



# HOW MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING Can Help a Changing Vermont

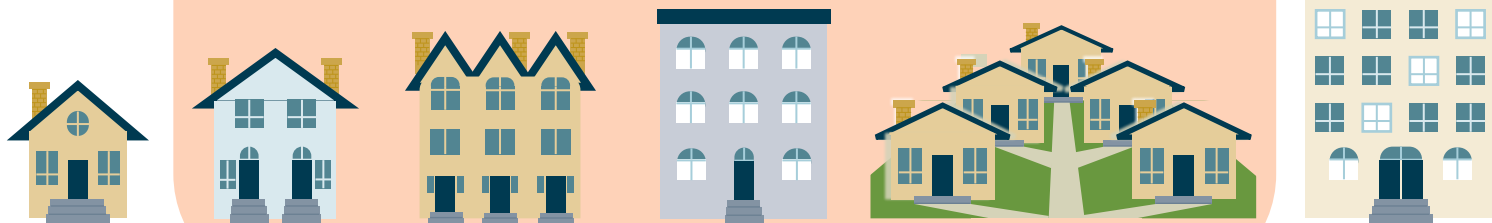
**How will the recently passed HOME Act help build momentum to expand housing options?**

Housing has become a critical priority for the State of Vermont, with increased pressures on housing availability due to high demand and rising costs as well as recent flooding events. Recognizing this, the 2023 Vermont legislature passed the HOME Act (S. 100), which aims to enhance the livability of Vermont communities by updating zoning laws to promote more diverse and affordable housing throughout the state. This bill mandates that zoning must allow for duplexes everywhere single-family homes are allowed, and more flexibility with parking requirements.

By allowing for more diverse housing in areas served by existing infrastructure, the act addresses the inadequacy of current regulations to meet housing demands, including those of Vermont's aging population who are seeking to downsize and live in smaller housing options. The HOME Act opens doors to more housing production by focusing growth on areas where development already exists and makes sense, scaled to the needs of urban and rural communities. Additional work is underway in the State of Vermont to develop more strategies to expand housing choices, support middle housing development, and fill in the gap with housing needs.



## What is MISSING Middle Housing and why is it important?



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**“Missing Middle Housing” falls in between traditional single-family homes and larger apartment buildings.**

Middle housing provides housing choices such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, cottage clusters, and neighborhood-scale mixed-use/live-work buildings. It is often “missing” in U.S. communities due to zoning and regulatory barriers, along with the mid-20th century preference for single-family homes.

**Missing Middle Housing can meet the needs of many types of households and provide age-friendly housing for the growing population of older adults.**

As the population of the nation and Vermont ages, it is critical to address housing needs and opportunities for those over 60. Age-friendly housing allows older adults to choose how and where they want to live: by downsizing, aging in place, or living in communities offering housing at a variety of price points and amenities. Smaller, moderately priced missing middle housing units provide the flexibility for older adults to live in affordable, walkable neighborhoods that foster independence and community connections.

VERMONT HAS A GAP BETWEEN SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED UNITS AND OTHER HOUSING TYPES.

## SHARE OF HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE, VERMONT, 2017-2021

71%

Single-Family Homes (1 Unit)



12%

Duplex, Triplex, Fourplexes (2-4 Units)



11%

Apartments (5+ Units)



6%

Other Housing (Mobile Homes, RVs, etc.)

More than **70%** of homes in Vermont are single-unit dwellings

65+

## VERMONT'S POPULATION OVER AGE 65 IS GROWING QUICKLY

In the past ten years, the population of adults over 65 has increased by almost one third, while adults aged 40 to 54 saw a sharp decline.

Most of the existing housing in Vermont consists of single-family homes, but the changing demographics of the state indicate that new housing types would benefit many households. Today, more than 70% of homes in Vermont are single-unit dwellings. Over the past twenty years, little has changed in the state's overall housing stock. **SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES AND APARTMENTS HAVE BOTH GROWN ONLY BY ABOUT TWO PERCENT OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES WHILE MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING HAS SLIGHTLY DECLINED.** The mix of housing types should be tracked in the future to examine the effects of recent state law.

## What are the benefits of MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING?



### A Range of Housing Choices in Local Communities

Missing middle housing provides a wider range of options for Vermont's changing demographics. Smaller units can suit young families, early career workers purchasing a first home, empty nesters, or older adults seeking to downsize but remain in their communities near services and support networks.



### Attainable Housing Prices for More Households

Missing middle housing does not fully equate with affordability, but smaller units tend to come at lower price points than single-family homes, offering more attainable homeownership options for moderate-income households like seniors living on limited budgets or fixed income.

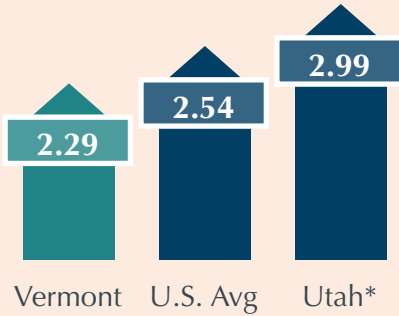


### Sustainable Housing Options

Missing middle housing offers efficient land use and compact housing design, reducing urban sprawl and enhancing walkability. By utilizing existing infrastructure and sharing resources, it can lower energy and water consumption per unit, curbing environmental impact on rural areas.

## Why is Missing Middle Housing Needed in Vermont?

VERMONT HAS ONE OF THE SMALLEST HOUSEHOLD SIZES IN THE U.S.



