Vermont Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks and Subdivisions, 1929-1976
Multiple Property Documentation Form
Mead & Hunt, Inc.
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Section E. Statement of Historic Contexts

1. Autocamping and the Invention of Travel Trailers: 1910s-1928

A. Early travel trailer tourism

The genealogy of the mobile home goes beyond the travel trailer—widely accepted to be its direct predecessor—to the covered wagons of yesteryear.[1] During the American westward expansion of the nineteenth century, migrants packed up their life's belongings into a wagon typically pulled by oxen and headed to western states and territories in search of better lives. The covered wagon provided the means for families to relocate with their most important belongings in tow, as well as all the necessities and shelter to make it through the multi-month journey. As horses and oxen gave way to automobiles, the evolution of the mobile home began to take on more recognizable qualities, next being the travel trailer.

Almost as soon as the automobile was introduced as a consumer product around the turn of the twentieth century, the travel trailer gained popularity as an accessory. Historian David Thornburg asserts that the modern automobile-pulled travel trailer first appeared in 1906 in Great Britain, where the English well-to-do outfitted the earliest automobiles to pull two-wheel trailers.[2] Soon after, Americans acquired a taste for recreational trailer traveling and looked to automobiles and trailers for exciting new "motoring" adventures.[3]

It should be noted that not all Americans could experience motoring during the early twentieth century. Social and cultural norms and policies that prevailed during these decades were steeped in racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and classism, which prevented a substantial portion of the American population at the time from participating in this new activity. Most recreational motorists in these early years were white, and typically of the upper- and upper-middle-classes, and were rarely women traveling unaccompanied.

B. Lodging for the motorist

During the 1910s and into the 1920s indoor lodging for the trailer traveler was limited for several reasons. Geographically, hotels were commonly located in larger communities, many of which were served by the railroad rather than along major roads. Additionally, a certain dress and etiquette were often expected at these establishments, an often undesirable adjustment for the exhausted auto-traveler.[4] Those with a travel trailer could pack provisions, tools, and the equipment needed to camp alongside the road overnight to avoid the necessary adaptations to standard hotel decorum. Autocamping—as it was called—was a different way to make road trips, and the travel trailer design morphed from a simple practicality to offering multiple designs and amenities to make the rough journey more comfortable.

[1] Taylor W. Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, Indiana University School of Business 37 (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1954), 3.

[2] Dorothy Ayers Counts and David R. Counts, *Over the Next Hill: An Ethnography of RVing Seniors in North America* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996), 34.

[3] Parker Clifton Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park: Developing a Historic Context for a Modern Resource" (University of Georgia, 2014), 11.

[4] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 11.

Additionally, camping gear prepared the motorist for a night stay along a rural roadside in case of break-down.[5]

Early travel trailers were small and mostly homemade by their owners. They offered a freedom of travel with a mobile dwelling, and were seen primarily as a vacation vehicle rather than permanent housing in the early days. Additional niceties began to find themselves in these home-made travel trailers, such as a bed, to soften the less-comfortable qualities of autocamping. Through the 1910s and into the 1920s these owner-built trailers were often a hodge-podge of components and parts that many viewed as visually unappealing, especially as many experimented with larger trailers with more complex features. Mobility rather than livability was the focus, and trailers were essentially one "room" that served multiple functions. Rounded forms and streamlined aesthetics prevailed, which effectively decreased usable interior space.

With a growing audience of recreationalists, manufacturers entered the scene in the early 1920s, producing units that reflected the appearance and function of the smaller, earlier, owner-built travel trailers, then expanding to larger models that could be occupied by its users. Small manufacturers entered the market, primarily comprised of skilled craftsmen. The small, custom production process allowed manufacturers to offer trailer models with optional features and conveniences to please various tastes, such as beds with mattresses.[6] Although perhaps more comfortable for some than tent camping, the interiors—if occupiable—and amenities of these early manufactured travel trailers were still rudimentary.

C. Trailer traveling: from roadside to autocamp

Although pitching a tent was no longer required for many, finding an acceptable location to spend the night still proved difficult for motorists. Ruts, ditches, mud, and fenced-in properties all challenged drivers looking for ideal spots to pull off the road.[7] Additionally, the growing popularity in autocamping resulted in many more motorists seeking a place to spend the night, leading to crowding along the main roads. As communities voiced concern over litter along these informal roadside camping spots, many local governments stepped in to address the uncontrolled roadside autocamping issues.[8]

(1) Early autocamps

While the lodging industry adapted to better accommodate the needs of motoring tourists through the 1920s, many travelers who used trailers were motivated by the independence and "roughing-it" character of the journey, and these kinds of motorists opted to waive the comforts of a hotel.[9] But as motorists continued to move toward greater predictability, they often opted to use tent trailers at designated sites rather than along a roadside.[10]

[5] *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Residential Development and Suburbanization/Trailer Parks and Mobile Home Parks, 1920-1969*, Survey LA: Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey (Prepared for the City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources, January 2016), 4.

[6] "Vermont to California: Burlingtonian Crosses the Country in Automobile in 31 Days," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 1, 1921.

[7] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 31.

[8] Brian Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," *Construction Physics*, July 15, 2022, https://constructionphysics.substack.com/p/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-mobile-home.

[9] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 11.

[10] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 3.

The country's first autocamp opened in 1913 in Douglas, Arizona, established and operated by the local government. Other communities followed suit, opening formal campgrounds for the through-traveler to use, often locating them near major roads, gas stations, and grocery stores.[11] These earliest autocamps commonly offered amenities such as communal bathing facilities, laundry, and a kitchen, aside from a free place to park.[12]

Between 1920 and 1924, 6,000 autocamps were established in the country, several of which welcomed tourists to the Green Mountain State.[13] Proponents viewed autocamps as a means of boosting the local economy by bringing in through-travelers to patronize Vermont's businesses.[14] With such high demand, private property owners and entrepreneurs quickly joined the autocamp industry, sometimes offering no more than a cleared, flat place to park—for a charge.

Private property owners—primarily farmers—charged motorists to park on their land, sometimes offering very little in the way of amenities or conveniences, let alone hygienic facilities. Some decided to further improve their land to attract customers, sometimes even making a formal business of it.[15] Through the mid-1920s real estate advertisements in Vermont newspapers started marketing the development potential for a private autocamp as a selling point. The investment attraction of an autocamp was often part of the promotional language used to market vacant parcels or farmsteads, alongside more traditional language such as "fine scenery" and "pine background."[16]

Good Roads and commercial booster organizations also developed autocamps in the early 1920s as a way to promote their individual missions. These types of groups were primarily active in the 1900s-1920s, sometimes working together to advocate for a greater, improved road network to promote local economic growth through increased visitors. One Vermont example was a Brattleboro autocamp that opened in 1922 by the local Outing Club, and included an "auto camp trailer" on display during its grand opening (see Figure 1). The camp was located on the Vernon Road next to Broad Brook, approximately two miles south of the Brattleboro village center.[17] A 1923 newspaper article told of the camp's "natural scenic advantages," with a "heavy growth of pine trees [that form] a high arched roof."[18] Another Vermont example is a St. Johnsbury autocamp opened around the same time by the local Commercial Club, which hoped to enhance local business patronage by providing a place for tourists to stay.[19]

[11] *Trailer Parks and Mobile Home Parks, 1920-1969*, 4.

[12] Allan D. Wallis, *Wheel Estate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 39.

[13] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 22.

[14] "Auto Camp Site Winning Favor," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, September 8, 1922.

[15] *Trailer Parks and Mobile Home Parks, 1920-1969*, 4.

[16] "Real Estate: One of the Best," *The Burlington Free Press*, December 30, 1938.

[17] "Numerous Parties At Auto Camp," *The Brattleboro Reformer*, July 11, 1924.

[18] "Outing Club Has Outdoor Meeting," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, May 25, 1923.

[19] "Opening of Auto Camp Site: DeWitt Grocery Co.," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, June 7, 1922.

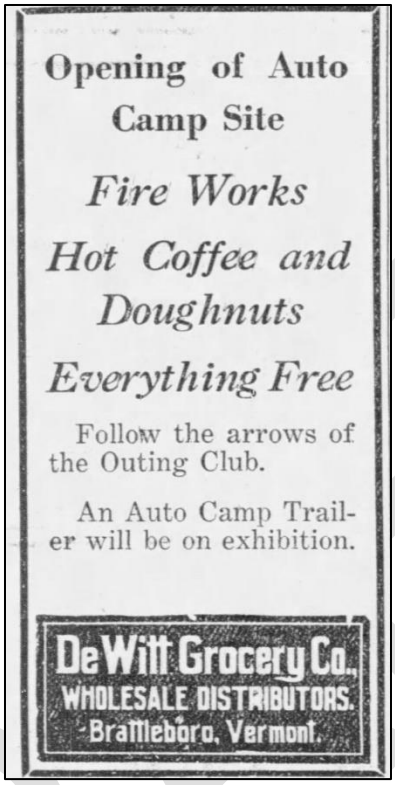


Figure 1. Advertisement in a 1922 issue of the Brattleboro Daily Reformer *promoting the new autocamp site operated by the local Outing Club in Brattleboro.*[20]

Nearly all visitors to these autocamps were tourists from out of state—though primarily from other New England states—and newspapers often published visitor praise on Vermont's autocamps being some of the finest they saw on their multi-state journeys.[21] Other newspaper articles from the early 1920s suggest that a substantial number of visitors to this autocamp were regionally based, primarily traveling from other New England states, while others are recorded from many different parts of the country.[22]

By 1926 another camp opened in Grand Isle, with others established in more remote recreational destinations such as the Mansfield, Proctor-Piper, and Townshend State Forests.[23]

(2) Busy tourism seasons spotlights autocamp problems

There was a particularly high demand for autocamps during the summer season, when most trailer-travelers visited Vermont, though the scenery and recreational activities in autumn and winter, respectively, also drew vacationers to the Green Mountain State through the 1920s.[24] Perhaps

[20] "Opening of Auto Camp Site: DeWitt Grocery Co."

[21] "Many Visitors At Free Auto Camp Site," *St. Johnsbury Republican*, July 24, 1924; "Use of Auto Camp Site Appreciated," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, July 20, 1922; "Six Tents at Auto Camp Site," *The Brattleboro Reformer*, August 19, 1924; "Numerous Parties At Auto Camp."

[22] "Six Tents at Auto Camp Site"; "Numerous Parties At Auto Camp."

[23] "Many Visitors At Free Auto Camp Site"; "Opening of Auto Camp Site: DeWitt Grocery Co."; "Walnut Ledge Camps Preparing For Season," *Burlington Daily News*, April 27, 1926; Reginald T. Titus, "Forestry Facts," *Springfield Reporter*, March 4, 1926.

[24] "Many Visitors At Free Auto Camp Site."

foreshadowing major events to come, not all visitors kept these Vermont autocamps in the most orderly conditions, with reports of visitors leaving litter and carving trees.[25]

Throughout America, communities along major roadways felt the increase in tourism brought by trailer-traveling of the 1920s, but expressed mixed feelings about the popularity of autocamping in their towns. While autocamps were often the preferable and most affordable option for motorists, small towns often expressed greater acceptance to having early cabins in their communities, rather than autocamps.[26] This sentiment was rooted in biases against certain travelers that did not have a permanent home, but instead used the free municipal autocamps. Complaints of these "hobo tourists" taking advantage of the lenient stay limitations and free parking resulted in many municipalities closing or simply charging a fee.[27] With fees imposed, municipal autocamps generated revenue for the community, but were now in competition with private campgrounds, who were already charging a fee.

While some Vermont parks were described as having minor issues related to crowding or litter, most were documented in the newspapers as being well-run and in a pleasant natural setting.[28]

Parks in Vermont: Vermont's first "trailer park"

In 1923 landowner George Farrington developed a trailer park in Burlington, widely accepted to be the first "trailer park" in Vermont. The land was purchased by Farrington's father in 1888, who used it as a dairy farm through the first few decades of the twentieth century. As Vermont gained popularity in autocamping and trailer traveling, Farrington found more and more travelers requesting to park on his farm. In response, he developed a formal area for these visitors and improved the site with the most basic amenities: public toilet and shower facilities near the center of the park, both hooked up to the city sewer system.[29]

According to Farrington, his first customers were primarily large families traveling for summer vacations, towing "'sport' trailers."[30] As travel trailers and mobile homes took on major industry changes through the mid-twentieth century, the Farrington Trailer Park—like many others—adapted to fit the latest trends and requirements. Once the larger house trailers and mobile homes were introduced with bathrooms, the shared park facilities were no longer needed. For decades this park was known as one of the largest in the state, offering space for 100 trailers by the late 1950s.[31] The property is still extant at 1106 North Avenue, and has since taken on a cooperative ownership model.[32]

[25] "Auto Camp Site Winning Favor."

[26] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 41.

[27] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 40.

[28] "Auto Camp Site Winning Favor."

[29] "Farrington Recalls How He Began Trailer Park in 1923," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 19, 1962.

[30] "Farrington Recalls How He Began Trailer Park in 1923."

[31] "Farrington Recalls How He Began Trailer Park in 1923"; "'Modern Living' in Trailers Grows More Popular in Area," *Burlington Free Press*, July 24, 1958.

[32] North Avenue Co-op Inc., "City of Burlington Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Project Award Application" (City of Burlington, November 15, 2017), https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/North%20Avenue%20Co-op.pdf.

D. 1920s travel trailer market

Most trailer-travelers did not fit the prevailing "hobo tourist" stereotype, but instead comprised a mix of socio-economic statuses. During this era the commercially produced travel trailer was typically limited to the well-to-do vacationer with disposable income. For those with "mobile occupations" that required routine moving from place-to-place, the travel trailer was able to appropriately fit a need. Traveling salesman, entertainers, construction line crews, and seasonal laborers were all shown to have used the trailer in the 1920s for its flexibility, allowing them to work in communities temporarily without regard to local lodging availability.[33] Except for the rare occasion, it was uncommon for families to use travel trailers as permanent housing before the 1930s, due to the lack of space.

Those of lesser means also found the trailer useful for their circumstances, and many low-income individuals found value in moving around rather than having a permanent house in one location. Prevailing public attitudes categorized the dwellers "vagabonds," worsening public attitudes and prejudices against the "mobile poor." Concerns were that trailer-travelers took advantage of the prolific fee-free offerings of many early municipal autocamps, solidifying biases toward this group as freeloaders.[34]

2. The Great Depression and the 1930s: 1929-1939

By the end of the 1920s and into the early 1930s formalized travel trailer and tourist camps had been established within Vermont, but were not widespread. With the Great Depression pausing recreational travel in America, travel trailers gained their first serious public consideration as a housing alternative in the 1930s. As economic turmoil wreaked havoc on the housing market during the Great Depression, the travel trailer industry promoted its products as an answer to a growing homeless population—at least as a temporary measure—and modified designs to be more "house-like."[35]

A. Distinguishing house from trailer

At this point industry manufacturers furthered distinction among their trailer models, reflecting differences in use: the recreational trailer used for storage (travel trailer) versus the larger more "home-like" trailer that could be used for permanent housing (house trailer). Interestingly enough, through this decade some industry leaders continued to doubt that trailer designs would ever be suitable enough for widespread use as permanent housing.[36]

As the industry navigated the split between travel trailers and house trailers, concerns arose regarding potential government restrictions to come. Before this split, trailers of any type were treated similarly under the law—as "vehicles"—and not subject to building codes in any jurisdiction. Manufacturers feared that this new emphasis on "house trailers" may push legislators to require traditional housing building codes apply to mobile homes. With a "vehicle" classification, these more home-like house trailers were able to evade all enforceable health, safety, and building standards.[37]

[33] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[34] Eduard Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places" (University of Minnesota, 2014), 4.

[35] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 4.

[36] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 15.

[37] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

(1) Curtiss Aerocar: the first true house trailer

In 1929 aircraft and motorcycle engine manufacturer Glenn Curtiss released the Aerocar, a revolution in travel trailer design and mass-manufacturing processes that would influence the industry for decades to come. Curtiss incorporated far more "home-like" features into the Aerocar than any other major trailer design on the market to date (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).[38] Its distinctive boxy curves and glass-roofed observation cockpit were unlike the more streamlined forms of its predecessors.[39] Despite its size, the Curtiss Aerocar could be towed by a passenger car. Its size and amenities came with a price—a cost much higher than any other trailer on the market.[40]

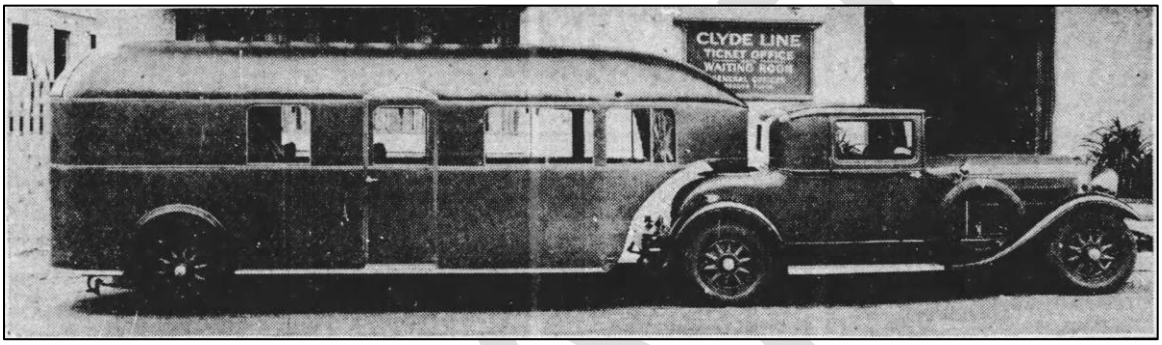


Figure 2. A photograph of the original Curtiss Aerocar production model, as printed in a 1929 The Miami Herald *article about the early house trailer.*[41]

[38] "28 Curtiss Aerocars Are Produced Here," *The Miami Herald*, July 21, 1929.

[39] Counts and Counts, *Over the Next Hill: An Ethnography of RVing Seniors in North America*, 35.

[40] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[41] "28 Curtiss Aerocars Are Produced Here."

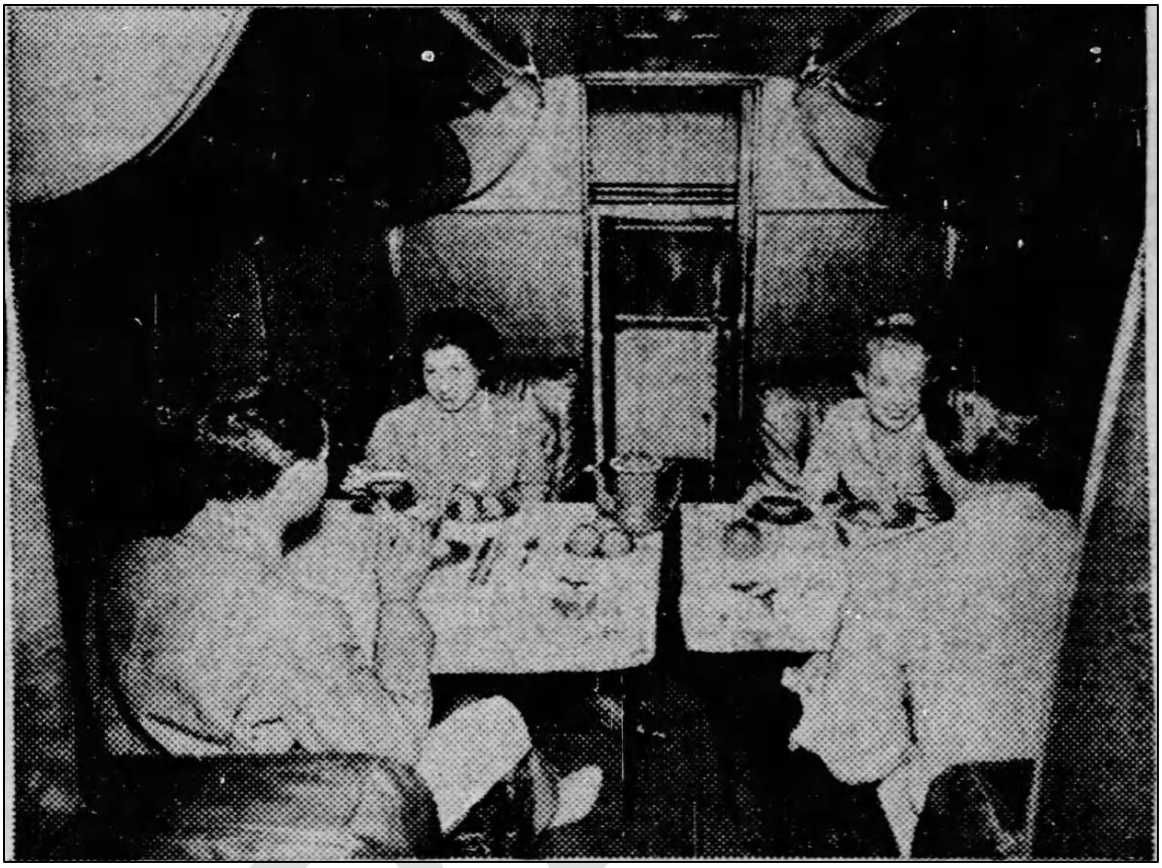


Figure 3. A photograph of the interior of a later, 1930s Aerocar model published in a 1935 issue of The Miami Herald.[42]

The Aerocar is widely considered to have been the first commercially produced house trailer, and the only factory-built one on the market in the 1920s (though for only a few months).[43] The mass-production method changed house trailer manufacturing by bringing the first assembly-line process to the industry. With this production process, Curtiss influenced nearly all other major house trailer manufacturers of the time.[44]

Size and cost ultimately dissuaded most prospective trailer buyers from considering the Aerocar, which had quickly become known as a "land yacht." The 1929 stock market crash happened just weeks after the Aerocar debut, and eventually the house trailer's glamorous image did not align with the thrifty attitudes that took hold during the early years of the Great Depression.[45] Despite its low sales, the Aerocar spurred renewed interest in making trailer designs more habitable, and with more comforts than before.

B. House trailers as Great Depression housing relief

The housing market experienced the worst effects of the Great Depression in the early to mid-1930s. Economic turmoil pushed countless families to destitution, with high rates of unemployment causing some

[42] "'Land Yacht' Member of Motor Industry," *Miami Herald*, February 24, 1935.

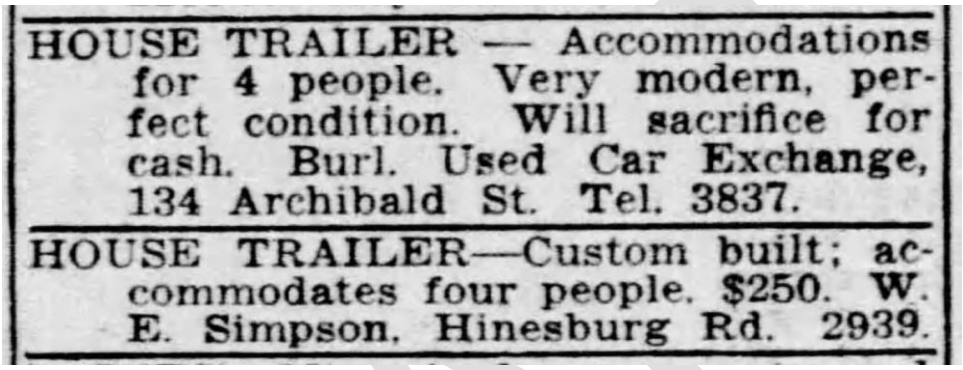
[43] Counts and Counts, *Over the Next Hill: An Ethnography of RVing Seniors in North America*, 35.

[44] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 6–7.

[45] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 32.

to default on mortgages. Some in precarious financial and housing situations invested in a house trailer, a trend that gained traction nationwide. For most, this lifestyle shift was temporary. For others, trailers became their preferred housing choice. Regardless of temporality, house trailers started to attract considerable attention in the 1930s for potential future use as mass-produced permanent housing.

While the travel trailer market in Vermont mirrored the national trends through the 1930s, it is not abundantly clear if house trailers made a prominent entrance into Vermont as a viable option for temporary housing. It is not until the late 1930s that Vermont newspaper classified ads begin to show house trailers with language highlighting its occupant capacities, which was often four people (see Figure 4).[46]


HOUSE TRAILER — Accommodations for 4 people. Very modern, perfect condition. Will sacrifice for cash. Burl. Used Car Exchange, 134 Archibald St. Tel. 3837.

HOUSE TRAILER—Custom built; accommodates four people. $250. W. E. Simpson, Hinesburg Rd. 2939.

Figure 4. Classified advertisements for house trailers in a 1938 issue of The Burlington Free Press*, marketing the four-person capacity for each model listed*.[47]

In response to historically high unemployment, the federal government established work-relief programs to kickstart the American economy into recovery. The "New Deal" formed agencies to spearhead work-relief programs in various parts of the country to both improve the country's infrastructure and put people back to work.

Many work-relief programs involved construction projects that were massive in scale, such as utility line stringing and road improvements, requiring workers to shift from site to site based on need. This often created a local housing dilemma for the federal agency, and put stress on the nearby communities. The federal government was not interested in developing permanent housing for every locale in which it was operating, so it turned to house trailers to temporarily solve its problem. As house trailers were inherently mobile, they could follow the construction crews from site to site, and be easily disposed of when the work-relief programs ended. While research did not uncover any 1930s federal work-relief programs that provided house trailers for projects in Vermont, these events had notable influence on the evolution of the house trailer nationwide.

These earliest government-supplied house trailers were typically for single occupancy, primarily housing men. Families of these employees were not advised to relocate together, as trailers at the time did not fulfill what the government considered to be appropriate living standards for children. Rather, the federal

[46] "Miscellaneous For Sale," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 4, 1938.

[47] "Miscellaneous For Sale."

government was adamant that house trailer quality and size at the time could not sufficiently serve as permanent housing, but fit the need during an emergency.[48]

C. The economic recovery years: mid-to-late 1930s

Use of house trailers during the Great Depression set the stage for the industry to further highlight the opportunity for house trailers to solve the nation's ongoing housing shortage. However, the change was not immediate. As the economy started to improve in the mid-to-late 1930s, pre-fabrication and mass-manufacturing gained substantial attention, and the housing industry was tinkering with ways to industrialize housing construction. During these years the house trailer industry reworked its designs, tried to rehabilitee its public image, and also advocated for widespread acceptance of house trailers as housing. Part of these efforts included promotion of the term "house trailer" over "trailer coach"—also commonly used in the early 1930s—to emphasize the new focus on the budding market for house trailers as permanent housing.

Like in the 1920s, travel trailers were typically sold in the 1930s by outfits already in the business of automobile sales or service.[49] Many larger companies began to establish official dealers to market and sell their brands locally. However, most manufacturers were still rather small enterprises and remained focused on their regional market. This manifested in manufacturers replicating popular teardrop and bread loaf forms with design adjustments and features that satisfied the specific tastes of their region's primary clientele.

While the trailer was gaining greater attention as a potential "housing" alternative throughout the decade, research indicates that few Vermonters were actually choosing a trailer as a permanent house at this time.[50] At least one college student attending the University of Vermont lived in a house trailer in the mid-1930s—one he built himself—parked in a Burlington back yard near campus.[51] This was one of the state's first instances of a widely publicized individual living in a house trailer parked permanently, though the trend for college-student trailer living was already catching on in other parts of the country.[52]

(1) Leisure (briefly) returns

Recreational travel resumed in the brief years between the depths of the Great Depression in the early 1930s and the start of World War II. Vermont had historically been a vacation destination, with recreational activities being a popular pastime for tourists, and experienced a tremendous increase in visitors from the mid-1930s through the end of the decade.[53] But rather than have second homes of the conventional nature, the lingering thrifty principles of the Great Depression pushed more well-to-do-vacationers to the house trailer:

> Four or five years of depression found the populace hanging on to their vacation resorts hesitatingly believing that 'keeping up with the Joneses' was the ideal way of vacationing. However, in that poverty oftentimes breeds common sense, the old summer homesteads have been raised or sold, the trailer

[48] "American Nomads Aided by Trailers," *The United Opinion*, September 10, 1937.

[49] "DeWitt Garage, Flat Street [Advertisement]," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, April 9, 1923.

[50] "Few Trailers in Vermont," *Hardwick Gazette*, August 5, 1937.

[51] "College Man Has Trailer For Home," *The Burlington Free Press*, October 9, 1936.

[52] "Trailers Go To College," *The Burlington Free Press*, October 14, 1936.

[53] "Tourists to Vermont," *The Waterbury Record*, July 22, 1936.

> has proven its worth, the vacationing public is satisfying its uncivilized instinct to 'rough it' and thus it has turned towards one of the few unspoiled spots in all New England, northern central Vermont containing rugged Mt. Mansfield, Camel's Hump, and the beautiful rolling country surrounding.[54]

During the 1930s, tourist organizations and newly formed trailer advocacy groups began publishing guidance for tourist camps throughout New England. One of the earliest in the region was the "New England Tourist Camp Directory," which provided information on autocamps and campgrounds throughout the multi-state area, including Vermont. The 1932-1933 issue recorded seven registered tourist camps in Vermont, located near the communities of Barre, Bennington, Canaan, Montpelier, Rutland, South Hero, and St. Albans.[55] While this may be an undercount, it is also likely that autocamps closed as a result of the sudden drop in vacationers around this time.

(2) House trailers for vacationing sportsmen

The house trailer provided far more than a conventional home for the hunter and fisherman visiting the Green Mountain State. By bringing their lodging—and sometimes their families and pets—along for the ride, sportsmen were able to reach more remote areas of the wilderness while enjoying the comforts and conveniences of a house trailer.[56] A 1937 *Orleans County Monitor* article described this new trend in Vermont (see Figure 5):[57]

> The modern fishermen, lured to the streams where trout are rising, is taking a house trailer with him this year, more than ever before, according to trailer manufacturers. Parked beside his favorite trout stream, the trailer becomes a completely equipped home in the Northwoods. With a trailer the fisher can go farther and penetrate into more remote country—and not have to worry about getting back to a lodge of camp at night.[58]

[54] "Tourists to Vermont."

[55] Raymond C. Palmer, "New England Tourist Camp and Cabin Directory, 1932-1933" (National Tourist Camp Owners Association, 1932), University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

[56] Jack Swanson, "Hunting and Fishing, Notes from Forest and Stream," *Middlebury Register*, June 26, 1936; "1937's Trout Fishermen Using House Trailers," *Orleans County Monitor*, April 28, 1937.

[57] "1937's Trout Fishermen Using House Trailers."

[58] "1937's Trout Fishermen Using House Trailers."

Figure 5. A photograph of trout fishermen in Vermont with a Covered Wagon house trailer in the background from a 1937 issue of the Orleans County Monitor.[59]

Trailer travelers tended to head to the most popular vacation destinations in the state, partially because they needed road conditions sufficient to tow a house trailer. To capture tourism business, locals developed trailer camps in these seasonal destinations, with many developed along Vermont's ski areas or lakeshores (see Figure 6). Vermont's trailer camps of the 1930s primary appeared in or around vacation destinations and attractions, and were mostly developed within close proximity to a highway.[60]

[59] "1937's Trout Fishermen Using House Trailers."

[60] "Newport Has Trailer Camp," *The Newport Daily Express*, June 21, 1937; "Stop At Sunset Coffee Shop on Beautiful Lake Dunmore," *The Brandon Union*, July 15, 1938; "Tourists to Vermont."

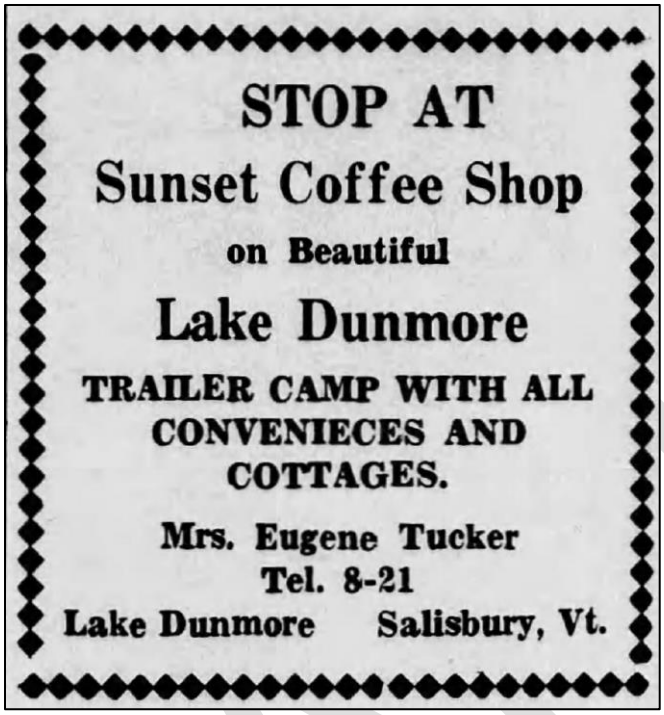


Figure 6. A 1938 Brandon Union *advertisement for a trailer camp operating near Lake Dunmore in Salisbury, Vermont, one of the state's vacation areas.*[61]

The popularity of these municipal and private autocamps led to even greater private development, in hopes that local efforts could meet the immense summer and autumn demand for trailer travel. In fact, after a popular summer in 1936, Vermonters approached the spring of 1937 by improving their camps and opening new ones in anticipation of another busy summer with travel trailers.[62] Some Vermont auto trailer camps used the name "Tourist Camp" or "Tourist Park," and advertised such features as having "flush toilets," "trailer camp hook up," and a "dining room a la carte."[63]

Surprisingly, the crowds of 1937 did not live up to the expectations, though they were still sizable. Some said the drop was likely a result of people trying trailer-traveling in 1936, and deciding it was not to their liking.[64] Nonetheless, trailer travel was here to stay for the long term, and there continued to be a demand for autocamps. Through the end of the 1930s most of Vermont's recreational-traveler-focused autocamps were located on main highways leading to popular vacation areas, as well as within these seasonal destinations themselves. All regions and all major rivers of the state appeared to have at least one auto trailer camp by the late 1930s. The more popular and publicized camps were often those with amenities such as a restaurant, grocery store, laundry, or ice house.[65]

There is at least one instance of the State of Vermont establishing trailer camp facilities in recreational areas. This example is from 1938, where the Vermont Forest Service established a trailer camp as part of

[61] "Stop At Sunset Coffee Shop on Beautiful Lake Dunmore."

[62] "Have Your Trailer Camp Ready," *Palladium and News*, March 31, 1937.

[63] "Visit Vermont To View Gorgeous Foliage Colors," *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 10, 1936.

[64] "Trailers Going Out," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, May 15, 1937.

[65] "For Sale," *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, April 2, 1938.

its redevelopment of the Bethel Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp.[66] The Bethel CCC camp was constructed on 26 acres of private land, and turned over to the State for the people's use, with the CCC-era buildings demolished to make room for new camp facilities.[67]

Vermonters owned travel trailers for recreation too, with many reported using them to travel to Florida during the harsh winter months in the Northeast.[68] Leisure was brief for all, however, as World War II put another pause on recreational travel in the early 1940s.

D. House trailer manufacturing in the 1930s

Early travel trailers were often homemade, consisting of a patchwork of various materials and components. After Curtiss started producing the Aerocar in 1929, many new players joined the expanding industry of large-scale house trailers. Most of these manufacturers were small, and aimed to produce house trailers with the same "home-like" concept championed by the Aerocar, but at a much lower price.

With the immense rush to cash in on the need for house trailers, new manufacturers joined the industry in full force in the mid-1930s. In 1936 a *New York Times* article on the trailer manufacturing industry claimed it was the fastest growing industry in the United States, describing plants running 24/7 to keep up with the backlog of orders.[69] Keeping costs down was necessary to remain competitive. While some manufacturers shed the unnecessary luxuriousness present in the Aerocar, others found cost-cutting methods in using substandard materials.[70]

During this time America's largest automobile companies such as Ford and General Motors considered manufacturing trailers alongside their automobile lineup, but ultimately declined due to the market's small size at the time. However, several companies that specialized in manufacturing automobile components entered the market, with truck body manufacturers such as the Pierce-Arrow Company, Federal Motor Truck Company, and Hayes Body Company producing trailers. Like many other fleeting trailer manufacturers of the 1930s, many of these companies ceased trailer production after only a few years.[71]

The Wallingford Trailer Company of Wallingford, Vermont, appears to be one of the earliest manufacturers in the state producing "house trailers" as evidenced in a 1930 advertisement in the *Rutland Daily Herald* (see Figure 7).[72] Aside from offering a $10 cash prize to the winner who could submit the "Best Name" for the company's new house trailer, the advertisement's promotional text highlights the trailer's "streamlined" design.[73] Even smaller craftsman—often unemployed as a result of the Great Depression—joined the industry for low-output production (see Figure 8). Others include the Camp-Easy Trailer Co. based in Chester, which produced trailers with "full size beds, electric lights, [and] sanitary features."[74]

[66] "A New Recreation Park Has Been Presented," *Vermont Standard*, November 10, 1938.
[67] "State Gets CCC Camp for Park," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 1, 1938.
[68] "Interviewed On Visit South," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, March 15, 1937.
[69] Burnham Finney, "An Industry Growing Up," *New York Times*, August 16, 1936.
[70] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 40.
[71] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 7.
[72] "Wallingford Trailer Co. [Advertisement]," *Rutland Daily Herald*, August 20, 1936.
[73] "Wallingford Trailer Co. [Advertisement]."
[74] "Chester Firm Building Trailers That Have Every Home Comfort [Advertisement]," *Springfield Reporter*, November 21, 1935.

WALLINGFORD TRAILER CO.

WALLINGFORD, VT.

Manufacturers of House Trailers

Offer

$10 CASH PRIZE

For the Best Name Submitted
FOR ITS NEW HOUSE TRAILER

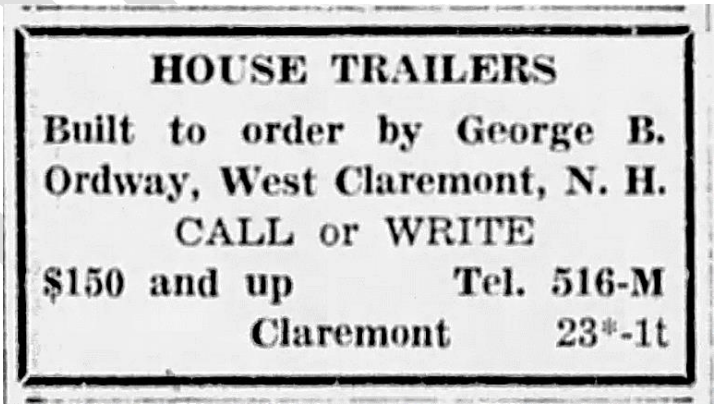
See this new streamlined Trailer on display at our plant. It is just completed and represents the very latest in modern House Trailers.

By using the latest type airplane steel frame we have eliminated about 50% of the usual trailer weight. We have attained an exceptionally light, yet thoroughly rugged construction—streamlined throughout and fitted with every conceivable convenience.

All entries must be post-marked not later than midnight, September 6th, 1936. Send all entries to Wallingford Trailer Co., Wallingford, Vt.

Aug20-1t

Figure 7. A 1936 Rutland Daily Journal *advertisement for the Wallingford Trailer Company, one of Vermont's earliest house trailer manufacturers located in Wallingford.*[75]



HOUSE TRAILERS

Built to order by George B. Ordway, West Claremont, N. H.

CALL or WRITE

$150 and up Tel. 516-M

Claremont 23*-1t

Figure 8. A 1936 Vermont Journal *newspaper advertisement for a small, West Claremont-based producer of house trailers.*[76]

[75] "Wallingford Trailer Co. [Advertisement]."

[76] "House Trailers Built to Order by George B. Ordway," *Vermont Journal*, June 4, 1936.

In 1938 there were approximately 400 companies reportedly manufacturing trailers nationwide, accounting for an estimated 85,000 to 100,000 trailers produced annually by 1937. This consisted of an approximate $55 million sales figure for that year, which was more than double the previous sales figure from 1936.[77] However, the industry soon had to grapple with the effects of its own uncontrolled expansion, lack of enforceable standards, negative public opinion, and the ever-popular passage of local restrictive zoning ordinances.

