

## **Poll Cover Letter and PRESS RELEASE**

### **Release Pending Poll Publication**

September 12th, 2022

## **Chester Planning Commission Citizens' Poll**

As the Chester Planning Commission continues working to maximize citizen input related to quality-of-life priorities around planning Chester's future, we request the following poll to be completed by all *renters, business people, resident and non-resident property owners* as a vitally important tool in providing direction to the work being undertaken.

As many are aware, the Planning Commission is working on multiple facets of town planning all of which are likely to have significant impacts upon the look and feel of our community over both the short and longer term. This work includes focus on housing, business, property development, our environment, and the overall look and feel of our town.

Utilizing a poll to maximize public input will provide the Planning Commission and potentially other town government, with a much stronger sense of what you and the rest of our town desires for the future of Chester. As such, it is important for all affected to complete and submit this poll. This is an opportunity to easily have your voice heard without needing to attend meetings or go through other processes to provide feedback to assist in guiding your local government.

Please take a few minutes to complete and submit this poll at your earliest opportunity. The Town of Chester thanks you!

Sincerely,  
Chester Planning Commission

Submitted by the Chester Planning Commission.

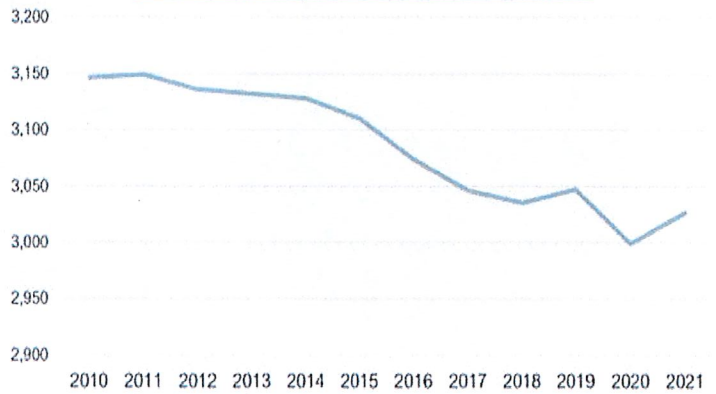
# Demographics

## Chester Unified Development Bylaws Update

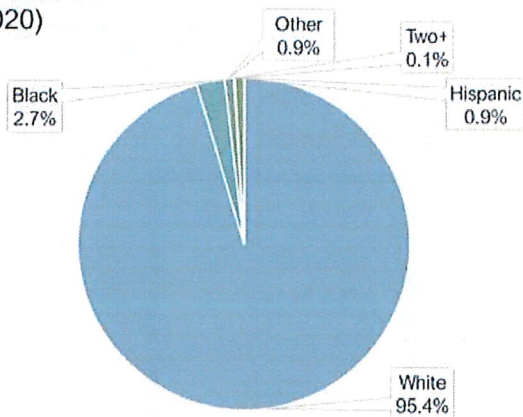
Regionwide, approximately 10,000 new homes will need to be built by 2030.

This is 3 times more homes than were created in the last decade.

2010-2021 – Population Growth, Chester, VT



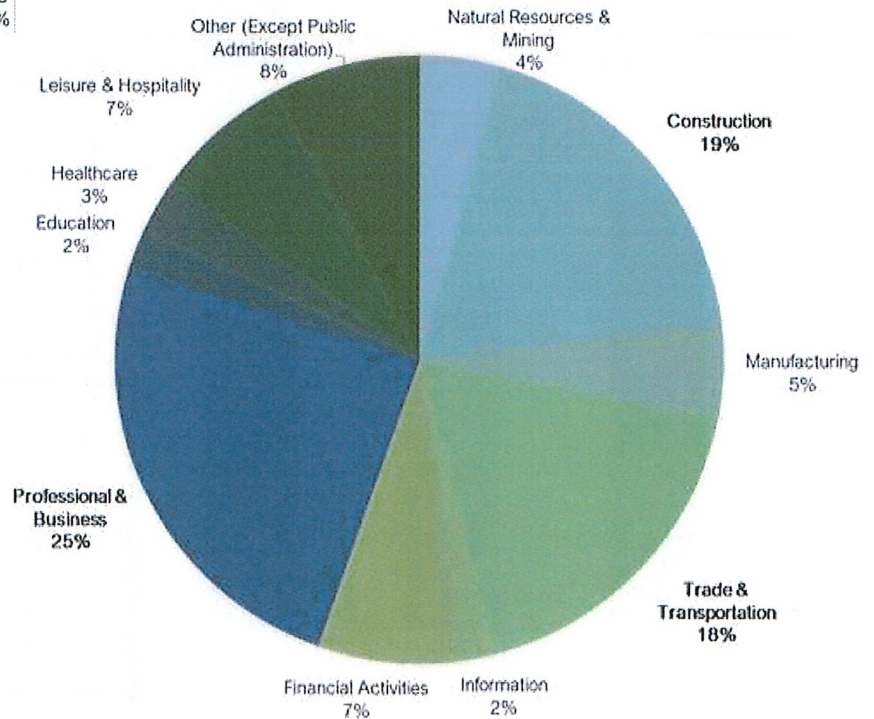
Race & Ethnicity  
Chester, VT  
(2020)



The cost of building materials has increased 33% since the start of the pandemic.

