

February 15, 2023

Vermont Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
Vermont House Committee on General and Housing

Subject: Written testimony for February 16th public hearing on housing

Thank you for considering ways to improve the opportunity for every Vermonter to have a safe and affordable home. Housing is a single economic ecosystem, likened by some to a cruel game of musical chairs. When there are not enough homes, the most vulnerable Vermonters are the ones who lose the game and find themselves homeless or living in homes that are not affordable or unsuitable for them in the long run. Despite significant public investment in permanently affordable housing, our housing ecosystem also needs the private market to house lower and middle-income Vermonters.

Please enact the improvements to municipal zoning and decision-making in the Housing Omnibus Bill introduced by Senator Ram-Hinsdale and in H.68 introduced by Representative Bongartz. Although I work at the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and am on the local housing committees in South Burlington and Winooski, I am writing this exclusively as a 25-year Vermont resident convinced of the urgent need to create more housing in my backyard.

I have 30 years of professional experience facilitating data-driven solutions to meeting the basic needs of low and moderate income people at the federal, state, and local levels. During this time, I've realized how great an impact local zoning, building requirements, and decision-making processes have on the availability and affordability of homes. Using these levers to improve, rather than reduce, the opportunities for housing at all price points will likely have a dramatic benefit on our state's housing shortage.

I've included some data below to help you appreciate the importance of your work. As elected officials with a lens extending beyond town boundaries, you can help create housing opportunities for new neighbors in Vermont places that are near jobs and water and utility infrastructure by removing local barriers that may otherwise continue to proliferate.