(2) Trailer Coach Association

As the market was saturating, one organization developed out of a group of trailer manufacturers, bringing some sense of order to the industry's lucrative chaos at the time. In 1936 the Trailer Coach Association (TCA) was formed as an advocacy group with trailer-related interests.[78] When established, the TCA generally operated east of the Rocky Mountains with its partner organization, the Trailer Coach Association of California, representing California. Shortly afterward, this state organization was expanded to represent all states west of the Rocky Mountains. As the industry continued to grow and change over the next several decades, the TCA would morph to meet the changing consumer desires and the industry's preferred image, and would serve as the industry's most influential advocate.[79]

E. Policy, quality, and safety issues

As autocamps and other trailer sites continued to proliferate during the latter half of the 1930s, public concerns about house trailers—and their dwellers—became amplified. Many communities in America feared that as more house trailers attracted permanent occupants, they would become a permanent fixture in the landscape. This alarmed those opposed to their appearance and/or those with stereotype-driven biases against the people living in them that had been carried over from previous decades.[80] Evidence of this nationwide stigma is in the harsh language used in a 1937 *Fortune* magazine article, where a description of permanent trailer camps condescendingly proclaims them as "crooked rookeries of itinerant flophouses."[81]

Through the mid- and late 1930s, Vermont communities were beginning to understand these trailer "issues" as a "purely local problem" that can be solved by local policy.[82] Concerned about possible negative changes house trailers may inflict on their communities, Vermont policymakers in local governments around the state began to consider implementing restrictive zoning ordinances that limited park development and mobile home siting in the 1930s, with some local laws enacted to ban house trailers outright. However, in Vermont most of this early local legislation would not be implemented or overhauled until following World War II, when these previously benign issues became more pressing.

[77] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 47.

[78] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 77.

[79] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 77; Gary Jay Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States: A Developmental History." (Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1972), 70, https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/74367; Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 33.

[80] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 73.

[81] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[82] "[No Title]," *The Newport Daily Express*, February 18, 1937.

(3) No trailer-specific building codes

In the 1930s almost every law governing house trailers continued to classify them as "vehicles." As such, they were not subject to building standards established for housing, and subsequently showed widespread quality issues. In addition to poor construction and substandard materials, trailers of the time were observed to burn quickly in a fire, leading to the nickname "'ten second trailers.'"[83] These earlier mobile homes were also particularly susceptible to windstorm damage, with documented losses at 30 times the rate of conventional houses.[84] These safety issues were widely broadcast, stoking fear in everyone including mobile home dwellers, manufacturers, policymakers, health officials, and the insurance industry.

The earliest attempt to establish a nationwide set of standards occurred in 1937, when the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) established a new Committee on Trailers and Trailer Camps. This committee worked to develop recommended standards for trailer construction and camp planning, ultimately published in 1939. These standards applied to all areas of safety, health, and overall quality of life, including guidance on park sanitation and site layouts, as well as recommended standards for park-sited house trailers.[85] However, these NFPA standards were recommendations only, and not legally enforceable, leaving the house trailer industry without building regulations. As such, low build-quality and poor material choice would continue to pervade the house trailer market for decades to come.

(4) Trailer road safety

In 1936 the increase in travel trailers and house trailers on New England's roads caused concern for highway and motor vehicle officials for the region's states, including Vermont. To draw greater attention to this safety issue, the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators named house trailers a "class of a major problem" at its annual meeting in Burlington.[86] In response, the conference members worked to develop safety requirements that could be somewhat consistent across state lines, but no uniform set of standards were developed from these efforts.[87] Variations in state laws on trailers created issues for both enforcement and the manufacturing side of the industry—let alone for the multi-state traveler who needed to abide by each state's individual laws:

> If a 'trailer liver' were to travel through all states, his vehicle eventually would be lighted like a Christmas tree. Red, green, crystal, amber, yellow, white and blue lights are demanded in various combinations and numbers by the statutes. Trailers must display as many as ten lights in some states.[88]

Vermont took its own steps in 1937 to incorporate trailers as part of their state code. In 1937 Vermont made its first formal acknowledgement of a house trailer through inclusion in the state's highway towing requirements. When passed that year, State Bill H-334 defined "trailer coach" and its requirements:[89]

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[83] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[84] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[85] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 78; "Those Who Dwell in Parking Lots," *The Evening Sun*, August 13, 1938.

[86] "House Trailers Are Discussed," *The Burlington Free Press*, October 2, 1936.

[87] "Motor Vehicle Men Recognize Passenger Car Trailer Hazards," *Burlington Daily News*, October 2, 1936; "Auto Trailer Laws Differ Greatly In The 48 States," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 6, 1937.

[88] "Auto Trailer Laws Differ Greatly In The 48 States."

[89] "New Bills Continue To Appear in House," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, March 25, 1937.

> [A]ny semi- or trailer designed to be towed by any motor vehicle and designed for living purposes. Requires the attachment to towing vehicle to be with safety chain and to be adequate to insure [sic] the public safety. Requires the carrying of a fire extinguisher. Provide a fine of not more than $100 or imprisonment for not more than 30 days, or both, for violations of the two provisions.[90]

Given the changing market and variations among state highway requirements, trailer safety issues persisted in the industry. To ensure that trailerites conformed to Vermont's requirements when in the Green Mountain State, the State of Vermont implemented an automobile and trailer inspection program.[91] Interestingly enough, a 1937 *Rutland Daily Herald* article describing Vermont's implementation of its second auto and trailer safety campaign is printed above a column reporting a trailer overturning on a road in Cuttingsville.[92]

Additionally, Vermont roads were well-known in the 1930s as being crooked and narrow, qualities not conducive to trailer towing. A 1937 *Hardwick Gazette* article asserts that the roads in the state were likely the most logical reason for why Vermont did not see the amount of travel trailer tourism that other areas experienced in the mid-to-late 1930s, but other newspaper accounts seem to contradict this statement, claiming Vermont was quite popular with out-of-staters during these years.[93]

3. World War II and the Role of the House Trailer: 1940-1945

The stability of the trailer industry was tested again in the early 1940s, with World War II contributing to major fluctuations in the industry. To meet wartime housing needs, the government made several immense purchase orders for house trailers. While quality concerns pervaded the trailer market before the war, rapid production of trailers for various federal agencies resulted in inappropriate material substitution, shoddy construction, and overall poor build quality.[94] As the wartime house trailers deteriorated, so did their image as an adequate substitute for conventional housing.

After the government stopped purchasing trailers for wartime housing in 1943, the trailer manufacturing industry experienced a sudden, but brief, slump. Wartime material shortages created difficulties for some manufacturers, who ultimately went out of business during these years. Only approximately 50 companies remained at the end of the war nationwide.[95] However, the house trailer industry would reemerge as the mobile home industry in the post-World War II (postwar) era, reignited to support the dire housing shortage during the mid-to-late 1940s.

A. Wartime government housing

By 1939 World War II had erupted in Europe. The United States assisted the Allied forces by providing munitions and food, but remained reluctant to directly join the conflict. As it was becoming more evident that the country would eventually be pulled into the war, the federal government preemptively constructed new military installations, expanded others, and ramped up production of weapons and munitions. In many

[90] "New Bills Continue To Appear in House."

[91] "Campbell Orders 2d Inspection of Autos," *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 14, 1937.

[92] "Campbell Orders 2d Inspection of Autos"; "Trailer Overturns, Holding Up Traffic," *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 14, 1937.

[93] "Few Trailers in Vermont."

[94] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 15.

[95] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 93.

defense areas, local housing could not keep pace with the new wartime economy, leaving many migrant workers struggling to secure a place to live around their new employment. The federal government worked to alleviate this housing shortage, even if it meant a short-term fix for a long-term problem that began prior to the war. For the powers that be, house trailers were the answer for three main reasons:

(1) Mass-production efficiency – in contrast to the construction of site-built housing, the mass-production process of manufacturing house trailers provided the speed and economy the government needed at the time.[96] House trailers were produced in factories and delivered to the site as a fully assembled housing unit. Unlike required skills to build conventional housing, producing these homes in a factory did not restrict manufacturing labor to those with construction skills. This also allowed for manufacturers to hire less-skilled labor, which in turn kept the factory producing trailers through the already critical wartime labor shortage.

(2) Flexibility in siting – siting trailers near production plants assisted with wartime gas rationing efforts, as employees would have a short commute, reducing fuel consumption.

(3) Easy disposal – the house trailer's transitory nature allowed for the government to leave defense areas after the war without creating ghost towns through abandonment of government-built permanent housing.

In 1940 the federal government placed its first order for house trailers, purchasing 1,500 units for various defense areas around the country.[97] The Council of National Defense established minimal standards and materials for these "government" house trailers, and tasked William B. Stout to design a wartime trailer for mass production. Stout was an important automotive and aeronautical engineer, holding the second most patents filed in U.S. history, and based this wartime house trailer on his earlier folding design.[98]

Nevertheless, house trailers were still viewed as transitional, rather than permanent, housing and their form and use continued to reflect their travel trailer forebears. Wartime house trailer models such as the Western Trailer Company defense housing units or the Council of National Defense expansion trailers were indistinguishable from those earlier travel models used for recreation, and their design changed little throughout the 1940s (see Figure 9 and Figure 10).[99] By 1941 various federal agencies had purchased more than 6,000 house trailer units to house wartime workers across the country.[100]

[96] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 14.

[97] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 88.

[98] "William Bushnell Stout," *CoachBuilt.Com*, n.d., http://www.coachbuilt.com/des/s/stout/stout.htm.

[99] *Trailer Parks and Mobile Home Parks, 1920-1969*, 6–8; Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 5–6.

[100] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 6.

Figure 9. Palace Mobile Home. Demonstration of expansion trailer for emergency defense housing.[101]

[101] "Palace Mobile Home. Expansion Trailer for Emergency Defense Housing Demonstrated in Washington Tourist Camp. Washington, D.C.," image, *Library of Congress*, (n.d.), https://www.loc.gov/item/2017824088/.

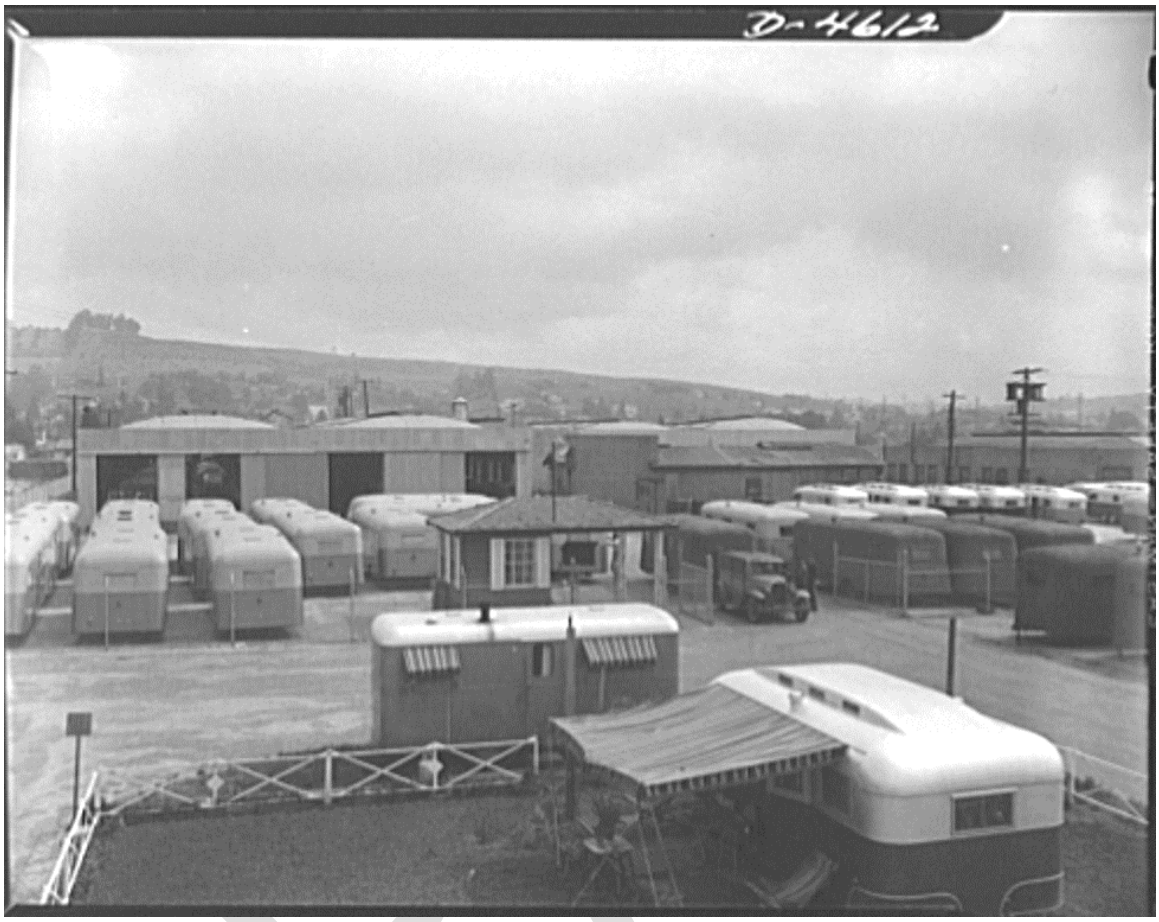


Figure 10. Image of war housing trailers at Western Trailer Company in Los Angeles.[102]

In 1943 the National Housing Authority (NHA) stopped purchasing new trailers as it believed the need for factory-built housing had passed, and focused efforts on building conventional housing for more permanent use. In all, the NHA purchased 35,000 trailers of the government's total 200,000 units bought for use during the war. While it recognized the benefits of house trailers for "stopgap" measures, the federal government continued to hold the stance that they were not suited for permanent habitation.[103]

Many industry manufacturers also showed insecurity as to the actual lifespans of their products. Some banded together to campaign the government to lease the trailers to their residents upon the war's end, rather than sell the units to them.[104] This situation is explained in a report on mobile home industry practices of the era:

[102] "War Housing. Lompoc Trailer Camp. A War Housing Trailer with Wheels and Tires Removed Is Supported Solidly and Safely on Heavy Wooden Horses. The Number of Removed Tires Are Carefully Recorded. Western Trailer Company of Los Angeles Makes Large Numbers of These Homes for War Workers," image, *Library of Congress*, (n.d.), https://www.loc.gov/item/2017692303/.

[103] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 92–93.

[104] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 15.

> A group of manufacturers, representing approximately 70 percent of total industry capacity, urged the government to lease rather than sell the dwellings to occupants, and to agree not to resell government owned trailers when the emergency had passed. These requests were made because it was feared that government and private sales of used trailers would demoralize the postwar market.[105]

The government ultimately denied the manufacturers' requests, asserting that it "reserves the right to sell any surplus material."[106]

(1) Government house trailer camps

To provide more comfort and boost morale, the government established house trailer camps designed with recreational spaces, larger lots, and a more urbane layout. However, many parks were laid out in a gridiron (rectilinear) design to get the maximum number of trailers in an area and did not follow logical circulation patterns (see Figure 11). Problems with trailer siting were quickly realized after the first several thousand units were delivered. For some, shower and toilet facilities were located at a distance from many trailers, perhaps a benefit for private camps during peacetime, but an inconvenience for wartime housing. The rectilinear gridiron park design was implemented to maximize space, where all trailers were lined in identical rows of a singular orientation, with no landscaping. Although efficient, this often proved unattractive, leading to more studies on improvements for camp design.[107]

[105] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 15.

[106] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 15.

[107] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 47.

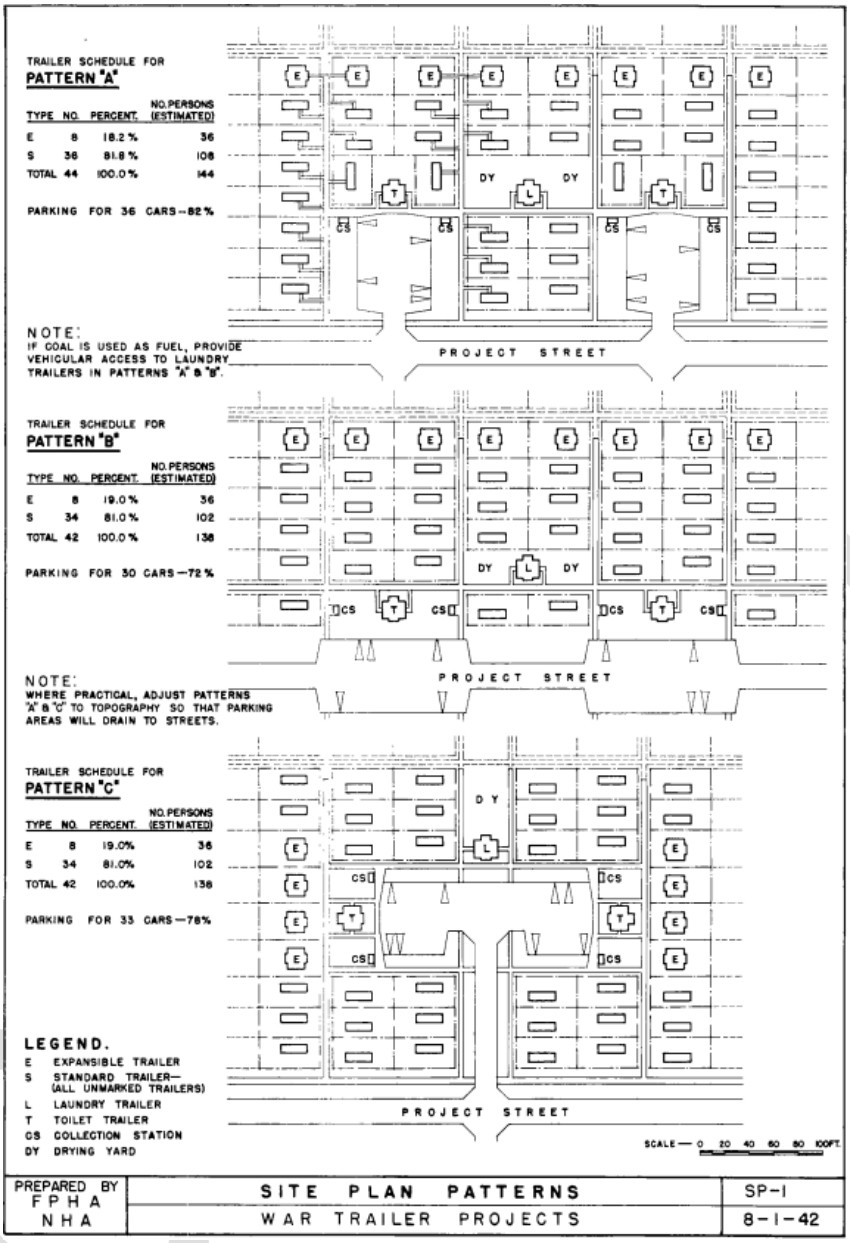


Figure 11. Site plan patterns for war trailer projects as recommended from the Federal Public Housing Authority, September 1942.[108]

During the war, many government-sponsored house trailer camps were mobile themselves, moving from site to site for certain "mobile occupations." In Burlington the Chittenden County fairgrounds served as a government trailer camp in 1943 to house those working on critical land surveys to produce maps for military use.[109] This camp is described in *The Burlington Free Press*:

[108] Federal Public Housing Authority, "Standards for War Trailer Projects." (National Housing Agency, September 1942), 9, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Standards-for-War-Trailer-Projects.pdf.

[109] "Make Burlington to Rutland Land Survey," *The Burlington Free Press*, June 18, 1943.

> Since June 5 there have been camped on the old fair ground five government trailers, with one for an office, one for a place of storage, and one for the men to eat in. There are also eight or 10 house trailers, where men with families live. In the group are about 15 children. Also there are perhaps 25 tents, where the men live and sleep. In all there are about 50 men in the party.[110]

B. Government house trailers for Springfield

During the war the town of Springfield served as one of the most critical places for wartime manufacturing in Vermont.[111] A center for munitions production, Springfield experienced a housing crunch for migrant workers relocating to participate in manufacturing. In 1942 the government stepped in with an order for 150 trailers for the town by the Farm Security Administration, and limited applicants to workers in Springfield's defense-related plants.[112] These trailers were delivered to a site in the south part of town that was already under construction with site-built dormitories for temporary war worker housing, and newspapers from 1943 indicate that only 136 trailers were at the camp (see Figure 12).[113]

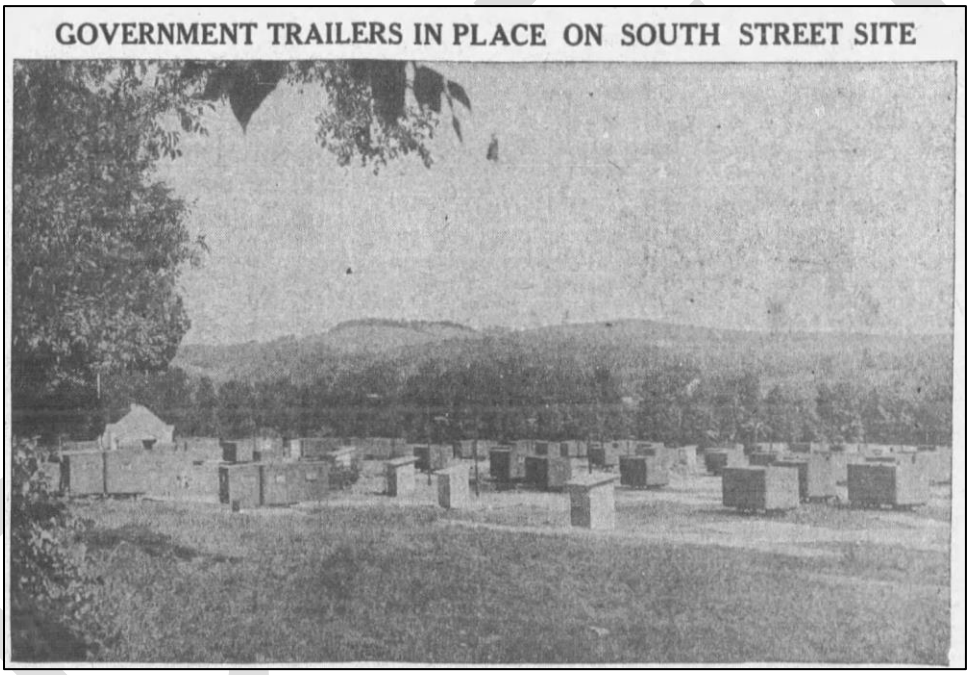


Figure 12. 1942 photograph printed in the Springfield Reporter *showing the new government house trailer camp in Springfield. The caption reads: "Some of the government trailers already in place at the South street extension site, waiting for the crew to come and expand them. Two in the left foreground have been expanded but the others are just as they were 'wheeled in' to Springfield from Flint, Mich."*[114]

[110] "Make Burlington to Rutland Land Survey."

[111] "World War II at Home," Radio Broadcast, *The Green Mountain Chronicles*, 1988.

[112] "Government Trailers Set Up At Springfield; Dormitories Started to House 310 Men," *Springfield Reporter*, July 30, 1942.

[113] "Chamber Hears Talks on Housing Developments," *Springfield Reporter*, December 17, 1942.

[114] "Government Trailers In Place On South Street Site," *Springfield Reporter*, September 24, 1942.

Each trailer was olive colored, complete with all necessary furnishings (except dishes and bedding), and able to house a family of six. The house trailers were not equipped with bathrooms.[115] Instead, one "bath unit" was built for every 30 families, and included tubs, showers, and regular janitorial service. Along with dwelling in the house trailer, occupants had access to utility trailers for laundry, hot water, and other conveniences.[116]

In February 1943 most house trailers at the camp were reported to be occupied by families with small children. Activities were held at the trailer camps for those not at work during the day—primarily mothers and their children—with libraries sending books, baby clinics, and even some war-related activities such as cross sewing lessons for surgical dressings.[117] The community even acquired a regular column in the *Springfield Reporter* on "Trailer Topics" that published a variety of social news, like the comings and goings of residents, between March 1943 and November 1944.[118]

In 1943 the government transferred 40 of the units to the United States Army, which relocated the units off the Springfield trailer camp for its own use. At this time housing was not needed in Springfield as it was in other areas: "The trailers are in great demand from the army and, as soon as the situation eased in Springfield and other housing facilities could be found for the occupants, 40 of them were transferred for army use."[119] In 1944 another 35 were removed from the site.[120]

C. Limited private market

As a result of wartime rations and limitations, some house trailers available on the private market were only available for defense-related workers (see Figure 13). A 1942 *Bennington Evening Banner* article described a couple that bought a three-room trailer to house them when one is working as part of a defense-related construction crew building a railroad through many rural parts of Vermont.[121] As such, Vermont's private market for house trailers were likely tied to these types of wartime "mobile occupations."

[115] "Government Trailers Set Up At Springfield; Dormitories Started to House 310 Men."

[116] "Chamber Hears Talks on Housing Developments."

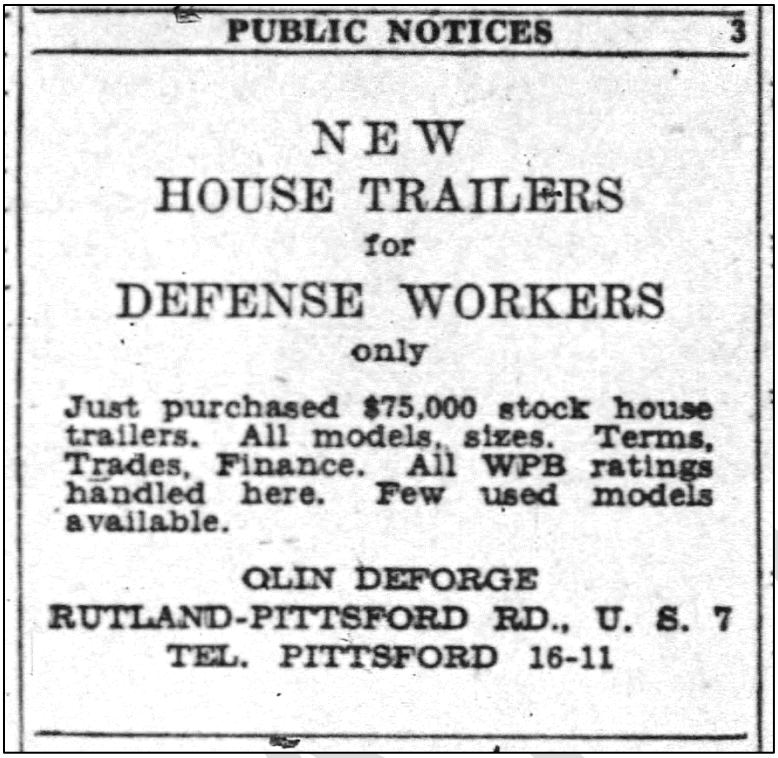
[117] "Activities Planned for Residents of Gov't Trailer Site," *Springfield Reporter*, February 4, 1943.

[118] "Trailer Topics And Southview," *Springfield Reporter*, April 27, 1944.

[119] "40 Government Trailers Taken Over by Army," *Vermont Journal*, September 2, 1943.

[120] "Trailer Topics And Southview."

[121] May White, "Ginger's Travel Talk," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, November 3, 1942.



PUBLIC NOTICES 3

NEW
HOUSE TRAILERS
for
DEFENSE WORKERS
only

Just purchased $75,000 stock house trailers. All models, sizes. Terms, Trades, Finance. All WPB ratings handled here. Few used models available.

OLIN DEFORGE
RUTLAND-PITTSFORD RD., U. S. 7
TEL. PITTSFORD 16-11

Figure 13. 1942 Rutland Daily Herald *advertisement for house trailers for sale—but restricted to defense workers—from a private dealer in Pittsford.*[122]

Vermont's parks: Private camps in Vermont during the World War II

As previously mentioned, the Farrington Trailer Park (later the Farrington Mobile Home Park) serves as an example of an informal tourist camp that later developed into a formal park, in this case in the context of wartime housing shortage and labor needs. Previously living in Connecticut and employed at the defense plant Pratt-Whitney in Connecticut, Jerome Brault and his wife (name not recorded) moved to Burlington in the winter of 1943. The Braults lived in a trailer camp while in Connecticut, and when they moved to Burlington for Jerome's job at the Bell Aircraft plant they brought with them the small trailer they owned, and lived in it next to a filling station on Shelburne Road. That first winter the Braults met the owner of the Farrington farm, George Farrington, Jr., and asked if they could park their trailer on his farm in exchange for working in Farrington's greenhouse and nursery. While at Bell Aircraft Jerome found many co-workers also looking for a place to set up their trailers. To meet this need Farrington and Brault formed a partnership to set up a formal trailer park. They dug water and sewer line connections to the municipal system and built common bathrooms and showers. By 1945 the Farrington Trailer Park had about 15 trailers grouped around the farm and its outbuildings. Initially there does not appear to be much in the consideration in design of this park, but over the decades as it grew it became to appear like other mobile home parks around the country. The partnership also started to sell trailers, with a member of the Farrington family driving out to dealers in Elkhart, Indiana, and Flint, Michigan, and driving them back. Vermont's Registry of Mobile Home Parks does not record any formal parks prior to 1945. It is unclear how many other such parks were present in the state during the wartime period, but following the end of

[122] "New House Trailers for Defense Workers," *Rutland Daily Herald*, June 30, 1942.

the war more formal mobile home parks are recorded in state data. The park continues to be in operation and is known as the North Avenue Co-op (see Figure 14).[123]

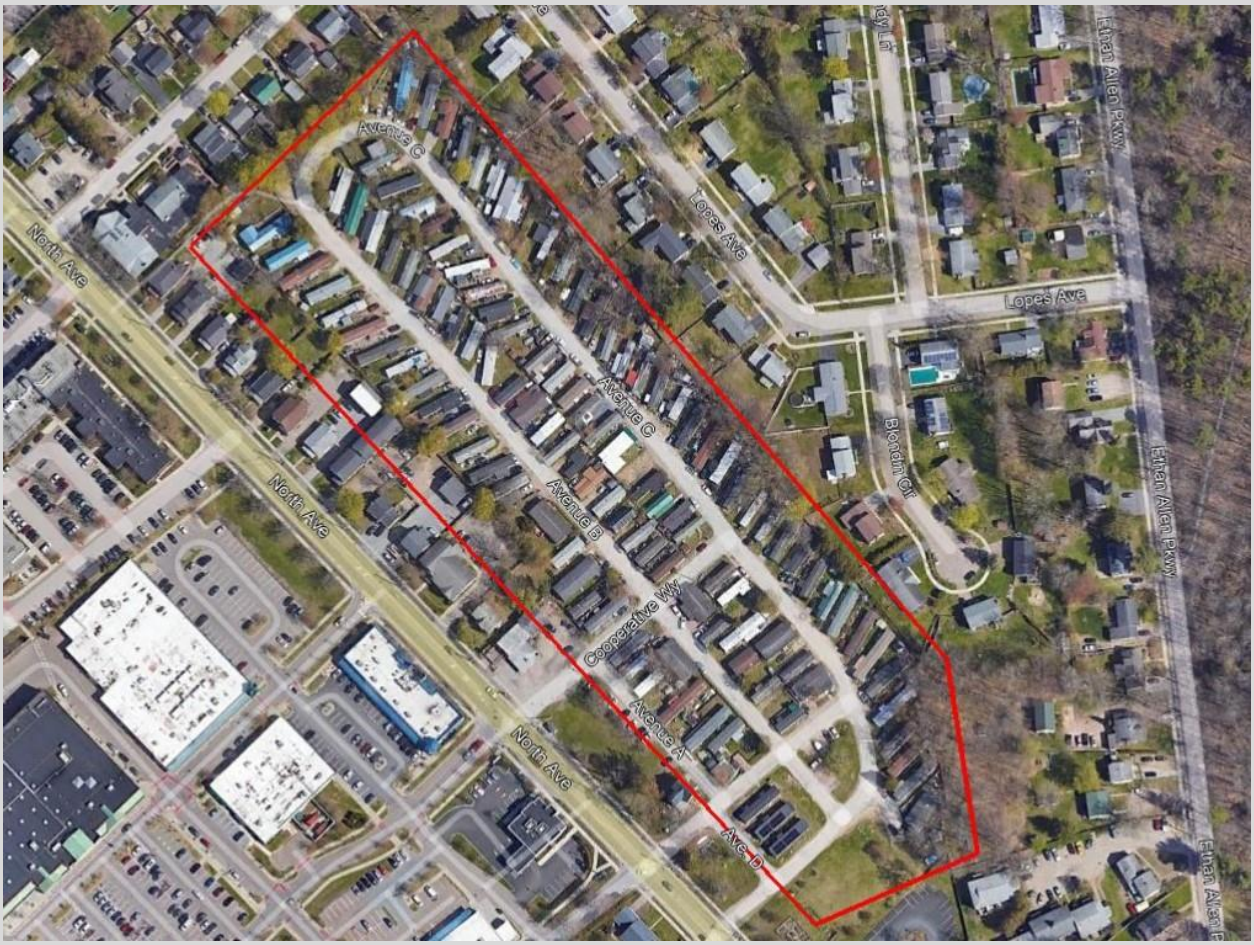


Figure 14. North Avenue Co-op, formerly the Farrington Trailer Park and Farrington Mobile Home Park, Burlington. 2022 Google Earth Image.

4. From House Trailers to Mobile Homes: 1945-1959

A. Immediate postwar housing crisis: 1945-1949

When the war ended in 1945 the existing housing shortage became a critical issue to solve. In many cases the problem worsened with the return of G.I.s and the continued dearth of building materials needed to build conventional housing, and competition among builders to secure what little was available. Despite some hiccups during the Great Depression and World War II, house trailers continued to prove worthy as one of the answers to the nationwide housing crisis of the immediate postwar era.

When the 200,000 government-owned trailers used for wartime housing became surplus, the NHA's own attitude toward trailers remaining a temporary housing solution hindered their sale as permanent homes:

[123] Lisa Phinney, "Farrington's and the Mobile Home," accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.uvm.edu/histpres/HPJ/phinney/intro.html.

> While Trailers are being used successfully as stop-gap war housing, they do not meet the standards of the National Housing Agency for duration housing for war workers. These wartime standards, moreover, have been cut to a minimum commensurate with providing adequate shelter for war workers and the NHA has no intention of going below them.[124]

The NHA reserved 13,000 of its surplus trailers for use on college and university campuses to provide temporary housing for married students.[125] Many others were given to municipal governments, sold at auction, or scrapped.[126]

The Military College of the State of Vermont in Northfield (now Norwich University) may have been the first institution of higher learning in Vermont to acquire house trailers for its veteran students and their families in 1946—25 in total.[127] What gained the most attention in the state, however, was at the University of Vermont. In 1946 the Federal Works Agency (FWA) approved 50 "family trailers" for the University of Vermont "to relieve the University's acute housing shortage for married couples."[128] Installed on the university's Centennial Field in the spring of 1947, the camp became known as the UVM Trailer Camp or the UVM Trailer Colony, with households that primarily had at least one veteran. The house trailers were rented to the university and required infrastructural improvements to the site, such as sewer and water connections.[129] Still without bathrooms in the house trailers, each household shared use of community washrooms.[130]

B. Emphasis on the *home*

While living in a trailer was viewed as a patriotic sacrifice during the war, the prewar stigma returned during peacetime.[131] As seen in Springfield, many abandoned trailer-living as wartime plants closed or transitioned to lower peacetime production, with the government reclaiming its trailers for other uses in the mid-to-late 1940s. Those who remained in trailers by the 1950s were once again viewed with distrust by many.[132] Despite the opposition, mobile home sales in the immediate postwar years had been the highest ever, reassuring the industry that it would continue to thrive through the next decade.

This decade was a period of experimentation and refinement of the form and plan of both mobile homes and mobile home parks. During this period mobile homes would become visually and functionally separate from the house trailers that had preceded them. The industry continued to downplay mobility, instead opting to emphasize the "home" aspect. This image shift manifested in promotional copy, as well as changes to unit design and park design. In addition, the shift influenced modifications to existing building code and housing policies at municipal, state, and federal levels.

[124] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[125] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 94.

[126] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 19.

[127] J.S.H., "College Problem, May and September," *The Brattleboro Reformer*, September 20, 1946.

[128] "FWA Approves Provision of 50 Family Trailers For UVM Housing," *The Burlington Free Press*, January 16, 1946.

[129] "FWA Approves Provision of 50 Family Trailers For UVM Housing."

[130] "Student Veterans Protest Excessive Housing Rates Here," *Burlington Daily News*, April 2, 1947.

[131] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[132] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 4.

In the years following the war the TCA made substantial efforts to improve the industry's image and earn greater public acceptance of mobile homes as a viable permanent housing option, especially during the postwar housing crisis. To best promote this message and create lasting change, the campaign focused on educating policymakers, financial institutions, and the general public on mobile home living, refuting false stereotypes and guiding all industry players to lasting positive changes.[133]

As part of this effort the TCA changed its name to the Mobile Home Manufacturers Association (MHMA) in 1953. This was part of the organization's effort to make the term "mobile home" stick as a replacement for "trailer," as the industry was splitting these ever-diverging products into separate markets. This name change was carried out by various players of the industry, from magazines to policymakers, though "trailer" continued to be part of common parlance. The name change had other practical reasoning, as the MHMA claimed that the incorporation of a bathroom to a trailer—first introduced in 1950—lifted it to status as a "mobile home."[134] Ironically, this name shift occurred as prevailing mobile home designs from the 1950s were becoming increasingly less mobile.

Elmer Frey of Wisconsin-based Marshfield Homes invented the ten-foot wide trailer in 1954, the form which became known as the "ten-wide." Frey insisted his wider product be referred to as a "mobile home" rather than any term that included "trailer."[135] His reasoning boiled down to towing ability, asserting that "trailer" described something the average automobile could tow.[136] The ten-wide did not meet this definition as it required special truck transport, sometimes requiring a wide-load permit.[137] Conveniently—and not surprisingly—the term "mobile home" aligned with the industry's common rebranding goals.

(1) Postwar unit design shifts

Emphasizing the "home," designs shifted in the mid-1950s to better resemble single-family houses. For nearly ten years following the war the most commonly sold house trailers were 8 feet wide and varied in length between 18 and 22 feet long. Since they were transitioning from the design of the earlier travel trailer, these mobile homes were still limited in size, and did not have space for a full kitchen, multiple bedrooms, or a washroom. This changed with the invention, and subsequent successes, of the ten-wide model of the mid-1950 and twelve-wide of the early 1960s.

Manufacturers successfully marketed longer mobile home models throughout the decade, with 74 percent of new trailers being longer than 30 feet by 1952.[138] However, their overall size remained limited by the ability to transport them. By 1954 many states, including Vermont, still required that trailers could not be more than 8 feet wide, 35 feet long, and 12.5 feet high to be transported on highways. Adhering to these dimensions limited mobile homes to only approximately 280 square feet of living area. This was a fraction of the size of the conventional site-built homes of the period. For example, the compact tract homes of

[133] Arthur D Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry" 17 (1970): 91.

[134] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 60.

[135] John Fraser Hart, Michelle J. Rhodes, and John T. Morgan, *The Unknown World of the Mobile Home* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 18.

[136] Hart, Rhodes, and Morgan, *The Unknown World of the Mobile Home*, 18.

[137] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 37.

[138] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 18; Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 9.

Levittown, New York, were closer to 1,000 square feet. This limited amount of interior space dictated the interior plan of these early mobile homes. Without the width for a corridor, the only way to access one end of the mobile home from the other was through the middle rooms, reducing privacy available to those living in them.[139]

Ten-Wide

The biggest change to the dimensions of mobile homes during this period was the introduction of the ten-foot-wide trailer, popularly known as the "ten-wide." Elmer Frey of Wisconsin-based Marshfield Homes invented this ten-foot wide trailer in 1954, at the time noticeably larger than most mobile homes on the market at the time. Like the name implies, it was ten feet wide with lengths typically varying between 40 and 50 feet.[140] The ten-wide was introduced in response to consumer demand for mobile home designs that better resembled a conventional house in terms of interior spatial separation. By the end of the decade the ten-wide was the most popular mobile home form in the country, produced by several manufacturers.[141]

The introduction of the ten-wide marked a major shift in the mobile home industry. The increased size allowed for a more conventional home floorplan with space for a corridor through the trailer along with closed off rooms, allowing for more privacy for its residents (see Figure 15).[142] Despite the new lack of actual mobility and restrictions by highway departments concerning transportation, the ten-wide proved immediately popular with those looking for affordable alternative dwellings. Companies such as Spartan Mobile Homes began manufacturing ten-wides the year after Marshfield Homes.