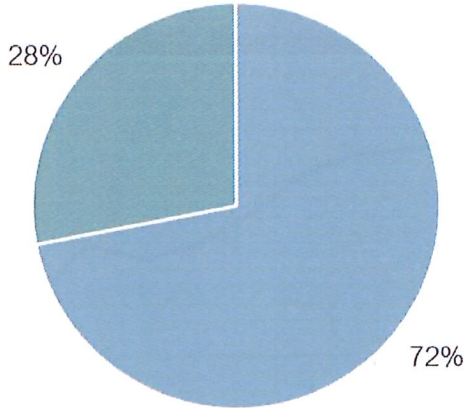
The cost of labor for housing construction has increased by about 39% since the start of the pandemic.

Employment Types in Chester, VT

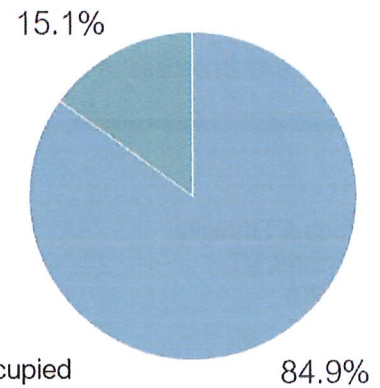


# Housing

## Chester Unified Development Bylaws Update



Number of Vacant Units	
For rent	18
For Sale	37
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	451
Other vacant	18



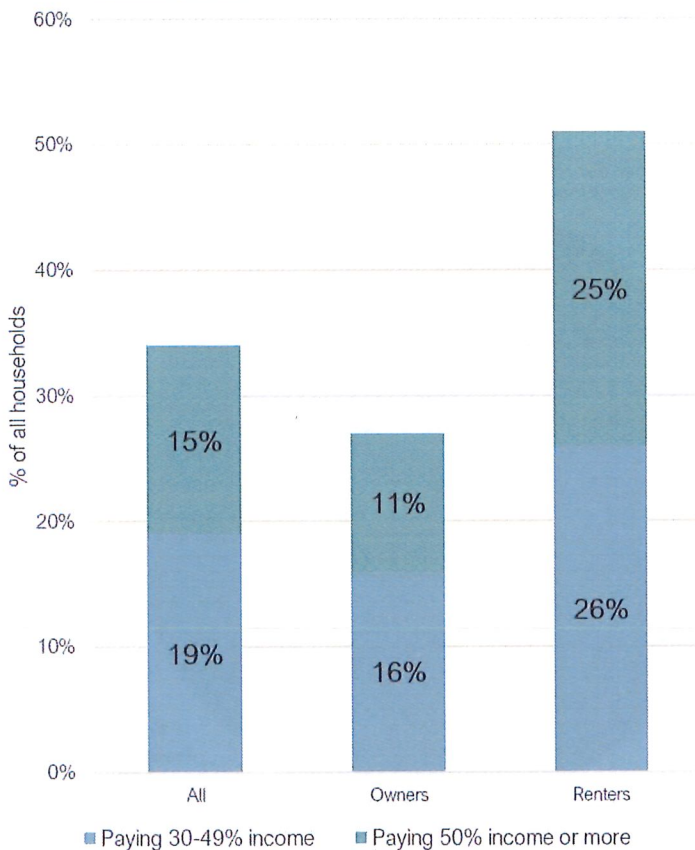
■ Occupied Housing Units   ■ Vacant Housing Units

*The average home sales price increased by 56% from 2018 to 2019 and by 82% over the past 10 years.*

■ Owner-Occupied  
■ Renter-Occupied

**Home Heating**  
63% Fuel Oil  
25% Wood  
9% Propane  
2% Other

Housing Costs as a % of Household Income



**Average Property Values**  
Residential with < 6 acres: \$188,200  
Residential with ≥ 6 acres: \$337,500  
**Average Home Sale Price on Zillow**  
\$349,900

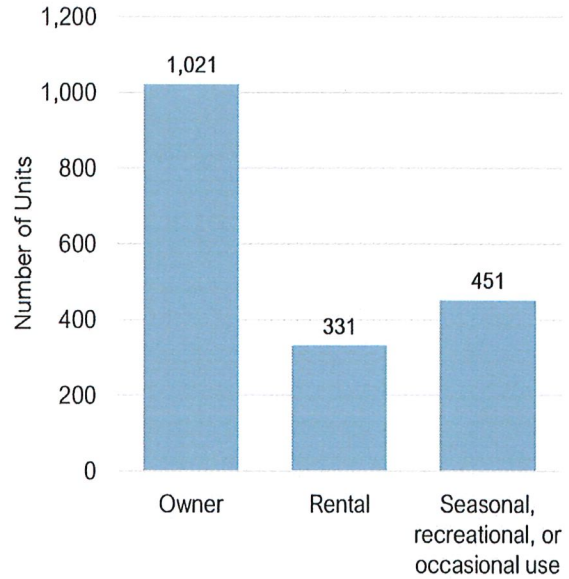
- Renters consistently face a higher housing cost burden compared to Owners.
- The majority of low-income renter households include senior residents or persons with disabilities.
- 9.5% of Chester's population is below the poverty line