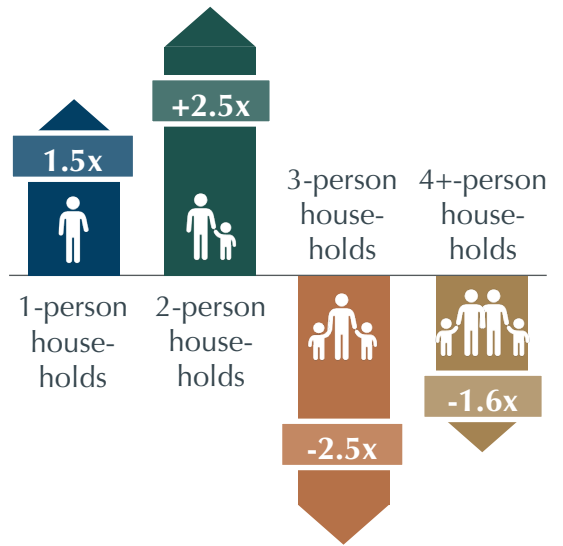
PEOPLE PER HOUSEHOLD

*\*Utah has the largest household size in the US*

VERMONT'S AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE IS SHRINKING

Since 2000, the share of 1-2-person households, who often benefit from missing middle housing, increased vastly in Vermont. In this time, the share of 3-or-more person households, who typically seek larger, family-sized homes, declined.

Change in household makeup, 2000 to 2021



Missing middle housing is an important option for older adults to age in place in their communities. Keeping community members near services and amenities builds social resilience and fosters stronger connections.

30% OF VERMONT HOUSEHOLDS WERE COST-BURDENED IN 2021

33% OF VERMONTERS AGED 65+ WERE COST BURDENED IN 2021

What is COST BURDENING?

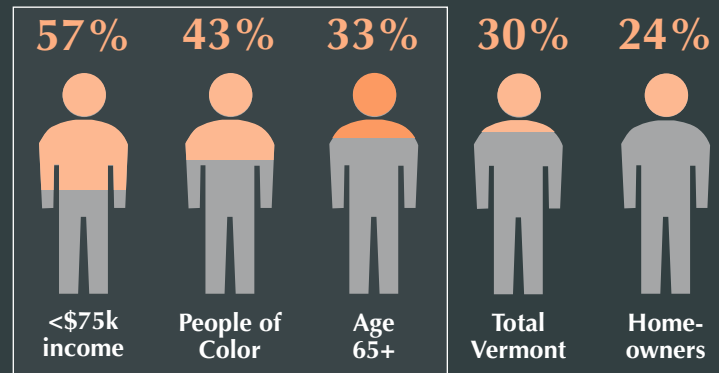
COST BURDENED households spend at least 30% of their income on housing, which can mean less money to spend on essential goods such as food, transportation, and medical costs.



COST BURDENING TENDS TO IMPACT PEOPLE UNEVENLY

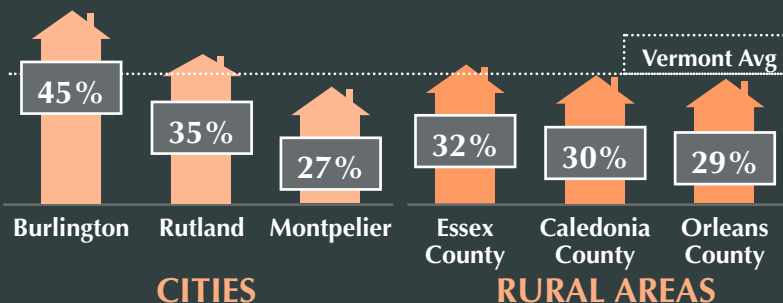
Households with lower incomes, people of color, and adults over 65 were much more likely to be cost-burdened overall.

% OF EACH GROUP THAT IS COST-BURDENED



COST BURDENING AFFECTS URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS VERMONT

Although the state's cities see relatively higher levels of cost burden, even the most rural communities are affected.



## ➔ What are Communities in Vermont Doing Now?

### BURLINGTON



In 2023, the City of Burlington published its Neighborhood Code Character and Analysis Report, which details how the city's neighborhoods and zoning policies have changed development patterns over time, and provides information about current barriers to allowing more and different types of homes within existing neighborhoods. The project is working to explore zoning changes that build on neighborhoods' unique patterns while facilitating their ability to meet the needs of current and future households, both by providing more context-sensitive zoning tools for areas well-suited for "middle" housing, and by considering the scale of development allowed along major streets served by transit.

### RURAL VERMONT: BELLOWS FALLS



After a community visit process with the Vermont Council on Rural Development in early 2020, Rockingham formed a task force to focus on downtown development and vacant buildings. One of the goals of this task force was to get more housing within the downtown, utilizing those vacant buildings. In partnership with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, the Town of Rockingham hosted the Incremental Development Alliance which conducted a handful of assessments along with providing many presentations on small scale development specific to the Town. Deliverables included identification of shortfalls in zoning bylaws, as well as process and financial feasibility challenges for developers. Out of this process the community visit task force grew the Rockingham Incremental Development Working Group, a grassroots group made up of almost 100 local, regional, and state housing advocates for Rockingham/Bellows Falls. Currently this group is focused on educating local officials and residents about the Town Plan, zoning and the importance of small-scale development and housing and they are working to identify projects to support and modifications needed to enable infill development. They've also co-hosted a walking tour of Windham Windsor Housing Trust investments, a conversation on the history of neighborhoods with the Bellows Falls Historical Society, and a meet and greet for new-to-town residents.

### SOURCES

- Population Changes and Vermont State Revenue Report (2019): <https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Subjects/Commission-Resources/05a742b874/Population-Changes-and-Vermont-State-Revenue-FULL-REPORT.pdf>
- Historic Burlington Project (2022): <https://www.uvm.edu/~hp206/2022/>
- Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development: <https://accd.vermont.gov/homesforall>

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