Intense lobbying by the industry led many state highway departments to permit ten-wides on their highways by 1957, provided the towing vehicle was adequately insured, had the requisite permits, and were moved only during daylight hours.[143] In response to the model's popularity and lobbying by the mobile home industry, most states increased their highway width maximums to ten feet by 1958.[144] As with other states, Vermont also quickly loosened its highway width maximums, allowing for ten-foot-wide vehicles by the end of the decade.[145]

By 1959 several manufacturers began to place kitchens at the front end, with the kitchen facing the street in what they called a gallery plan. Manufacturers started to offer picture windows with a large, fixed pane and sections that opened on the side that also mirrored the windows of site-built homes of the time. By 1955 many also even offered bay windows with a sill for plants, lamps, or other decorations. As Dr. Allan Wallis notes, "the changing treatment of windows and doors reflected the fact that these features were meant to be seen from the interior, as part of a home rather than as part of a vehicle."[146]

[139] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 9.

[140] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 75; Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 37.

[141] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 133.

[142] *Trailer Parks and Mobile Home Parks, 1920-1969*, 9.

[143] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 131–32.

[144] *Trailer Parks and Mobile Home Parks, 1920-1969*, 9; Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 131–32.

[145] "House Trailer Welcome Varies by Communities," *The Burlington Free Press*, December 19, 1960.

[146] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 140.

As the interior became more homelike, the exterior appearance also began to change. The rounded stylings of the 1920s-1940s were replaced with rectangular forms and windows.[147] Manufacturers also began placing the primary entrance to open into the living room rather than the kitchen, making them more like the tract homes of the 1950s.[148]

Sometimes owners took this a step further with personal modifications to accentuate the traditional American home life at the time, such as the addition of mudrooms, porches, carports, breezeways, and patios (see Figure 15).[149] Certain modifications were highly desirable, leading to a new market for prefabricated room additions to install on a mobile home. Companies such as Alum-O-Room and Add-A-Room provided standard shed additions for purchase in the 1950s, along with South Burlington-based Twin State Aluminum and Combination Window Company that produced a screened porch (see Figure 16).[150] However, added spaces were known for leaky joints between the moving sections and mechanical problems.[151]

[147] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 19.

[148] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 140.

[149] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 18; Robert Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Books, 1952), 21.

[150] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 154.

[151] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 9.

Figure 15. Advertisement by the Mobile Home Manufacturers Association in Life *magazine showing the more "home-like" interior provided by ten-wide mobile homes.*[152]

[152] Mobile Home Manufacturers Association, "Advertisement," *Life*, October 19, 1969; Mobile Home Manufacturers Association, "Advertisement," *Life*, May 9, 1960.

Figure 16. A 1955 advertisement for a screened-porch add-on in the Vermont Sunday News.[153]

Further innovations led to mobile homes looking more like single-family dwellings than the travel trailers of only a few years earlier. For example, in 1958 the manufacturer Midwest Homes introduced the "Cozy Cottage" model that had lap siding, a saddle roof, and double-hung windows with attached ornamental shutters.[154] Other common modifications included "camouflaging" the mobile home by hiding its chassis with skirting, or adding landscaping around the unit to simulate the appearance of a traditional house.[155]

New materials that provided cost savings created from efficiencies of scale also helped shape the form and function of mobile homes during this period. Manufacturers began to use metal sheathing produced and delivered in large rolls, which was more easily applied to flat sides rather than the earlier curved forms. This squared-off form made inside detailing more simplified and made it easier to apply plywood sheets on the interior. As a result, the postwar mobile home evolved to have a boxier shape than its streamlined or sculpted house trailer predecessors.[156]

[153] "Poranda: Miracle of Design and Modern Metals [Advertisement]," *Vermont Sunday News*, May 29, 1955.

[154] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 145, 148.

[155] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 151.

[156] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 145.

C. Postwar house trailer camps and parks

While sources differ on estimations of mobile home parks, approximately 11,000-12,000 were present in the country by the mid-1950s. These were located primarily in California, Florida, and Arizona—traditionally warmer areas of the country—but Vermont certainly saw substantial park development during these years.[157] New parks developed during this decade show distinct differences from those developed during the 1930s and 1940s. This is generally attributed to 1950s parks following guidelines and recommendations by the MHMA and various government agencies, whereas many earlier park designs focused on recreation, were hastily established for emergency purposes, or were not informed by prevailing planning principles.[158]

For the next several decades mobile home park use and design was informed by changes in the size and form of mobile homes as they became more like site-built homes, as well as by mobile home park residents and proponents that demanded access to modern living. However, before more guidance and regulation informed the layout of mobile home parks, they primarily adopted the same layout as the trailer camps and parks that had preceded them. These layouts utilized a gridiron (rectilinear) design that allowed for the maximum number of trailers within a site. Densities allowed for economical use of space but was often unattractive in appearance.[159] In 1956 the American Society of Planning Officials (ASPO) made remarks on this:

> one of the main objections to trailer courts is their often-unattractive appearance. Trailer courts may have good facilities, be well laid out and constructed, but still be offensive to their neighbors. How the trailer park appears as a whole will depend a great deal on the type of awnings used, on the design of sheds on trailer lots, and on the architecture of public buildings on the park site.[160]

As the market for house trailers continued to thrive in the 1950s, the supply of available park lots continued to trail demand, despite approximately 1,000 new parks opening in the nation per year.[161] This supply-and-demand misalignment had major effects on many aspects of the mobile home industry, creating local problems that governments struggled to solve in an equitable manner. Vermont was no stranger to this problem, as many of the state's industry players felt the effects of this lot shortage, from buyers to dealers to park operators.

D. Mobile home parks in the early postwar period

New mobile home parks began appearing throughout the country in the immediate postwar years, and were typically larger than had been developed in the 1930s.[162] However, with the lack of standardized design guidelines, many of these parks developed rather haphazardly. In response, the mobile home industry promoted certain design principles and amenities in park development, and published guides for mobile home owners to design and plan parks to receive a recommendation from the MHMA.

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[157] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, Planning Advisory Service (Chicago, March 1956), 1.

[158] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 114.

[159] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 47.

[160] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 20.

[161] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 2.

[162] Hart, Rhodes, and Morgan, *The Unknown World of the Mobile Home*, 14.

The first official mobile home park was established in 1955 in Bradenton, Florida as Trailer Estates, and was designed to include a range of amenities and to accommodate new bathroom-equipped mobile home models. The majority of parks at this time did not follow a design drafted by a planner, landscape architect, or engineer, but were mostly clusters of vernacular design on the outskirts of Vermont's towns and villages, or located in industrial or commercial areas.[163] Lots in parks were typically rented by the park owners to mobile home dwellers, though Trailer Estates would introduce a cooperative ownership structure that remained relatively uncommon.[164]

Despite the 1950s having several publications that included direction for park development, the majority of parks across the nation and within Vermont were considered vernacular because their focus was on function and utility rather than form and aesthetics. Mobile home parks began to take cues from conventional site-built suburban developments, but many reflected a variety of layouts, from a simple, single arterial road lined by perpendicularly placed units on each side, to complex radial patterns.[165] Dr. Wallis argued that like mobile homes, mobile home parks were a hybrid. With the lack of a front yard, right-angle orientation of units to street, and the park office located at the front, the parks recalled earlier campgrounds, while attempts to introduce variety of unit placement, curvilinear streets, and areas of social gathering reflected the influence of contemporary tract developments of conventional housing.[166]

Early lots typically only had space enough for a single car to be parked on one side, but often that space may have a porch that had been added to the mobile home, and it was not uncommon to find lots being only 35 feet by 60 feet.[167] But as the size of mobile homes increased, so too did the general lot size, and by 1954 the average lot size was up to 1,500 square feet. Older parks were often forced to limit their patrons to those with smaller homes, to enlarge their lots, or to use two lots for the large mobile homes. Parks also started to spend more money on landscaping, paved roads, and improved community and laundry facilities. Park owners sought to increase lot sizes, provide separate toilet and shower facilities, and provide better facilities for children's play. However, implementation was uneven, and many did not attempt to meet even these minimum requirements.[168]

Overall, the parks developed during the late 1950s were much larger than their predecessors, averaging about 150 spaces, while at the same time they became more specialized in the residents they would accept.

[163] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 36.

[164] Robert H. Nulsen, *All About Parks: For Mobile Homes and Trailers* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Trail-R-Club of America, 1968), 130.

[165] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 36; Allan D. Wallis, "House Trailers: Innovation and Accommodation in Vernacular Housing," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 3 (1989): 38.

[166] Wallis, "House Trailers: Innovation and Accommodation in Vernacular Housing," 38.

[167] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 18; Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 64.

[168] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 51, 64.

Parks in Vermont: Postwar parks

The Registry of Vermont Mobile Home Parks shows 28 mobile home parks that had been established between 1945 and 1958, all of which are small to medium in size and range in their formal planning. The largest park to come out of this era was the Tri-Park Cooperative Housing (previously called Mountain Home Park) in Brattleboro, currently with 264 lots. This is the largest park in Vermont and was first established in 1958. The vast majority in the state are a fraction of this size.[169] The park was originally located close to the main road with fairly regularly spaced units along series of roadways in a flat valley, but also shows additional units along driveways winding up the wooded slope at the west side of the frame. A cleared field at the southeast corner of the frame was subsequently developed to accommodate more units in a typical spatial-efficiency setting (see Figure 17 and Figure 18). In comparison to this design is the later Deepwoods Mobile Home Park to the northwest that reflects mountainous suburbs of conventional housing. The roads are winding and curvilinear, the homes are oriented at angles to the roads with mature trees and more formal driveways. Another example from the era is the earlier Willows Mobile Home Park located in Bennington. The park was established in 1945 and currently has 24 units within the park. Like many of the parks of the period it is small in scale, lacks amenities or landscaping, and lots are tightly concentrated around a single loop road. The focus of the park was and continues to be fitting the maximum number of units with the space of the park (see Figure 19 and Figure 20).

Figure 17. Current aerial image of Tri-Park Cooperative Housing Mountain Home Park (Brattleboro) at right, with 1962 imagery at left for comparison.[170]

[169] Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs, "Vermont Mobile Home Park Program 2019 Registry & Mobile Home Parks Report" (Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs, December 20, 2019).

[170] All aerial imagery from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, unless noted.

Figure 18. Angled units in the upland portion of the park (left) and perpendicular to the road in closer arrangements in the flat portion of the park (right).

Figure 19. Current aerial image of Willows Mobile Home Park (Bennington) at right, with 1962 imagery at left for comparison.[171]

Figure 20. Willows Mobile Home Park as it appears in 2021.

[171] Aerial imagery from the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.

E. Park guides, periodicals, and recommended standards

To address the ad hoc park development issues, the MHMA, government agencies, and other entities involved in the industry developed planning guides and standards to protect their image and grow the market. This started in 1952, when the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) published a *Land Planning Bulletin* with guidelines for mobile home parks—the first federal guide of its kind.[172] This was far from the NFPA building code-style standards, and was meant to achieve less tangible goals, such as quality of life improvements, rather than meeting measurable health and safety standards of the NFPA's trailer standards.

As part of its standards, the FHA emphasized the mobile home as part of the supply of permanent housing in communities and included regulations for land planning and construction and improvement of mobile home parks that the FHA could then insure mortgages for (see Section 4.I.(4), Section 207 of the Housing Act).[173] The FHA stated:

> The plot, including mobile home stands, patios, buildings and all site improvements shall be harmoniously and efficiently organized in relation to topography, the shape of plot, and the shape, size, and position of buildings and with full regard to use and appearance. A gridiron layout or other regimented, unimaginative type of site planning is not acceptable where it would result in a monotonous, unattractive development, such as on a level unwooded site or on a large project. Plot planning shall provide for safe, comfortable, efficient and sanitary use by the occupants, under all weather conditions, and services appropriate to the needs of the occupants. Full advantage shall be taken of favorable views, existing trees and other desirable site features. Adequate protection shall be provided against any undesirable off-site views or any adverse influence from adjoining streets and areas.[174]

Through minimum lot sizes and other specifics, the FHA guidelines became the new guiding light for the industry; however, none of these were legally enforceable, as none had been formally adopted as code by any government. Shortly following the FHA's guidelines, the MHMA introduced its own.

(1) MHMA Park Division and Land Development Division

Influential in late 1950s park design was the MHMA's Park Division, a branch of the MHMA that produced updated park planning standards and free planning kits for park owners and developers. The Park Division crafted standards based on the organization's earlier *Planning a Profitable Trailer Park* publication under the TCA name. The MHMA standards exceeded those of the FHA and were seen as innovative in that they shifted lots from the perpendicular orientation to a subdivision-like park with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs reflecting the suburban housing developments that were becoming popular during this time.[175] The MHMA also required organization members to conform to these standards, and asked others to self-regulate in the absence of legally enforceable policy.[176]

For those that wanted more customized guidance, the Park Division also offered consulting services through external landscape architects and planners that were available to work with park owners and

[172] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 31.

[173] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 16–18.

[174] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 21.

[175] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 33; Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 183.

[176] American Society of Planning Officials, *Regulation of Mobile Home Subdivisions*, Planning Advisory Service (Chicago, April 1961), 2.

developers on specialized designs. Demand for these consulting services was incredibly high, so the MHMA established the Land Development Division in 1958 to capitalize on the market for these services. This team comprised both internal designers and consulting professionals from the landscape architecture departments of the University of Michigan and the University of Illinois.[177]

When the MHMA shuttered the Land Development Division in the early 1970s, it left a legacy of tens of thousands of mobile home park designs; however, the division chief engineer at the time, Herbert W. Behrends, estimates that only half of the designs produced over the division's 14 years were actually carried through to construction. Behrends also claimed the division was highly popular among park developers, estimating the division designed more mobile home parks than any other entity though its operating years.[178]

(2) Publications and directories

The 1950s saw a massive increase in publications and directories printed by government agencies and private organizations to help the prospective mobile home buyer find quality mobile homes and parks—for temporary, vacation, and permanent use. Some of these publications included the *Woodall's Mobile Home Park Directory* (published by *Trailer Travel Magazine*), the *Rand McNally Guide to Trailer Parks* (published by Rand McNally), *Mobile Home Manual* (published by the Trail-R-Club), *Trailer Coach Homes Magazine* (published by the TCA, see Figure 21), and the *Trailer Park Guide* (published by the MHMA).[179] The MHMA's *Trailer Park Guide* had a major influence on the nation's mobile home industry in general, as well as the success of individual mobile home parks, as explained below.

During this era and earlier, travel was often complicated and even dangerous for Black American travelers due to Jim Crow laws, and *de facto* discrimination and segregation practices. To help navigate the landscape, a number of publications were available for Black travelers. These included Hackley and Harrison's *Hotel and Apartment Guide for Colored Travelers* (1930) and their *The Traveler's Guide* (1931); Victor H. Green's *Negro Motorist Green Book* (1936-1966/1967); Smith's Touring Club's *Smith's Tourist Guide* (1939-1940); the U.S. Travel Bureau's *A Directory of Negro Hotels and Guest Houses* (1941, federal government publication); Baltimore's *The Afro-American*, "Afro American Travel Map" (1942); *Ebony* (vacation section, 1947-1953); *Travelguide* (1947-1963); *Go, Guide to Pleasant Motoring* (1952-1959); and the Nationwide Hotel Association's *NHA Directory and Guide to Travel* (1959). These publications primarily focused on gas stations, businesses, tourist homes, and hotels, though Victor H. Green's travel guides did include a few listings of "trailer parks" or "trailer courts." As an example, the 1946 volume had listings in four states: California, Georgia, Louisiana, and Maryland (none listed in Vermont).[180] Research did not yet reveal trailer or mobile home park guides geared to Black people who may have sought out such sites for recreation or permanent residence, but additional work should be done to determine if any such guides exist.

[177] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 180, 183.

[178] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 183.

[179] "Interesting Notes," *The Bennington Evening Banner*, November 19, 1954; Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 35.

[180] V.H. Green, *The Negro Motorist Green-Book* (New York City: V.H. Green, 1946), https://www.loc.gov/item/2016298176/.

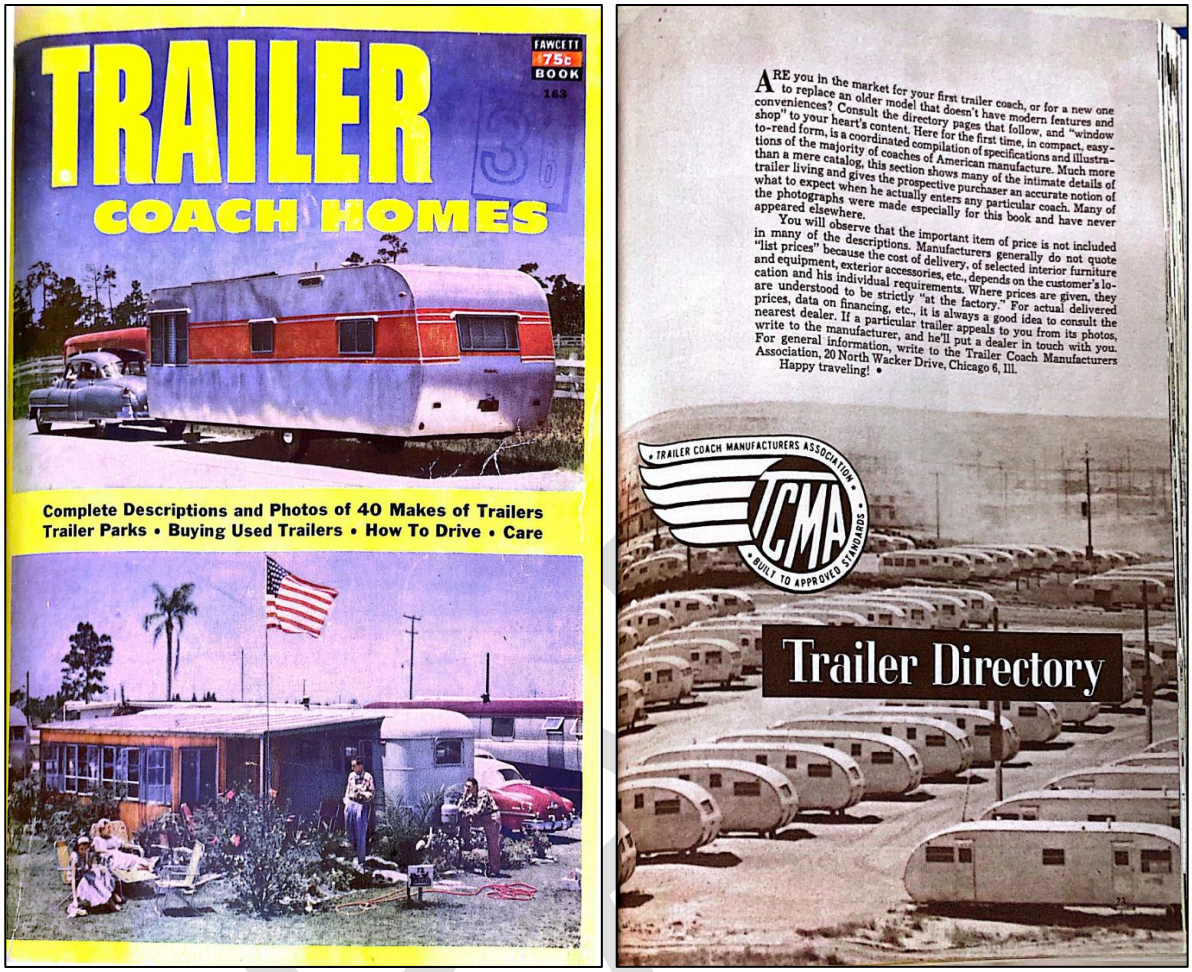

Figure 21. Cover of Trailer Coach Homes *(left) and an image of the "Trailer Directory" section of the publication (right).*[181]

MHMA's Trailer Park Guide

Using its substantial postwar influence, the MHMA crafted the *Trailer Park Guide* as a way to achieve its goals to improve overall park quality and, in turn, repair the industry's public perception of mobile home parks as "slums."[182] This annual guide produced in the 1950s highlighted mobile home parks across the nation that met the MHMA's own standards, as determined by an "impartial inspector" who assigned the park with a points rating out of 100. A highly rated listing in the guide was shown to increase park business. This coveted honor could only be earned though evaluation by MHMA inspectors, and many park owners nationwide worked to improve their parks to achieve it. The MHMA hoped higher quality parks would lift the industry's image and drum up more interest in mobile home living. The 1953 *Trailer Park Guide* published a nationwide list of 4,000 parks out of approximately 12,000 in operation at the time.[183]

[181] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*.

[182] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 17.

[183] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 35.

Many park owners criticized the MHMA's guide for promoting more luxurious amenities as standards, even while it was intended as a promotional and municipal guidance tool, with no legal mandates or requirements. These park owners complained that implementing many of these standards would force them to raise rent for lots to cover the improvement costs, which in turn would damage the affordability aspect of mobile home living.[184]

Some of the recommendations included density limitations to eight mobile homes per acre, which also accounted for space in the park occupied by roads, sidewalks, utility buildings, and recreation areas. The MHMA suggested individual lot sizes be a minimum of 3,000 square feet (approximately 0.07 acres) to appropriately accommodate the current 1950s mobile home sizes, but this was loosely followed. Rather, many park owners opted for approximately 2,000 square feet per lot.[185]

With this publication, the MHMA garnered substantial clout by positioning itself as the guiding light to ideal park designs in order to improve the industry's public image. This magnitude of influence resulted in many park owners modifying their parks to accommodate larger lot sizes, improve landscaping, pave roads, and add amenities such as laundry facilities.[186] Over time, overall park design and quality standards shifted, as many existing parks made these capital investments around the same time to retain competitiveness in the market.

F. New England Mobile Home Association

Previously named the New England Auto Trailer Association and New England Trailer Association, the New England Mobile Home Association (NEMA) continued the duties of a regional chapter to the nationwide MHMA since its founding around 1935.[187] NEMA lobbied against restrictive local ordinances throughout New England states, including Vermont, New York, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, and promoted its own standards for mobile home park planning. One of its primary functions was to "present mobile home living to the public as an acceptable way of life."[188]

In an ocean of various policies and recommendations, NEMA put forth its own standards for mobile home park designs and minimums in 1957.[189] NEMA recommended 5,000-square-foot lots, around double the industry standard at that time set by the MHMA, and an additional 100 square feet of recreation area per trailer."[190] This would even meet some of the most stringent lot size requirements set by Vermont local governments during the late 1950s.[191]

[184] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 64.

[185] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 78–79.

[186] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 68, 70.

[187] "Gov. Bridges At Maranacook," *Biddeford-Sasco Journal*, July 22, 1935.

[188] "Pecor Appointed to Board of N.E. Mobilehome Assn.," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 19, 1962.

[189] Howard Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent," *Rutland Daily Herald*, June 5, 1968; Arthur Dieter Bernhardt, "Taxation and Regulation of Mobile Homes--Barriers to Growth and Development of the Mobile Home Industry" (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969), 400, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/7372671.pdf.

[190] Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent."

[191] Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent."

The Vermont Chapter of the New England Mobile Home Association was founded in October 1954, with George Cassavant of Melvina's Trailer Sales in South Barre elected as first chairman and Mrs. Dorothy Lascelles of Montpelier-based Modern Mobile Homes as secretary. There were 22 individuals present at the first meeting, held at Montpelier Tavern with a dinner and cocktail hour, and an address from the president of NEMA.[192] The purpose of this local chapter was to provide a greater focus on addressing local zoning issues restricting mobile homes and park development.[193]

G. Market and consumer base in the 1950s

Similar to the automobile industry, most manufacturers made minor updates to their models annually.[194] To promote these annual changes, mobile home shows popped up throughout the country following the war, displaying the latest models and drumming up excitement with conceptual designs.

(1) Vermont hosts 1955 NEMA Mobile Homes Show

Shortly after forming the Vermont chapter of NEMA, the first meeting concluded with a vote initiating the planning for a mobile home show in Vermont, which was held the following year at the Champlain Valley Fair Grounds at Essex Junction (see Figure 22 through Figure 24). The event was meant to improve the image of mobile homes and show how they can be sensitively sited in the landscape. A newspaper article reporting on the show described some areas showing "the quiet charm of old New England blended with the modern design of mobilehome living."[195]

[192] "Vermont Chapter of NE Mobile Home Ass'n Formed Here," *Montpelier Evening Argus*, October 27, 1954.

[193] "News Of Wallingford," *Meriden Journal*, August 14, 1954.

[194] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 46.

[195] Greg Jackson, "Fair Ground Show Is Open to Public," *Burlington Daily News*, May 26, 1955.

Figure 22. Burlington Daily News *advertisement for the 1955 NEMA Mobile Homes Show, held at the Champlain Valley Fair Grounds in Essex Junction in May 1955.*[196]

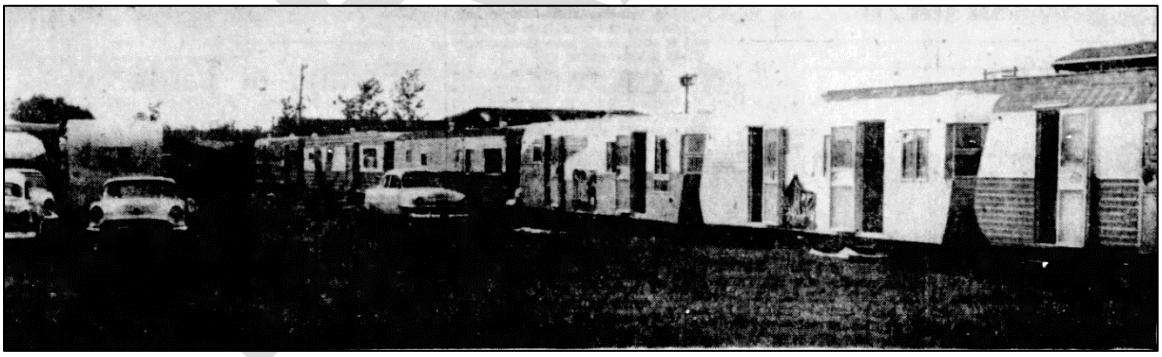

Figure 23. A 1955 photo printed in the Vermont Sunday News *showing a preview of the mobile homes that would be on display at the NEMA Mobile Homes Show.*[197]

[196] "You Are Invited! To The New England Mobile Home Association's Spring Mobile Home Show," *Burlington Daily News*, May 26, 1955.

[197] "Mary's Mobilhomes Sales: Vernon Trailer Court [Advertisement]," *Vermont Sunday News*, May 29, 1955.

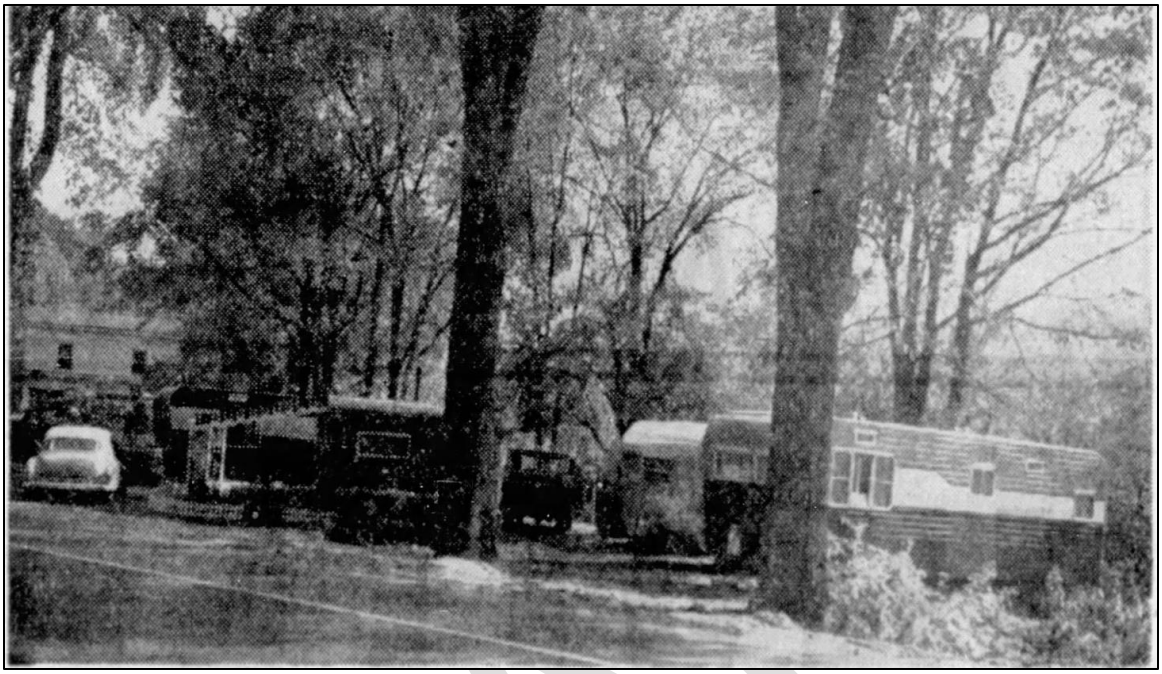

Figure 24. A photograph from the 1955 NEMA Mobile Homes Show in the Burlington Daily News.[198]

(2) Demographics of postwar mobile home dwellers

Through the 1940s and 1950s Vermont experienced intrastate population shifts that impacted regional demographics.[199] During these first postwar decades the population of Vermont's northern and eastern counties declined along with the declines in both the state's agriculture and forest products industries. By contrast, Vermont's western counties grew, a result of increased non-farm use of land and general population growth in urban areas. The state's housing market was unable to fully adjust to these changes, highlighting the need for more housing—including mobile homes—in the state's urban and rural areas.[200]

The 1952 *Trailer Coach Homes* guide claimed the mobile home market for temporary housing was "practically non-existent before the war," but grew tremendously to represent 45 percent of mobile home dwellers (about 675,000 people).[201] Next were those with "mobile occupations," a group that accounted for 35 percent of mobile home dwellers (about 525,000 people) in 1950.[202] The publication documented this group to include migrant workers, traveling salesman, and construction crews that relocate regularly, among other types of people who live in mobile homes as an aspect of their career.[203] Retirees represented the third most common demographic at 15 percent of mobile home dwellers (about 225,000 people) in 1950, followed by the "trailer life" dweller at four percent (about 60,000 people). The book

[198] Jackson, "Fair Ground Show Is Open to Public."

[199] Lester Eisner, *State Plan for Housing* ([Montpelier]: State of Vermont, Office of Local Affairs, 1968), 13–14, University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

[200] Eisner, *State Plan for Housing*, 13–15.

[201] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 7.

[202] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 7.

[203] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 7.

defined “trailer life” dwellers as those “who by nature prefer the kind of existence mobile housing offers.”[204]

By the mid-1950s the primary demographic for mobile home living shifted to the migrant worker and traveling salesman.[205] This change was attributed to the housing market recovery of the early 1950s, which saw an explosion in single-family subdivision development and gave temporary mobile home dwellers the opportunity to secure conventional housing.[206] A description of the average mobile home owner in 1956 was presented in an ASPO document as a summary of the results from a 1955 MHMA survey of mobile home park demographics at the national level:[207]

> The average trailer dweller is not a poor man, unable to afford conventional housing. On the contrary, his annual income is slightly more than $1,000 above the national average. Nor is he a nomadic ‘gypsy,’ as was once popularly thought. His mobility is primarily the result of his occupation. A study made by MHMA in 1955 showed that 63 per cent of all trailer residents surveyed were workers in mobile or semi-mobile occupations, 20 per cent were military personnel, 10 per cent were retired persons, and ‘all others’ made up the remaining 7 per cent.[208]

The mobile home also provided quality-of-life benefits to some with “mobile occupations” that wished to have their family join them as they moved around. This is evidenced by some hiring preferences of private construction companies, who opted to hire married men with families, as they cited “married workers accompanied by their families are happier and more dependable than bachelors or those who have left their families behind.” [209] For this type of situation, the mobile home fulfilled the need for adequate habitation for families subject to frequent relocation. Instead of moving to new homes, mobile homes allowed the families to migrate with their existing, familiar household to minimize lifestyle adjustments that typically accompanied relocation.

Overall, the statistics indicated that the primary motivating factor for mobile home living was convenience, with affordability as a secondary factor.[210] Demographics continued to morph through the end of the 1950s, with a trend toward mobile home dwellers that were “younger, less educated, and less affluent than the general population.”[211] In other words, by the end of the decade most mobile homes were occupied by younger households taking their first step in the housing market.[212]

While these summaries give an overall picture of the average mobile home dweller at the national level, it does not present other important details that may be region-specific. Rather, the 1956 publication emphasizes the fact that mobile home parks are likely to have clusters of individuals who share similar occupations. The document concludes with a list of factors that may influence the demographics of a particular mobile home park: “What groups will settle in what communities depends on the location,

[204] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 7.

[205] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 6.

[206] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 132.

[207] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 6.

[208] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 6.

[209] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 28.

[210] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 6.

[211] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 132.

[212] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 132.

attractions, rate of growth and development, and what facilities and attractions a community has – industry, military post, university, resort areas, and so forth."[213]

One example in Vermont that demonstrates this is the College Parkway Mobile Home Park outside of Burlington. It was reported in 1958 that approximately half of the park's households had at least one family member working at the nearby Ethan Allen Air Force Base (now the Burlington Air National Guard Base) at Fort Ethan Allen.[214]

H. Sense of ownership

Most mobile homeownership in Vermont during the 1950s were on rented lots—likely without a lease agreement—so although the mobile home may be owned outright, it was not considered part of the state's traditional homeownership count. Increased homeownership rates, part of the quintessential "American Dream," rose dramatically from a low point in 1940 and grew through the 1950s across the country. Although growth varied regionally, it occurred in both urban and rural areas. The 1950 census indicated U.S. homeowners outnumbered renters for the first time since the census started. By 1957 homeownership across the nation climbed to approximately 60 percent.[215]

Compared with the rest of the nation, Vermont has historically had a high rate of home ownership, primarily owing to its ruralness.[216] In the postwar years Vermont followed the general nationwide rate of an increase in homeownership, keeping ahead of national figures.[217] However, homeownership numbers only account for ownership of conventional houses on privately owned parcels, which would not account for those mobile home owners who own their lot under a cooperative-type ownership model.

(1) Cooperative-type ownership

Beginning with the 1955 opening of Trailer Estates in Bradenton, Florida—the first true mobile home park—mobile home lots were available for purchase, rather than lease.[218] This park was quite large and had many recreational areas and other amenities, but was the first park in the country to offer mobile home lots for sale. Rather than implementing the traditional lot-leasing practices, Trailer Estates tapped into a market that wanted a blend of mobile home living with some of the autonomy of a traditional subdivision.[219] This was the earliest known instance of where mobile home owners could own their own unit *and* park lot. With restrictive zoning prohibiting mobile home siting on residential parcels, this condominium- or cooperative-type ownership was sometimes the only way for mobile home owners to avoid land-leasing. However, as interest was not quick to catch on, the traditional leasing model remained the norm across the nation.[220]

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[213] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 9.

[214] "'Modern Living' in Trailers Grows More Popular in Area."

[215] "Percentage of Home Owners In Utah Exceeds U. S. Average," *Deseret News*, April 22, 1951; "Home Ownership in Utah Approaches 70% -- Higher Than National Figure," *The Daily Herald*, September 22, 1957.

[216] Roy C. Haupt, *Housing in Vermont* ([Burlington, Vt.]: State of Vermont, Agency of Development and Community Affairs, October 1983), 6, University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

[217] Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*, 6.

[218] Nulsen, *All About Parks: For Mobile Homes and Trailers*, 130.

[219] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 26–27.

[220] Nulsen, *All About Parks: For Mobile Homes and Trailers*, 130.

In Vermont, one of the earliest examples of this situation was proposed in Williston in 1960 with the Oak Hill Mobile Home Development, developed by Howard A. Hubbard. Rather than a traditional "park," this proposal took on a subdivision-style design to be classified by its developer as a "mobile home neighborhood," where lots would be sold to residents with utilities hook-ups and street lights pre-installed.[221] As the name suggested, this was more of subdivision development than a park, with a design that had the character of a conventional residential neighborhood versus a mobile home park.[222] One of the biggest factors was the ownership model, however, which allowed for mobile home dwellers to purchase lots outright and resell at will.[223]

I. 1950s policy changes and case law

The public witnessed the development of mobile home parks in smaller communities in the years that followed the war.[224] Even though many postwar mobile home parks showed substantial improvements from those developed in the prewar years, the stigma of the earlier parks remained.[225] Resumed pushback among citizens and policymakers in the postwar era led to greater efforts to limit (or prevent) new mobile home parks from being built, or simply prohibit mobile homes to be sited in their communities.

A 1951 article from *Survey* magazine quotes a municipal official's scathing perspective on mobile home parks:

> A new kind of slum, the permanent trailer camp, offering all the bad features of the urban 'blight area,' none of the vacation adventures for which trailers were made. Trailer camp slums are a very real, if as yet unrecognized, menace to our American way of life. They should be eradicated now, even in the face of an acute housing shortage, for the creation of even more slums is not the solution to the problem of housing shortage.[226]

Those opposed to mobile homes and parks found one of the most effective tools to be policy changes at the local level. The most successful efforts to thwart new mobile home development were often accomplished through rezoning, or enacting local ordinances targeting mobile homes directly. Many 1950s policies specifically targeted mobile home siting and park development, with zoning actions creating greater distinctions between mobile homes and conventional houses. This secondary effect turned the mobile home and park into "a special category of use."[227]

(1) Vermont Act 281

At the state level, Vermont decided to allow local governments to continue restricting mobile home park development through municipal ordinances, and collect licensing fees for registering through a locally administered program. This was permitted by the Vermont State Legislature in 1957, when it passed Act 281 (H-325), which authorized "municipalities to regulate and license parks for trailer coaches or mobile

[221] "Mobile Home Development Set in Williston," *The Burlington Free Press*, June 25, 1960.

[222] "Mobile Home Development Set in Williston."

[223] "Mobile Home Development Set in Williston"; "Property Transfers," *The Burlington Free Press*, April 2, 1963. While little information was found on this development, lot sales were reported in local newspapers in the 1960s.

[224] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 70.

[225] Construction Industry Research, Inc., *An Appraisal of Mobile Home Living -- The Parks and the Residents* (Los Angeles: Trailer Coach Association, 1960).

[226] Alexander C. Wellington, "Trailer Camp Slums, A New Kind of Slum," *Survey*, 1951.

[227] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 179.

homes to collect license fees therefor."[228] The State hoped the licensing fees would qualm those concerned with mobile home owners "not paying their fair share." After the bill was enacted in 1958, many Vermont municipalities jumped on-board with new zoning restrictions for mobile homes and parks.[229]

(2) Local restrictions throughout Vermont

Across Vermont, municipalities began acting to control mobile home development in their communities in response to citizen complaints and allowed through Act 281 (see Figure 25). Local governments were receiving applications for mobile home parks, and most were unsure of how to handle development. Some municipalities went forth with preemptive restrictions at the first whiff of potential mobile home development in their communities. Others waited at first, opting to see how some of the early ordinances play out. However, nearly every community that was experiencing growth in the postwar years started to see mobile home park development and mobile homes being sited on residential lots.[230]

Legal Notice

It is hereby ordained by the Trustees of the Village of Randolph, that the Zoning Ordinance be amended by the addition of Section 13.

Section 13. Regulations for Trailer Coach or Mobile Home Parks.

Figure 25. A 1959 legal notice in the White River Valley Herald *notifying the public of the Village of Randolph's new zoning ordinance changes, which added regulations for mobile home parks.*[231]

Short of prohibiting mobile homes and parks altogether, many municipalities attempted to address the issue through zoning. Zoning restricted locations where mobile homes could be placed and, combined with other local ordinances, was the most effective municipal action to manage development of mobile home parks. This often forced new park developments to be built in less-than-desirable areas of town, such as in industrial zones or outer fringes of the community.

During the 1950s many Vermont communities were adopting zoning policies for the first time. Establishing a zoning system for a community is certainly no quick, easy feat, and is often met with disagreement. But given the urgency of the matter in many Vermont communities, local governments enacted "interim zoning" plans to buy some time and temporarily appease those concerned.[232]

[228] "Proposed Ordinance for the Town of Berlin in Conformity with State Regulations Governing the Following: No. 281 - An Act to Authorize Municipalities to Regulate and License Parks for Trailer Coaches or Mobile Homes, To Collect License Fees Therefor.," *Montpelier Evening Argus*, February 14, 1958.

[229] "Proposed Ordinance for the Town of Berlin in Conformity with State Regulations Governing the Following: No. 281 - An Act to Authorize Municipalities to Regulate and License Parks for Trailer Coaches or Mobile Homes, To Collect License Fees Therefor."