# Housing

## Chester Unified Development Bylaws Update

Okemo Mountain Resort in nearby Ludlow (~20 mins) attracts over 600,000 annual visitors

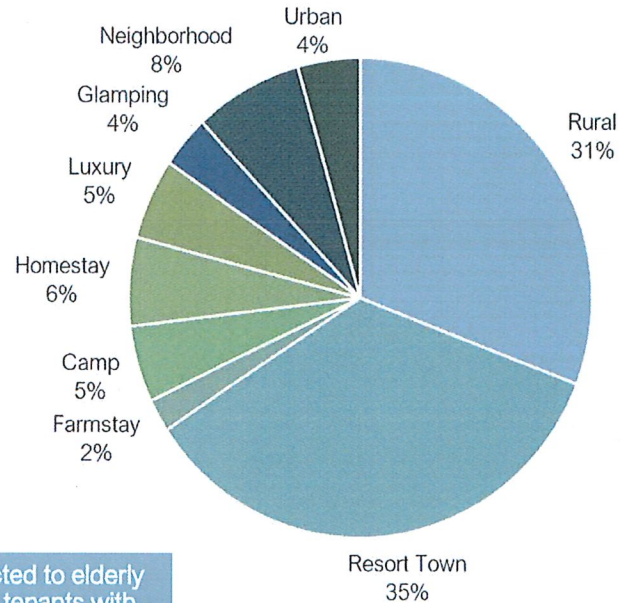
### Household Types



### Short Term Rentals in Chester from 2019-2022



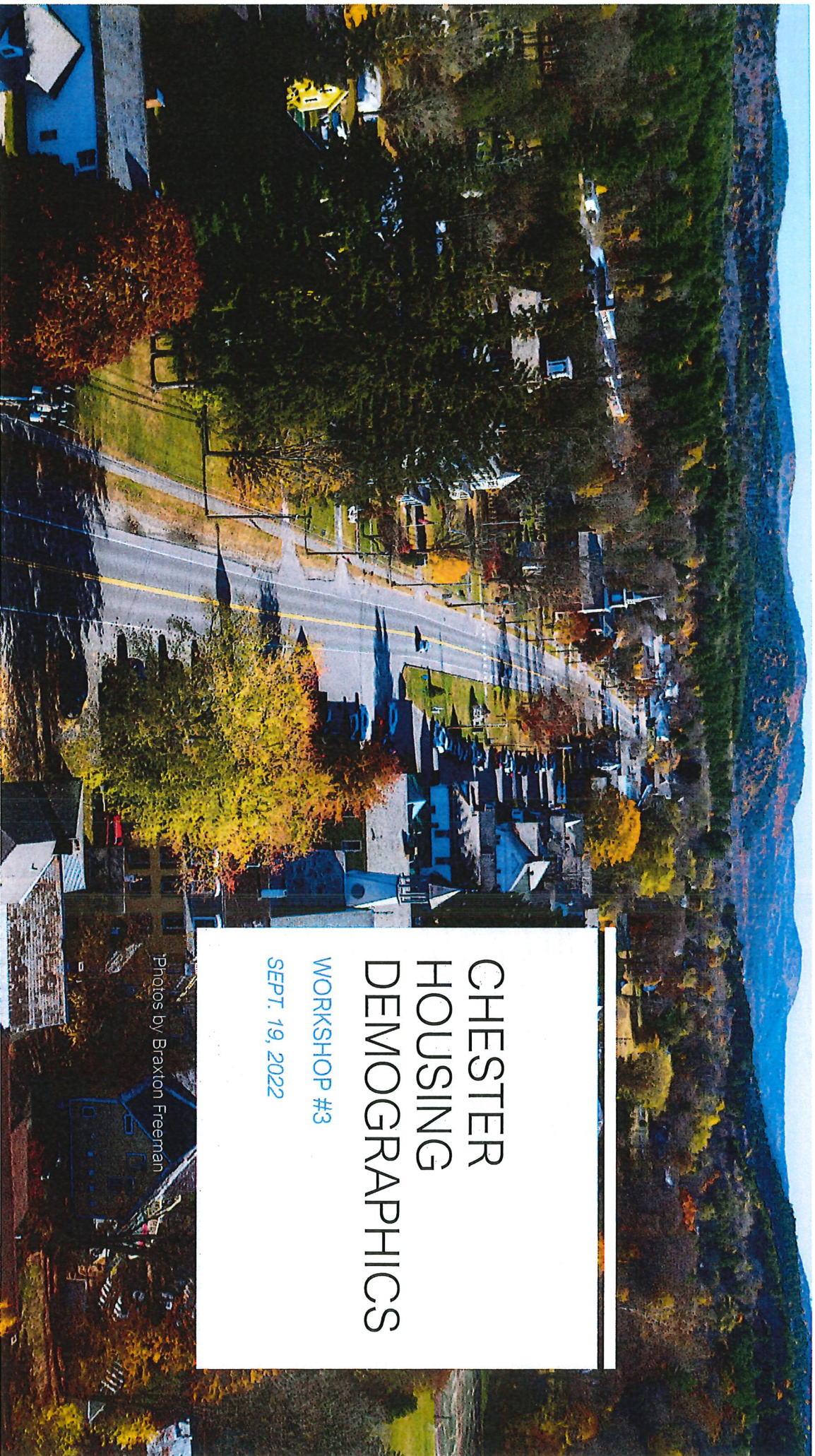
### Short Term Rentals Types Vermont-Wide