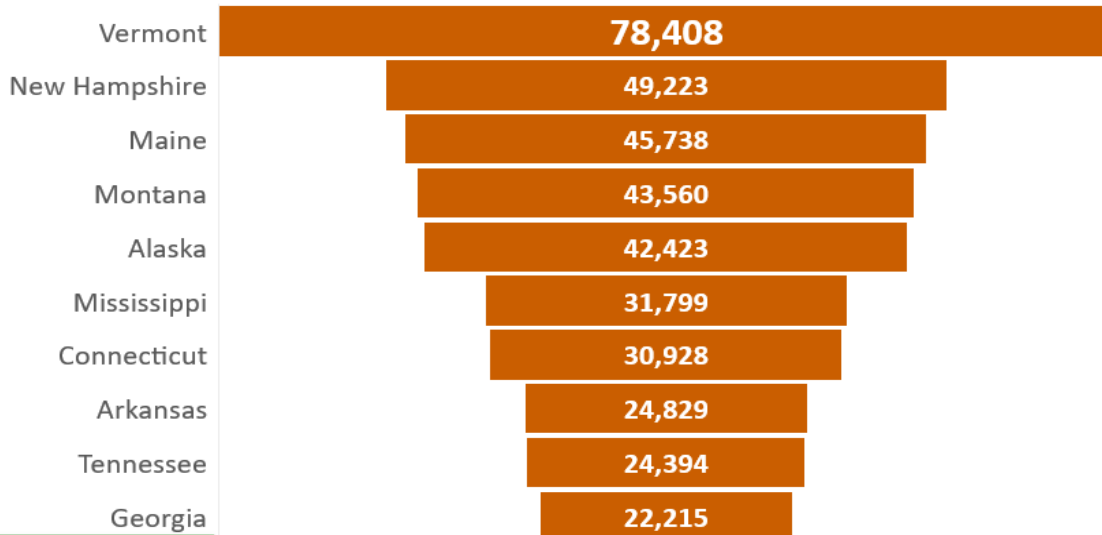
Sincerely,



Leslie Black-Plumeau
33 Knoll Circle, South Burlington

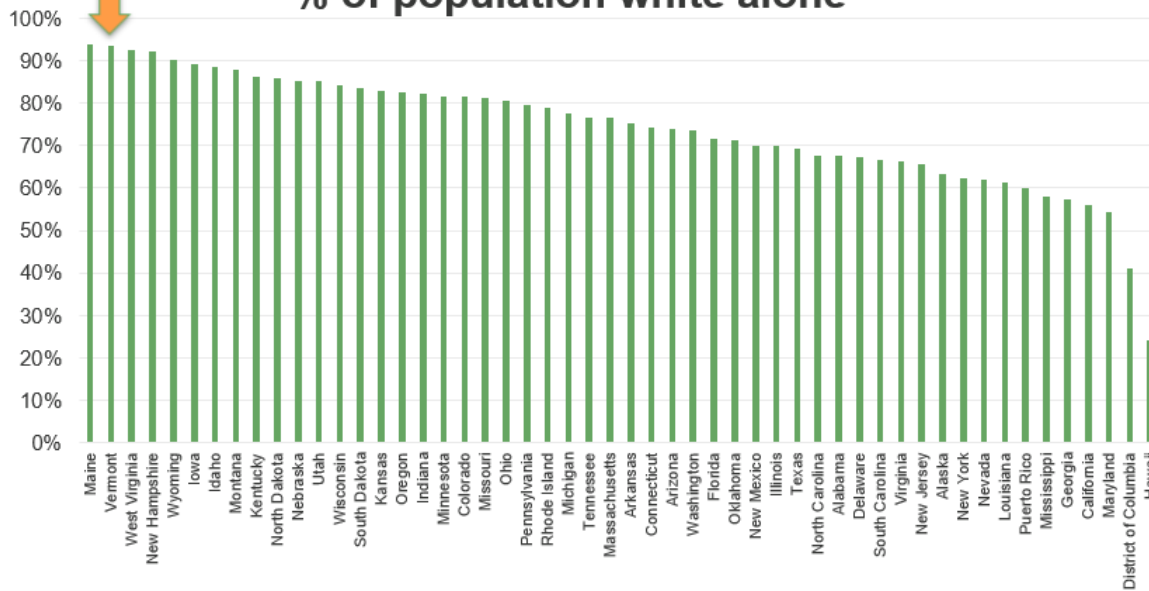
Vermont has largest median home lot size in U.S.

Top 10 states for largest median lot size, 2022



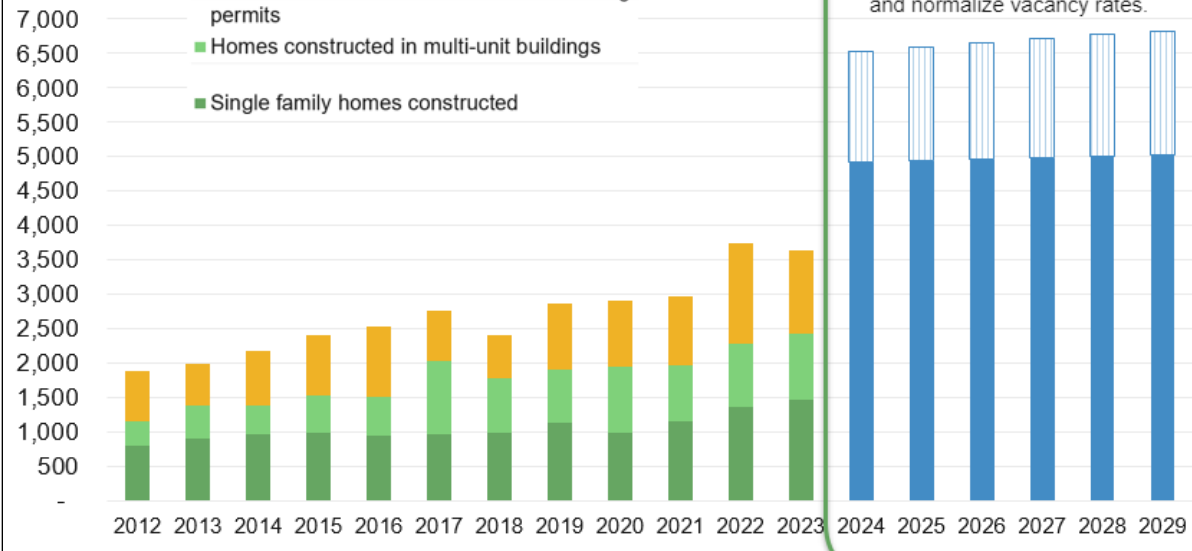
Vermont and Maine are the whitest states in the country

% of population white alone



30,000 - 40,000 homes needed by 2030

- Homes created without construction building permits
- Homes constructed in multi-unit buildings
- Single family homes constructed



Homes needed to meet projected demand at pre-pandemic (lower) and pandemic-era (higher) growth rates, address homelessness and normalize vacancy rates.

Indicators of current housing market imbalance

Rental vacancy rate