[230] "Town Faces Trailer Problem [Editorial]," *Addison County Independent*, August 22, 1958.

[231] Trustees of the Village of Randolph, "Legal Notice," *White River Valley Herald*, May 28, 1959.

[232] Nick Marro, "Proctor Selectmen Vote To Use Interim Zoning," *Rutland Daily Herald*, September 12, 1969.

Vermont local governments used interim zoning to provide a temporary solution when awaiting zoning code to be established for the first time. As explained by an official of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, "interim zoning is only a temporary measure aimed at providing a town with some type of protection against large scale development while permanent zoning regulations were being drawn up."[233] In many instances this was a measure to deal with mobile homes until a local consensus could be made for how to deal with them in zoning code.

Villages, towns, and counties across the state began zoning-out mobile home parks from their communities. Communities in and around Randolph, Rutland, and Berlin had very restrictive zoning laws implemented in the 1950s, with many other Vermont local governments also putting forth limiting policy on mobile home siting and park development.[234]

Zoning restrictions also often limited mobile homes to mobile home parks, which often prohibited siting on residential-zoned parcels. According to the ASPO, the majority of local zoning ordinances in place in 1950 that pertained to mobile home parks limited their location to commercially zoned areas.[235] Park developers were well aware of the public's generally negative attitudes toward their properties, and many preemptively selected sites adjacent to municipal borders to avoid other local regulations that would otherwise apply within the town or city limits. This had a major impact on development patterns for decades to come, as numerous local governments in Vermont had long-standing planning policies relegating mobile homes and parks to the fringes of communities.[236] Policy researcher and writer Arthur D. Bernhardt succinctly describes this issue: "Local mobile home policy is a direct function of local public attitudes," and local opposition to mobile homes were reflected in the laws.[237]

Some mobile home park dwellers decided to incorporate their park, taking on local control and avoiding restrictive policies that pervaded many municipalities at the time.[238] While several parks in the country incorporated in the 1950s, this practice was uncommon at the time. Additionally, no Vermont parks were found to have attempted incorporation.

(3) Pivotal legal decisions on local policy

Efforts to restrict mobile home development through local ordinances gained tremendous support through the 1950s, leading to legal challenges that ended in pivotal, case-law decisions. For Vermont this was impacted by several cases at the federal and state level, along with other decisions regarding Vermont-specific local authority.

The 1953 United States Supreme Court case *Connor v. West Bloomfield Township* concerned the constitutionality of local ordinances that prohibited mobile homes from being sited in residential

[233] Marro, "Proctor Selectmen Vote To Use Interim Zoning."

[234] "More And More Trailers," *Rutland Daily Herald*, July 14, 1959.

[235] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 17.

[236] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 31.

[237] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 92.

[238] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 88.

subdivisions.[239] In this case the plaintiff had a mobile occupation and owned a mobile home, but was prohibited from siting it on residential land they owned in the township. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the township's right to enact such a law, a decision that wounded the mobile home industry and emboldened policymakers and citizens working to restrict mobile home units in their communities, and limit them to designated parks.[240]

Two years later, *Gust v. Township of Canton* was heard by the Michigan Supreme Court, a case that questioned the authority of a local government to enact policy banning mobile home parks outright.[241] The court decided in favor of the plaintiff in 1955, citing the need to demonstrate that mobile home parks are "detrimental to the public health, safety, morals or general welfare under every condition and circumstance;" otherwise, total prohibition of parks is not justified under the law.[242] The next year this decision was reaffirmed though the same court in *Smith v. Plymouth Township Building Inspector*, where the court decided in 1956 that "mobile home parks are not nuisances per se and to prohibit them altogether there must be evidence presented that clearly indicates their prohibition is necessary for the public welfare."[243]

These critical legal cases set the limits for how far local governments could go with enacting laws to restrict mobile home parks in their communities. The decisions clarified the rights of municipal ordinances to restrict mobile home parks from certain planning zones—including prohibiting them from residential zones—but made it abundantly clear that policymakers could not use zoning or ordinances to ban mobile home parks entirely.

(4) Section 207 of the Housing Act (1955)

In 1955 Congress passed amendments to the Federal Housing Act that included Section 207, permitting FHA-insured loans to be issued for mobile home park developments. To qualify for these loans, existing or new parks were required to demonstrate that proposed improvements would conform to the agency's minimum standards on park size, density, amenities, sanitation, and utilities.[244] The FHA published its requirements in a 1955 *Land Planning Bulletin* titled *Minimum Property Requirements for Mobile Home Courts*, and *Mobile Home Courts*.[245]

Through Section 207, the FHA intended to influence park design on a national scale with standards that encouraged design qualities to more closely resemble conventional subdivisions. For years after its introduction, Section 207 loans remained in high demand, leading to park improvements that met the FHA's minimum standards. The success of this policy resembled the influence FHA stipulations had on house design and subdivision planning of the 1930s and 1940s, as FHA-backed loans and mortgages were extremely popular at the time, but needed to fit within the FHA's strict size parameters.[246]

[239] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 46.

[240] "Connor v. West Bloomfield TP," *Casetext*, n.d., https://casetext.com/case/connor-v-west-bloomfield-tp.

[241] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 46.

[242] Gust v. Township of Canton, 70 NW 2d 772 (Supreme Court 1955).

[243] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 46.

[244] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 2, 20.

[245] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 16.

[246] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 18, 21.

Some of these federal requirements for FHA-insured park loans did not always align with local ordinances, especially those that that relegated all mobile home parks to specific zoned areas. For example, municipalities that required new mobile home parks to be located in industrial or commercial areas may not meet FHA's environmental standards related to location and surroundings.[247] As a result, park development in these locales could be ineligible for FHA-loans due to these restrictive zoning laws, which resulted in higher-interest loans (or no loans) for developing a park that would not even meet certain quality-of-life standards.

This policy was highly successful, resulting in almost $193 million in FHA-insured loans for mobile home park development between 1955 and 1980. Approximately 84 percent of these loans were granted in the three-year period between 1970 and 1972—the height of mobile home park development in the nation (see Section 6, Mobile Homes in the 1970s).[248] It is highly likely that some of these common design elements from the 1955 *Land Planning Bulletin* are implemented in Vermont, given the program's popularity around the country.

(5) The taxation question

One of the longest-standing public concerns about mobile home living involved property tax structure, as many perceived mobile home dwellers as freeloaders taking advantage of a tax loophole. While different states and municipalities use differing tax systems, this issue nevertheless garnered enough attention for countless discussions and studies on this topic.[249] Concerned citizens questioned whether mobile home dwellers were paying their fair share to support municipal services such as public schools, police and fire protection, and other tax revenue-funded programs.[250] These concerns are based on two tax-related variables for mobile home living: depreciation of mobile homes and typical rental structure of mobile home parks.

Unlike a single-family house, a mobile home "does not meet the standard housing construction codes" and "keeps its wheels."[251] Therefore, the mobile home was typically treated under the law like an automobile rather than housing, and therefore as personal property. Personal property depreciates over time and so does its tax obligation; therefore, as a mobile home depreciates in value, so does its tax obligation.[252] By contrast, a conventional house typically appreciated over time, raising the property overall assessed value and tax obligation. When this scenario is viewed in isolation of all other factors, it implies the mobile home owner's tax obligation will decrease over time, while that of the conventional home owner would be steady or increase. If this theory was true, mobile home dwellers as a whole would be required to pay substantially less taxes than their conventional house neighbors, with the disparity growing annually. However, this was not entirely the case, as this line of thought did not account for other factors, which are discussed below.[253]

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[247] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 18.

[248] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 216.

[249] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 42–43.

[250] American Society of Planning Officials, *The Changing Function of Trailer Parks*, 13.

[251] Maxwell C. Huntoon, Jr. and John Kirk, "It's Time to Take the Low-Price Market Back from the Mobiles," *House & Home*, April 1971, 66.

[252] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 43.

[253] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 43.

Park owners pay property taxes annually on their land, which typically appreciates over time. These costs are likely passed on to the mobile home dweller through their monthly rent, as the vast majority of mobile home park sites were leased rather than purchased (and turnover allows for incremental rent increases to match a park's current assessed—and taxed—value).[254]

This concern was repeatedly given attention by municipal and state governments, as well as the ASPO, and was published in numerous newspaper articles and opinion pieces, despite the many logical pieces that showed it was a faulty assumption. Parker Clifton Lawrence asserts that in most cases, mobile home dwellers were actually paying more in taxes compared with conventional homeowners:[255]

> Because the mobile home depreciates similar to an automobile, the tax rate diminishes over time and often causes other community members to believe that mobile home residents are not paying their fair share of the tax burden. Yet often times community members do not take into account that the property owner renting the land to the residents most assuredly passes the cost of property taxes onto the residents via a monthly rental fee. This fact points out that mobile home residents actually may, proportionally, pay more in taxes on their mobile home than a community member with a site-built home.[256]

If this is the case, mobile home owners in many places were paying disproportionately higher taxes than owners of conventional, site-built housing.

J. Mobile home manufacturing in the 1950s

After the industry's tumultuous journey from the 1930s through the immediate postwar era, mobile homes gained steady traction and growth through the 1950s. While there were still no federal building codes for mobile homes at the start of the decade, increased competition forced manufacturers to raise their standards—or at least feign quality—to succeed in the marketplace.

Efficiency of factory production was key to making mobile homes affordable, as it eliminated many high-cost elements and potential delays common to conventional house construction.[257] Unlike factory-built mobile homes, conventional houses needed customized designs to fit site conditions, required most construction to be performed by skilled workers, and were subject to weather-related delays.[258] Therefore, mobile home production had a closer similarity to assembling automobiles and airplanes than to constructing site-built housing.

As described in the 1952 book and catalogue *Trailer Coach Homes*, "flexibility" and "a mass assembly process" are the primary factors that contribute to the efficiency and low-cost production.[259] Flexibility in the production system allows for equipment modifications needed to build new or custom mobile home designs, while the mass assembly process allows for quick production on large orders.[260] The lack of consistent mobile home building codes gave manufacturers substantial freedom in production methods.

[254] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 43.

[255] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 43.

[256] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 43.

[257] American Society of Planning Officials, *Regulation of Mobile Home Subdivisions*, 1; Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 6.

[258] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 116.

[259] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 6.

[260] Hertzberg, *Trailer Coach Homes*, 6; Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 97.

Without regulation, manufacturers were observed to have produced mobile homes with construction methods and materials that would be considered substandard by the prevailing building codes for conventional houses.[261] As a result, many mobile homes continued to show poor build quality, further damaging the industry's reputation in public opinion.

Plants producing the earliest factory-built travel trailers and mobile homes were located near the automobile industry in the Great Lakes region.[262] Joining this existing industry cluster minimized distance—and decreased transportation costs—between the mobile home plant and component suppliers for the automobile industry.

As the industry reignited in the years following World War II, the number of manufacturers grew substantially and new mobile home plants began opening in other parts of the country; however, none appear to have been in Vermont during this time.[263] In the early 1950s new companies found it relatively inexpensive to open a plant, expecting to quickly cover these base costs given the market's high demand for mobile homes.[264] Additionally, producing houses in a factory avoided traditional construction delays such as poor weather.

Manufacturers eventually chose to de-centralize away from the automobile industry in the Great Lakes Region to decrease overall transportation costs, and instead located in regions where the market potential was strongest. By locating the factory closer to the dealer, the manufacturer minimized the high freight costs of transporting a complete mobile home. This approach was carried out largely by the biggest manufacturers, who opened many plants in the 1950s across different regions. Aside from transportation savings, regional branch plants were able to tailor unit designs to local preferences.[265]

A 1952 article in the Housing and Home Financing Agency's publication *Housing Research* provides a map of mobile home manufacturing plants in the United States at that time. This map showed the vast majority of plants located in four states—California, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan—which together accounted for 97 of the country's 115 plants documented at the time (see Figure 26). Following these four leading states was Ohio with six plants, and nine states with three or fewer plants: Wisconsin, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Florida, and Maryland. Most plants outside the Great Lakes Region were primarily located in the Sunbelt states, showing a positive correlation between a state's number of factories and numbers of mobile homes.[266] By 1959 there were 268 manufacturers operating 327 plants in the nation.[267]

[261] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 114.

[262] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 116.

[263] Housing and Home Financing Agency, "Trailer Coach Industry Survey for the Year 1950," ed. Helen K. Delany, *Housing Research* 3 (Spring 1952): 18.

[264] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 117.

[265] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[266] Housing and Home Financing Agency, "Trailer Coach Industry Survey for the Year 1950," 18.

[267] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 117.

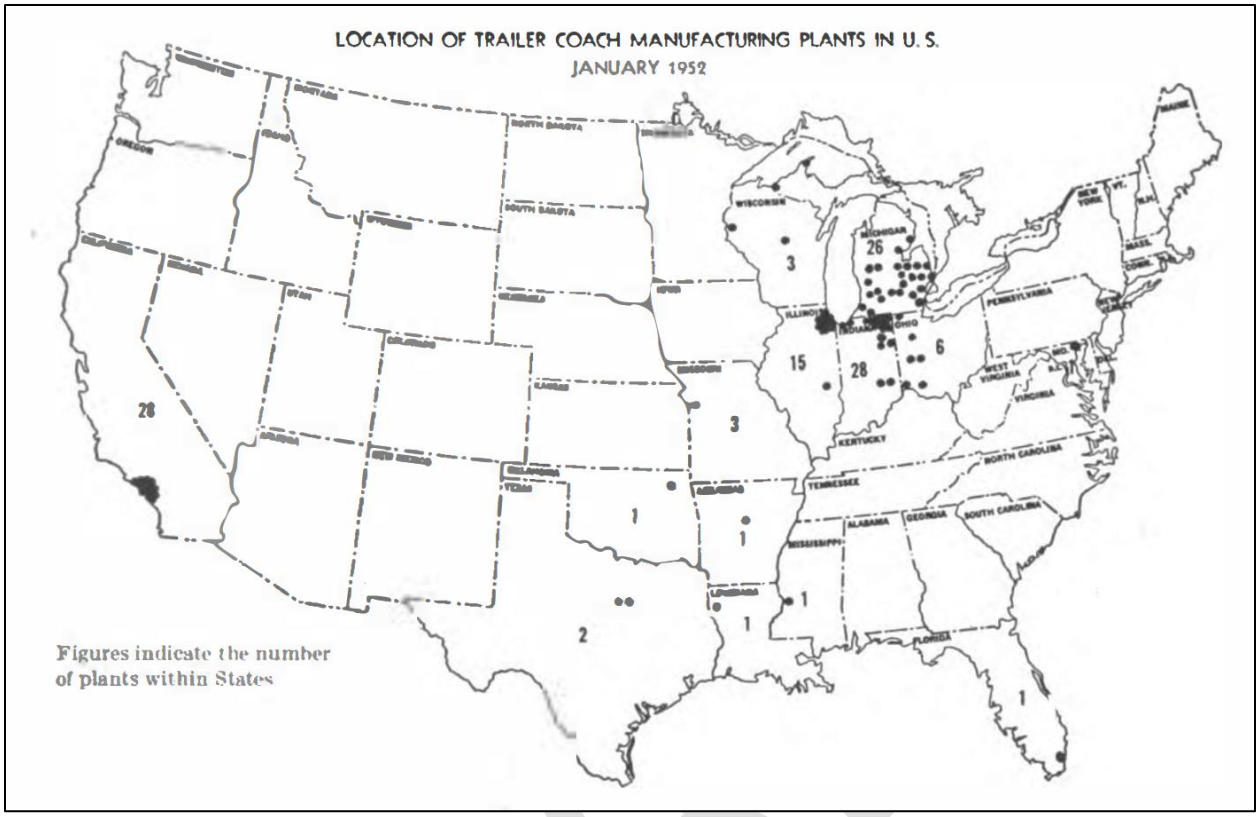

Figure 26. Map showing the location of house trailer manufacturing plants throughout the country as of January 1952, as shown in Housing Research*, a publication of the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency.*[268]

K. Mobile home dealers in the 1950s

As travel trailers gained popularity in the 1930s, dealers began partnering with existing automobile dealerships. Other existing automobile dealerships began taking on the role of trailer dealer as a secondary market, like Ray's Motor Sales in South Burlington (see Figure 27). The resurgence of the industry after World War II resulted in new dealers opening independent stores in the 1950s, with some selling trailers only—no automobiles—such as Melvina's Trailer Sales in South Barre (see Figure 28). Aside from mobile home sales, dealers typically also offered financing, mobile home repairs, demonstrations of various unit functions, and accessories such as skirting.[269]

[268] Housing and Home Financing Agency, "Trailer Coach Industry Survey for the Year 1950," 18.

[269] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 118–20.

Figure 27. A 1953 advertisement in the Vermont Sunday News *for Ray's Motor Sales in South Burlington.*[270]

Figure 28. A 1958 Vermont Catholic Tribune *advertisement for Melvina's Trailer Sales, a South Barre-based dealer.*[271]

The country had an estimated 3,500 mobile home dealers operating in 1953. Dealers opened in such great numbers in the 1950s that many clustered their businesses. These "trailer rows" were often located near downtown areas and offered comparison shopping for interested buyers, much like commercial rows

[270] "Economy and Quality: Ray's Motor Sales, Inc.," *Vermont Sunday News*, May 31, 1953.

[271] "Melvina's Trailer Sales [Advertisement]," *The Vermont Catholic Tribune*, November 28, 1958.

of automobile dealerships.[272] However, none of these were identified in Vermont communities, as most dealers in the state appeared joined with used car dealerships at the time.

L. Postwar return to recreation

The Great Depression and World War II caused two major slumps in the recreation market for mobile homes, caused by a decline in disposable income and wartime gas rationing, respectively. Trailer traveling for vacation slowly returned in the postwar years, now with a major new array of trailers to choose from, including some that were entire houses. While recreational activities were extremely popular in the late 1940s and 1950s, a mobile home for leisure became more of a luxury. Those trailers and parks aimed at vacationers became places for more affluent Vermonters to frequent, and the units and parks showed it with more appealing designs, greater landscaping, more luxurious amenities, and many recreational spaces, all offered at higher price tags than parks for long-term residents.

A 1955 study by the American Automobile Association (AAA) found that vehicular travel rose 10 percent between 1954 and 1955, and was expected to continue to rise.[273] An increase in automobile purchases was paralleled by a rise in trailer and mobile home demand for use as a vacation accessory.[274] If buying for vacation use, customers primarily purchased mobile homes with widths less than eight feet to remain within most state's vehicle size regulations. Mobile homes over eight feet wide were rarely allowed to be towed by a passenger vehicle, and almost always required special truck transport and a wide load permit. As a result, as mobile homes grew in size through the latter half of the twentieth century, there became a greater difference between mobile home designs for vacation versus permanent habitation.

Many park owners preferred to have year-round residents, and often discouraged leasing to those looking to site a mobile home for vacation use. On the other hand, many parks in recreational areas catered specifically to vacation use, and typically asked for higher monthly rents than year-round parks. As such, this market became increasingly focused toward affluent families, and parks began reflecting this changing consumer base by offering luxurious amenities.[275]

5. Mobile Homes in the 1960s

The mobile home industry proved consequential to the housing market in the 1960s. For almost the entire decade conventional home sales declined while mobile home sales skyrocketed across the nation.[276] The ten-wide dominated the mobile home market of the 1960s, with its popularity influencing park modifications to accommodate the larger size. Some parks overcompensated for this change and created even larger lots, correctly foreshadowing the popularity of even wider mobile homes to come.

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[272] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 118.

[273] *The Development of Highways in Texas: A Historic Context of the Bankhead Highway and Other Historic Named Highway* (Texas Historical Commission, n.d.), 199–200, https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/survey/highway/Section%20I.%20Statewide%20Historic%20Context.pdf.

[274] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 93.

[275] Meloan, *Mobile Homes: The Growth and Business Practices of the Industry*, 33.

[276] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 91.

Following the national trend, Vermont experienced its most rapid growth of mobile home parks starting in the 1960s, a decade when the industry actually showed gains from its nationwide efforts to secure its position in the housing market.[277] Despite such immense growth and greater acceptance in some corners, many Vermonters and their local governments continued to "do everything possible to keep the mobiles out" of their communities through the 1960s, staying the course of the previous decades, with much of the same arguments and playbook for solutions.[278]

Vermont's population shifts and resulting housing shortages of the 1960s could not keep mobile home parks out of all communities. The state's postwar housing shortage continued in the 1960s, especially in Chittenden County—with Burlington showing substantial shortages—as well as Washington County and the state's southeastern counties.[279] These were areas that had some of the most mobile home development pressure, and like most other communities, continued to receive pushback from the communities, despite major shifts in their own local demographics and a desperate need for affordable housing.

A. New, wider mobile home forms

At the start of the 1960s the ten-wide was the flagship form, gaining 90 percent of the new mobile home market just six years after its debut. During this decade mobile home designs generally continued to adapt popular architectural styles of the time to further resemble the appearance of conventional homes—most notably the Ranch style. Floorplans that included a corridor became standard for such models. Dr. Allan D. Wallis asserts that the ten-wide attracted so much attention as to have had a measurable impact on overall mobile home sales from its 1954 debut through the 1960s. In 1964 the ten-wide reached its peak in popularity, gaining the highest market share of any other mobile home form ten years after its initial launch.[280]

The ten-wide and homes of that width were already being quickly challenged, however, by a 12-foot-wide mobile home that had been introduced in 1962 (the "twelve-wide"). These were simply the names for forms applied by various manufacturer, who put forth their own stylistic specialized designs and features.

(1) Twelve-wide

The twelve-wide was introduced in 1962 and gained popularity through the early to mid-1960s, quickly replacing the ten-wide as the most popular size and form.[281] This size could incorporate a living room, dining area, bathroom , and two bedrooms into its floorplan. The preference was to have bedrooms that were clustered toward the rear, instead of at opposite ends like what was found in some older models.[282] However, the corridor option was better accommodated with a twelve-wide unit, maximizing bedroom privacy.

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[277] "Legislation On Trailers," *Rutland Daily Herald*, March 15, 1998.

[278] "Trailer Camping Popular This Year," *Addison County Independent*, August 13, 1965.

[279] Eisner, *State Plan for Housing*, 16.

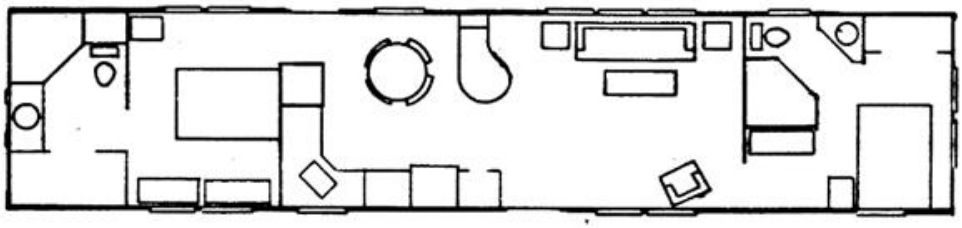
[280] Wallis, "House Trailers: Innovation and Accommodation in Vernacular Housing," 37–38.

[281] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 133.

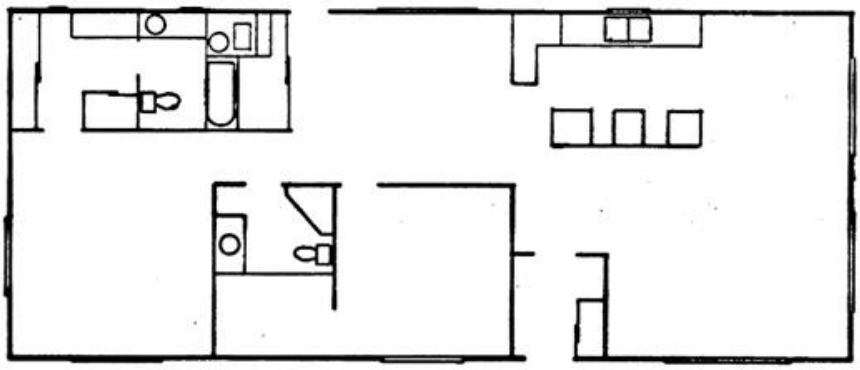
[282] Wallis, "House Trailers: Innovation and Accommodation in Vernacular Housing," 37; Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 138; Pacific Northwest Cooperative Extension, *Choosing A Mobile Home* (Pacific Northwest Cooperative Extension, October 1970), 2.

Following concerted industry lobbying efforts, many state regulations were relaxed in the early 1960s to allow the transportation of twelve-wide units. Length restrictions were also eased during this period and lengths continued to increase. The introduction of the twelve-wide helped boost the mobile home industry, and by 1972 twelve-wides made up 85 percent of all new mobile homes (see Figure 29).[283]

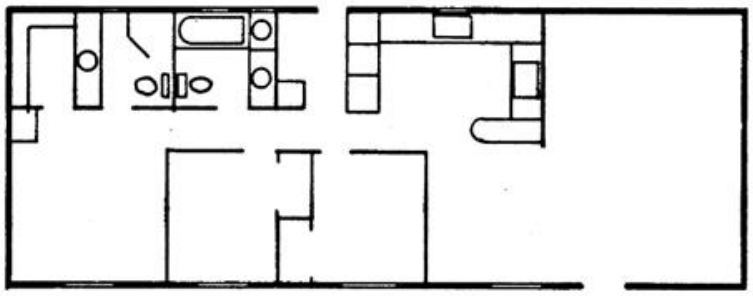
[283] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 10.



(a) 12-wide, 60' long (Delta Homes)



(b) 24 x 60 double wide (Cambridge Mobile Homes)



(c) 20 x 55 double wide (Budger Manufacturing Co.)

Figures 6.1: Mobile Home Floor Plans.

(From Nulsen, Construction, Management and Investment Potential of Mobile Home and Recreational Vehicle Parks, 1970, pp. 18,34,21, respectively.)

Figure 29. Examples of the growing dimensions and square footage of mobile homes over the 1960s.[284]

[284] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 99.

(2) Double-wide

The double-wide changed the industry by making minor modifications to one of the most popular mobile home forms of the postwar decades. The double-wide simply refers to two single-wides produced and transported separately, each with an open elevation. The mobile homes are then joined together on-site to make a single permanent house. While joining mobile homes was not a new concept at the time, until the double-wide, manufacturers had not successfully produced a commercially viable product of two conjoined units. While ten-wides and twelve-wides were typically the largest components used due to the majority of states' vehicle width restrictions at the time, larger single-wides—such as fourteen-wides (see Section 4)—were later used to make some of the largest mobile homes available at the time.

B. New and changing policies of the 1960s

Despite ongoing stigmas about mobile homes concerning perceptions about their quality, appearance on the landscape, and prejudice against their residents, mobile homes were gradually gaining more acceptance as legitimate housing options for a different part of the populace. With this growing acceptance, state and federal agencies sought to legitimize mobile homes through loan and insurance programs, and industry standards were introduced to secure these financing options. During the 1960s mobile homes became eligible for FHA and Veterans Administration (VA) mortgage financing. At the end of the decade major federal policy changes took place that resulted in the first time the federal government made effective moves demonstrating acceptance of mobile homes as permanent housing.[285]

At the local level, however, less encouragement was extended to mobile home owners and park owners and developers. Instead, municipal governments continued to implement more policies to control mobile home park design and development. Some municipalities required units to have skirting on them by the 1960s.[286]

The State of Vermont was already struggling with how to handle the state's "booming land development," which included new mobile home parks.[287] To chart a path forward, Governor Deane Davis established two committees to study these planning concerns at the end of the decade: the Governor's Environmental Control Commission, for general land development, and the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing, for mobile homes and parks.[288] The findings of these committees, and the policies enacted in response, occurred in the 1970s and are described in that section (see Section 6, Mobile Homes in the 1970s).

(1) First federal building code for mobile homes: ANSI Standard A119.1

Health and safety issues of mobile homes were widely discussed in the 1960s, with many attributing it to the lack of commonly accepted standards or building codes for mobile homes. Until the latter part of the decade no federal standards existed for a performance-type building code that applied to mobile homes—leaving the industry with decades of unenforceable recommendations rather than a nationwide set of

[285] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 211.

[286] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 152; Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent."

[287] "Bill to Regulate Development of Trailer Parks Due by Nov. 1," *The Burlington Free Press*, August 28, 1969.

[288] "Bill to Regulate Development of Trailer Parks Due by Nov. 1." While the committee was formed in 1969, its policies had impacts primarily in the 1970s, so the findings of the committee are provided in Section 6.B.(1), Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing.

requirements. Instead, differences among state building codes (where they existed) resulted in frustration and confusion for manufacturers and consumers, who were limited by common denominator standards among states in their market.

The MHMA partnered with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the NFPA to begin crafting standard building codes that could apply to mobile homes. It was another move by the MHMA to get some lasting policy on building codes in an effort to salvage the damaged image of trailer quality being inconsistent, and often substandard. The MHMA persuaded the ANSI and NFPA to use the standards it developed itself, which had been a self-regulating honor system until some sort of uniform, enforceable policy code could take over.[289]

The collaboration resulted in the ANSI introducing ANSI/NFPA Standards A119.1, more commonly referred to as ANSI Standard A119.1 (A119.1) in 1964. These were the first substantial quality standards set at the federal level for mobile homes, and applied to electrical, heating, and plumbing systems.[290] The standards called for adequate insulation on all six sides (ceiling, floors, and walls) with a plastic vapor barrier or proper ventilation in the walls and ceiling to reduce moisture. They required at least two entrances, although many had three.[291]

As these were performance-based codes, rather than prescriptive codes, manufacturers retained the ability to use their own unregulated methods in order to achieve the performance outcome.[292] Regardless, this was a critical event for the mobile home industry, as Standard A119.1 brought clarity and cohesion to mobile home building codes and regulatory procedures.[293]

While Standard A119.1 was born from a collaboration with the MHMA, the new standards did not please everyone in the industry, and especially frustrated those pushing for manufacturers to improve build quality. This was rooted in the fact that performance-based metrics determined compliance, rather than codifying specific construction techniques. Therefore, as long as a manufacturer could ensure its product met Standard A119.1, they maintained the freedom to choose the methods for production.[294] Despite the standards meant to increase the quality and durability of mobile homes, it was noted that they were lightly enforced, and many quality issues remained.

(2) 1969 Green Mountain Mobile Home Park and Sales v. Town of Richmond decision

Local control of mobile home parks in Vermont was reigned in as a result of a decision made by a Chittenden County Court in the late 1960s. This case involved the Town of Richmond and its program to collect fees for mobile home unit and park licensing. In the case, Mountain Mobile Home Park and Sales challenged the legality of Richmond's town ordinance enacted in March 1967 to require license fees for

[289] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 91.

[290] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 13.

[291] Pacific Northwest Cooperative Extension, *Choosing A Mobile Home*, 4.

[292] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 13.

[293] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 91. In 1969, ANSI amended A119.1 to also include structural standards for mobile home units.

[294] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

mobile home parks, which had been granted by the State in 1958 through Act 281, but which the plaintiffs argued were unreasonable.

At the time the Town of Richmond required the following: "a basic mobile home park license fee of $100, an additional fee for each mobile home owner and a $5 fee for each mobile home added to the park after April 1 of any year."[295] However, the town did not demonstrate the purpose of establishing such fees, nor could it be proven to fairly offset the town's administrative costs for the licensing program. Attorneys representing Green Mountain Mobile Home Park and Sales viewed these fees as another local effort to dissuade development of mobile home parks in their communities, and believed them to be unfair and unjustified. They filed a lawsuit against the Town of Richmond when the Richmond Board of Adjustment attempted to begin collecting the fees.[296]

In July 1969 Judge W. Larrow ruled that the locally required fee structure was "clearly unreasonable – excessive and not reasonably related to any cost of licensing or regulation," striking down Richmond's policy and setting case law for all municipalities in the state.[297] From that point forward local fee structures directed at mobile homes in Vermont had to be reasonable and justifiable, lest they be viewed as discriminatory policy.

The U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War steadily increased in the late 1960s, causing fluctuations in the American economy.[298] High inflation resulted in steep construction costs, which slowed conventional home building. Like in previous periods of economic downturns, the mobile home market was able to offer an alternative housing option for those impacted by the state of affairs.[299]

C. Discrimination

Housing discrimination has long been a complex issue for policymakers, but especially for those who have been discriminated against because of unfair housing practices. Various discriminatory housing practices were noted in Vermont through incidents described in newspaper articles and legal transcripts, including discrimination based on factors such as race. However, discrimination as it relates to mobile home living in Vermont was primarily based in the actual or perceived lower socioeconomic status of the occupants. Research indicated that this was the most common factor influencing restrictive policy, as public opposition to mobile homes and parks was typically because of fears that mobile homes and parks would "devalue" adjacent land, based on socioeconomic biases.[300]

Discriminatory practices by mobile home park operators limited who could be admitted as a tenant to a park. Incidents of discrimination based on other factors, such as sexual orientation and households with children, were also reported at some mobile home parks in Vermont prior to 1990.[301]

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[295] Fred Stetson, "Mobile Homes Help Meet Housing Need," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 19, 1969.

[296] Stetson, "Mobile Homes Help Meet Housing Need."

[297] Stetson, "Mobile Homes Help Meet Housing Need."

[298] Peter E. Scheer, "The Mobile Home Crunch," *Bennington Banner*, June 30, 1973, 16.

[299] Scheer, "The Mobile Home Crunch," 16.

[300] Kevin Goddard, "City Asks Legal Opinion On Mobile Home Zoning," *The Times Argus*, June 8, 1979.

[301] "Agency Investigates Mobile Home Parks," *The Burlington Free Press*, June 3, 1990; Deborah Sline, "Gay Rights Out of Mobile Home Bill," *Rutland Daily Herald*, May 13, 1988.

(1) Race-based discrimination

Racial prejudice and discrimination occurred across the United States, and in Vermont, people of color experienced incidents of racial discrimination. In the 1960s housing discrimination was intertwined with the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. Policymakers across federal, state, and local governments struggled to reconcile policies that sustained racial-based disparities between white majorities and people of color.

Race-based discrimination in Vermont's housing market was first addressed in 1965 by Governor Philip Hoff through a proposed a bill that would prohibit such practices across the state and which would apply to both rentals and sales.[302] The State Legislature voted down the bill that year, amending it to include an investigatory body to field complaints—known as the Vermont Human Rights Commission. The amended bill did not include provisions to give the commission authority to discipline violators, but passed nevertheless in 1967.[303]

The following year Congress enacted the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which had substantial impacts on housing rights under the law.[304] One of the most notable parts of this policy made racially restrictive covenants and deeds illegal, enforcement for which had already been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948 as a result of *Shelley v. Kraemer*.[305] However, it is widely understood that enforcement continued through other means across the country, such as discouragement, violence, and real estate practices such as "redlining" and "blockbusting."[306]

A 2016 article in the Vermont Historical Society's *Vermont History* suggests race-based discrimination occurred in Vermont—including the author's firsthand accounts—but research did not yet uncover anything related to this discriminatory practice taking place with mobile homes or mobile home parks.[307] This is not to say it did not occur. Given the state's high number of mobile homes, it is likely that racial-based housing discrimination extended to this housing type. Additionally, racial minorities in twentieth-century America commonly hesitated reporting such violations to the media or government agency for fear of blowback—sometimes deadly—and often the decision to live elsewhere rather than fight to live in an unwelcome environment.

(2) Socioeconomic-based discrimination

Socioeconomic-based housing discrimination was perhaps the most severe issue dealt to the mobile home industry. Stigma against mobile home dwellers had been a problem ever since travel trailers became used as housing, influencing restrictive policy and perpetuating false or assumed stereotypes.

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[302] Elisa A. Guyette, "The Power of Erasure: Reflections on Civil War, Race, and Growing Up White in Vermont," *Vermont History*, Summer/Fall 2016, 163.

[303] Guyette, "The Power of Erasure: Reflections on Civil War, Race, and Growing Up White in Vermont," 163.

[304] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017), ix–x.

[305] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 85.

[306] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, vii, 95.

[307] Guyette, "The Power of Erasure: Reflections on Civil War, Race, and Growing Up White in Vermont," 154–55.

This played out through local policies that attempted to relegate mobile homes and parks to less-visible parts of the community, or more undesirable areas, despite their exclusive use for housing. Arguments for restricting the locations of mobile homes, and "zoning-out" mobile home parks, also speaks to the socioeconomic discriminatory practices. Concerned citizens throughout Vermont claimed the traditionally low-income mobile home dweller would devalue the community through appearance alone, would impact public health through unsanitary practices, and would generally bring an undesirable quality to the area.[308]

It also played out through the tax system, where (refuted) arguments about disparity in tax liability between conventional homeowners and mobile home owners led to public campaigns encouraging local governments to charge additional fees for this type of housing through a licensing program, to recoup the "lost" tax revenue. However, this misplaced concern about taxes continued to be one of the most vocal arguments against mobile homes in Vermont and was likely still based in the "freeloader" stereotype of the mobile home dweller that was pervasive through the state.[309]

As described later in Section 6.B.(8), Vermont State House bill H-436, restrictive zoning for mobile homes was outlawed by the Vermont State Legislature in 1976, when it passed H-436 to require local governments to treat mobile homes equally under the law as conventional site-built housing.[310] This had a major effect on the mobile home market at the time and provided mobile homeowners in Vermont with substantially more siting freedoms. Perhaps the most influential factor was the prohibition of local policy from restricting mobile homes from being sited on residential-zoned parcels.[311] This sought to reduce discrimination against those who chose mobile home living by placing it at the same level as other housing throughout Vermont, knocking down many prohibitive local ordinances across the state.

D. Industry split

In 1963 the mobile home industry took the monumental step to bifurcate. As mobile homes became more permanent fixtures, the market for mobility shifted almost entirely to trailers and recreational vehicles (RVs). By this time the industry understood that these two markets had been growing apart, and decided to split into separate industries. This was marked by the MHMA's move in 1963 to create the Recreational Vehicle Association (RVA) as a spin-off, which became its own entity for travel trailer manufacturers.[312] As it was focused on the market for mobility, the RVA also included travel trailers and mobile homes under the standard eight-foot width threshold and remained mobile rather than placed on a foundation. The split was a major milestone and formalized the mobile home industry's future, as explained by Potter: "The industry transitioned from one that supplied movable housing, to one supplying low-cost housing."[313]

[308] Goddard, "City Asks Legal Opinion On Mobile Home Zoning."

[309] "Mobile Home Owners Come in All Ages and Philosophies," *The Burlington Free Press*, April 9, 1978.

[310] Vermont Press Bureau, "Legislative Log," *The Times Argus*, March 25, 1976.

[311] Michael Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 28, 1990.

[312] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 20.

[313] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

E. Mobile home market in the 1960s

By 1968 approximately 22,000 mobile home parks were in the country, with continued growth for the rest of the decade at a rate of about 2,000 new parks annually. The industry's expansion during this decade was primarily attributed to an acceleration in mobile home purchases in the American South, which had outpaced all other regions. Growth at this rate thrilled manufacturers but ultimately caused frustration among those searching for available park lots, which continued to dwindle. Hindered by local restrictions that had become ubiquitous, park development simply could not keep up with the demand for suitable lots.

(1) Demographics Changes in the 1960s

In the 1960s Vermont experienced a substantial increase in new housing, attributed to two primary changes in the state's demographics from the decade earlier. While Vermont saw its population increase like the rest of the country, it also experienced a rather unique decrease in household size.[314]

Mobile home living was gaining interest by young families, low-income families, and the elderly. With a growing demographic disparity among their consumer base, many park owners adjusted their model to focus on serving a singular group. As explained by Robert H. Nulsen, writer for *Trail-R-Club*: "Parks tend to specialize in the type of tenant they serve. Thus, there are parks that cater to senior citizens, parks which cater to families with children, parks which cater to working adults who have no children, or, parks which cater to military families."[315]

(2) Recreation-based market

Vermont saw development of more recreational-focused mobile home parks during the 1960s, with places like Eldon G. Bird's Beach and Trailer Park on Lake Hortonia, and Woodland Shores Mobile Home Park and Porter's Point Mobile Home Park—both on Lake Champlain—among many others that catered to a vacationing, or recreational-focused, clientele (see Figure 30).[316]

[314] Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*, 4.

[315] Nulsen, *All About Parks: For Mobile Homes and Trailers*, 16.

[316] "Trailer Park Expanding," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 19, 1962; "Enjoy a Fine Private Beach: Woodland Shores [Advertisement]," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 19, 1962; Pat Orvis Weed, "Same As Camp In All Seasons," *The Burlington Free Press*, May 19, 1962.