### Affordable Rental Properties

Property Name	Address	Total Apartments	Restricted to elderly and/or tenants with disabilities
517 Depot Street	517 Depot Street	6	0
Chester Elderly Apartments	110 Senior Circle	36	36
Pleasant Brook Apartments	82, 106 & 108 Pleasant Street	24	0

There are NO Vacancies



# CHESTER HOUSING DEMOGRAPHICS

WORKSHOP #3

SEPT. 19, 2022

Photos by Braxton Freeman

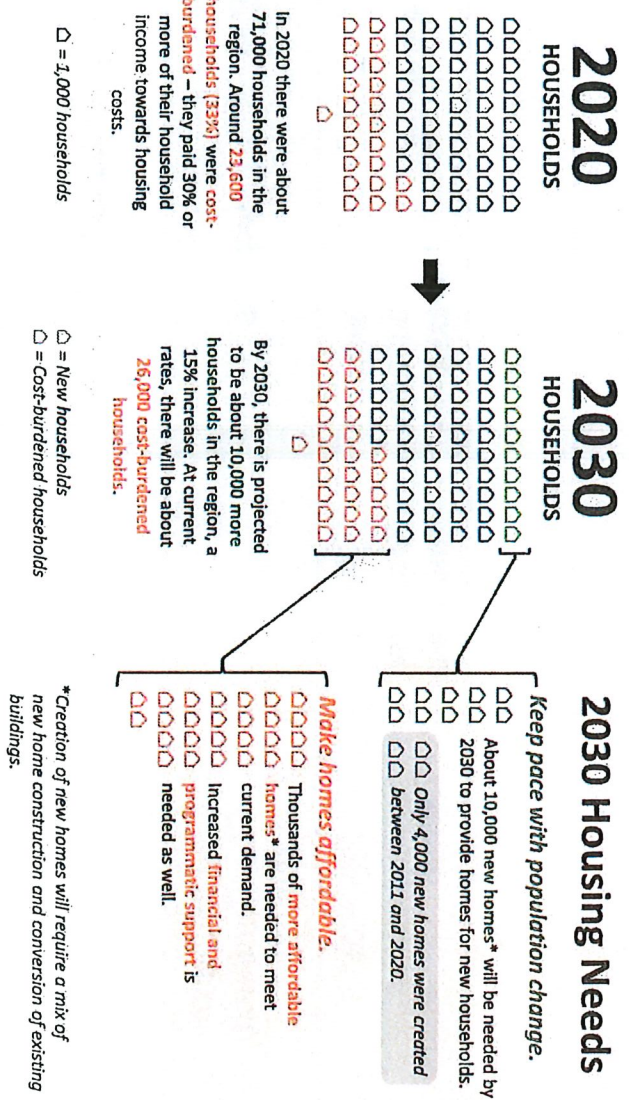


# The Problem

## We have a housing crisis

- Projected 10,000 new homes needed by 2030
- About 1/3 households are cost burdened
- Average household size in the greater Upper Valley is projected to shrink from 2.3 people per household to 2.14 people per household by 2030
- Made worse by pandemic influences
- “The Missing Middle”

## REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS PROJECTIONS



*Description:* To maintain the Region’s current level of housing supply and start to address affordability challenges, more new homes need to be built or converted from existing in the next decade than the last decade.  
*Source:* Keys to the Valley 2021 Regional Housing Projections, Vital Communities New Homes Count, 2017 ACS 5-year estimates of owner and renter households. Find out more at [www.keystothevalley.com](http://www.keystothevalley.com)

