Barriers to Housing

Results of Stakeholder Survey
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development – July 2019
Survey received an enthusiastic response considering it was issued during the 4th of July week.
Who Responded

What is your primary role? (The role that informed your responses)
Choose one.

Respondents represent a range of stakeholder groups.
Which describes your work place best? Choose one.

- For profit enterprise: 35% (74)
- Non profit organization: 18% (38)
- Municipality: 16% (33)
- Regional government entity: 9% (20)
- State government: 4% (9)
- Other (please specify): 18% (37)

Roughly equal distribution between public and private interests.
Who Responded

Survey Results

Experience with what geographic area informs your responses? Choose one.

More responses from areas in Vermont with high housing demand (e.g. greater Burlington and Montpelier areas).
Who Responded

How large are the municipalities you normally work in or with? (Numbers = residential population) Choose one.

Responses mostly reflect conditions in the municipalities with over 5,000 people.
Survey Results

Q1. List the housing types you believe are most needed in Vermont. (These can range from building, unit, ownership or resident types, locations where homes are most needed, etc.)

Vermont needs a variety of efficient housing types, affordable at a range of income levels in downtowns, village centers and other walkable places.
Q2. What factors make it difficult to achieve those housing needs in walkable places (downtowns, village and surrounding neighborhoods)?

- High costs, lack of available land and community resistance to change, along with municipal land use regulations are the primary factors affecting housing starts.
Q2. What factors make it difficult to achieve those housing needs in walkable places (downtowns, village and surrounding neighborhoods)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>All Responses</th>
<th>Developers</th>
<th>Planners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack or high cost of available real estate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High construction costs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People resisting change in their neighborhoods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal zoning/land use regulations – processes and requirements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act 250 processes and requirements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of water/wastewater services or insufficient capacity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of affordable financing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health, safety or energy code requirements</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
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Developers consider municipal regulations to be a primary factor affecting housing opportunity while planners consider it to be less of a factor.
Q2 Comments - Other Factors

- Empty nesters aren’t downsizing
- Labor costs – lack of tradespeople
- Layers of regulation stack up to restrict developable land
- Developable areas limited
- Lack of capital for non-profits
- Too much competition from non-profits
- Path of least resistance leads to construction outside walkable places
- Public transit insufficient to stop owning a car
- Cost of brownfield remediation
- High construction costs and low median wage
Q3: Indicate the degree to which the following items are a barrier to creating the housing in walkable places (downtowns, villages and surrounding neighborhoods)?

Density limits, appeals, complexity of permitting and regulations, and parking requirements create barriers to housing in walkable places.
**Q3: Indicate the degree to which the following items are a barrier to creating the housing in walkable places (downtowns, villages and surrounding neighborhoods)?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>All Responses</th>
<th>Developers</th>
<th>Planners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Density limits (min lot size, max units/acre, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost and delay from appeals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complexity of permitting process</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-street parking minimums</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of regulations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses – restrictions on dwelling types</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of permitting (fees, impact fees, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot coverage maximums</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setback minimums</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of, or inadequate professional staff support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building height maximums</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic preservation requirements</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design standards</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street width requirements</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
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**Ranking**

All responders consider the complexity of regulations to be more of a barrier than the planners.

Developers consider fees and other permitting costs to be a significant barrier, as well as lot coverage limits.

Planners consider lack of adequate staffing to be more of a barrier than others.
Q3 Comments on Barriers

- **State regulation:** Act 250, wetlands, stormwater, wastewater, stream erosion, etc.
- **Conflicts and lack of coordination between state and local regulation**
- **If you know the regulations, or if there is well educated and professional support, zoning and regs. shouldn’t be a barrier.**
- **Need clearer permit process for different types of congregate housing, such as seasonal worker housing, dorm-style nano housing for young professionals or creative economy workers.**
- **Lack of understanding in municipal offices about what constitutes barriers - and then the resolve to make changes.**
- **Reliance on zoning -- lack of other housing, building codes**
Need to Change Attitudes
Municipalities need to LEAD on this, not just reduce barriers.

Why Homeowners Don’t Create Units
Even with a large home in ideal location, we lack the money and experience to create small units for rent.
Survey Results

Optional Comments

Water/Wastewater Stormwater

Costs of development are prohibitive, especially to meet various state regulations for stormwater, contaminated soils, etc.

Rural Vermont

In areas not growing, changing zoning may do nothing. Much of Vermont isn’t growing. Other incentives are needed too.
When Regulations Help

In some cases, LACK of design standards is part of the problem, as neighbors have concerns that new housing added to a historic downtown will wreck the feel of the existing settlement.

Broadening Idea of Centers

Ski resorts and college campuses should also be considered walkable places. We should look at how to transform the resorts and closed college campuses into new neighborhoods.