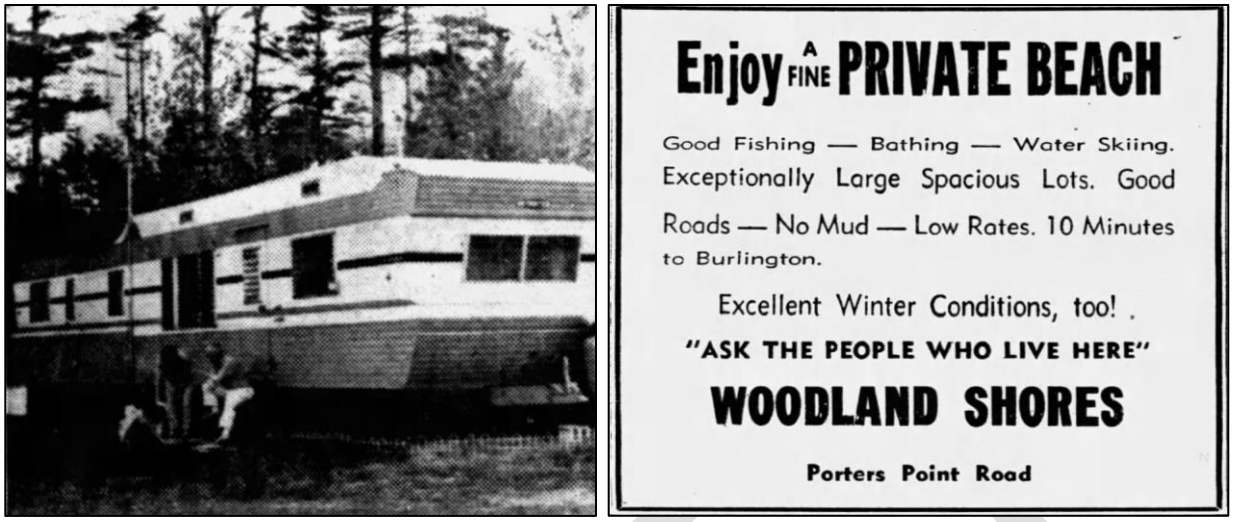


Figure 30. These images show two mobile home parks operating nearby one another on Lake Champlain in the 1960s. On the left is one of the mobile homes at Porter's Point Mobile Home Park in 1962, and the advertisement on the right is for Woodland Shores Mobile Home Park.[317]

(3) Combination mobile home dealer-operator

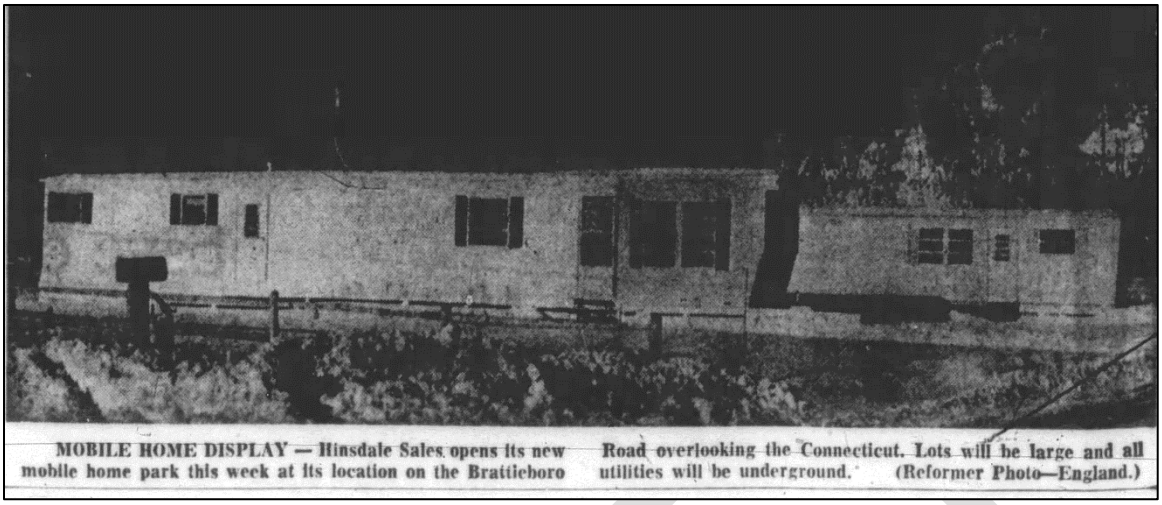
Starting in the 1950s some dealers chose to navigate market issues through vertical integration, adding new roles to their repertoire such as park lot broker or even park developer. This move was a response to the shortage of adequate, available lots, which caused hesitation among potential mobile home buyers who feared buying a house with nowhere to put it. While some dealers reserved lots in affiliated mobile home parks as part of a sales package, others decided to develop and manage parks themselves.[318]

Many of Vermont's dealers took the same approach, with Barre-based dealer Bebe's Mobile Homes being one of the earliest in the state to serve both roles. The dealer sold a variety of models from its salesroom, while at the same time operating the Bebe Mobile Home Park. Other dealers in Vermont took on these dual roles in the 1960s, such as Hinsdale Sales (see Figure 31), Green Mountain Mobile Home Park and Sales, and Ray's Mobile Homes.[319]

[317] Weed, "Same As Camp In All Seasons"; "Enjoy a Fine Private Beach: Woodland Shores [Advertisement]."

[318] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 119.

[319] "Richmond's Trailer Fee Called High," *Rutland Daily Herald*, July 18, 1969; "Mobile Home Display," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, January 3, 1967.



MOBILE HOME DISPLAY — Hinsdale Sales opens its new mobile home park this week at its location on the Brattleboro Road overlooking the Connecticut. Lots will be large and all utilities will be underground. (Reformer Photo—England.)

Figure 31. A 1967 photograph and caption in The Brattleboro Reformer *that shows a mobile home park being developed by dealer Hinsdale Sales.*[320]

F. Mobile home park design of the 1960s

Due to the high demand of the 1950s, mobile home parks became seen as a good return on investment, particularly following Congress passing Section 207, allowing for FHA-insured loans to be used for park development or improvements.[321] This led some mobile home park developers to implement a layout and design similar to traditional tract housing during the period: a developer purchases a large block of land, divides up the land into plots, streets and utilities are installed, and the purchaser selects the lot that appeals to them, with the price varying according to location within the development.[322]

By 1960 approximately 50 mobile home subdivisions were across the United States, with the design type growing in popularity. Although that number continued to increase over the decade, an ongoing issue up to the modern day was a lack of available park space—a problem that continued to plague Vermont.[323] The shift toward larger properties with more neighborhood amenities became increasingly difficult to achieve through the beneficial FHA-insured loan program. These FHA-set stipulations on park design sometimes conflicted with a park developer's intentions to be competitive through changing consumer tastes.

[320] "Mobile Home Display."

[321] Nulsen, *All About Parks: For Mobile Homes and Trailers*, 20.

[322] Nulsen, *All About Parks: For Mobile Homes and Trailers*, 130.

[323] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 83.

Parks in Vermont: Breezy Acres

An example of a larger mobile home park that incorporates more of the design guidance and standards that emerged in the 1960s and meant to better mirror the suburban developments for conventional housing. Breezy Acres was established in 1962 in Colchester. The park is comprised of six looping drives and lacks through streets, very much like contemporary housing developments of the era. The park's 191 units are primarily arranged at a diagonal to the drives. Those units not arranged within the loops of the drives are oriented perpendicular to maximize the number of lots (see Figure 32 through Figure 34). Located adjacent to the park is Brault's Mobile Homes, a mobile home sales facility that was established by the same Brault family that helped develop the Farrington Trailer Park.[324]

Figure 32. Modern aerial of the Breezy Acres mobile home park in Colchester.

[324] Phinney, "Farrington's and the Mobile Home."

Figure 33. Typical streetscape showing densely arranged units at an angle to the roadway.

Figure 34. View of the Breezy Acres mobile park entrance sign.

With this land speculation that looked more like traditional housing developments, a 1965 study conducted on behalf of the TCA by Dr. James Gillies, professor of business at UCLA, concluded that there are two types of parks: “housing-orientated” and “service-orientated” parks. This study found that residents in housing-orientated parks were there primarily because of the cost of housing, while service-orientated communities were more concerned with ease of upkeep and amenities, particularly golf courses and clubhouses. Service-oriented parks appealed more toward well-off retirees. These parks focusing on people with disposable income were more attractive to developers, while investment in

housing-oriented parks was less attractive because of smaller profits, difficult management, and greater local opposition.[325]

The growing presence of mobile homes across Vermont's landscape led to more scrutiny on how local governments could manage the appearance of mobile home parks from the roadside viewshed; however, these efforts lacked actual forces to encourage development of more livable mobile home parks. In Vermont, as in many other states across the country, widescale objection to the presence of mobile homes and mobile home parks was often based on several factors, including their visibility along main highways (inadequately landscaped), little screening between each unit, clutter from lack of available parking, and that trash cans were often out in the open.[326] The condition of these housing-oriented parks was generally poorer than service-oriented. Writing in 1971, journalist Mavis Doyle, in speaking to Donald Webster, the director of the Vermont Environmental Protection Division, noted that Webster said: "[C]onditions in most of the parks developed before 1967 are very bad, but the state has no power to do anything about them. It is all up to local health officers who do little, if anything, about health hazards."[327]

Some regulations for mobile home parks were established in Vermont law, but these were largely inadequate and could not meet the need to upgrade the state's generally poor mobile home parks. Regulations included minimum lot sizes for 2,500 square feet—seen as too small for the much larger mobile homes— did not require the paving of roads, and did not have regulation requiring the park owner to include a certain amount of recreation space per trailer.[328] These issues were often compounded during the 1960s and 1970s, an era that saw a proliferation of mobile homes and mobile home parks in Vermont.

Parks in Vermont: Mobile home parks of the 1960s

An example of a small-scale, year-round park developed during the 1960s is Eastwood Manor near the town of Berlin. The park was established in 1965 and is comprised of a single arterial drive with nine units perpendicular to the roadway. The design is extremely minimal, with no screening between units and no other examples of design considerations to dissuade the criticisms of mobile home parks on the Vermont landscape. This is purely an efficiency focused, housing-oriented park. Interestingly, the park is located immediately to the east of Village Homes, a mobile home sales business, and may have furnished some of the models found in the park (see Figure 35 and Figure 36). Owners of each are currently different for the park and sales lot, but further research may show a common past owner.

[325] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 188–91.

[326] Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, *Mobile Homes in Vermont* (University of Vermont, 1972), 7, University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

[327] Mavis Doyle, "Mobile Home Gripes Aired; Park Owner Fiefdoms Rapped," *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 7, 1971.

[328] Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent."

Figure 35. Current aerial image of Eastwood Manor mobile home park in Berlin.

Figure 36. Eastwood Manor mobile home park (top) and Village Homes mobile home sales (bottom).

An example of a medium-scale park developed in the 1960s is Mobile Acres, established 1969 in Braintree. Although much larger than Eastwood Manor, Mobile Acres is also an efficiency focused park that consists of multiple loops and drives that now contain 77 units. The presence of several patterns of unit orientations may indicate multiple phases of development, although the majority of units are aligned perpendicular to the drives. The park also illustrates some of the continuing overlap of mobile home parks and their earlier travel trail campground antecedents. Mobile Acres is located alongside a campground to the south and west of the park (see Figure 37 and Figure 38). Although they currently have different owners, the mobile home park and campground were established by a single owner in 1968.[329]

Figure 37. Current aerial imagery showing the Mobile Acres park and associated campground in Braintree. The park is outlined in orange.

[329] Josh Pelland, "Abel Mountain Campground," Abel Mountain Campground, accessed August 23, 2021, http://abelmountain.com/.

Figure 38. Mobile Acres park (top) and the adjacent campground (bottom).

6. Mobile Homes in the 1970s

The 1970s began with President Richard Nixon proclaiming the need for mobile home living to support the lack of affordable housing across the country.[330] In an address to Congress about the mobile home's necessary future in American housing, Nixon proclaimed: "For many moderate income American families, the mobile home is the only kind of housing they can reasonably afford."[331] By this time mobile homes had fully transitioned to a product primarily used for permanent housing, with units being moved on average once every five years.[332] However, the national market for mobile homes was beginning to soften in the mid-1970s, widely blamed on overbuilding for all housing that had taken place in recent years.[333]

[330] Arthur Moore, "Now President Nixon Says It: Mobile Homes Are Much of the Answer," *House & Home*, May 1970, 5.

[331] Moore, "Now President Nixon Says It: Mobile Homes Are Much of the Answer," 5.

[332] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[333] Credit Research Center, *Mobile Home Demand and Sources of Financing* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Krannert Graduate School of Management - Purdue University, 1979), 6–7.

This is where Vermont deviates from the national growth rate. Rather than experiencing a contraction, the industry rapidly expanded in the state, becoming the fastest growing housing sector throughout the 1970s. Statistics comparing 1970 and 1980 mobile home numbers in Vermont show a 50-percent increase in the market share of mobile homes versus all housing units in the state across that ten-year period. By the decade's end an estimated 8.2 percent of all homeowners in Vermont lived permanently in mobile homes.[334] This meant one out of every 12 homeowners in Vermont lived in a mobile home instead of conventional site-built housing.

In terms of model form shifts of the 1970s, the ten-wide was quickly overtaken by the twelve-wide by 1972, gaining a substantial 85 percent share of the market that year.[335] This was followed by fourteen-wides and double-wides as the next most popular. The width increases were meant to increase comfort and a general desire for larger living space, rather than the need to support a family with many children. Through the 1970s the typical mobile home was 65 feet in length, comprising far more living space than those in previous decades. The 1970s continued the boxy shapes seen in earlier decades, with flat roofs and straight sides. Often the ends had some type of eave or a section that tilted out. They were clad in aluminum and were largely uniform in appearance, but they could be designed to have the look of wood or siding that looks and feels like brick.[336]

A. Vermont's mobile home market of the 1970s

As Vermont's mobile home industry entered the 1970s, the market was captured by a major study by Federal Reserve Bank economist Carol S. Greenwald in 1969. These findings on Vermont, plus findings of two governor's committees, detailed many factors of the state's mobile home market in 1970s—owing its shifts primarily to demographic and policy changes at the state level.

(1) Greenwald study "Mobile Homes in New England"

One of the most comprehensive studies for mobile homes within the New England region was by Greenwald in 1969. The results of Greenwald's study were presented in her journal article entitled "Mobile Homes in New England," published in the May/June 1970 issue of the *New England Economic Review*.[337] The article provides vital regional context to understand mobile homes and mobile home park development in Vermont as compared to other New England states.

Greenwald found that Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island saw far less mobile home development per capita in the late 1960s than the national average, while Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire saw far more. The study attributed this disparity to the income differential between the northern and southern New England states. New site-built homes were less affordable to many families in northern New England, and the report suggests that the existing supply of older homes in these areas did not provide a higher standard of housing than mobile homes. Of note, Vermont received a noticeably

[334] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Housing Subject Reports: Mobile Homes* (Washington D.C., 1973), 298; Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*.

[335] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[336] Pacific Northwest Cooperative Extension, *Choosing A Mobile Home*, 2.

[337] Carol S. Greenwald, "Mobile Homes in New England," *New England Economic Review*, June 1970, 2–27.

higher number of mobile homes per capita in 1969 than any other New England state, and mobile homes accounted for the majority of new housing starts in many Vermont communities during this period.[338]

The article also discusses mobile home parks, noting that those in New England do not typically follow the pattern of "large, new, well-designed mobile home parks like those [in] California, Florida, and Arizona" and were frequently converted trailer camps.[339] However, it points out that Vermont had just passed legislation that set statewide standards for mobile home parks intended to preserve "the traditional scenic environment of the state."[340]

Greenwald's findings are striking when reviewing mobile home growth of the period in Vermont compared with New England states:[341]

> Information gained was based largely on surveys of town officials in each town and on bank loan portfolios. The study showed that nearly 90 percent of the towns and cities in the three southern New England states now exclude mobile homes, but they are a major factor in the new housing supply in northern New England. New England had 58,200 mobile homes in 1969; 62 percent of these were in the three northern states. New Hampshire has shown the greatest growth—335 percent—since 1960; Vermont was second with a 269 percent increase.
>
> Especially significant is the relationship between new mobile homes and total housing starts. In Vermont towns that freely permit mobile homes, they increased from 48 percent of new housing starts in 1968 to 81 percent in 1969. The 1969 figure was the highest in New England; only Maine with 76 percent was close. In all Vermont cities and towns, the corresponding increase was from 37 to 62 percent.[342]

It was clear that while the 1960s frenzied market for mobile homes had fizzled as America entered the 1970s, the industry remained strong through the decade for Vermont.[343] Vermont's figures of mobile home dwelling per capita was staggering in the late 1960s and 1970s compared with other New England states, and best illustrated through this statistical analysis and bar chart (see Figure 39) excerpted from the Greenwald study:

> When one compares mobile home shipments with state populations, as in [(Figure 28)], the magnitude of the difference is immediately clear. Vermont had 511 new mobile homes in 1969 for each 100,000 residents while Massachusetts had 31. Mobile homes as a pro portion of the population were much greater than the national average in the three northern New England states, and much lower than the national average in each of the southern New England states.[344]

[338] Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, *Mobile Homes in Vermont*, 8.

[339] Greenwald, "Mobile Homes in New England," 14.

[340] Greenwald, "Mobile Homes in New England," 12.

[341] Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, *Mobile Homes in Vermont*, 8.

[342] Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, *Mobile Homes in Vermont*, 8.

[343] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 229; Andrew Nemethy, "Home, Sweet Mobile Home," *Rutland Daily Herald*, October 23, 1988, 26.

[344] Greenwald, "Mobile Homes in New England," 14.

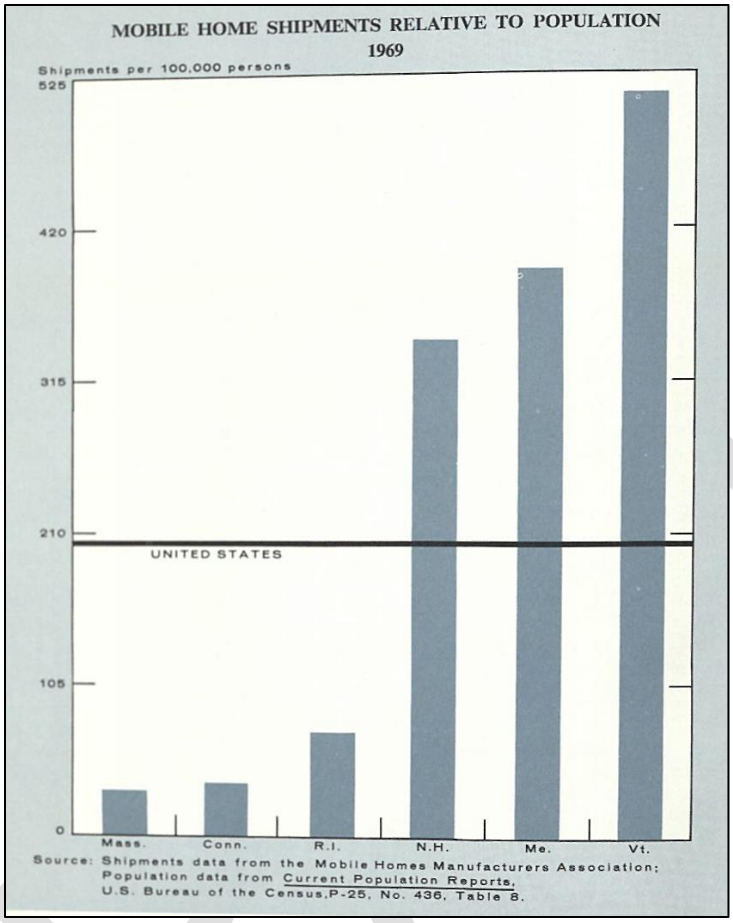


Figure 39. A chart showing mobile home shipments relative to population of New England states—along with the United States average—in 1969, with Vermont far and above the leader in new mobile home dwellers compared with other New England states, and the national average.[345]

(2) Demographics changes

Scholars typically agree on the demographic and economic factors that contributed to Vermont's dramatic rise in mobile homeownership throughout this decade. First, family sizes were shrinking in the Green Mountain State, with the age disparity widening.[346] In the 1970s there were more elderly individuals or couples living on their own, and an increase in young adults.[347] These population groups did not typically have substantial incomes sufficient to sustain prevailing mortgages in Vermont. Instead, mobile home ownership gained appeal among these groups, who could find more independence in owning a mobile home either semi-permanently—until purchasing a site-built home—or permanently.[348]

Second, while some states experienced major postwar shifts in economic prosperity during the postwar years, Vermont remained a primarily low- to middle-income state. As property values rose in Vermont

[345] Greenwald, "Mobile Homes in New England," 14.

[346] Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*, 4.

[347] Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*, 4.

[348] Mary Barr, *Mobile Homes in Addison County* (Addison County Regional Planning & Development Commission, 1977), 17.

during this decade, due to an influx of vacation homes, it became even more difficult for a struggling population to become homeowners or retain homeownership with site-built housing in their home state.[349]

Taken together, the state's demographic shifts of the decade have a major correlation with the increased interest in mobile home living. Whether or not this is the main case, in 1970 it was abundantly clear how dramatically mobile homes were eating at the overall share of new housing units in Vermont. A 1978 article in *The Burlington Free Press* discusses Vermont's growing contingent of mobile home dwellers:

> It used to be a safe generalization that mobile home owners tended to be either the elderly moving out of conventional housing seeking convenient, compact living space or young couples starting on the way to "stick-built" housing. No longer, if several random interviews point out a trend.[350]

(3) Oligopoly of Vermont mobile home park owners

In the 1970s Vermont's mobile home park industry filtered out smaller companies in favor of a few large companies dominating the market. This shift was identified by the University of Vermont in its report *Mobile Homes in Vermont*, prepared in 1972, which argued that the state had a problem with mobile home park owners conducting business as an oligopoly. The report argued that the oligopoly reduced competition and afforded the state's few major players in the industry greater influence over policymaking.[351]

This oligopoly was the product of Vermont's severe mobile home park lot shortage, zoning restrictions limiting park development, and the actions of many of Vermont's largest mobile home dealers to begin buying or developing their own mobile home parks.[352] The University of Vermont study was not the first to observe this situation; rather, this was an issue that had already attracted attention before the report was published.[353]

Many dealer-owners claimed they entered the park management business to improve mobile home sales, as there was demand for units but no available lots for siting.[354] However, others appeared to benefit substantially from this situation, with many reported to provide preferential treatment to those looking for available lots who agreed to purchase a unit from the dealer-side of their business.[355] Also, as competition decreased owners had more flexibility in charging higher lot rents than normally justified, though it was unclear if this had a noticeable impact on prevailing rents for the (already) supply-strained market.[356]

[349] Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*, 6.

[350] "Mobile Home Owners Come in All Ages and Philosophies."

[351] Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, *Mobile Homes in Vermont*, 19.

[352] Robert Ward, "Need for Regulating Mobile Home Parks Stressed at Hearing," *The Burlington Free Press*, October 7, 1971.

[353] Ward, "Need for Regulating Mobile Home Parks Stressed at Hearing."

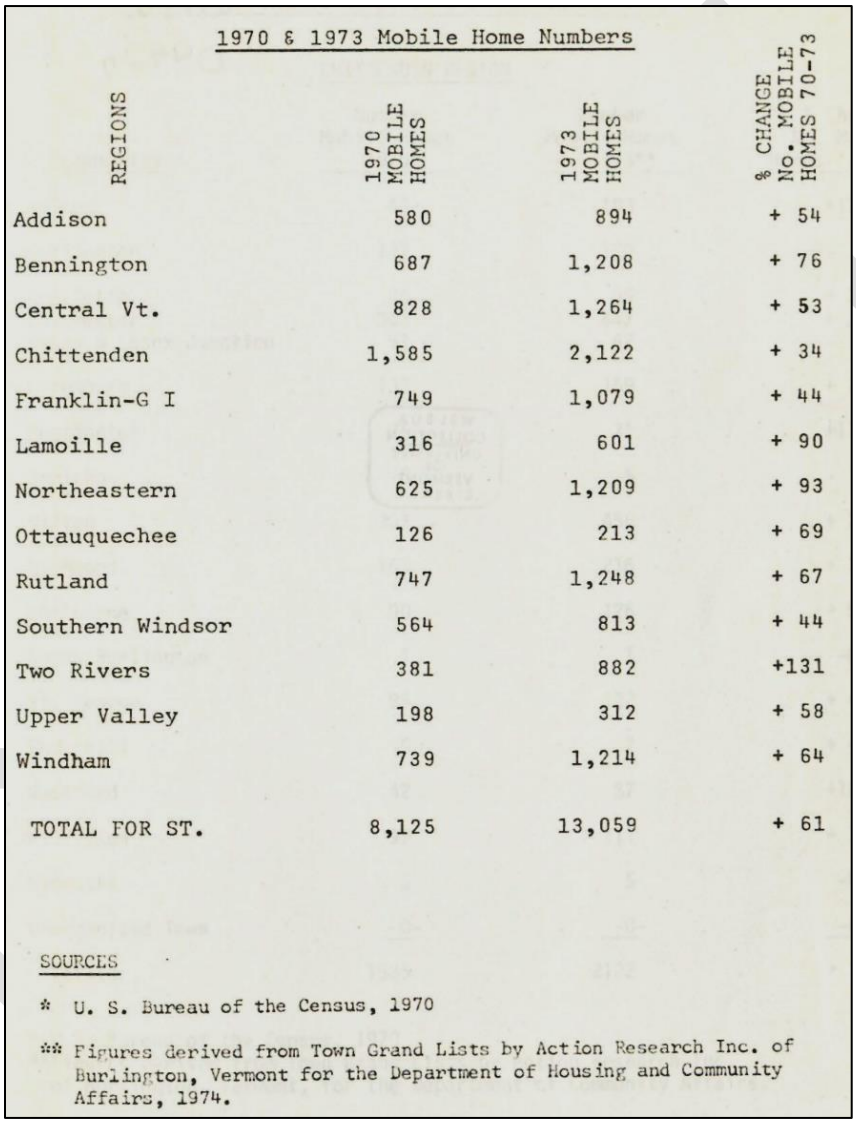
[354] Ward, "Need for Regulating Mobile Home Parks Stressed at Hearing."

[355] Ward, "Need for Regulating Mobile Home Parks Stressed at Hearing."

[356] Frederick Stetson, "Mobile Homes Report Shows Park Owners Have Oligopoly," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 15, 1973.

(4) Growth within Vermont

In 1974 the State Agency of Development and Community Affairs published a table showing mobile home growth in Vermont, sorted by region (see Figure 40). Statistics given for mobile home growth between 1970 and 1973 are staggering, with all regions experiencing substantial growth. According to the data presented, Vermont had an average 61 percent increase in mobile homes over the period between 1970 and 1973.[357]



1970 & 1973 Mobile Home Numbers

REGIONS	1970 MOBILE HOMES	1973 MOBILE HOMES	% CHANGE No. MOBILE HOMES 70-73
Addison	580	894	+ 54
Bennington	687	1,208	+ 76
Central Vt.	828	1,264	+ 53
Chittenden	1,585	2,122	+ 34
Franklin-G I	749	1,079	+ 44
Lamoille	316	601	+ 90
Northeastern	625	1,209	+ 93
Ottauquechee	126	213	+ 69
Rutland	747	1,248	+ 67
Southern Windsor	564	813	+ 44
Two Rivers	381	882	+131
Upper Valley	198	312	+ 58
Windham	739	1,214	+ 64
TOTAL FOR ST.	8,125	13,059	+ 61

SOURCES

* U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1970

** Figures derived from Town Grand Lists by Action Research Inc. of Burlington, Vermont for the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, 1974.

Figure 40. Table of mobile home figures by Vermont region, comparing 1970 and 1973, with rates of change.[358]

B. Policy changes in the 1970s

As with the mobile homes themselves, state and federal governments sought further regulation and standards for parks. By the early 1970s there was a growing tension between the need for affordable

[357] Agency of Development and Community Affairs State of Vermont, "Mobile Home Study" ([State of Vermont], 1974), 2, University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

[358] State of Vermont, "Mobile Home Study," 2.

housing and governments standing by their policies that often severely restricted mobile home development. Vermont was an exemplary case-in-point, as real estate values were rising with the median income levels falling.

During the early 1970s a full 60 percent of communities across the country excluded mobile homes from being sited on private lots. Municipalities such as Miami and Des Moines placed a full moratorium on construction of new parks. Some states that did not issue full bans essentially did so tacitly, such as Illinois, which only approved one mobile home park between 1955 and 1975. Those homes outside of parks were typically relegated to marginal areas near highways and interstates or located in commercial and industrial areas.[359] However, Vermont would begin the decade with policy changes that would limit local authority over mobile home siting within communities.

To try and make mobile home parks more aesthetically pleasing and to lessen the stigma about their presence on the landscape, federal and state entities sought to provide further guidance seeking to make parks appear more like the subdivision developments of conventional housing. In the mid-1970s the Vermont State Legislature wrestled with how to address this and other mobile home issues, with several state bills passed into law during this time. Policymakers ended up acting decisively in support of mobile home living by passing influential bills into law. Much of this was guided by findings of the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing, formed in 1969.

(1) Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing

In August 1969 Vermont Governor Deane C. Davis declared the need for the state to provide a more tailored focus on mobile home development, including tackling the local zoning restrictions issue, and in response established the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing. The committee was tasked with acquiring a thorough understanding of Vermont's mobile home industry and the current housing situation, and made recommendations on state policy regarding mobile homes.

At the first meeting Governor Davis made it clear to the committee that recommendations may not ban mobile homes outright from any large area of the state, but they should still place considerable attention on potential effects to Vermont's natural scenic landscape. Governor Davis also hoped this would address the pervasive issues of local zoning restrictions, and encouraged cities to "zone in" rather than "zone out" mobile homes and parks.[360] Other issues to address were related to health and environmental concerns, with one of the planners on the committee citing high densities of mobile home parks.

The committee's findings were presented in a December 1969 report to the governor; with the main points and recommendations as follows:[361]

- Protect the "typical Vermont scene" (see Section 6.B.(3), Issues on scenic qualities, for a description);

[359] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I," 12.

[360] "Statewide Mobile Home Park Law Recommended by Governor's Panel," *The Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, December 17, 1969, 1.

[361] Norman Williams and Robert A. Fetz, *Report of the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing* ([Montpelier]: State of Vermont, December 15, 1969), University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

- End real economic discrimination against the poor through restricting choice of home site;
- Reserve the right for municipalities to require mobile homes be sited exclusively in mobile home parks; and,
- Improve park and unit design for better curb appeal.[362]

Under this report the committee recommended all site plans for proposed new mobile home parks be reviewed and approved by a state agency, such as the Planning and Community Services Agency.[363] Additionally, the committee reviewed the current tax structure regarding mobile homes and determined that mobile home dwellers could, in fact, be paying more in taxes than those living in conventional site-built housing, as explained further in Section 4.I.(5), The taxation question.[364]

(2) Mobile home park model in Vermont Statehouse

In December 1969 Governor Davis announced the plan to install a scaled model of an exemplary mobile home park design in the Vermont Statehouse, to be ready for viewing in January 1970. The intent for this model was to "depict visually the aesthetic possibilities of a mobile home park."[365] The design was based on recommendations of the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing, which had been released in November, and was constructed by Burlington-based architect Robert Metz, a cochairman of the committee.[366]

(3) Issues on scenic qualities

The scenic quality concerns were not new in the 1970s; instead, Vermont had struggled to find a balance and implement solid guidance on park development that harmonizes, rather than clashes, with the landscape. The need for affordable housing continued to be an issue, and the State knew concessions may be needed. A *Brattleboro Reformer* columnist commented on this dilemma in a 1976 article:

> On the one had they're cheap ugly metal boxes that clutter the landscape, a glittering blot on the otherwise peaceful setting that makes up the Vermont Countryside. On the other hand, mobile homes have solved a part of the great housing problem throughout the country by providing safe, clean, modern, efficient housing for young families.[367]

Vermont has long been considered a rural state. Through the postwar decades Vermont experienced land use changes most evident in farmland being replaced with non-agricultural uses.[368] With disappearing agricultural land in Vermont, some of the loudest opposition to mobile homes were rooted in aesthetics to retain the rural landscape.[369] Throughout the postwar era there was widespread concern in

[362] Williams and Fetz, *Report of the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing*, 1, 8, 9.

[363] "Statewide Mobile Home Park Law Recommended by Governor's Panel."

[364] "Statewide Mobile Home Park Law Recommended by Governor's Panel."

[365] "Mobile Home Park Model to Be Set Up in Capitol," *The Burlington Free Press*, December 22, 1969.

[366] "Mobile Home Park Model to Be Set Up in Capitol."

[367] David Chase, "The Dilemma Of Mobile Homes," *The Brattleboro Reformer*, November 20, 1976.

[368] Eisner, *State Plan for Housing*, 2, 13. However, as state population densities rose in the rest of New England, Vermont retained more of its agricultural land when compared to other states and had only an incremental density increase comparatively.63

[369] Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent."

Vermont that mobile homes blighted the natural viewshed (see Figure 41). This became particularly heated with the ongoing environmental movement.

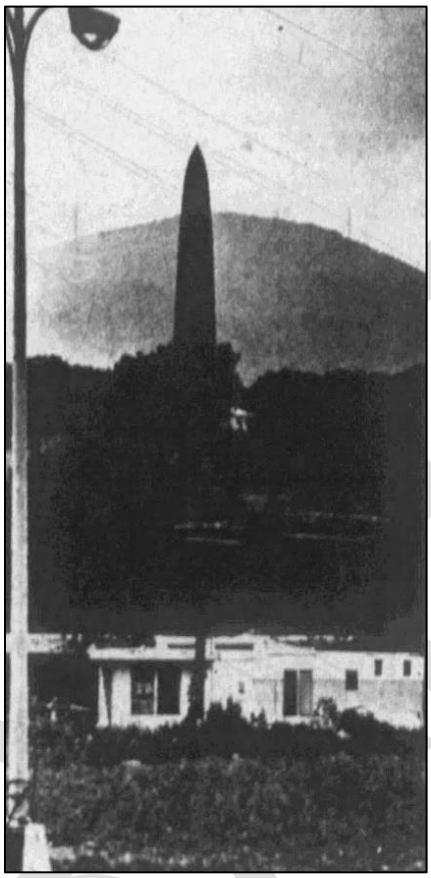


Figure 41. A 1968 Rutland Daily Herald *article by Howard Coffin includes a photograph of Bennington, with a mobile home in the foreground looking toward the Bennington monument and Green Mountains behind. This image was meant to show the mobile home as an inappropriate addition to this viewshed.*[370]

The Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing described the issue of mobile homes sited in a way that disrupts the "typical Vermont scene," which it defined as follows:

> [A] valley scene from, ridgetop to ridgetop, with the open fields usually extending from the valley bottom part-way up the hillsides, and with marvelous and infinitely varying patterns of woods, fields, and stone walls, of streams, and of buildings, together with great variation of sunlight and shadow and sky, of color and texture. It is precisely in this type of area that both mobile homes and mobile home parks have been locating, with results that are often devastating. Several fine scenes are spoiled every year by such developments.[371]

This concern continued to pervade the industry, as park development in Vermont accelerated through the 1970s, along with public alarm about the impending ruin mobile homes had on the unspoiled landscape of the Green Mountain State.

[370] Coffin, "Despite Efforts by Both Sides, Vermont's Mobile Home Problem Appears Permanent."

[371] Williams and Fetz, *Report of the Governor's Committee on Manufactured Housing*, 3.

(4) Vermont State Act 250

Passed in 1970, Act 250 was a major legislative milestone for land use, development, and the environmental review in the state, leading to substantial changes for Vermont's system of reviewing and approving major development proposals, including mobile home parks.[372] The law was born out of concern for major developments around Vermont's resort regions—primarily ski areas in the southeastern part of the state.[373] Given its land use and development focus, Act 250 also had consequences for Vermont's mobile home industry, as it would apply to any project that includes construction of "10 or more units of housing within a five-mile radius"—capturing all new small- to large-sized park developments.[374] The legislation provided for criteria to be met for compliance related to air and water quality, water supplies, traffic, local schools and services, municipal costs, and historic and natural resources, including scenic beauty, impacts of growth, and municipal and regional plans.[375]

(5) Vermont State Act 291

In recognition of mobile homes becoming a larger share of affordable housing in Vermont, the state government also began to take steps to allay the concerns of municipalities and planning officials. In July 1969 the State passed Act 291, enacted in 1970, which included basic regulations for mobile home parks. The act called for provisions such as each home site including at least 5,000 square feet, a common space to be accessible to all residents with a minimum dimension of 30 feet, at least two trees on each home site, and off-street parking for each lot.[376] Despite issuance of standards and guidelines for mobile home park development meant to improve their function and aesthetics, mobile homes and mobile home parks would continue to face discrimination and marginalization into the next decades.

The first Vermont park to be developed to these new standards was Westbury Park, a 175-unit mobile home park in Colchester. This park was "expected to be the model" for designs to come (see *Figure 44*).[377]

Parks in Vermont: Westbury Park

The 1970s era of mobile home park development in Vermont also included examples of large-scale parks. Westbury Park located in Colchester was established in 1972 and is likely the best example in the state of a mobile home park that applied the philosophies of suburban residential design that the FHA and other guidance was striving for. It is located in a heavily wooded area and screened from several nearby industrial areas and the historic site of Fort Ethan Allen. Aerial views make clear the suburban-style street layouts that include a wide boulevard with a planted median that terminates at a pool and community center at the rear of the complex. Roads branch off the main boulevard into side streets that are curvilinear and lead to loops, circles, and cul-de-sacs. Units are placed at angles to the roads or oriented

[372] John Dillon, "Plan To Overhaul Vermont's Act 250 Would Eliminate Regional Review Boards," *Vermont Public*, January 8, 2020, https://www.vermontpublic.org/vpr-news/2020-01-08/plan-to-overhaul-vermonts-act-250-would-eliminate-regional-review-boards.

[373] Dillon, "Plan To Overhaul Vermont's Act 250 Would Eliminate Regional Review Boards."

[374] N. Gail Byers and Leonard U. Wilson, *Managing Rural Growth: The Vermont Development Review Process* (Montpelier, Vt.: State of Vermont Environmental Board, April 1983), 19.

[375] Gregory LeFever, "Foes of Quechee Mobile Home Park Plan Are Outmaneuvered," *Rutland Daily Herald*, April 24, 1975.

[376] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 144.

[377] "Mobile Home Park in Colchester Begins Soon," *The Burlington Free Press*, July 24, 1972.

parallel to them, each set on a large lot with mature trees. Additionally, other details such as street signage, prominent entrance sign, and decorative light standards are present (see Figure 42 and Figure 43).

Figure 42. Aerial view of Westbury Park showing the curvilinear nature of circulation networks in Colchester.

Figure 43. Typical streetscape in Westbury Park showing the wooded setting and widely spaced, secluded units, along with ornamental lighting.