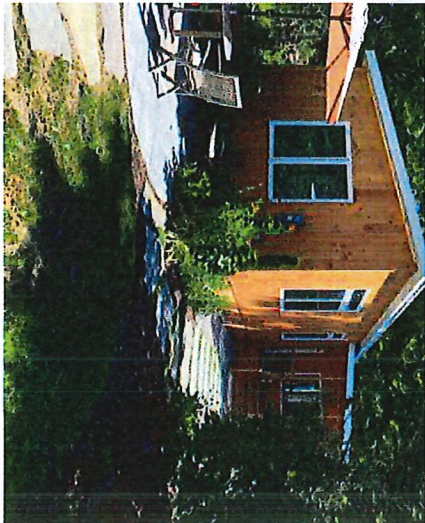
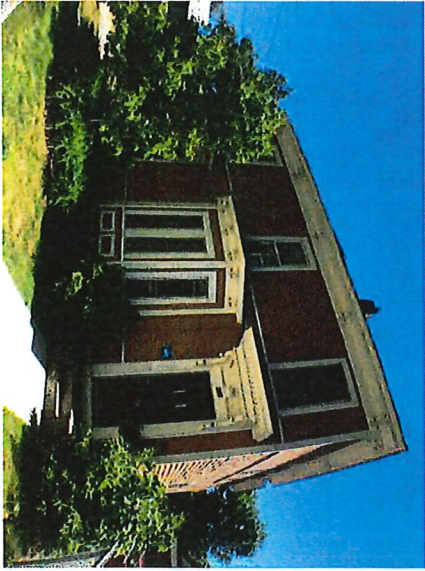
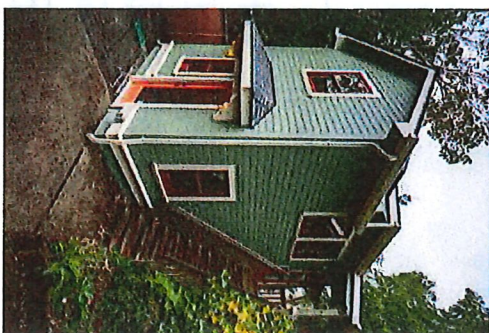
# 2030 HOUSING NEEDS FORECAST

Region	Year 2030 Housing Projections <sup>1</sup>						Percentage of Cost-Burdened Households:	
	Year	Population in Households	Total Households	Owner-Occupied Households	Renter-Occupied Households	2013-2017		
Chester	2010	3,154	1,402	1,040	362	Owned	Rented	
	2030 Projected	3,610	1,720	1,320	410	24%	72%	
	Change, 2010-2030	456	318	280	48			
		14.46%	22.68%	26.92%	13.26%			

Source: <https://www.keystothevalley.com/> U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates



# Types of Homes



# Visualizing New Homes - Chester Scenario



Chester, VT - Church Street		
A	New ADU	1 unit
B	New ADU	1 unit
C	New Duplex	2 units
D	New Duplex	2 units
Total		6 new units

# Visualizing New Homes - Chester Scenario



# Regulatory Reform

## Regulations contribute to the problem

- Often makes it harder for lower cost homes
- Need to modernize regulations
- Appeals

**We are focused today on common zoning issues, but other types of regulations are also relevant such as:**

- Act 250
- Wastewater/water permitting
- Building codes

### In the news:

**How zoning can restrict, or even prevent, affordable housing**

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/chasing-the-dream/stories/how-zoning-can-restrict-affordable-housing/>

**Affordable Housing Push Challenges Single-Family Zoning**

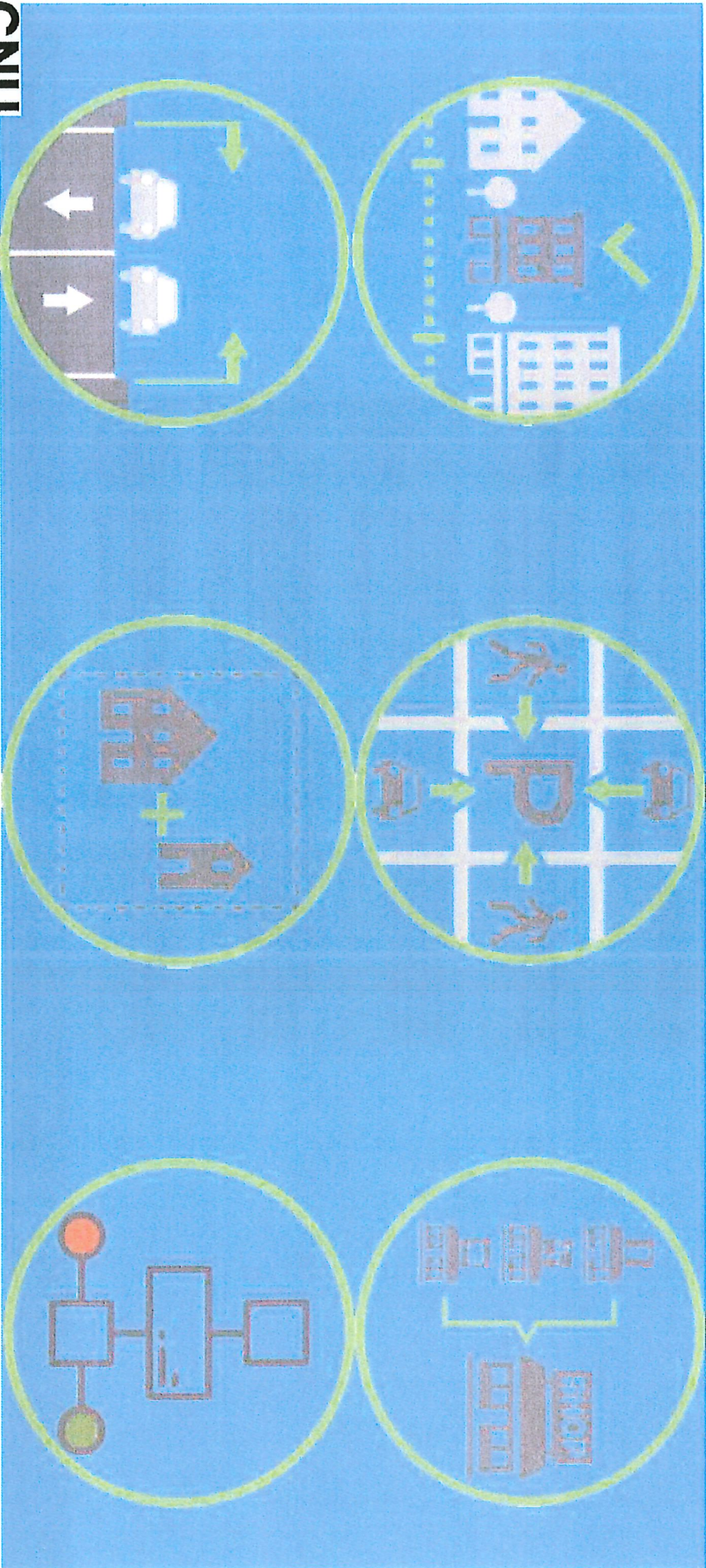
<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/08/20/affordable-housing-push-challenges-single-family-zoning>

