its communities. No single factor is more responsible for the health of our cities, towns and villages than housing.”

— G. Kenneth Perine, President,
National Bank of Middlebury

“As new options for economic development are considered, the availability and accessibility of affordable housing and transportation must be included in the planning process.” — Congressman Bernie Sanders

WHY DO WE NEED MORE HOUSING?

Despite Vermont’s strong economic growth in the 1990s, we haven’t been building enough housing to meet our needs. This has resulted in a severe housing shortage.

To make matters worse, the shortage is pushing up rents and purchase prices much faster than incomes. Often families must wait many months to find suitable housing that they can afford.

Over the last several years, key employers in the state have described how the housing shortage limits their ability to recruit and retain good employees or expand their businesses.

Recent studies show there is an ongoing need for thousands of new housing units.¹ We need to address the demand for new housing if we are to meet our economic potential. At the same time, we must preserve economic diversity within our communities by offering a range of housing opportunities to meet the various needs of our citizens.

¹ *Upper Valley Housing Needs Analysis*, Applied Economic Research, Laconia, NH., August 2002, and *Housing in Northwestern Vermont: A Review of Demand and Supply of Housing in the Six-County Region*, Economic and Policy Resources, Inc., Williston, Vermont and Thomas E. Kavet Consulting, August 2000.

on the cover: Battenkill Housing is an award-winning development by the Regional Affordable Housing Corporation of Bennington.

THE VERMONT HOUSING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

is a partnership of business, community and nonprofit groups and government agencies working to encourage support for the development of housing for households with different needs and income levels by:

- promoting balanced communities with a diverse supply of housing sufficient for Vermont’s workforce, for families and individuals with special needs, and for seniors;
- encouraging understanding about affordable housing and the people who need it;
- motivating community members to take an active role in welcoming families into our neighborhoods by supporting the construction, conversion, and rehabilitation of housing that they can afford.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED?

The Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign encourages citizens, businesses, and organizations to take an active role in deciding how and where their communities will grow. Please contact us to learn how you can get involved with housing issues in your community.

We welcome invitations from groups and organizations to speak about housing issues and to discuss solutions. Let us show you examples of thoughtfully designed, mixed-income housing developments in your area.

You are invited to join the Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign. Working together, we can support the development of sufficient housing opportunities in each of our cities and towns.

Affordable Housing in Vermont: Myths and Realities



Eight affordable apartments were created in this historic home in Arlington, Vermont.

What is affordable housing?

Who lives there?

How will it affect my town?



Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign

Contact us at 802-652-3449
or visit our website:
www.housingawareness.org



Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign

Affordable housing ...why should you care?

- Thousands of people in Vermont can't find an affordable place to live.
- Thousands of Vermont families pay too much of their income for housing, leaving less income for critical expenses such as food and medical care.
- Well-kept, reasonably priced housing provides families with a safe and healthy place to live.
- Housing development creates jobs and helps local economies.
- A lack of affordable housing close to employment centers stifles economic growth, increases traffic problems, and lowers our quality of life.
- People have more time for their families and volunteering in their community if they don't have to commute long distances.

A lack of affordable housing affects all of us directly

- Is your child's day care provider able to live in your town?
- Is your local hospital having a hard time finding nurses because of the tight housing market?
- Can retail and service workers and volunteer firefighters that you rely upon afford to live in your community?

**HOUSING IS
THE FOUNDATION OF
VERMONT COMMUNITIES**



Affordable Housing in Vermont:

Myths and Realities

myth: People in affordable housing won't fit into my neighborhood.

reality: The word "affordable" simply means that housing shouldn't cost more than 30 percent of household income—the same standard used by banks in approving home mortgages. As housing costs rise, many of us struggle to keep up, sometimes paying as much as 50 percent of household income for rent. Most residents of affordable housing developments have full-time jobs. They earn entry level or moderate wages working as police officers, hairstylists, cashiers, carpenters, executive secretaries, social workers, and loan officers. People working at these jobs in our towns need affordable housing.

myth: Affordable housing will reduce property values.

reality: Studies have shown that well-designed, properly managed affordable housing developments do not have a negative effect on neighboring property values. In fact, these developments can increase property values, especially in the case of rehabilitation projects. Vacant and blighted properties that have been developed into housing have spurred investment in neighboring properties, raising property values.²

²Green, Malpezzi and Seah, *Low Income Housing Tax Credit Housing Developments and Property Values*. The Center for Urban Land Economics Research, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. June 14, 2002.

myth: "Affordable housing" means large, ugly projects.

reality: The latest generation of affordable and mixed-income housing is based on good planning, minimal impact, and re-creating the neighborhood design of historic New England villages. Smaller, mixed-income developments and affordable single family homes can be distributed throughout a town. Buildings in more rural settings are clustered to leave areas of open space, utilizing efficient, attractive design.

myth: Affordable housing will increase crowding and social problems.

reality: Rehabilitation of vacant buildings can reduce crime by increasing activity in downtowns in the evening, making neighborhoods safer. Most affordable housing is no more crowded than the surrounding neighborhood.

With affordable housing, families have more resources available to provide for basic needs such as food and medical care, with the result that children perform better in school and are more likely to be healthier. A stable housing situation allows children to remain in the same school, whereas families without adequate, affordable housing may move around, double up with friends or relatives, or become homeless.

The Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign is indebted to the Upper Valley Housing Coalition of White River Junction, Vermont and the Workforce Housing Coalition of Portsmouth, New Hampshire for the brochure concept and to Cathleen Gent and Bob Eddy for the use of their photographs.