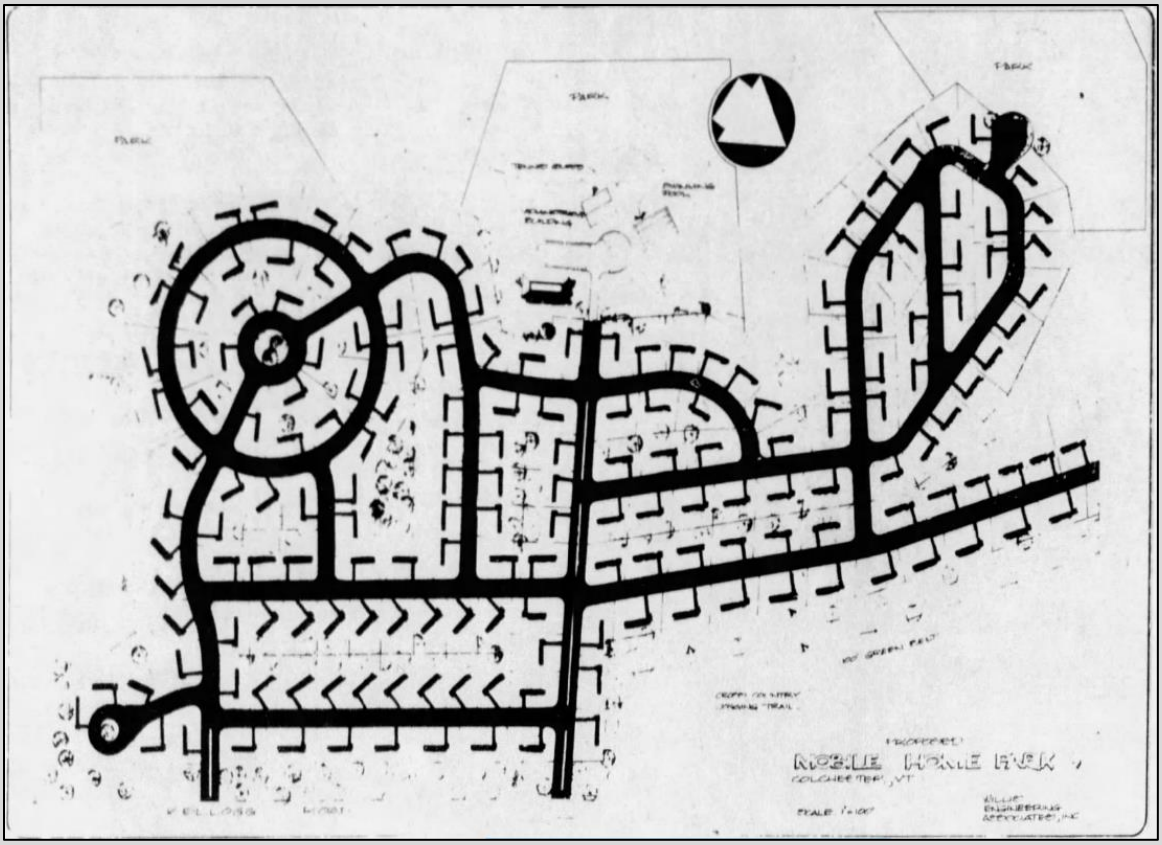


Figure 44. Sketch of the proposed Westbury Park development in Colchester, as published in a 1972 issue of The Burlington Free Press*. This park the first to be designed to meet Vermont's criteria and standards enacted in 1970 as part of Act 250 and Act 291.*[378]

(6) Vermont "Mobile Home Park Tenant's Bill of Rights"

In April 1974 the Vermont state legislature passed a law that had critical impacts on the rights of the state's mobile home dwellers. This "Mobile Home Park Tenant's Bill of Rights" outlined the rights of park owners and tenants with respect to "leasing arrangements, evictions, charges and fees and the purchase of goods and services."[379] The law provided some major benefits to the mobile home owner, as summarized by the Office of the Attorney General Consumer Fraud Division:[380]

> The Bill Prohibits[:]
>
> - Having unreasonable and unfair park rules such as a rule prohibiting the ownership of washing machines so residents would have to pay to use the park-owned laundromat.
> - Charging extra rent for each child or overnight guest or pet that the resident might own.
> - Requiring that all residents buy milk or fuel from one dealer at a much higher price than residents would pay if they could make their own deals.
> - Charging hundreds of dollars in 'entrance fees' for the mere privilege of placing a mobile home in the park.

[378] "Mobile Home Park in Colchester Begins Soon."

[379] "Bill Defines Rights For Mobile Home Parks," *The Brattleboro Reformer*, April 4, 1974. The "Mobile Home Park Tenant's Bill of Rights" is the official name, but some sources reference "Mobile Home Owner's Bill of Rights."

[380] Consumer Fraud Division Office of the Attorney General, "Mobile Home Owners Bill of Rights Is Signed Into Law," *The Brattleboro Reformer*, April 24, 1974.

- Refusing to allow residents to sell their mobile homes to other individuals unless the park owner received a substantial 'commission' even though he had nothing to do with arranging the sale."

"The Bill Provides[:]

- All mobile home park owners must enter into written leases with all park residents by July 1, 1974. Although the law doesn't spell out what the terms of the lease must be, it does require all the terms to be fair and reasonable – otherwise they may not be enforced.
- All of the lease terms must be uniformly applied. In other words, owners can't make special rules or rental fees applicable to one person, unless they are applicable to everybody.
- Residents may only be charged for rent, utilities, or other reasonable incidental services. In other words, they can't be charged extra for pets, appliances, automobiles, or children.
- No mobile home resident may be evicted form the park unless he fails to pay his rent or unless he is in substantial violation of the other lease terms. In other words, a resident can't be evicted for forgetting to cover a trash can, even though the lease says that all trash cans must be covered. But, if the resident purposely continues not to cover the can after being told about it, that would be a substantial violation.
- Park owners may no longer charge 'entrance fees' for the mere privilege of moving a mobile home into the park.
- Park owners may no longer tell residents that they must deal with any one particular seller of goods or services.
- If a resident wants to sell his mobile home, the park owner must allow the purchaser to move into the park as long as the purchaser and his household qualify under the lease terms of the park."[381]

This "bill of rights" set many standards prohibiting common practices by mobile home park operators in Vermont, radically changing the system and providing greater protections to park tenants.[382] To provide further guidance, the state's Consumer Fraud Division of the Attorney General's Office developed a standard lease as a template to assist park operators in establishing leases that conform to the "bill of rights." The model lease was published later that year, in November 1974.[383]

(7) Federal Mobile Home Construction and Safety Standards Act

In 1974 Congress passed the Mobile Home Construction and Safety Standards Act that put mobile home regulation under the purview of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This authorized HUD to develop a stronger set of safety standards for mobile homes, as not all states had adopted ANSI Standard A119.1 (see Section 5.B.(1)). The subsequent HUD code went into effect for the entire country in 1976 and had a critical impact on the industry's ability to work across a uniform playing field for building code conformance. Although it did not alter the appearance of mobile homes much, it did seem to have its intended effects. Before the code the rate of fire deaths in mobile homes was about three times higher than site-built homes; afterwards, that difference was mostly eliminated.[384]

The HUD code may have had the unintended effect of forcing down nationwide production and substantially driving up costs of mobile home units over the ten years following its enactment. As asserted by Wallis, the 30-percent drop in new mobile home shipments experienced between 1976 and 1986 was because the standards were too stringent for many to remain in business.[385]

[381] Office of the Attorney General, "Mobile Home Owners Bill of Rights Is Signed Into Law."

[382] Office of the Attorney General, "Mobile Home Owners Bill of Rights Is Signed Into Law."

[383] "Uniform Lease Prepared For Mobile Home Parks," *The Burlington Free Press*, November 1, 1974.

[384] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[385] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 229.

(8) Vermont State House Bill H-436

In the mid-1970s, local restrictive zoning was a hot topic with the Vermont State Legislature.[386] In 1976 Vermont passed House Bill H-436, a policy that required municipal governments to treat mobile homes as housing and prohibit towns from zoning out mobile homes.[387] This was in response to towns around Vermont establishing ordinances in the 1950s and 1960s that did not consider mobile homes to be categorized with other types of housing under the law, and/or which used restrictive zoning to limit mobile homes and mobile home parks to areas not otherwise permitted for housing. When enacted in 1977, H-436 required Vermont's local governments to classify mobile homes as "housing" and treat them equally with site-built housing under the law.[388]

H-436 also intended to avoid the critical issue that was anticipated by equalizing conventional housing and mobile homes—"housing" laws that applied to conventional homes but could not directly translate to mobile homes. For example, many Vermont communities required new housing units to have square-foot minimums for living space that few commercially produced mobile home models could accomplish at that time.[389] H-436 worked to prevent this by including language that waived the need for mobile homes to comply with parts of certain housing laws that they otherwise could not conform to.[390]

In 1990 William Mitchell, Chief of Technical Assistance for the State Housing and Community Affairs Department, asserted that after 14 years, H-436 was "still the most progressive mobile home regulation with respect to zoning in the country."[391] Mitchell also claimed that most communities have stopped attempting to prohibit mobile homes through restrictive zoning ordinances.[392]

C. Manufacturing in the 1970s

The early 1970s were incredibly lucrative years for the mobile home industry, riding the highs of the industry's peak in 1968. In *Forbes* magazine's list of most profitable companies, the top three spots were held by mobile home manufacturers every year from 1968 and 1973.[393] At the beginning of the 1970s the nation's mobile homes were being produced by approximately 200 firms across 400 plants. However, manufacturers were still plagued by build-quality issues, with a 1973 article in the *Bennington Banner* collectively calling them "fiercely competitive and corner-cutting companies."[394]

Manufacturing mobile homes continued to require less labor than producing housing in other sectors of the market. The industry agreed that the affordability of a mobile home is attributed to the efficiency of the manufacturing process, more than any other aspect.[395] A 1970 paper published for the International

[386] Barr, *Mobile Homes in Addison County*.

[387] Vermont Press Bureau, "Legislative Log."

[388] Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes."

[389] Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes."

[390] Barr, *Mobile Homes in Addison County*.

[391] Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes."

[392] Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes."

[393] Potter, "The Rise and Fall of the Manufactured Home - Part I."

[394] Scheer, "The Mobile Home Crunch."

[395] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 92.

Symposia on Low Cost Housing Problems compared the labor requirements of different house types at that time:[396]

> For the production of 1,000 square feet of net floor area, in place, exclusive of land and land development, the mobile home industry typically needs between 135 and 230 man hours, the manufactured home industry needs 350 to 540 for modules and 380 to 700 for package-based houses, and the traditional residential building industry usually from 700 to 1,000."[397]

By 1976 more than 75 percent of mobile homes produced were said to meet ANSI Standard A119.1, which covered the four basic areas of mobile home construction, and all new ones needed to comply with the new HUD code established that year.[398]

(1) HUD code: first enforceable nationwide mobile home building code

By 1973 Vermont was one of five states that had not yet adopted ANSI Standard A119.1, nor any other enforceable mobile home regulatory program. However, three years later the HUD code went into effect as part of the 1974 Mobile Home Construction and Safety Standards Act, as a single code across the entire country. When enacted in 1976, the HUD code was quickly adopted by several states, including Vermont, which used it as its first enforceable mobile home building standards at the state level.[399]

Establishing the HUD code was preemptive, rather than reactionary, to avoid any state policy differences that might arise from each state establishing their own codes. Because HUD aimed for its new code to apply across all parts of the country, it incorporated various regional environmental variables such as climate. Before the HUD code the only federally recognized standard was set by the FHA as part of Section 207 of the Housing Act of 1955 (see Section 4.I.(4) on Section 207).[400] Dr. Allan D. Wallis explains the benefit of the HUD code: "By establishing a single standard, a manufacturer was assured that the electrical system built for a mobile home in Indiana would also meet the requirements of any other state to which it was shipped."[401] However, the HUD code made for more expensive production costs, which chipped at the affordability quality. In response, national mobile home sales declined nearly 30 percent in the 1980s.[402]

D. Mobile home unit design of the 1970s

The 1970s continued many of the trends in mobile home design and manufacturing established during the past decade. The models with larger dimensions and square footage developed over the past decades became standard. Where earlier expandable and double-wides may have been considered in the luxury range, now families with three, four, or five children required the extra space despite the higher

[396] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 91.

[397] Bernhardt, "Creating a Resource For Low Cost Urban Housing: Towards a Policy For Developing the Mobile Home Industry," 91.

[398] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Buying and Financing a Mobile Home" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1976), 4, University of Vermont.

[399] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 213–14.

[400] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 214–16.

[401] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 214.

[402] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 229.

costs. However, although they were more expensive than 12-foot by 60-foot trailers, their initial costs were still lower than site-built homes with comparable space.[403]

By this time HUD noted that a typical mobile home had: a living room; complete kitchen (including major appliances); separate dining area (or a dinette); one or two bathrooms; one, two, or more bedrooms; cabinets and closets; water heater; and an automatic heating system whether gas, oil, or electricity. The agency also noted that "most mobile homes are sold completely furnished, equipped, and decorated. Major appliances, furniture (free-standing or-built-in), curtains and draperies, lamps, and carpeting or other floor coverings may be included in the purchase price."[404]

(1) Fourteen-wide

The homeowner's need for space led manufacturers to develop larger mobile homes over the course of the 1960s, with a 14-foot single-wide being produced in 1969. This fourteen-wide was introduced the same year as its 28-foot double-wide counterpart.[405] The double-wide mobile home was now not that different in total floor area than many single-family, site-built homes and could be placed on a similar-sized lot.[406] It was now almost universally accepted that the largest mobile homes—which had become some of the most popular—would not be regularly moved, so the only restriction on size continued to be state highway transportation restrictions that could accommodate this width. According to a newspaper advertisement for the state's supposed first fourteen-wide, Vermont saw its first ultra-wide model in 1970, though it is unclear when the state law changed to allow 14-foot vehicle widths.[407]

(2) Materials and accessories

By this period the exteriors of most mobile homes were comprised of steel, aluminum, or a composite material. Aluminum was one of the most popular materials as it was lightweight, rustproof, termite proof, and would reflect heat. The exterior materials could be designed to have the appearance of wood and even brick and be dent and weather resistant.[408] The period also saw an increase in the usage of lumber in the production of mobile homes. This was partly attributed to the larger size of the units, but also to the better quality of the homes and sturdier framing meant to meet the higher standards that began to be codified in the 1960s.[409]

Although initial costs were overall lower and packaged amenities such as appliances and furniture were convenient, there were still other monetary investments typically needed. These usually included aftermarket accessories such as skirting, steps, a carport, and a utility shed. Although they were considered "extras," these were features often seen as needed to make a mobile home livable and could add about 15 percent to the cost of the home. Additional costs also came with the price of comprehensive

[403] N.G Asbury, *A Formula for Determining the Feasibility of Mobile Housing Developments* (Chicago: Mobile Homes Manufacturers Association, 1971), 38.

[404] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Buying and Financing a Mobile Home."

[405] Lawrence, "Home Sweet Mobile Home Park," 20.

[406] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 100.

[407] "Stryker Mobile Homes [Advertisement]," *The Times Argus*, September 15, 1970.

[408] Pacific Northwest Cooperative Extension, *Choosing A Mobile Home*, 2.

[409] H. Edward Dickerhoof, *Lumber Use Trends in Mobile Home Construction* (Madison, Wis.: Forest Products Laboratory, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1977), 1.

insurance as mobile homes were more vulnerable to fire and wind than site-built homes, making insurance more expensive.[410]

E. Park development in the 1970s

There was a stark distinction between parks in New England that started as trailer camps along major highways and those that were constructed in later decades. Most later parks were designed to be hidden by spatial isolation or tucked behind hedges forming a green screen—both more likely than not, a physical manifestation of the local law.[411] Additionally, in the early 1970s the MHMA claimed to be the largest residential land development planning operation in the world, having been responsible for designing tens of thousands of mobile home parks across the country through its Land Development Division services.[412] Park design in Vermont was also influenced by both state and federal legislation and guides of the 1970s, all aimed to improve resident quality of life.

The *Mobile Home Court Development Guide* was published in 1970 as a joint effort by HUD and the FHA to provide broad guidance pertaining to zoning, providing specific recommendations for placement. Some of these recommendations were prescriptive, while others directed to other legal jurisdictions:

> It is desirable to locate mobile home parks in residential areas rather than in commercial or industrial districts. Sites should not be located near swamps or other places where insects and pests may breed or near noisy and odorous manufacturing plants. Zoning must be permissive. Park developers must assure that the park will not violate any State or local regulation governing land use, water supply and sewage disposal.[413]

This was all to make a more suburban approach to mobile home park design and differentiate them from the utilitarian mobile home parks that seemed more like the earlier travel trailer lots. Nevertheless, planning authorities across the country continued to discriminate against further park development with restrictive zoning laws and confining parks to marginal and non-desirable areas.[414]

In 1975 HUD and the FHA began issuing updated guides for mobile home parks to meet new HUD/FHA guidance to insure park-development mortgages. These standards were intended to encourage a more suburban approach to mobile home park design, and differentiate them from the utilitarian parks that resembled the earlier travel trailer camps.

(1) New concepts

Some new concepts in park design came to the forefront in Vermont in the 1970s, such as the terrace-style design and the cluster design concepts. These experimental plans pushing ideas about how mobile home parks could function and serve their residents came out of the broad postwar technological optimism of the period.

[410] Sylvia Porter, "Can Mobile Home Be Considered Bargain?," *The Burlington Free Press*, March 17, 1975.

[411] Greenwald, "Mobile Homes in New England," 14.

[412] Felser, "The Mobile Home Park in the United States," 102.

[413] "Mobile Home Parks Financing" (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1975), 5, University of Vermont Library.

[414] Krakhmalnikov, "Finding Five Million: Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places," 7.

In 1971 Richard Casavant of Melvina's Trailer Sales presented plans for a new "cluster" design concept when the developer proposed to build the Sandy Pines mobile home park in East Montpelier (see Figure 45).[415] Each cluster was proposed to be "complete with centralized parking, trash pickup, school bus stops and mail boxes" as well as a green space and street light.[416]

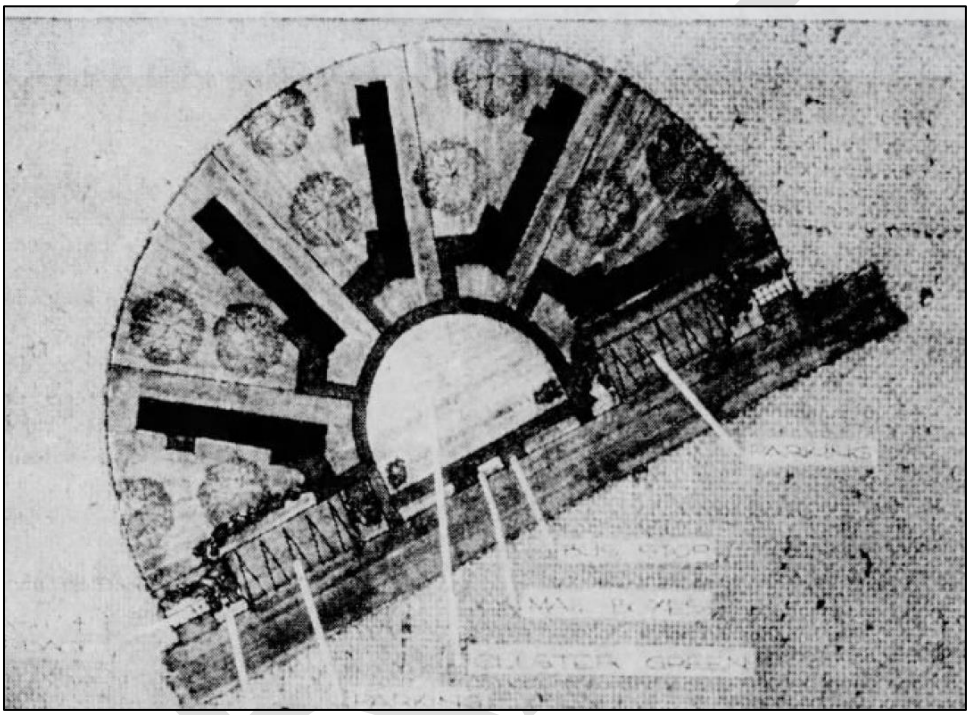


Figure 45. A sketch of the "cluster" design concept proposed for the Sandy Pines mobile home park in East Montpelier, as published in a 1971 issue of The Times-Argus.[417]

In 1970 the Sunrise Mobile Home Park opened in Morrisville, exhibiting a terrace-style design with "each mobile home overlooking the other."[418] The terraced approach provided scenic views for each of the 14 lots in the park.[419] This may have been influenced by a never-built concept introduced in the mid-1960s by Elmer Frey, inventor of the ten-wide. In 1966 Frey promoted his concept of the SkyRise Terrace that was designed as a pair of drive-in skyscrapers proposed to be built in Milwaukee. While SkyRise Terrace was never built, Frey did construct a smaller prototype in Saint Paul that consisted of two towers with three levels of mobile homes. Other more modest examples such as this were also constructed in the 1960s and 1970s.[420] Sunrise Mobile Home Park and Sandy Pines were not as avant-garde as Frey's concepts, but show examples of how new ideas about community planning was applied in some cases in Vermont.

[415] Fred McGrath, "Casavant Unveils Mobile Home Park Plans," *The Times Argus*, April 26, 1971.

[416] McGrath, "Casavant Unveils Mobile Home Park Plans."

[417] McGrath, "Casavant Unveils Mobile Home Park Plans."

[418] "Terraced Mobile Home Park Developed In Morrisville," *The Times Argus*, July 11, 1970.

[419] "Terraced Mobile Home Park Developed In Morrisville."

[420] Crystal Adkins, "Stacked Mobile Homes and Highrise Mobile Home Parks," *Mobile Home Living*, December 1, 2013, https://mobilehomeliving.org/stacked-mobile-homes-highrises/; "Mobile Home Skyscrapers: The Elusive Dream of Vertical Urban Trailer Parks," *99% Invisible*, December 2, 2020, https://99percentinvisible.org/article/mobile-home-skyscrapers-elusive-dream-vertical-urban-trailer-parks/.

Parks in Vermont: Mobile home parks of the 1970s

Examples of mobile home parks in Vermont during the 1970s show how all of the various types of the previous decades continued to be developed. Located in Rutland, the Allen Street mobile home park was established in 1971 and is a good example of a very small-scale, efficiency-based park with more design elements than some of the more rudimentary parks. The park has 18 units oriented perpendicular and parallel to the loop roadway. What sets this park apart from some of the efficiency layouts is the inclusion of several design elements, including signage, fencing, landscaping, streetlights, and individual driveways (see Figure 46 and Figure 47).

Figure 46. Current aerial image of the Allen Street mobile home park in Rutland.

Figure 47. The Allen Street mobile home park showing the park's mature trees, ornamental streetlights, and individual unit driveways.

For a medium-scale park developed during the 1970s, the Tucker Mobile Home Park in Northfield incorporates some suburban characteristics. Established in 1975, Tucker Mobile Home Park has 32 units located along two long drives and is set back from the main road accessed by a bridge. Units are all given generous space, often three times more than the typical park focused on spatial efficiency. The park has less rigid and dense planning elements and incorporated individual driveways, streetlights, and mature trees. Its screening from the main road and loose design make it more suburban and spatial-efficiency examples (see Figure 48 and Figure 49).

Figure 48. Current aerial of the Tucker Mobile Home Park in Northfield.

Figure 49. View of the Tucker Mobile Home Park including streetlights, driveways, and landscaping.

F. Another industry identity change: "manufactured home"

In 1975 the MHMA followed the general wishes of the industry and changed its primary product's name—and overall image—from "mobile home" to "manufactured home." As with the previous identity change, the industry's leading advocacy organization—MHMA—switched its name from the Mobile Home Manufacturers Association to the Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI).[421] The Trailer Coach Association—the western region sister to the MHMA—also changed names to become the MHI's Western Region.[93] For the southeastern United States, the South East Mobile Home Institute formed in 1967 was changed to the Southeastern Manufactured Housing Institute (SEMHI).[422]

In contrast to the earlier 1953 name change from house trailer to mobile home, this change was not set on emphasizing the identity of a specific product over another, but intended to capture other related housing as well. By this time it was clear that mobile homes were no longer a mobile product, and instead were being moved from their sites on average every seven years, according to national statistics from 1975.[423] As such, when the name change happened in 1975, the MHI picked up where the MHMA left off—with a dwindling membership base and a slowing industry nationwide. As the national market declined in the 1970s, the MHI was left with only about 80 of 334 mobile home manufacturers operating in 1975. However, it is important to note that only 25 percent of the MHI members accounted for approximately 70 percent of the nation's entire mobile home output at that time.[424]

While the industry led the image shift, the terminology remained on the books for many local governments. The federal government made a formal change in 1980, when Congress passed the Federal Housing Act of 1980, officially mandating "manufactured housing" replace "mobile homes" in all federal law and literature for those homes built in a factory post-1976.[425]

7. Mobile Homes in the 1980s and Beyond

Into the 1980s mobile homes remained a popular and a more accessible housing option for low-income Vermonters, and the number of mobile homes and mobile home parks continued to increase over the course of the decade both in Vermont and nationwide. Several additional studies were conducted and laws enacted in the 1980s to address the continuing issues of discrimination against the location of mobile home parks within communities, and to tackle the issue of the substandard conditions of mobile home parks in Vermont and elsewhere. Legislation were passed at the state and federal levels to improve conditions, protect people's investments, and provide broader rights and protections for mobile home residents.

A U.S. Department of Commerce housing census found an estimated 4,663,457 mobile homes in the United States in 1980—comprising 5.3 percent of all housing units in the country. This included mobile home counts that have seasonal or migratory uses. The census found that across the nation, mobile home units housed an estimated 10,244,173 residents. The majority of these mobile homes were located

[421] Andy Lang, "Mobile Home Builders Changing Their Image," *The Burlington Free Press*, December 19, 1975.

[422] The Center for Auto Safety, *Mobile Homes: The Low Cost Housing Hoax* (New York, NY: Grossman Publishers, 1975), 13.

[423] Lang, "Mobile Home Builders Changing Their Image."

[424] The Center for Auto Safety, *Mobile Homes: The Low Cost Housing Hoax*, 12.

[425] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 220.

in rural areas. The nationwide count breakdown put rural mobile homes at 2,944,842 units in 1980, with 1,718,615 in urban areas. This translates to approximately 63 percent of the nation's mobile homes in 1980 sited in a rural environment across the country. By 1980, out of Vermont's estimated 15,231 mobile homes, including seasonal and migratory, 13,826 homes were in rural areas and 1,405 in urban areas. This amounts to approximately 90 percent of the state's mobile homes sited in a rural environment—far more than the national average. While this may not be surprising given the rural nature of the state, mobile homes accounted for a substantial 6.8 percent of all housing units in the state.[426]

These statistics point to a greater acceptance of mobile homes as an important housing asset through the 1980s. The decade started out with the Federal Housing Act of 1980 that officially mandated that "manufactured housing" replace "mobile homes" in all federal law and literature for those homes built in a factory post-1976. The intent was to more clearly define them in all enforceable standards as buildings rather than vehicles. In doing so this also opened mobile home purchases to assistance payments from HUD, increased the loan insurance limits for manufactured homes and home lots, established procedures to more regularly collect data of manufactured homes, and backed loans under the National Housing Act or veteran's mortgage program for manufactured homes.[427]

It is also illustrative to note that nationally, 61.6 percent of mobile homes were connected to public or private company water, and 43.5 were connected to a public sewer system. Meanwhile, in Vermont 37.3 percent of homes were connected to public or private water and only 19.5 percent connected to public sewer.[428] By the 1990 housing census the summary report for Vermont showed that the number of mobile home units had increased to 28,593, reaching approximately 10 precent of housing stock within the state.[429] Although growth continued through the 1980s, by 1990 the director of programs at the Vermont State Housing Authority stated that "the creation of new parks has come to a dead end because of a combination of the regulatory environment and community attitudes."[430]

Legislation undertaken in the 1970s did lead to some improvements for the state of housing in Vermont overall, with the percentage of housing considered "substandard" declining from 15 percent in 1970 to five percent in 1980. The housing data did not break out housing condition by type such as mobile homes, so it is a bit unclear the impact to mobile homes and parks at the time.[431] Mobile homes and mobile home parks still faced considerable issues by the 1980s, despite their growing share of Vermont's housing market, and the improvement of housing conditions overall. This would prompt further study and legislation by the State of Vermont, as well as mobile home park owners seeking solutions on their own.

Important trends of past decades continued to inform mobile home parks and mobile home ownership into the 1980s and up to current day. Some park residents found the best manner of resolving landlord-

[426] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Volume 3: Subject Reports, Chapter 2: Mobile Homes*, 1980 Census of Housing (Washington D.C., 1984), 1–3, 217.

[427] Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 220–22.

[428] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Volume 3: Subject Reports, Chapter 2: Mobile Homes*, 1–3, 217.

[429] U.S. Department of Commerce, *1990 Census of Population and Housing: Summary Population and Housing Characteristics, Vermont* (Washington D.C., 1991), 29.

[430] Susan Youngwood, "Vermont Holds the Line for Its Mobile-Home Owners," *The New York Times*, December 16, 1990.

[431] Haupt, *Housing in Vermont*, 1.

tenant issues was to eliminate the landlord from the equation altogether. In these cases, tenants joined to create a cooperative organization to purchase the mobile home park from its owner, and be able to have greater control over their community. This structure gave tenants the complete freedom to make community decisions about the park, typically through a controlling board.

Although there are earlier examples of tenant-ownership, the 1980s saw this trend continue and to be codified in Vermont law. In 1987 Tri-Park in Mountain Home started the process of implementing a tenant-ownership structure, when tenants banded together to purchase their mobile home park from its owner through a shell business entity. When this transition was complete in 1989, the park was managed by a nine-member board consisting entirely of residents.[432]

Such efforts became supported by the State of Vermont with the passage of the 1988 Mobile Home Park Act that required park owners to notify tenants if their home park was for sale. Then, if within 45 days, a majority of park tenants voted to buy the park, all parties had 90 days to negotiate a sale. If these negotiations failed, the park owner could pursue a private sale. Under this structure, in the two years following the passage of the Mobile Home Park Act, 47 parks went on sale in Vermont, with nine of those being sold to nonprofit groups (or had pending sales at the time of data collection), while seven were sold privately.[433] Overall, since the passage of the legislation nonprofit housing agencies acquired or built 47 mobile home parks. By 2023, 67 mobile home parks registered in the state were owned by cooperatives or nonprofits.[434]

The ability for tenants or nonprofits to take ownership of parks was one of the solutions to come out of a state commission assigned to study mobile homes and mobile home parks in Vermont. In 1985 Governor Madeleine M. Kunin appointed a five-member Commission on Mobile and Manufactured Homes with a task of reviewing the state statutes and regulations and proposing changes meant to promote the development of safe and healthy mobile home parks.[435]

The commission collected a broad range of data spanning from official state reports and a questionnaire of mobile home park residents and park owners, as well as a public forum that was held in September 1985. After the commission analyzed the various data and input, it came to the broad conclusion that mobile homes were a critical resource for affordable housing in Vermont. The commission stated that mobile homes needed to achieve status equal to other types of housing and that the legislative process needed to be the instrument to achieve that. The commission also called for public subsidies for home and park financing to ensure affordability, as well as to create an educational initiative to counter the persistent misconceptions about mobile homes. The commission provided recommendations in five

[432] Allen, “Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes.”

[433] Youngwood, “Vermont Holds the Line for Its Mobile-Home Owners.”

[434] “Mobile Home Facts and Park Registry,” *State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development*, n.d., https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/mobile-home-parks/registry.

[435] Advisory Commission on Mobile and Manufactured Homes, *Final Report to the Governor and the Legislature on Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks* ([Montpelier]: Advisory Commission on Mobile and Manufactured Homes, December 1987), 1, University of Vermont Library, Special Collections.

areas: habitability, landlord tenant relations, conversions and closing of mobile home parks, zoning discrimination, and affordability.[436]

Recommendations from the commission would make their way into future legislation meant to improve the living conditions of mobile home parks and homes, safeguard the parks from further loss to ensure a form of accessible housing, and give mobile home park residents even legal footing with those of conventional housing. Many of the recommendations were incorporated into the 1988 Vermont Mobile Home Act (State Act 252). The law as enacted included several of the recommendations provided by the commission, but did not include all of the tools commission members believed would help protect residents and mobile homes as a resource for affordable housing. It did include requirements such as requiring a written lease agreement that outlined all terms of use and occupancy, limited rent increases to once a year, took steps to eliminate discriminatory application of mobile home park regulations and rules, established timelines and conditions for eviction, and, perhaps most impactful as discussed above, required a six-month notice if the park is to be sold, 45 days for residents to vote to buy the park, and 90 days for negotiation of the potential sale of the park to residents. With passage of this law, Vermont became one of the 22 states that had passed mobile home antidiscrimination laws by 1989.[437]

The 1980s and following decades continued to see many of the issues and conversations continue from previous decades. This included the struggle with maintaining its "affordable" identity in the face of studies that found depreciation rates chipped away at the claim that mobile home living was truly a "low-cost" option in the long-term, and the expense of designing, applying for development, and constructing new parks. However, the need for housing meant that Vermont started to buck this trend. In the 1980s the used mobile home market saw dramatic gaps between the values presented by the industry's blue books and the actual sales prices for these units in the state.[438] Lucinda M. Jones, housing program coordinator for the Vermont Housing and Community Affairs Department, confirmed this claim with statements summarized in a 1990 article in *The Burlington Free Press*, noting that unlike seeing the depreciation vehicles saw, mobile homes began to sell for $15,000 to $20,000 above listed market value:[439]

Vermont's mobile home appreciation rates showed that the affordability of this housing type was deteriorating in the state. The dramatic increase in land values, combined with the state's prevailing demographic shifts, severely weakened the morale among the typical Vermonter hoping to achieve homeownership. The very reason for the mobile home's popularity in Vermont—its affordability—was ultimately destabilizing the market for those most desperate for low-cost housing.

The other issue that mobile home manufacturers, parks, and residents continued to struggle with was the negative perception of said homes, parks, and their residents. Despite steps to put mobile homes on more equal footing with conventional housing under the law and under public opinion, negative stigma about mobile homes and parks continued through the 1980s. In 1988 Paul Dettman, director of programs

[436] Advisory Commission on Mobile and Manufactured Homes, *Final Report to the Governor and the Legislature on Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks*, 1.

[437] Nemethy, "Home, Sweet Mobile Home," 1–2; "The Vermont Statutes Online," *Vermont General Assembly*, n.d., https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/10/153; Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 218.

[438] Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes."

[439] Allen, "Negative Public Perception Plagues Mobile Homes."

for the Vermont State Housing Authority, stated that "the prejudice against people who live in mobile homes has been slow to change."[440] The complex perceptions of mobile homes, parks, and mobile home living continued in the 1980s and beyond.

Parks in Vermont: Willston Woods

Despite some of the ongoing issues and debates, Vermont would continue to see development of mobile home parks. Although not as prolific as the previous decades, mobile home parks continued to be developed during the 1980s, with 16 registered parks established during the decade. Most were small in scale, but a few large parks were created during this time.[441] One of these larger developments was the Williston Woods Park established in 1983 outside the town of Williston. The park is located in a rural area and includes clear features of the suburban design philosophies proponents had long been arguing for, with location off the main transportation corridor and units set back from interior roadways, with formal landscaping and mature trees on each lot. Roadways are looping and are lined with decorative streetlights. The park also includes community features called for in design guidance with a centrally located community and activity center (see Figure 50 and Figure 51).

Figure 50. Current aerial of Williston Woods mobile home park in Williston.

[440] Nemethy, "Home, Sweet Mobile Home," 1–2.

[441] "Mobile Home Facts and Park Registry."

Figure 51. Typical streetscapes in Williston Woods. Individual driveways, garages, landscaping elements, and streetlights are visible.

8. Conclusion

The mobile home was an innovation that reshaped the understanding of housing in the United States. This discussion is ongoing today with arguments about health and safety, affordability and value, and the role of mobile homes and parks and their residents in communities across the country. The previous decades saw innovations in technology and design of mobile homes continually develop to make them more like conventional housing. At the same time ideas about mobile home park design proliferated and were published in industry guidance and codified in federal and state policy. By the 1980s the form of mobile homes was largely established, with just the detailing and designs morphing to fit standards of the times. The designs of parks were also essentially established by this time, with the applications of ideal designs and standards still being implemented unevenly across the county and in Vermont. At the state level, the 1988 Vermont Mobile Home Park Act had a lasting impact on parks and their ownership and conditions. By allowing nonprofits and tenants to take control of mobile home parks, Vermont has helped safeguard an affordable avenue to home ownership, despite the various controversies. This has become an important tool with development pressures on these types of properties across the country intensifying. Currently, Vermont has 67 nonprofit- and resident-owned parks, ensuring those who live in the parks continue to have a say in where they can live and make their home.[442]

[442] "Mobile Home Facts and Park Registry."

Section F. Associated Property Types

1. Name of Property Type

Property Type: Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks of Vermont, 1929-1976

Subtypes: Ad-hoc Park
Spatial Efficiency Mobile Home Park
Suburban Influenced Mobile Home Park or Mobile Home Subdivision
Individual Mobile Home Units

Historic Context: Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks of Vermont, 1929-1976

2. Description

Between 1929 and 1976, a total of 194 registered mobile home parks (of the current 238) in Vermont were established.[443] By 1990 there were a recorded 28,593 individual mobile homes units used as housing stock in Vermont.[444] Mobile home parks contain the majority of the mobile homes during this period due to the fact that many municipalities in Vermont restricted their placement on residential lots outside of said parks. Before state legislation eliminated restrictive zoning, mobile homes were primarily relegated to registered parks or found in more ad-hoc parks located on the land of individual landowners. This MPDF evaluated Vermont mobile homes and mobile home parks and subdivisions during the 1929-1976 period by the subtypes based on the types of development they each represent. The range of the temporal limits for the property types is relatively broad in order to account for the complex history of how the property types developed over time. The year 1929 was selected as the start for multiple reasons. These include considering how the Great Depression helped establish trailers as a potential form of permanent housing, to account for the fact that some older travel trailer camps transitioned into later mobile home parks during this time, and because the Curtiss Aerocar was introduced as the first "house trailer" that year. The end date of 1976 was selected because of the passage of Vermont State House Bill H-436 of that year that outlawed restrictive zoning for mobile homes. This sought to reduce discrimination against mobile home owners and had a major effect on the mobile home market at the time, and provided mobile homeowners in Vermont with substantially more siting freedoms. At a national level, 1976 was also when the Mobile Home Construction and Safety Standards Act was implemented after being passed two years prior and established a stronger set of safety standards for mobile homes.

Mobile home parks and subdivisions developed during 1929-1976 evolved from earlier travel trailer camps and temporary war industry worker housing. As the lodging industry, landowners, local governments, and entrepreneurs sought to accommodate the needs of the growing number of motoring tourists, autocamps began to be established in Vermont and across the country. These could range from just offering a flat place to park to more formal camps that included showers, laundry, toilets, and potable

[443] "Mobile Home Facts and Park Registry," *State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development*, n.d., https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/mobile-home-parks/registry. Vermont does not track mobile home subdivisions, only registered parks.

[444] U.S. Department of Commerce, *1990 Census of Population and Housing: Summary Population and Housing Characteristics, Vermont* (Washington D.C., 1991), 29; "Mobile Home Facts and Park Registry."

water. Later, with the onset of the Great Depression and collapse of the housing market, travel trailers started to be considered a housing alternative during the economic turmoil. Around the same period, trailers were produced that were more “home-like” than just a recreational accessory. This included the first house trailer, the Curtiss Aerocar, introduced 1929.

The onset of World War II and the complete mobilization for the war effort led the federal government to seek to alleviate the housing shortage for those working in war industries. To do this it turned to the house trailer, within trailer parks of rectilinear design that contained the maximum number of trailers. Like the earlier travel camps, they included a single shower, toilet, and cooking facility for multiple families. This more compact park design, focused on spatial efficiency, continued to be utilized throughout the rest of the century.

In the decades following World War II, trailers gained more traction as permanent housing, and mobile homes as we know them today were first introduced. These larger mobile homes included amenities like bathrooms and kitchens, and reflected efforts to make parks conform to family living ideals of the time, resulting in changes to mobile home park design. Parks were still focused on spatial efficiency but now needed utility hookups, accommodations for vehicles, and may have also included community focused amenities like a clubhouse or a pool to enhance the park’s attractiveness. To further legitimize the mobile home as permanent housing and to meet the expectations of mid-century families, design guidelines and standards began to be issued for park design. These guidelines sought to make mobile home parks more like postwar subdivisions of conventional housing and in some cases rectilinear grids gave way to curvilinear designs, with long blocks and street patterns that limited through traffic.

As their namesake indicates, mobile homes were the dominant dwelling type in mobile home parks, although more contemporary modular dwellings were introduced later. These range from the early eight-foot-wide trailers of various lengths and their descendants, such as ten-wide, twelve-wide, fourteen-wide, and then the double-wide or triple-wide that combined two to three units of the above widths together. A broad range of mobile home model types may be represented within a mobile home park. Generally they were wood frame, boxy in form, and clad in metal sheathing, although other materials were also used.

Mobile home parks range in size, spanning from small ad hoc lots with a handful of mobile homes to accommodate members of an extended family, up to large, planned communities with hundreds of units. Other buildings and structures within mobile home parks can vary and may include a central office, community center, sales office, laundry facility, and small parks or recreational areas. The age of individual mobile home units within a mobile home park or subdivision may also vary greatly. Despite their name, mobile homes were moved or replaced infrequently and will typically date to the development of the park or subdivision in which they are located. Parks with mobile homes constructed during different years and eras can still represent a cohesive and contiguous district.