**A Push for Zoning Reform in Connecticut:**

Momentum is growing for multifamily housing to be built in a state full of detached single-family houses.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/realestate/connecticut-zoning-reform.html?smid=em-share>

# Regulations: Topics of Reform



# Overview of Regulation Action Steps



## Dimensional Requirements

Building heights, setbacks, and lot coverage regulations are often similar between towns, in spite of differences in character. These dimensional requirements should be carefully crafted to reflect the existing built patterns and local goals, and should avoid needlessly restricting desirable housing options.



## Parking Standards

The effects of excessive parking requirements on housing availability are often underestimated. Especially in areas that have transit and are walkable to school, jobs, and other daily needs, the cost of each unneeded parking space inflates the cost of housing. (The average cost of a parking space is estimated at about \$4,000.) High parking requirements can block new housing options that fit seamlessly into existing neighborhoods, such as ADUs, small infill buildings, and conversions of large houses into more than one residence.



## Allowable Uses

Restrictions on the use of property is a central purpose of zoning, but many Vermont towns and villages severely restrict housing other than a single-family home by requiring complex review processes and/or applying onerous restrictions. Small buildings containing two, three, or four dwellings have historically provided housing variety with minimal neighborhood impacts. These buildings can be enabled again through minor changes to local regulations.



## Street Standards

Streets should be designed according to the intensity of activity through which the street passes. The capital and maintenance costs of overly wide streets can increase the cost of diverting housing as well creating a long-term drain on municipal budgets. Disconnected street networks hinder walking, biking, and transit, increasing individual household transportation costs.



## Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

Vermont has progressive ADU provisions that are applied through regulations of individual towns. Local regulations could be improved to encourage creation of more ADUs through minor changes to parking standards and to size and ownership restrictions.



## Development Review Process

Layers of regulatory review can aid environmental stewardship and protect local character, but they also add time and cost to the production of housing. Strategic streamlining can retain the important functions of the development review process while eliminating unnecessary barriers to locally desired housing.

CNU



# Regulatory Solutions – How to Get Started

## Review your municipal regulations and practices

- Use either the detailed or rapid assessment

**Review and update your municipal plan to make sure it addresses your community housing need and forms a basis for regulatory reform**

HOMES FOR NOW AND TOMORROW - MUNICIPAL POLICY REVIEW	
TOPIC TYPES AND DENSITY:	HOW APPLICABLE TO LOCAL TARGETS
	VISION & MASTER PLAN
	RECS
	CUR
	OTH
	IMPLEMENTED AS PART OF AN ADOPTED POLICY
<p><b>OPPORTUNITY OR BARRIER TO LOCAL TARGETS</b></p> <p>Assign a rating for your community's housing regulations and approval process, and the impacts that they may have on developing new homes that are affordable and meet the needs of residents. Here are some questions you can consider in developing your answer (there may be others relevant to your community that you want to consider as well):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it possible for a resident to create a new home that is affordable under current regulations/practices?</li> <li>• Are density standards (e.g., minimum lot area, building setbacks, etc.) more restrictive than needed for affordable housing?</li> <li>• Would it be possible to permit greater density in keeping with community planning goals?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities to permit mixed home types and more affordable homes in ways that are consistent with the character of the community?</li> <li>• If a senior resident wanted to advance in your community (i.e., build a small, affordable home on a small property) could they?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>PROCESS:</b></p> <p>Is your community's land use permitting process reasonable, efficient, and effective? Have you considered the following questions in developing your answer (there may be others relevant to your community that you want to consider as well):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the permitting process well-defined and easy to navigate?</li> <li>• Is the developer review process for small/lot development (e.g., properties ≤ 1/2) reasonable in time and number of steps?</li> <li>• Is administrative review always being applied where appropriate?</li> <li>• Does the process promote dialogue with current residents?</li> <li>• Are the fees reasonable to diverse incomes?</li> <li>• Do municipal boards and staff have a trusting and functional relationship?</li> </ul>	

<https://www.keystothevalley.com/toolbox-orientation-and-goals-list/topical-ready-resources/municipal-policy-review/>

# Regulatory Solutions – Housing Types

## Allow for more housing types and make permitting easier:

- Allow triplex and quaddplex as permitted uses within village districts
- Specifically allow other desirable housing types, such as row houses, co-housing, live/work units, and bungalow courts.
- Simplify the development review process, remove conditional use and special exception requirements.
- Mixed use buildings: allow more than 1 principal use in village districts
- Adaptive reuse: allow conversion of barns and carriage houses into dwellings



Missing Middle Housing is a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood.



<https://missingmiddlehousing.com/>

- Allow owner to occupy the ADU
- Increase ADU sizes
- Exempt certain things, such as conversion of existing buildings to ADUs or 2-3 dwelling units if there is an affordability component

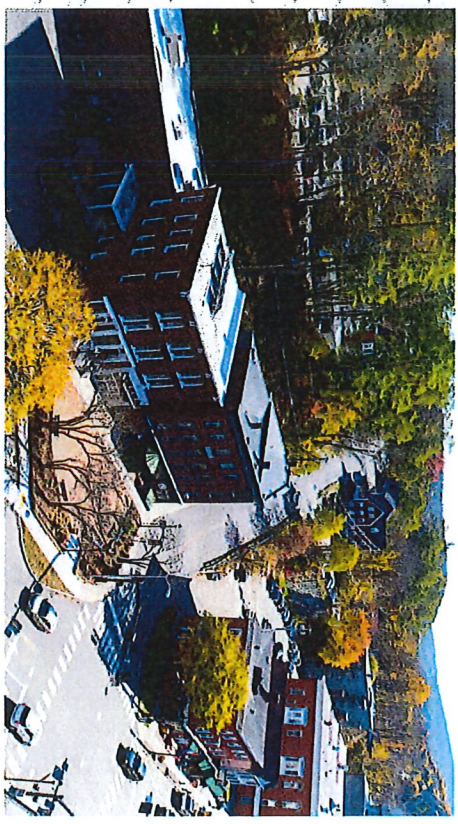




# Regulatory Solutions – Housing Types

**TABLE 6 - LAND USE TABLE - DOWNTOWN DISTRICT**

Description of Use	Permission	Special Restrictions
<b>Principal Residential</b>		
Single-household building	C	
Two-household building	P	
Three-household building	P	
Four-household building	P	
Building with five or more households	P	
Accessory dwelling units	P	
<b>Lodging Uses</b>		
Bed and breakfast inn	P	
Hotel, motel, and other lodging uses	P	
<b>Institutional Uses</b>		
All institutional uses	P	
<b>Commercial Uses</b>		
Automobile sales	N	
Adult entertainment	N	
Gas stations	N	
Storage facilities	N	



**CNU**

## Regulatory Solutions – Dimensional Standards

- Match standards to the existing / historical built pattern.
- Remove maximum density cap for residential areas. Instead, control density by lot width, setbacks, and height limits.
- Eliminate lot requirements for each unit for lots with sewer and water.
- Reduce setbacks, add maximum setbacks or zero lot line setbacks.
- Allow taller structures. Regulate by story, not height.
- In rural areas, go to density provisions instead of overly large minimum lot sizes.



*Figures 1 and 2 depict an area in Petersburg, both historically and current day, where the current zoning bylaws are problematic due to lot size, density, setbacks and other issues. In an analysis completed about a year ago, we found that more than half of the lots are noncompliant. This is fairly typical.*

# Regulatory Solutions – Dimensional Standards

**TABLE 4. DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS FOR STRUCTURES AND LOTS**

Lot Widths:	30' min.
Setbacks	
Front	0' min., 0' max.
Side	0 or 5' min.
Rear	3' min. with rear lanes or 12' min.
Parking setback from building front	20' min.
Maximum building height	3.5 stories
Maximum building width	120' per building, within 30' of front
Maximum building coverage	100% per site

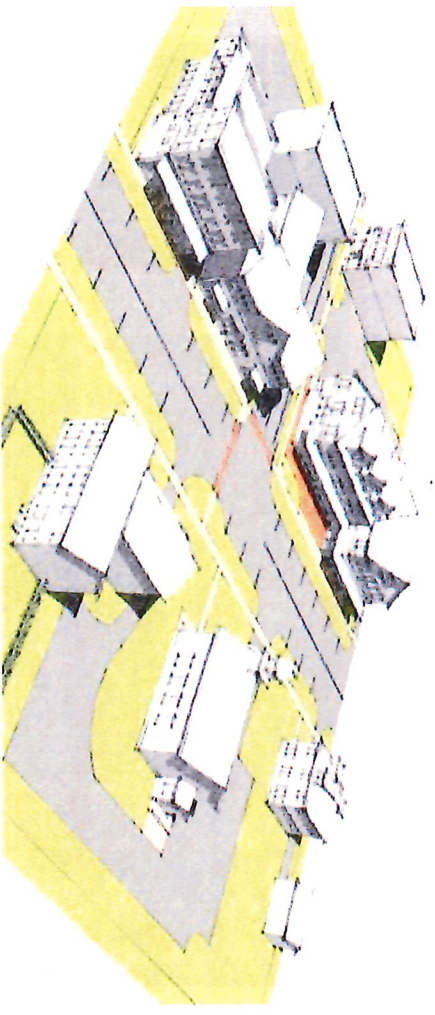
[Numbers in green must reflect the character of the local context. Use the Character Survey below to determine the appropriate dimensions.]