Ownership

Landownership should also be considered in examining the development of mobile homes, and mobile home parks and subdivisions, and it must be considered in defining boundaries as well as the legal obligation of landowner notification if a property is being listed in the National Register. Landownership for these property types may roughly be divided into either “landed” or “unlanded.” Landed refers to parcels that include both the land and mobile home unit together. Such cases may be found in mobile home

subdivisions where mobile home owners also own the land on which the unit is sited. Unlanded refers to mobile homes that are considered real property but the owner of the unit does not own the land on which it is sited. This is the most typical arrangement of mobile home parks. Such categories will inform steps for listing as it concerns owner notification. Owners of the land must be notified and provided the opportunity to object. While those on leased land (despite owning the unit) should be provided the opportunity to comment, they do not have the ability to formally object. All landowner considerations and notifications must conform to 36 CFR 60.6 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Mobile Home Park and Subdivision Use

Mobile home parks and subdivision in Vermont are primarily used for year-round residence for those living in the parks, though a smaller number are used seasonally or recreationally. Some seasonal/recreation parks may include transient RV sites or campgrounds. They may be related to certain recreational activities, such as being near ski resorts, and may include certain site-specific amenities like docks for waterfront sites. Many are visually indistinguishable from year-round registered parks, although they are more likely to contain amenities. Any of the following subtypes may overlap with different uses including year-round living, seasonal or recreational use, or collections of worker housing for agricultural labor.[445]

Subtypes

Subtype: Ad-hoc Park or Grouping

This subtype is represented by parks that consist of a small number of units (typically ten or fewer) placed on a small lot. In urban areas they might take the form of an individual neighborhood lot divided into space for multiple mobile homes. Rural examples of the type can often be found on farmsteads where a small parcel of land is leased to mobile home residents who may or may not labor on the farm on which it is located. Unit placement is irregular, and particularly in urban areas, emphasis is placed on fitting the greatest number of units in a small space rather than on aesthetics. They usually lack any special features or amenities. Those in rural areas may also be immediately next to other buildings related to the farmstead, including conventional built housing or agricultural outbuildings.

Subtype: Spatial Efficiency Mobile Home Park

This subtype is represented by mobile home parks that prioritized spatial efficiency in their plan and are focused on housing and other domestic buildings. Examples of this subtype are laid out in dense, rigid patterns that maximize the number of units along the roadway frontage, often with units placed perpendicular to the drive on or at a slight angle. This alignment accommodates a greater number of units per acre and provides increased revenue in a for-profit mobile home park. As most parks in Vermont were established under a for-profit model by either landowners or development companies, this design approach is the most commonly represented in the state. The focus on density does not necessarily relate to size. Spatial efficiency mobile home parks can be small, medium, or large in scale. They may range from a single loop road with mobile home units arranged along the frontage up to large-scale residential areas with dozens of units within the park. This subtype may also have a range of amenities; however, the focus on density of housing means there will likely be fewer amenity-focused features than

[445] Vermont law requires registration of any property with three or more mobile homes or mobile home lots as a park, although this does not include mobile homes used seasonally either for recreation or farm housing.

may be found in suburban-influenced mobile home parks (discussed below). Common character-defining features may include:

- Single parcel divided into multiple smaller lots.
- Dense, efficiently arranged units, often perpendicular or at a slight diagonal to one or both sides of the roadway, that maximize the number of units along the street frontage.
- Can be small, medium, or large in scale.
- Roadways are typically linear or grid-like.
- Spacing between units is often rigid and close, generally no more than twice the width of a single-wide mobile home.
- Minimal examples typically feature signage, utilities boxes, sheds, and mailboxes. Streetlights may be present.
- Utility hookups.
- More elaborate examples may feature all of the above plus:
    - Landscaping, fencing, covered mail shelters.
    - Street lighting.
    - Community buildings and other amenities such as laundry facilities.
    - Pools, parks, common spaces, and/or picnic areas.

Subtype: Suburban-influenced Mobile Home Park or Mobile Home Subdivision

This subtype refers to park design and unit arrangements that reflect those found in suburban subdivisions of conventional housing. This suburban-influenced approach creates a layout that, unlike the spatial efficiency approach, could be applied to site-built or mobile homes. These parks or subdivisions do not attempt to maximize the number of units per foot of roadway frontage but instead arrange units with a spacing reminiscent of a site-built house on an individual parcel. Units are generally placed parallel to the roadway on spacious lots with larger setbacks. Generally, suburban influenced mobile home parks or subdivisions are indistinguishable from postwar residential neighborhoods of single-family homes except that the residences within are mobile homes instead of site-built houses. An emphasis on plan through curvilinear streets helps provide more space and screening between units and provides a higher level of privacy. This is in contrast to spatial efficiency parks where units are close together with little to no screening. Formal landscaping is also more prominent in this subtype and contributes to the more suburban feel. The park subtype may also have a range of amenities and is more likely to include more amenities than can be found in the typical spatial efficiency mobile home park.

Like suburban-influences mobile home parks, mobile home subdivisions are indistinguishable from postwar residential neighborhoods of single-family homes except that the residences within are mobile homes instead of site-built houses. They are not registered parks like suburban-influenced mobile home

parks or spatial efficiency mobile home parks are. Subdivisions may have separate legal parcels unlike parks, which may have privately owned mobile homes but the land is owned by a park owner. The division between the two rests on a matter of landownership rather than plan or use. It is a matter of each property being on a separate legal parcel, unlike the park ownership model. Otherwise, they share the same design considerations.

Common character-defining features may include:

- Single or multiple plats divided into multiple smaller lots.
- Resemble suburban-style, site-built home subdivisions.
    - May have some or all units oriented parallel to the road reflecting typical siting of conventional built housing.
- Roadways are typically curvilinear with long blocks and include street patterns intended to limit through traffic.
- Individual unit lots are spacious, and units are often set back from the main drive by lawn space.
- Landscaping is designed as screening between units or to screen units from major roads or highways.
- Units may have individual driveways and/or garages.
- Likely to be medium or large in scale.
- Roadways within the park or subdivision are typically looping, winding, or curvilinear, shortening sight distance and increasing privacy.
- Smaller examples are likely to incorporate, at minimum, signage, utility boxes, mailboxes, and streetlights.
- Utility hookups.
- More elaborate examples feature all of the above plus:
    - Landscaping, fencing, covered mail shelters.
    - Street lighting.
    - Community buildings and other amenities such as laundry facilities.
    - Pools, parks, common spaces, and/or picnic areas.

Subtype: Individual Mobile Home Units

The term “mobile home” is used in Vermont state law (as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6201) to refer to:

> [A] structure or type of manufactured home, including the plumbing, heating, air-conditioning, and electrical systems contained in the structure; that is built on a permanent chassis; designed to be used as a dwelling with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required utilities; transportable in one or more sections; and at least eight feet wide, 40 feet long, or when erected has at least 320 square feet.

While federal legislation uses the term "manufactured home" to refer to structures meeting the same criteria, the term "mobile home" is used throughout this MPDF as it is most consistent with both colloquial use and Vermont state agency use (e.g., the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Mobile Home Park Registry). This term does not extend to campers and RVs, as these are not intended to function as permanent dwellings and are not covered under this document.

One of the defining attributes that separate mobile homes from their travel trailer predecessors is that the mobile home is designed for long-term occupancy. To accomplish this they will contain sleeping accommodations, kitchen facilities, flush toilet, a tub or shower, and plumbing and electrical connections for attachment to outside systems. They were designed to be transported either on its own wheels, or on a flatbed truck or tractor-trailer. Once arriving at the site where it is to be occupied, many came as a complete dwelling ready for occupancy with all major appliances and furniture, requiring only minor work before occupancy. Over the subject period mobile homes were sold in a variety of sizes and model types. The first true mobile homes were eight feet wide and came in a variety of lengths. With the introduction of the ten-wide in 1954, mobile homes were now wide enough to accommodate interior plans more like those of conventional built housing with a central corridor with rooms off it, rather than the earlier need to move through rooms to get from one end to the other. Over the following decades larger mobile homes were introduced, including the twelve-wide, fourteen-wide, and double- and- triple-wides that combined two to three units of the above sized together. Despite the range sizes and model types, there are features consistent across the subtype.

These character-defining features may include:

- A chassis.
- Wood framing similar to conventional housing with vapor barriers and walls of plywood or drywall.
- Flat or very shallow gable or barrel roofs.
- Rectangular in plan and boxy in form.
- May be clad in aluminum, but vinyl is also a commonly found material.
- As simple, mass-produced housing, most mobile home lack stylistic detailing, although decorative features such as false shutters are commonly found across examples in Vermont.

3. Significance

This section discusses areas of significance for mobile home parks or subdivisions as potential historic districts. As mass-manufactured housing, individually eligible mobile homes are likely to be rare

throughout Vermont as it is hard to argue they are an important example in their context. They are unlikely to represent areas of significance under *Criterion A*. There may be individual homes eligible under *Criterion C* for Architecture or Engineering. It is more likely that a collection of mobile homes may be eligible for National Register listing as a historic district.

Criterion A

Mobile home parks or subdivision may be significant under *Criterion A* for their association with events that have made an important contribution to the broad patterns of Vermont's history. Mobile home parks significance under *Criterion A* may be associated with the following areas of significance: Social History (for its representation of the expansion of housing and home ownership, or for introducing an innovative housing type or planning principle), Community Planning and Development (as relating to neighborhood planning principles that influence residential growth and human lifeways), Government (as reflecting early or particularly important responses to government financing, adherence to government standards, or the institution of zoning by local governments), Industry (as related to the need for housing for workers in a particular industrial activity), Entertainment/Recreation (for association with the development and practice of leisure activities for refreshment, diversion, amusement, or sport), or Ethnic Heritage (for association with a particular ethnic or racial group). Mobile home parks that are significant under *Criterion A* will likely have a period of significance that spans many years in order to frame important events and development in community life.

The mobile home parks or subdivisions of 1929-1976 reflect the continuing growth of municipalities in Vermont, when mobile homes played an essential role in providing affordable housing within the state and the nation more broadly. As travel trailers began to meet the housing needs of the country during the Great Depression and World War II, trailers and trailer parks became a form of permanent housing. Some of the earliest parks illustrate the expansion for adequate dwellings for war industry workers, such as that at the government camp outside of Springfield, or the privately developed Farrington Trailer Park (current North Avenue Co-op) that primarily housed industry workers at the Bell Aircraft plant in Burlington. After the war there was a massive pent-up demand for housing, particularly for returning GIs and their families, and trailers often served as temporary housing as the government off-loaded surplus trailers to municipalities, colleges and universities, and to individual buyers. Following the war the first true mobile homes came on the market with the eight-foot-wide trailers. Although limited in size, these types put more emphasis on being home-like rather than the earlier travel trailers. This more home-like aspect was realized with the introduction of the ten-wide in 1954, and federal and state governments, and individuals, began to see them as a legitimate and affordable alternative housing. Additional widths that provided more home-like features were introduced over time.

New parks developed during this decade show distinct differences from those developed during the 1930s and 1940s. This is generally attributed to 1950s and later parks following guidelines and recommendations by the Mobile Home Manufacturers Association (MHMA) and various government agencies. For the next several decades mobile home park use and design was informed by changes in the size and form of mobile homes as they became more like site-built homes, as well as by mobile home park residents and proponents that demanded improvements and amenities. However, before more guidance and regulation informed the layout of mobile home parks, they primarily adopted the same layout as the trailer camps and parks that had preceded them. Mobile homes and mobile home parks and subdivisions served as an affordable alternative that allowed a broader swath of the American public to

fulfill the “American Dream” of homeownership and became a critical avenue for housing in states like Vermont where an affordable housing crisis developed over the decades, and continues to be an issue today. The majority of mobile homes units in Vermont are owned by their residents who then lease the land on which it is located. Current data for registered parks in Vermont note less than ten percent of units are owned by the park owner and rented out.[446] Information on non-registered parks was not available. Mobile home parks and subdivisions may be eligible under these broad patterns on history for recognizing their contribution to the improvement of living conditions by the introduction of an innovative type of housing, mobile home park planning principles, and a unique response to cultural values about lifestyles and family needs that were met with mobile homes and mobile home parks or subdivisions.[447]

Under Community Planning and Development, mobile home parks and subdivisions may be significant for introducing “conventions of community planning important in the history of suburbanization, such as zoning, deed restrictions, or subdivision regulations.”[448] Mobile home parks and subdivisions may demonstrate further significance in Social History through trends in residential location and demographics. Although generally mobile homes and mobile home parks were increasingly seen as a viable option for permanent housing by their residents and state and federal governments, many local governments in Vermont actively discriminated against mobile homes and parks. Local residents often eyed mobile home parks and their residents with suspicion, accused them of not paying their fair share in local taxes, or the mobile home parks and residents were attacked as blights on the natural landscape. Because of this, individual mobile homes were largely barred outside of mobile home parks, and mobile home parks were relegated to the more marginal areas near transportation corridors and in commercial and industrial zoned areas. These aspects may also overlap with Community Planning and Development.

The area of significance of Government may apply to those mobile home parks or subdivisions that reflect early or important responses to government financing, conformity with government standards, or the institution of zoning by local governments. Considerations may include how restrictive zoning affected mobile home park or subdivision development, or how legislation such as the Federal Housing Act of 1955 or the Vermont State House Bill H-436 of 1976 informed how these properties developed over time.

Industry may apply when a mobile home park or subdivision was developed in response to a housing need caused by an industry. It may be by design or circumstance that a particular mobile home park or subdivision served the need for housing for workers in a particular industrial activity. An example may be a park or subdivision related to industrial manufacturing for World War II.

Mobile homes and mobile home parks or subdivisions may also reflect aspects of Ethnic Heritage, as permanent dwellings for ethnic groups that were excluded from living in particular areas through restrictive housing covenants and coercion. Research conducted for this MPDF did not uncover any readily known examples and specific cases may be rare in Vermont due to its overwhelmingly white population. However, such questions must be kept in mind when evaluating mobile home parks.

[446] “Mobile Home Facts and Park Registry.”

[447] David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, September 2002), 59.

[448] Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 93.

Entertainment/Recreation may also be applicable under *Criterion A*. Although the majority of park owners preferred to have year-round residents, and often discouraged leasing to those looking to site a mobile home for vacation use, there are still a number of parks in recreational areas that catered specifically to vacation use, and typically asked for higher monthly rents than year-round parks. Some of these seasonal or recreational parks may include transient RV sites or campgrounds. They may also be related to certain recreational activities and have character defining features that reflect recreational use such as site-specific amenities like docks for waterfront parks or subdivisions.

Criterion B

Mobile home parks or subdivisions may be eligible under *Criterion B* for direct association with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented, and for which the property is illustrative. The areas of significance under this criterion may reflect the influence of a developer associated with the creation of a mobile home park or parks and who were engaged in activities such as the planning, platting, construction, and selling of mobile home parks. Occasionally these owners and their parks had mobile home sales centers associated with the park development. This would be most applicable to persons who strongly shaped the overall residential development of an area. Persons who are significant for these associations were likely connected to several mobile home parks and therefore evaluation will require comparative analysis to identify the most significant mobile home park that represents the developer's work.

Mobile home parks, subdivisions, or individual mobile homes may also be eligible under *Criterion B* for association with a "person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance."[449] It is not sufficient only if that person is part of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group who owned a park or lived in a mobile home; rather, "it must be shown that the person gained importance within his or her profession or group."[450] In following the *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*, that person may also encompass those who lived in the mobile home park who "exerted important influences on the neighborhoods sense of community or historic identity and they must have gained considerable recognition beyond the neighborhood."[451]

Criterion C

Mobile home parks or subdivisions may have significance as collections of buildings, landscape design, community facilities, and other features that embody "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style, or method of construction."[452] Mobile home parks or subdivisions eligible as a historic district will be comprised of properties that lack individual distinction yet represent a significant and distinguishable entity. A mobile home park may possess significance under *Criterion C* in the areas of Architecture (when significant qualities are embodied in the design, style, or method of construction of buildings, structures, and sites). Community Planning and Development may also be applicable under *Criterion C* as well as

[449] National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 15.

[450] National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 15.

[451] Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 95.

[452] National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 17.

under *Criterion A* (for representation of patterns of development and land division or use), or Landscape Architecture (for overall design or plan and artistic design of landscape features). The period of significance for such a mobile home park will generally correspond to the actual years when the design was carried out and construction of the mobile home park took place.

Mobile home parks or subdivisions may be eligible under *Criterion C* in the area of Architecture as a "significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction."[453] Since mobile homes were mass-manufactured buildings constructed and shipped across the country, mobile home parks or subdivisions are unlikely to be representative of significant styles or forms, but as a collection of an important modern house type that may be an example of a type, period, or method of construction. They may represent well-preserved examples of the period's construction techniques and materials through standardization and prefabrication, rather than being representative of a particular architectural style. Comparative analysis with similar properties within the community is necessary to determine if the individual property is a distinguishable example of the type, period, or method of construction. Due to the number of mobile home parks found in many communities within Vermont, they should be compared with other mobile home parks to determine if they are important within the context of the community or region.

For Community Planning and Development to apply to mobile home parks or subdivisions under *Criterion C* they must convey historic design principals related to community development or introduced patterns of mobile home park design, financing, or building practices that were influential in the local community or region. Characteristics that are representative of Community Planning and Development may also overlap with those for Landscape Architecture. These may relate to the pattern of circulation, how they relate to natural topography (some mobile home parks are located along lakes or bounded by rivers), uniform setbacks, and unit orientation to the street. Other characteristics may be landscape features such as plantings and trees, and if there is distinctive street signage, entry gates, or the presence (or not) of sidewalks. One should also consider if the mobile homes that make up the park have commonalities of material combinations, such as if certain porch or carport additions are found throughout the park, or the use of common decorative treatments.

Criterion C for Architecture and/or Engineering is the only type of significance that may apply to individual mobile homes in Vermont under this criterion. However, as a form of mass-manufactured housing that can be readily found across the country, it is difficult for an individual mobile home to be considered as a significant example within its context. Because they represent a property type with similar examples that can be found in nearly every community nationwide, mobile homes must be critically assessed for historic integrity of the property. Integrity requirements must be strictly applied and a loss of the aspects of integrity that make the property significant may render an individual property ineligible. Individual mobile home units may be significant if they illustrate an early or important variation, evolution, or transition of mobile home type or method of construction. Individual examples of mobile homes from local or regional companies may also be considered significant within the local context. Comparative analysis is also essential in determining if an individual mobile home is significant. For example, early models that experimented with new mechanisms to increase space, such as a telescoping side or upper story, were rarer during their period of construction compared to other available models and are likely to be even

[453] National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 15.

more rare today. If an individual mobile home is highly intact and comparison shows it is a significant example in its context, it may be eligible under *Criterion C*.

Criterion D

Criterion D will be applicable to the above subtypes only if they have been used as a source of data and contain more, as yet unretrieved data. That information potential must also be demonstrated to be important. As properties that were planned, designed, required zoning or permits, or were mass manufactured, the property subtypes will likely not contain any information that is not available in the historic record. The resources are not likely to contain information important to history or prehistory beyond what is already documented and therefore *Criterion D* will not be applicable.

Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties

As property types, mobile home parks or subdivisions are resources that are not moved. Therefore, *Criteria Consideration B* will not be applicable to those resources. As it concerns individual mobile home units, they were ostensibly mobile by name, despite being moved infrequently. As a property designed to move during its historic use, in order to meet *Criteria Consideration B*, mobile home units must be located in a historically appropriate setting in order to qualify, retaining its integrity of setting, design, feeling, and association. As individual units will most likely only be eligible under *Criterion C*, one must retain enough historic features to convey its architectural values and retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for the criteria consideration to be applicable.

Level of Significance

Most individual mobile homes and mobile home park or subdivision districts eligible for listing in the National Register will be at a local level of significance for demonstrating important aspects of community growth and development in Vermont. Mobile home parks that were innovative or influential within Vermont or within a larger region (such as New England) may have a state level of significance. Mobile home parks or subdivisions displaying outstanding characteristics of community design, landscape architecture, or architecture within the context of design statewide, or those representing the work of a master recognized within the state for planning, landscape architecture, or architecture, may have a state level of importance. Mobile home parks or subdivisions with a national level of importance represent innovative architecture, plans, or landscape design that influenced design at a national level. Mobile home parks or subdivisions with a national level of significance may possess “outstanding artistic distinction” or represent important work of nationally recognized master designers influential in the design of mobile home parks.[454] As mass-manufactured housing, individually eligible mobile homes are likely to be rare as it is hard to argue they are an important example in their context, and are unlikely to represent areas of significance under *Criterion A*. However, mobile homes that are strong examples of an early or new type of housing or manufacturing technique, or those that strongly represent regional adaptations and are eligible under *Criterion C*, may be significant at the local level if they compare well with other examples in the area.

Property Boundaries

The identification of appropriate district boundaries or individual property boundaries for property types included in this MPDF should start with legal boundaries as recorded in the plat accompanying the deed

[454] Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 95-96.

or recorded subdivision plat (and may include multiple filings), or the legal lot of individual mobile homes. The boundary should include the broadest interrelated area comprising the largest number of contributing properties, features, and lands that encompass the property. Some district boundaries for mobile home parks or subdivisions may be readily identified by design, fencing, walls, and geographic features, as well as designed landscape features such as planting, street signs, or other types of unifying elements. However, they may not all be applicable to all eligible districts. Boundaries overall should be delineated by physical characteristics, historic ownership, and community identity as a mobile home park. Mobile home parks or subdivisions as districts must be a definable area distinguishable from surrounding properties. When identifying the boundaries of mobile home parks or subdivisions important in the areas of Social History or Ethnic Heritage, "factors such as identity as a neighborhood community based on historic events, traditions, and other associations may be more relevant."[455] Boundaries may also be informed by the landed or unlanded nature of the resources and property types. Those property owners that are landed have the right to object to the property being listed in the National Register. In a district a majority of property owners must not object for a property to move forward with listing. The identification and justification of boundaries shall follow guidance as provided in the National Register of Historic Places publications *National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* and *National Register Bulletin: Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties*.

4. Registration Requirements

In order to be eligible for listing as an individual property or a mobile home park or subdivision type under this MPDF, a property must: 1) be located within the geographic area defined in Section G; 2) possess historical associations related to mobile home park development of the region; 3) have developed substantially between 1929-1976; and 4) retain sufficient historic integrity in order to convey its significance.

For mobile home parks or subdivisions to be considered eligible, a majority of individual resources in a mobile home park must be associated with the park's or subdivision's development during the period 1929-1976 and must retain sufficient integrity to reflect the original fabric and character of the mobile home park. Assessing the integrity of a property should begin with National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,* which defines the seven aspects of integrity from which to assess a property: Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association.

Integrity

Location

Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. It is the relationship of the property within its original siting and requires that the boundaries that historically defined the mobile home park or subdivision remain intact. This includes that the size of the lots and placement of streets and any open spaces should also remain intact. Because mobile homes were ostensibly meant to be "mobile," those units that have been moved from elsewhere whether inside or outside the mobile home park will not detract if moved within the period of significance. Location is

[455] Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 107.

essential to understanding why the property was created. This may relate to a property's relationship to a natural feature, or as worker housing, or illustrate aspects of social history since mobile homes and mobile home parks were often purposely located in marginal areas of a community, and were also regularly placed along major thoroughfares.

Design

Design is the combination of elements that create form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. These aspects may include, but are not limited to, style, layout, scale, materials, ornamentation, massing, patterns, textures, aesthetics, and function. Concerning mobile home parks, the arrangement of mobile home units, lot size, yards, and street plan comprise the design. The organization of space and the relationship and associations of major features are integral to districts and is an important factor in assigning areas of significance such as Community Planning and Landscape Architecture. Design can come from conscious planning, as may be seen in suburban-influenced mobile home parks, or they may be the result of more ad-hoc development or a smaller spatial efficiency mobile home park. Changes in street patterns, lot sizes, modern infill, or arrangement of mobile home units and how they relate to each other may negatively affect the qualities of design. Design of individual units should be weighed against their model type. Different models may include varying plans and forms along with other character-defining features. If the model is depicted in advertisements or promotional materials, that can help determine original character-defining features, to compare with their current state.

Setting

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property and refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role. Integrity of setting requires both a strong sense of historical setting within the boundaries of the property as well as its relationships with the surrounding landscape. Setting helps illustrate the historic contexts and the significance for which it is associated. It may be that a mobile home park has a more semi-rural feel both within and without, or that mobile home parks were sited along thoroughfares, which may relate to its use and the demographics of the people who lived there. Additionally, they may be surrounded by commercial or industrial areas and the setting speaks to mobile home parks often controversial nature and marginalization.

Materials

Integrity of materials include the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time that make up a historic property and considers the original physical elements and their pattern. Arguably the most integral element for materials of a mobile home park or subdivision as a historic district are the mobile home units themselves and that the majority of dwellings retain their key exterior materials that marked their identity during the historic period. Additionally, assessing integrity of materials must also include other features such as plantings, lots and hookups, unit parking areas, areas of transition between zones, signs, and materials of other associated buildings and structures. Materials of individual mobile home units reflect those used during their manufacturing as well as alterations and additions that were part of their physical development over time during their period of significance. HUD notes that mobile homes have an assumed lifespan of 30-50 years. However, if maintained regularly they can also last as long as site-built homes. Common alterations and how they should be considered will be discussed below.

Workmanship

Workmanship reflects the labor and craftsmanship skills of artisans. It is the evidence of the ways materials were fashioned for functional or decorative purposes to create buildings, structures, and a landscaped setting. Mobile homes and mobile home parks and subdivisions are unique in that that they are comprised of mass-manufactured materials and buildings. As an example, with the increasing standardization and industrialization of design and construction during the twentieth century, the use of crafts that might go into a Queen Anne-style house became rare and is likely to be a less significant aspect of integrity. Mobile home parks are reflective of large-scale, off-site, assembly-line production methods. The workmanship of mobile home construction was an off-site process driven by efficiency and economies of scale. Workmanship is also evident in how materials have been used to create a landscaped setting, such as planters, circulation networks, or other architectural elements.

Feeling

The quality of feeling results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic period of significance. It comes from the cumulative effect of setting, design, materials, and workmanship. This may include collective qualities of the mobile home units, such as cladding materials, roof pitch, the layout, setback, and lot size. It is defined by how the presence of physical characteristics convey a sense of past time and place.

Association

A property or district retains integrity of association if it continues to convey the important event or activity. Integrity of association requires that a historic mobile home, mobile home park, or subdivision "convey the period when it achieved importance and that, despite changing patterns of ownership, it continues to reflect the design principles and historic associations that shaped it during the historic period."[456]

Alterations

When it comes to mobile homes, mobile home parks, and subdivisions, assessing alterations will be unique in comparison to many other historic properties. Although mobile homes were delivered on site, and meant to be ready for immediate occupancy, common alterations were made to them to fit the needs of residents. Change over time is part of the historic context of the properties. A wide range of aftermarket accessories such as skirting, decks, steps, carports, and utility sheds were available for purchase to enhance the livability of mobile homes. In fact, many such changes were recommended by industry or FHA guidance, and some alterations such as adding skirting may even have been legally required by local municipalities. Residents also regularly made site-built alterations like adding on additional rooms or even incorporating a mobile home as part of a larger residence. These types of alterations generally do not diminish the historic physical integrity of mobile home parks as a district if completed during the period of significance. However, as discussed earlier, when considering the eligibility of individual mobile homes, any alterations will negatively impact historic integrity and render the property not eligible. As an individual resource they need to be a strong representation of a type or method of construction, and any alterations that obscure those features will make the property not eligible.

[456] Ames and McClelland, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 105.

Section G. Geographical Data

The geographical area encompasses the entire state of Vermont, shown in Figure G-1.

Figure G-1. Map of the state of Vermont showing county borders.[457]

[457] "Vermont County Selection Map," *Internet Archive*, n.d., https://web.archive.org/web/20050207000440/http://www.fedstats.gov/qf/maps/vermont_map.html.

Section H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property listing of mobile homes and mobile home parks statewide in Vermont is based on a need identified by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) for a statewide MPDF to address mobile homes and mobile home parks, and streamline review of future projects under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended), as these resources approach historic age. In the absence of an existing comprehensive study on the subject, VTrans considered the possibility of either a resource-specific MPDF that could address pre-World War II auto camps, mobile homes, trailers, and other associated properties, or the addition of mobile home properties to a future post-World War II (postwar) context and MPDF. In June 2020 VTrans retained Mead & Hunt, Inc. (Mead & Hunt) to complete a preliminary study to determine the most appropriate course of action. The goal of the study was threefold: 1) to understand what resources are present across the state; 2) to consider whether they may have significance either architecturally or through an association with significant trends in Vermont's history; and 3) to make a recommendation as to whether the property types are best addressed by a resource-specific MPDF or within a larger postwar study. In order to provide VTrans with information on mobile properties and develop a recommendation, the study involved four components, which are summarized in this section:

- A summary of existing guidance from other states
- Geospatial analysis
- Preliminary state-specific research at Vermont repositories
- Selective survey of mobile home parks

1. Summary of Existing Guidance

Mead & Hunt conducted a literature review to summarize existing guidance prepared by and for other states, including historic contexts, resource guides, books, and theses. The evaluation of mobile homes and mobile home parks according to National Register Criteria for Evaluation represents a relatively new topic in the field of historic preservation. States like California, Nevada, Minnesota, Texas, and Washington have begun exploring mobile homes and parks as they relate to eligibility for listing in the National Register. Additionally, the mobile home's postwar rise in popularity and the development of mobile home parks has been the subject of several recent graduate theses covering multiple states, including Georgia, Florida, Missouri, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

This summary covers the previous work concerning mobile homes and parks topically rather than on a state-by-state basis. The treatment of mobile homes and parks varies widely between states that have examined them from a preservation perspective. The degree of detail provided in each source varies. While some states have produced typologies for mobile homes and parks, others have focused on character-defining features. Sources that mention aspects of significance or integrity considerations do not look beyond the guidelines previously established by the National Register. In other words, no single source discusses how these property types could be evaluated in a way that moves through each step of the process.

Table 1 lists the sources examined and the topics covered within each report. The presence of an "X" in a box indicates that the source mentioned the topic indicated but does not necessarily mean that the discussion was in-depth. The presence of an asterisk next to an "X" that appears in the categories of

significance and integrity signals that, though a topic was mentioned, these sources provided no guidance beyond those found in *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Register Bulletin 15).

Table 1. Areas covered by existing sources

Source	States	Historic Context	Significance	Mobile Home Units Typology	Mobile Home Parks Typology	CDFs	Integrity	Eligibility
Survey LA: Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement Suburbanization, 1880-1980 (MPDF section)	CA	X		X	X	X		X*
Home Sweet Mobile Home Park (M.A. Thesis)	FL, GA, MO, WI	X	X		X		X	X*
Mobile Homes: the Unsung Heroes of the American Built Environment (Presentation)	GA	X						
Finding Five Million Mobile Home Parks as Historic Places (M.A. Thesis)	MN	X			X			
Red Top Trailer Park and Drive-In Restaurant, 1845 West Fifth Street (Determination of Eligibility)	MN	X		X				X*
Nevada DOT Mobile Home Evaluation Guidelines	NV		X*			X	X*	X*
The Development of Highways in Texas: A Historic Context, National Register Evaluation Criteria	TX	X				X		
The Royal Treatment: A Review of the Royal Oaks Mobil Manor (Presentation)	OR	X						

Source	States	Historic Context	Significance	Mobile Home Units Typology	Mobile Home Parks Typology	CDFs	Integrity	Eligibility
Historic Communities of Washington State (Website, photo collection)	WA							
Manufactured/Mobile Homes (Presentation)	WA	X				X		

Mead & Hunt's review of state guidance concluded that no thorough guidance existed at the statewide level for the evaluation of mobile homes. While current National Register guidelines are applicable to these property types, mobile homes and parks must be examined within the context in which they developed. To date, this has not been done in a comprehensive approach that examines the property type and subtypes, National Register themes and areas of significance, registration requirements, and integrity considerations to effectively evaluate them for potential National Register eligibility.

2. Geospatial Analysis

GIS analysis using parcel data, the Mobile Home Registry database maintained by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, historic aerial imagery, and other existing datasets provided a comprehensive view of resource distribution across the state and identified several geographic and chronological trends. This analysis also found that in addition to the 239 registered mobile home parks in the state, other concentrations of mobile homes are present, primarily subdivisions with mobile homes that are very similar to other postwar neighborhoods, as well as recreational complexes, that also fall within the purview of a statewide mobile home study.[458]

The results of the geospatial analysis provided some useful insights and pointed toward several areas for further consideration

- Mobile homes parcels are more likely than other parcels to be located adjacent to main transportation corridors. Half of all mobile home parcels and more than two-thirds of all registered mobile home parks in Vermont are located within one-quarter mile of a State, U.S., or Interstate Highway, compared to one-third of all parcels statewide within this proximity.

- Distribution of mobile homes and mobile home parks across Vermont mirrors overall population trends in many areas, but this is not universally true. Consider examination of areas that fall outside the general trend, as well as relationships between towns with very few mobile homes that are surrounded by towns with many mobile homes and parks.

[458] Vermont law requires registration of any property with three or more mobile homes or mobile home lots as a park, although this does not include mobile homes used seasonally either for recreation or farm housing.

- No strong statewide trends emerged regarding relationships between population and mobile home park size, indicating a varied approach to development of mobile home parks from one area to the next (more small parks vs. a few larger parks).

- Most mobile home parks in Vermont were developed during the Interstate Highway era (1956 through the 1970s). Preliminary research indicates that some may have evolved out of pre-World War II auto camps or postwar seasonal campgrounds. New park establishment dropped precipitously after 1970, likely due to new state regulations implemented in that year.

- In addition to year-round mobile home parks, seasonal mobile home parks are found in proximity to recreational areas, primarily Lake Champlain (Grand Isle County), and to a lesser degree adjacent to ski areas.

- Mobile home subdivisions are indistinguishable from postwar residential neighborhoods of single-family homes except that the residences within are mobile homes instead of site-built houses. Most subdivisions are not registered parks.

A full discussion on the geospatial analysis used for the development of this MPDF is presented in Section J, Geospatial Analysis.

3. Preliminary State-Specific Research at Vermont Repositories

Targeted research at Vermont repositories yielded important information on the history of mobile homes in the state and helped to understand and interpret the results of the geospatial analysis. Mead & Hunt obtained research materials from several sources, including University of Vermont (UVM) Library Special Collections, UVM Howe Library, and the Vermont State Archives. Historical orthoimagery from the early 1960s was available through VCGI and was consulted (along with subsequent imagery) to determine the early layout of pre-1965 parks and the prior land use of parks constructed from 1965 onward. Sources consulted included state government documents; U.S. Forest Service and Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station studies; journal articles, most notably the results of a study undertaken by Federal Reserve Bank economist Carol S. Greenwald in 1969, presented in her article entitled “Mobile Homes in New England” published in the *New England Economic Review*, May/June 1970; private campground information; and additional housing studies.

4. Selective Survey of Mobile Home Parks

A selective survey of 39 out of 258 sites (registered mobile home parks and other concentrations of mobile properties) included representative examples of the variety of sizes, ages, layouts, and use types (a complete listing is provided in Table 2. The sample set was intended to represent a cross-section of the overall pool of both registered mobile home parks and unregistered concentrations. It contained examples that span the ranges of age, size, layout, and purpose (year-round residential and seasonal use) and includes examples from 13 out of 14 Vermont counties.[459] Using current aerial imagery, Mead & Hunt first examined each of the 239 registered parks and 19 unregistered concentrations of mobile homes and recorded observations related to road layout, mobile home spacing and orientation,

[459] No examples were selected within Essex County, which has only two registered parks.

associated structures, and setting. This information was used to develop a tentative typology. By combining these observations with information in the Mobile Home Registry Database, such as the total number of lots and the year of establishment, a total of 39 sites for survey was selected. These include the largest and smallest parks in the state, representatives of different eras of park development, and several that illustrate evolution and expansion over time.

Fieldwork was conducted over a one-week period from August 9 to August 13, 2021. Surveyors drove all roads within each park, obtained photographs showing typical streetscapes from multiple angles, and documented the presence of amenities such as pools, community centers, and playing fields, as well as offices, signage, lighting, mailboxes, and any landscaping or other related resources. The resulting information was used to prepare the associated subtypes for the MPDF.

Table 2. Selected survey sites

Site name	County	Town name	Physical address	Year established	Total lots
Otter Creek Park	Addison	Vergennes City	Panton Road	1960	73
High Manor Park	Addison	Waltham	1202 Green Street	1966	23
Willows Mobile Home Park	Bennington	Bennington	211 Northside Drive	1945	24
Gore Road Mobile Home Park	Bennington	Bennington	Gore Road, Bennington	1960	38
McGill Avenue Mobile Home Park	Caledonia	St. Johnsbury	11 McGill Avenue	1955	10
Riverview Estates	Caledonia	Lyndon	Rte 114/East Burke Road	1957	30
BCP Mobile Home Park	Caledonia	Hardwick	Route 16, East Hardwick, VT	1989	7
Unnamed (Folsom vicinity)*	Caledonia	Lyndon	Locust, Ingalls, & Woodbury Lanes	n/a	n/a
Strong's Mobile Home Park	Caledonia	Hardwick	52 Molleur Drive	1970	3
Woodland Shores Park RLLP	Chittenden	Colchester	1518 Porters Point Road	1952	56
Breezy Acres Mobile Home Park	Chittenden	Colchester	3691 Roosevelt Highway	1962	191
Williston Woods Coop Housing Corp	Chittenden	Williston	126 Williston Woods Road	1983	112
Westbury Park	Chittenden	Colchester	289 Coventry Road	1972	250
Simonds Mobile Home Park	Franklin	St. Albans	RD 2 Nason Street, St. Albans	1967	60
Gosselin's Mobile Home Park	Franklin	St. Albans City	102 Lower Newton Street	2014	13
Cooper's Bay Mobile Home Park	Grand Isle	Grand Isle	East Shore Road, Grand Isle	1954	24
Alburg RV Resort*	Grand Isle	Alburg	Blue Rock Road	c.1963	120+
Sterling View Mobile Home Park	Lamoille	Hyde Park	Route 15, Hyde Park	1988	113

Site name	County	Town name	Physical address	Year established	Total lots
Mobile Acres Mobile Home Park	Orange	Braintree	Route 12A	1969	95
Grenier Mobile Home Park	Orleans	Derby	Roy Street	unknown	9
Valley View Mobile Home Park	Rutland	Brandon	Franklin St. Route 7 South	1955	10
Billings Mobile Manor	Rutland	Rutland City	So. side of Curtis Ave.	1964	34
FWMHP, LLC	Rutland	Castleton	81 Cramton Road	1970	44
Allen Street Mobile Home Park	Rutland	Rutland City	33 Allen Street	1971	18
Brookside Mobile Home Park	Rutland	Rutland City	Mussey Street, Rutland	1978	26
Prestons Park	Rutland	Rutland City	Curtis Avenue	1980	12
Mussey Street Mobile Home Park	Rutland	Rutland City	209-215 Mussey Street	1993	14
Eastwood Manor Mobile Home Park	Washington	Berlin	US Route 2, Berlin	1965	9
Northfield Falls Mobile Home Park	Washington	Northfield	VT Route 12	1965	51
LaGue Inc.	Washington	Berlin	Off Green Mountain Drive, Berlin	1967	36
Sandy Pines Mobile Home Park	Washington	East Montpelier	Route 14, East Montpelier	1970	56
Tucker Mobile Home Park	Washington	Northfield	Fairgrounds Road, Northfield	1975	32
Mountain Home Park	Windham	Brattleboro	42 Village Drive - Off Route 9 West	1958	264
Deepwood Mobile Home Park	Windham	Brattleboro	Deepwood Drive	1991	42
Unnamed grouping*	Windham	Wilmington	Cross Country Circle	unknown	31
Chambers Mobile Home Village	Windsor	Hartford	1 Chambers Lane	1960	84
Woodside Manor	Windsor	Hartland	Blake Drive, Hartford and Hartland	1965	87
Country Estates Mobile Home Park, LLC	Windsor	Weathersfield	Route 5	1965	92
Tall Timbers MH Community, LLC	Windsor	Hartford	40 Moosewood Way, Quechee	1977	105

** Indicates concentrations of mobile homes that are not registered as year-round parks*

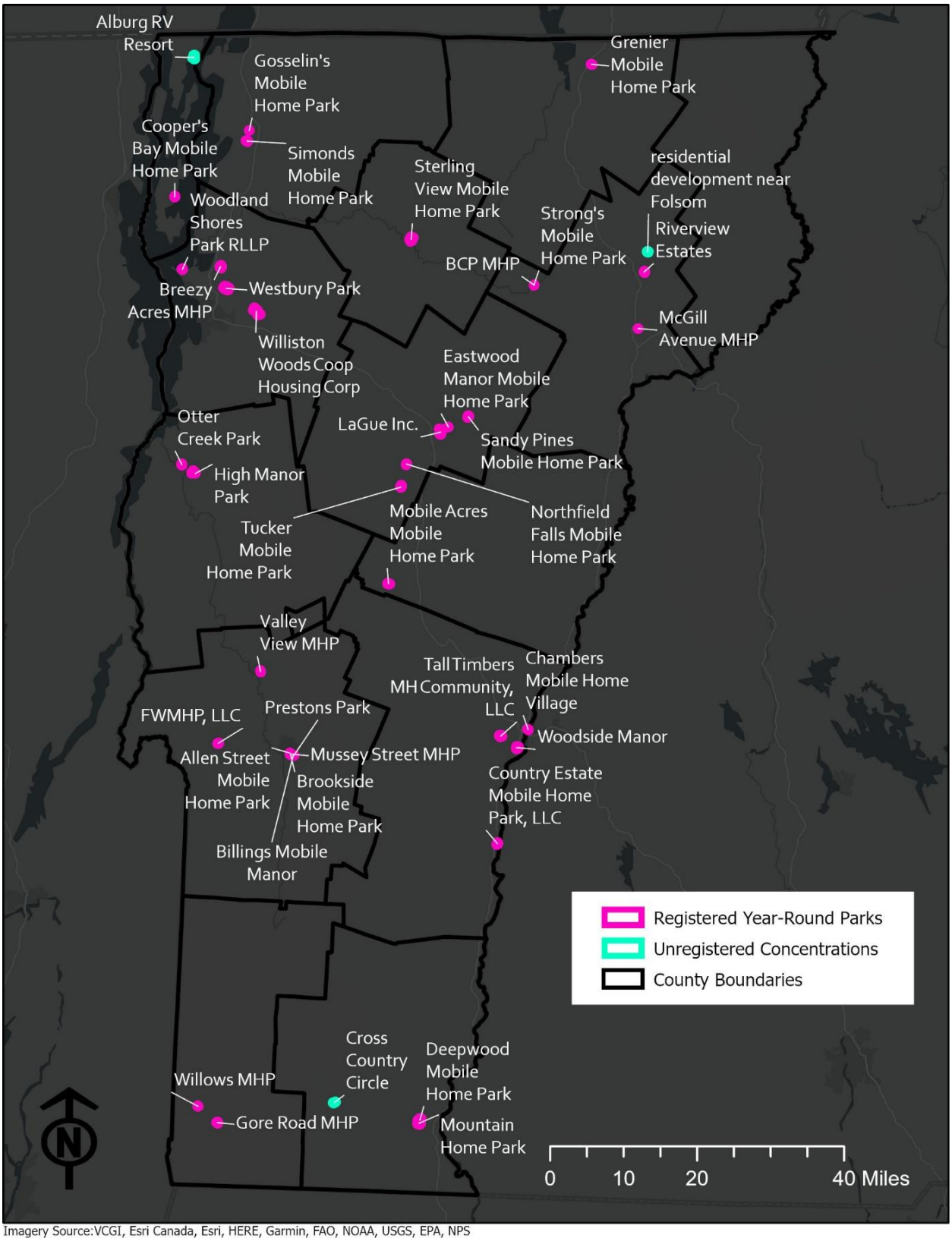


Figure 52. Map showing locations of selective survey properties.