**CNU**



## Regulatory Solutions – Transportation & Parking

- Remove or reduce parking space requirements in core areas with sidewalks, on street parking and/or transit nearby
- Allow on-street parking spaces or off-site, leased spaces in the area to count.
- Require parking to locate behind buildings
- Remove parking requirements for accessory dwellings
- Impose traffic impact study guidelines that specifically require consideration of transit, biking and walking
- Allow an applicant to propose long-term funding for public transit in lieu of making roadway improvements.



THIS SHARED PARKING LOCATED TO THE REAR OR SIDE OF BUILDINGS WITH CROSS ACCESS BETWEEN LOTS

Source: MARC Regional Plan 2021 Draft



# Regulatory Solutions – Transportation & Parking

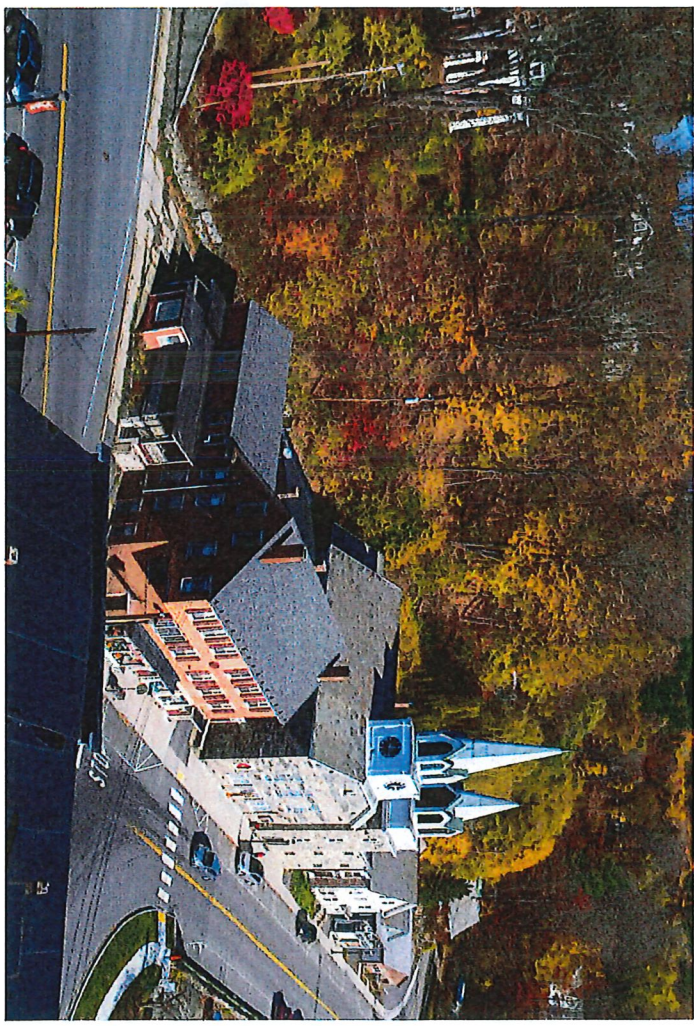
## B. On-Site Parking and Loading

1. On-site parking spaces are not required. *Alternative: "On-site parking spaces must be provided in accordance with Table 1. Each on-street parking space directly adjoining the site will replace two parking spaces otherwise required by Table 1."* Parking spaces constructed on-site cannot be located in front of buildings.
2. Unless no reasonable alternative exists, on-site parking shall be located to the rear of building. When no such reasonable alternative exists (including on-street or shared off-site parking), parking may be located to the side, no closer to the street than the facade.
3. Access to on-site parking and loading areas is limited as follows:
  - a. Access must be from a rear alley where available.
  - b. Access may be from a street adjoining the rear or side property line if a rear alley is not available.
  - c. If access is not possible from a rear alley or rear or side street, access may be provided from a driveway from the street.

### OPTIONAL TABLE 1 - REQUIRED ON-SITE PARKING SPACES

Uses	Minimum Parking Spaces Required
All Residential Uses	1 space per household unit
All Lodging Uses	1 space per sleeping unit
All Assembly Uses	1 space per 4 installed seats
All Retail Uses	1 space per 300 sq. ft. of display floor area
Medical Offices	1 space per 400 sq. ft. of gross floor area
All Other Offices	1 space per 500 sq. ft. of gross floor area
Restaurants/Taverns	1 space per 4 indoor seats

**CNU**





## **If you do nothing else, do this:**

- Reduce parking requirements
- Increase ADU area maximums
- Permit residential in downtowns and village centers by right

**CNU**