5. Typological Considerations

The vast majority of Vermont's mobile home parks appear to represent properties intentionally developed as sites where five or more mobile homes may be permanently located. Vermont does not require registration for mobile home parks that are only used seasonally. In addition to the registered year-round residential parks, geospatial analysis identified other concentrations of mobile homes that are used as seasonal residences but otherwise share the physical characteristics of the registered parks. In all cases observed by Mead & Hunt during the geospatial analysis and selective survey phases, these parks were not typologically distinct from year-round parks and can be understood using the same typological considerations. These parks are likely to be located adjacent to recreational attractions, such as on lakeshores or near ski resorts, and individual evaluation should take both immediate setting and proximity to such attractions into account.[460]

[460] Some seasonal parks may include transient RV sites and campgrounds as well, but this is not a universal characteristic, and is also a feature that these parks share with some registered year-round parks. Aside from site considerations and site-specific amenities (such as docks for waterfront sites), a slightly lower incidence of paved roadways was the only other noteworthy difference between the seasonal and year-round park category.

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Section J. Geospatial Analysis Methodology

Two sources provided the bulk of the information used to inform this reconnaissance study: the Statewide Standardized Parcel Data parcel polygons (obtained through the Vermont Center for Geographic Information [VCGI]) and the Mobile Home Registry Database provided by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). Additional datasets obtained through VCGI assisted with identification of possible historical trends, including the Outdoor Recreation Sites Inventory (from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources [VT ANR]) and VT Data - Historical Census Municipal Population Counts 1791-2020. The following sections detail the use of these data sources to analyze and understand the spatial distribution and historical development of mobile homes and mobile home parks in Vermont. This analysis was then used to inform archival research, helping to couple the trends provided by the data with contextual information from a variety of sources. In addition to individual mobile home units, analysis identified three broad categories of mobile home properties:

- Year-round mobile home parks
- Seasonal/recreational mobile home parks
- Residential lots in subdivisions containing a mobile home unit

1. Parcel data

Using the Statewide Standardized Parcel Data parcel polygon dataset (Parcel Data), Mead & Hunt identified all parcels associated with mobile homes, recorded as either landed or unlanded (within the CAT field, values ‘Mobile Home/la’ and ‘Mobile Home/un’). “Landed” refers to parcels that include both the land and mobile home unit together, while “unlanded” refers to mobile homes that are considered real property but the owner of the unit does not own the land on which it stands (each unlanded unit is stored as a copy of the parcel polygon on which it rests).

Using both landed and unlanded categories (to include both park-based and individually sited units), the analysis captured parcels that were recorded in the statewide dataset as associated with one or more mobile home units as primary dwellings. The results of this selection (see Figure 53and Figure 54) show a wide distribution of mobile homes (both individual and located within parks) across the state. Most counties in the state contain between five and eight percent of the statewide total; Chittenden and Essex Counties, due to their high and low populations, are outliers.

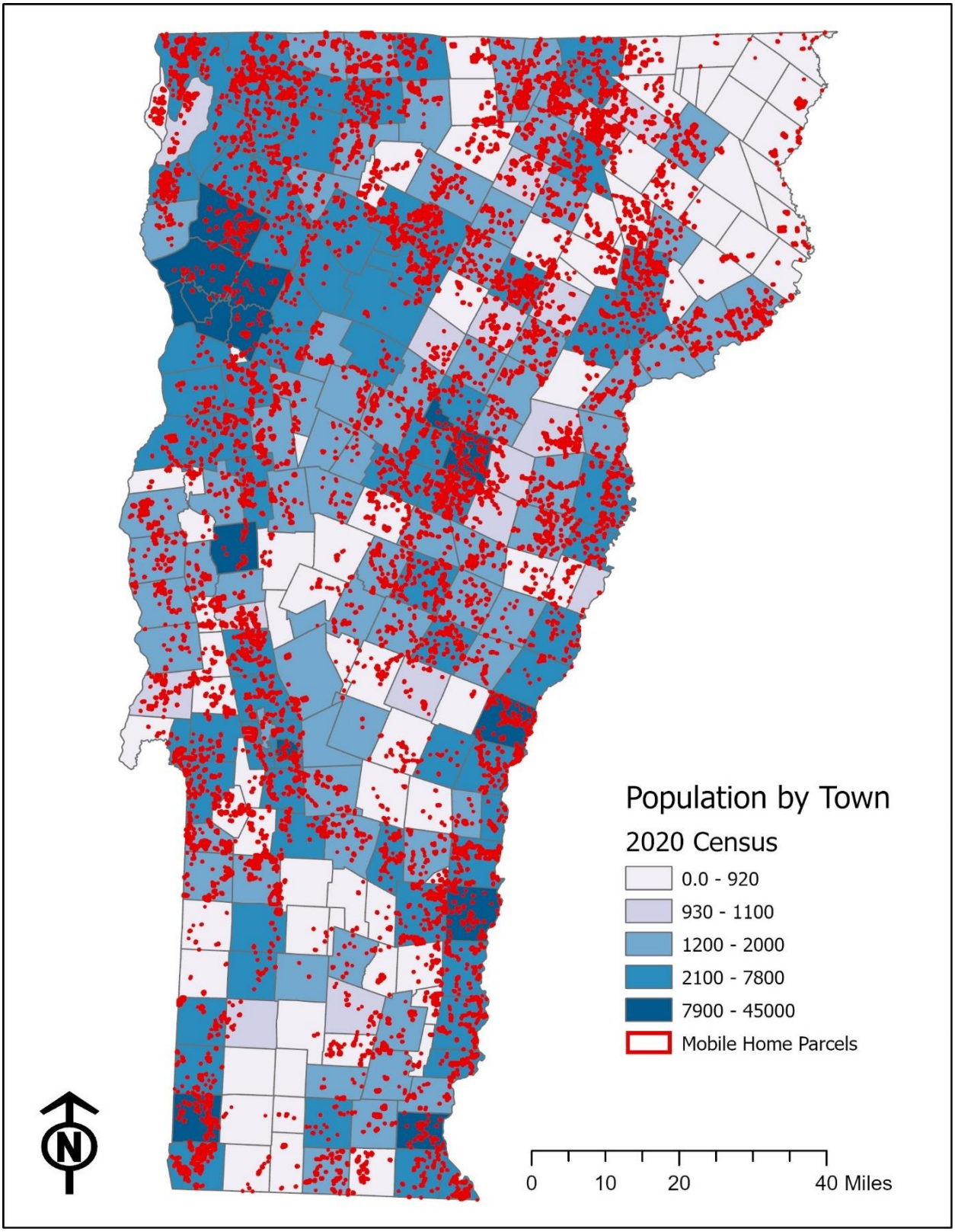

Figure 53. Map of Vermont showing population of individual towns and locations of parcels with one or more mobile homes.

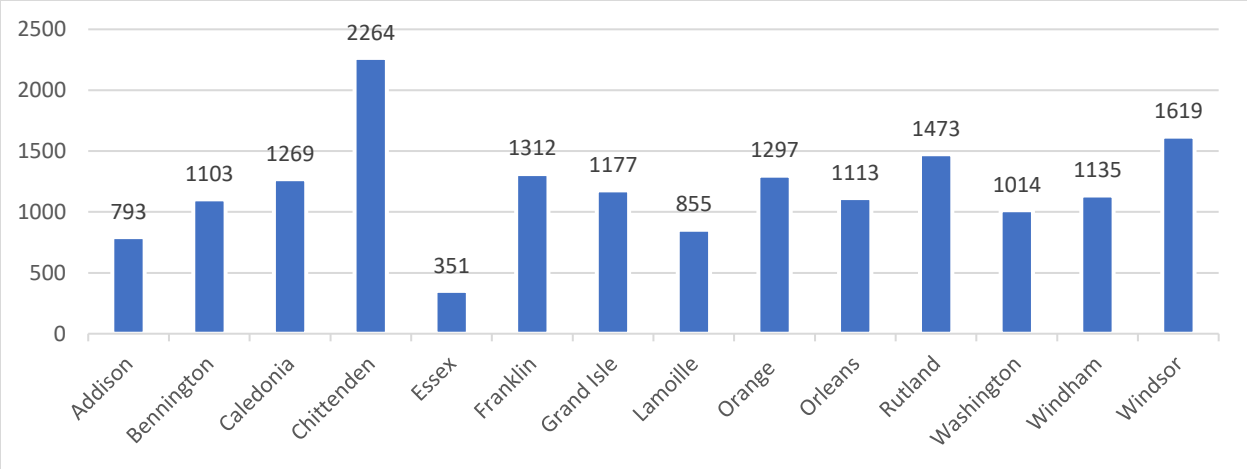

Figure 54. Number of parcels with mobile homes (landed and unlanded) by county.

A. Mobile home distribution and density

After calculating the centroid of each parcel, the resulting points feature was used to create a density map (see Figure 55). This made it easy to identify clusters of mobile homes, including many parks (when a parcel has many unlanded units on it, these points "stack" and show up as dense areas). This also revealed numerous concentrations of mobile homes that are not among the 239 registered year-round mobile home parks in the state (see the following section).

Additional analysis of the attribute table for the parcel polygons provided statistics on ownership; approximately 10 percent of all units in Vermont are owned by an individual or corporate entity with a primary address outside of Vermont. While several of the denser areas of out-of-state ownership in Bennington County represent mobile home parks owned by non-resident individuals or entities, most correlate to seasonal communities that do not meet the legal requirements for registration with the ACCD (see the following section).

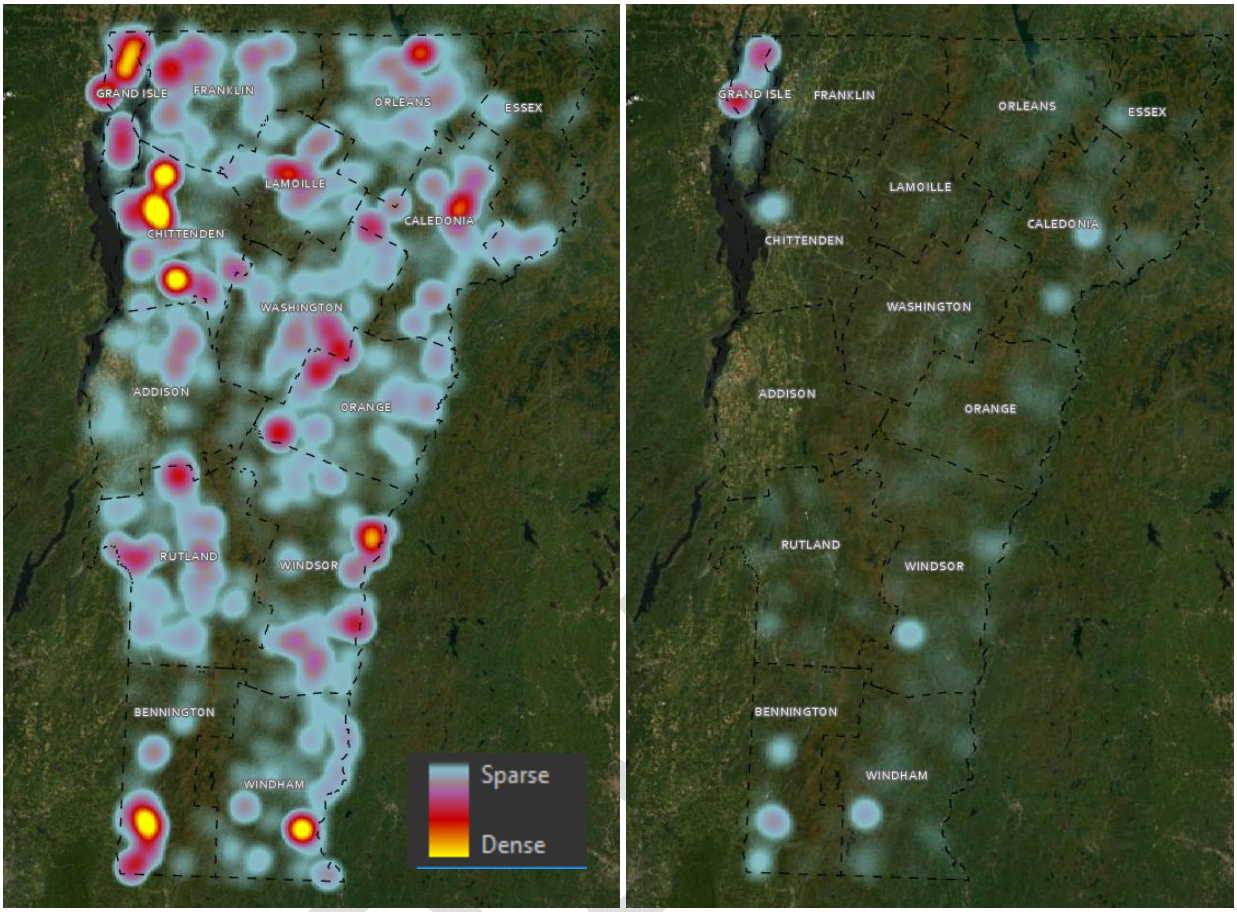

Figure 55. Density map showing overall concentrations of mobile homes (at left) and mobile home parcels owned by individuals or entities outside of Vermont (at right).

B. Relationship to population

To better understand whether the distribution of mobile homes is a direct reflection of overall population, Mead & Hunt then examined the relationship between the number of parcels with a mobile home (both landed and unlanded) and population at the town level. Figure 56 presents a map showing the ratio of parcels containing mobile homes to the total population as of the 2020 census.[461] This clearly shows that some areas have a higher ratio of mobile home parcels to residents, such as the towns of St. George, Starksboro, and Bennington, and much of Grand Isle County. It also highlights those with a very low ratio, including a large area of south-central Vermont as well as Waterbury, Burlington, and the north side of the Interstate Highway (I-) 89 corridor between both cities. This map is most useful for understanding trends in a town-by-town sense, and while it shows that the number of mobile homes per capita is not consistent across the state, it does not provide an easy, at-a-glance understanding of the relationship between population *density* and mobile home distribution at a state level.

Another way to visualize this relationship and understand which areas had a higher or lower concentration of mobile homes relative to population is to display the data using bivariate symbology. Figure 57 shows each town in the state shaded according to both the 2020 population and the number of parcels containing a mobile home. Using these two color ramps combined, it is much easier to see both

[461] Count of mobile home parcels within the town boundary divided by the 2020 population.

the overall population distribution across the state *and* which areas have larger numbers of mobile homes. Dark purple areas have both large populations and larger numbers of mobile homes, while white areas have small populations and few mobile homes. Pink areas have larger populations but few mobile homes, while blue areas have small populations but more mobile homes. The map indicates that there are many towns such as South Burlington, Stowe, Montpelier, Norwich, and Woodstock with more residents but comparatively few mobile homes, while the opposite is true in Isle La Motte and several towns in the Northeast Kingdom. This suggests that future study and context development may benefit from a more regional approach. As every one of the towns with large populations and few mobile homes abuts one or more towns with a large number of mobile homes, future work may also examine the socio-economic relationship between these areas.

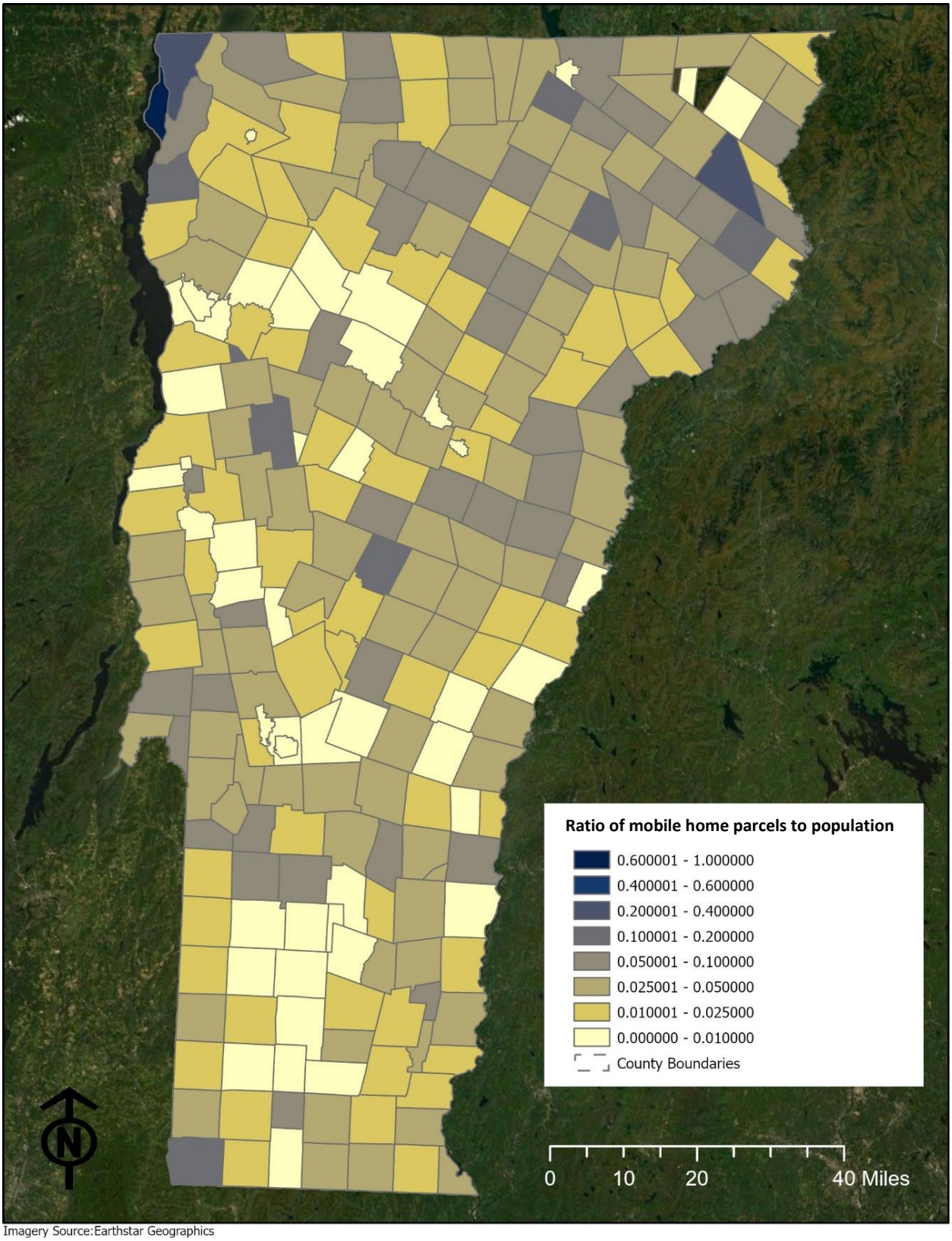

Figure 56. Map showing town-level ratio of parcels with mobile homes to total number of residents as of the 2020 census.

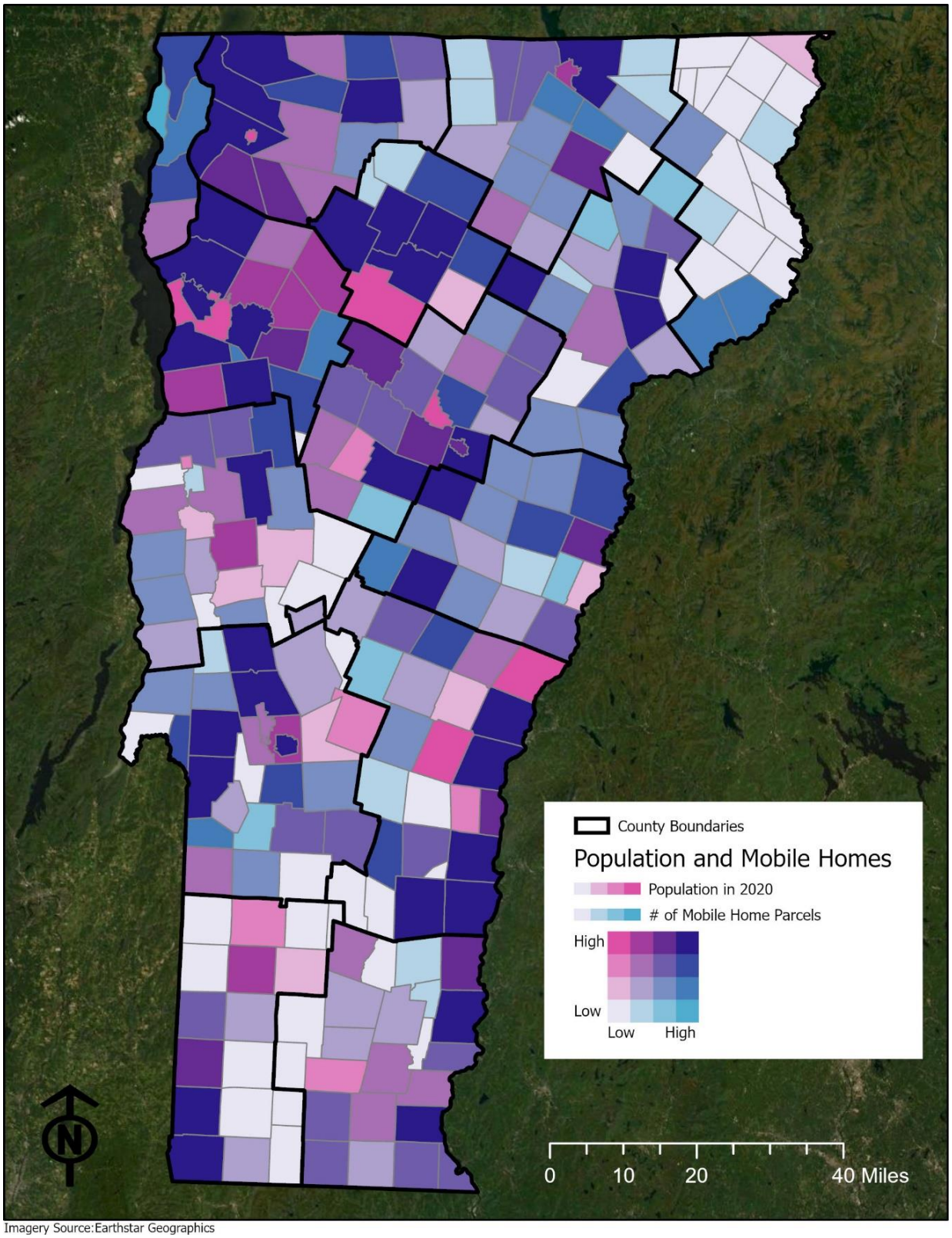

Figure 57. Map showing relative quantities of residents (pink axis) and mobile home parcels (blue axis). Where that relationship is balanced, towns appear in shades of purple; where it is not, towns appear in shades of blue (low population but more mobile homes) or shades of pink (large population but few mobile homes).

2. Mobile Home Registry data

After analyzing the parcel data to understand trends related to overall mobile home distribution patterns, Mead & Hunt then turned to the Mobile Home Registry database for 2020 and mapped the locations of all 239 registered mobile home parks (boundaries were derived from the existing parcel polygons layer). Information in the database was then used to examine whether any physical or chronological trends emerged at the local or regional level.

A. Distribution

Unlike mobile home distribution, registered mobile home park locations and the number of mobile homes strongly correlate to areas with higher population density, most notably Chittenden County, but also the Barre/Montpelier area, central Lamoille County, St. Johnsbury/Lyndon, White River Junction, Rutland, Bennington, and Brattleboro. The three northeastern counties have far fewer parks, and the majority are clustered in the St. Johnsbury/Lyndonville and Newport/Derby areas. Grand Isle County also has very few registered year-round parks; however, many mobile homes are found within unregistered seasonal parks. Figure 58 presents the total number of mobile home parks by county.

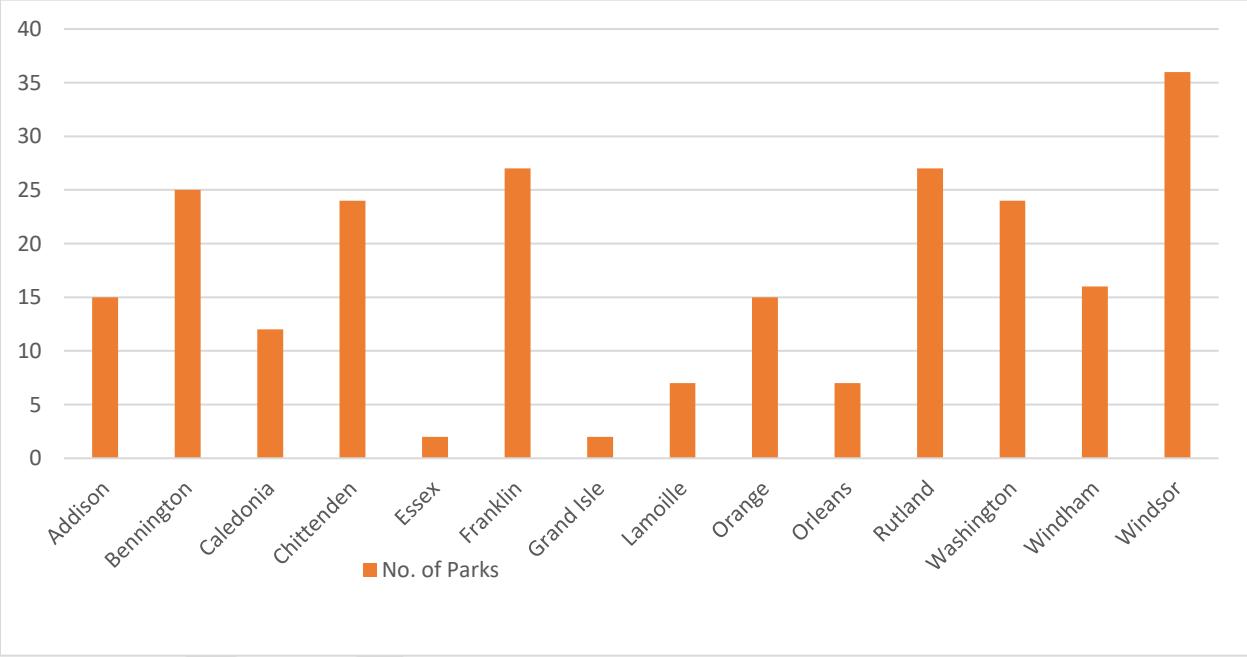

Figure 58. Chart showing the total number of registered mobile home parks by county.

In considering trends related to park sizes, however, only Chittenden County has a concentration of very large parks (see Figure 59). With the exception of the Mountain Home mobile home park in Brattleboro, all the parks with 120 or more lots are located in Chittenden County, and other regional concentrations are comprised of larger numbers of small or medium-sized parks (compare Bennington and Windham Counties in Figure 59). When looking at this larger body of small and medium-sized parks, data suggests that development varies from one county to the next as far as whether an area's needs are met by a few larger parks (as in Lamoille County) or a larger number of smaller parks (as in Rutland County), and county population is not a strong predictor of average park size (see Figure 60).

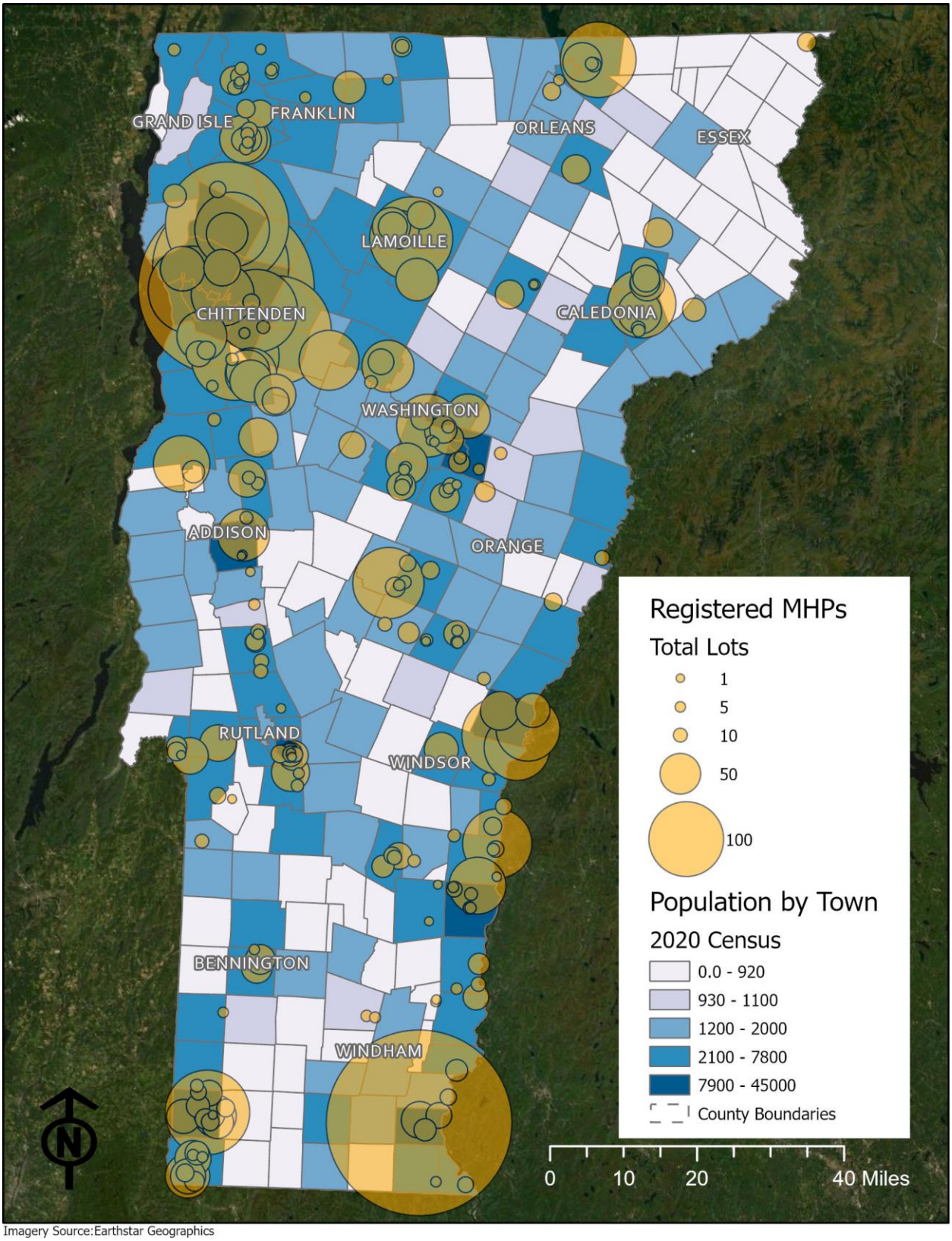

Figure 59. Mobile home parks symbolized by size (number of lots).

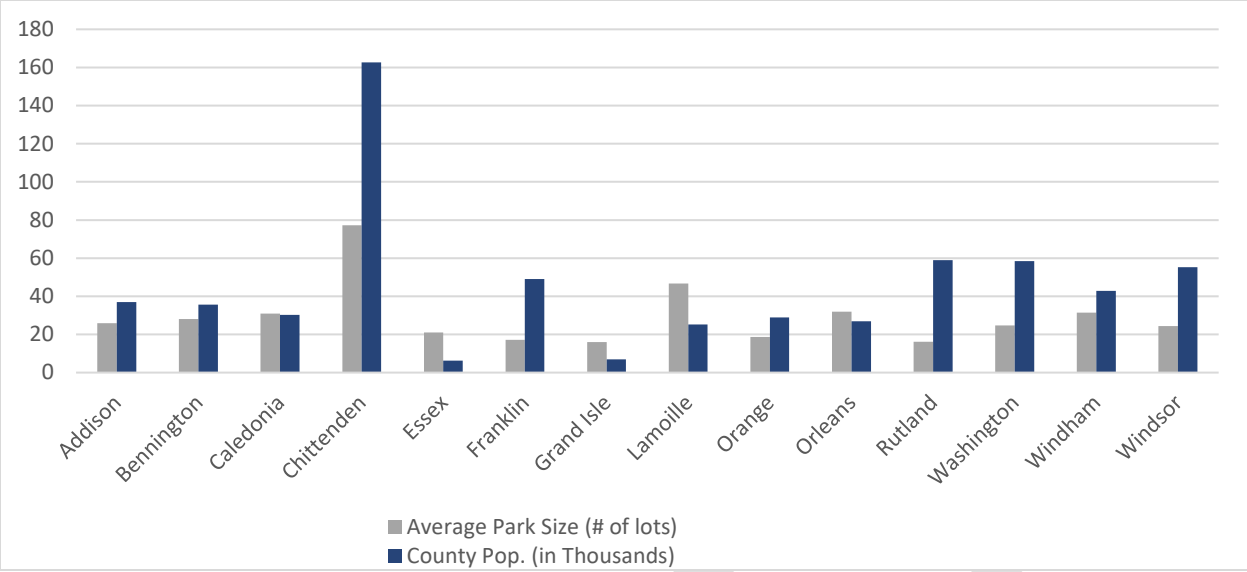

Figure 60. Chart showing the relationship between average park size in each county and the county population.

Ratios of park-based to individually-sited mobile homes vary considerably at the county level. In ten out of 14 counties, fewer than half of the mobile homes recorded in the parcel data appear to be located within registered parks (see Figure 61; percentages for each county were derived by dividing the total number of park-based lots by the total number of parcels containing mobile homes). The majority of mobile homes in Essex, Orleans, and Orange Counties are sited on individual lots, whereas more than 80 percent of mobile homes in Chittenden County are located within parks. Of note, while very few of the mobile homes in Grand Isle County are located in a registered mobile home park, more than half are actually sited on one of the nine large parcels that are not registered as mobile home parks but function as seasonally occupied communities of permanently sited mobile homes.

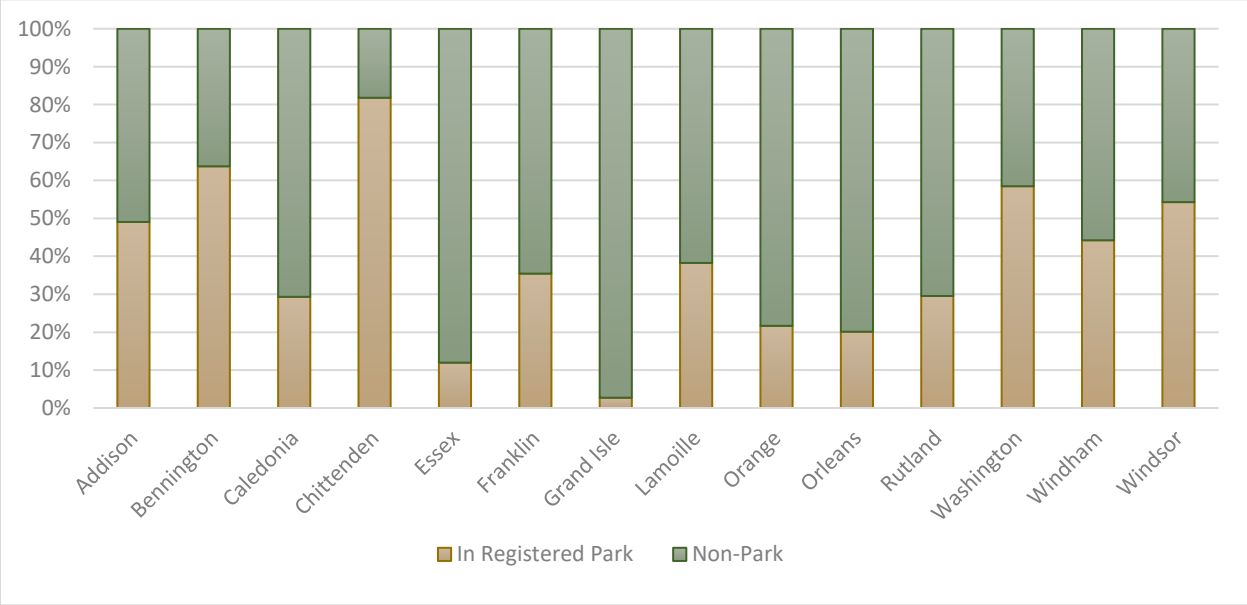

Figure 61. Chart showing ratio of park-based to individually sited mobile home parcels by county.

B. Proximity to transportation corridors

A spatial analysis examining the relationship between mobile home parks and transportation corridors found that parcels containing mobile homes and mobile home parks are more likely to be close to a main transportation corridor (defined for these purposes as a State, U.S., or Interstate Highway). In fact, 90 percent of registered parks are located within one mile of a main transportation corridor, and 80 percent are within one-half mile.[462] In looking at individual parcel data, approximately 74 percent of all landed and unlanded mobile homes are also located within one-half mile of a main transportation corridor.[463] Those that are further from one of these main corridors are well-distributed throughout the state and no regional trends were discernable in this respect. While this information is mainly useful in understanding the relationships between transportation corridors and mobile homes, it also emphasizes the degree to which the vast majority of these resources have the potential to fall within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) of a VTrans project in the years to come. Just over one-third of all parcels statewide are within one-quarter mile of a State, U.S., or Interstate Highway. In comparison, half of all mobile home parcels and more than two-thirds of all registered mobile home parks fall within this range.

C. Age of parks

Statistical analysis of the Mobile Home Registry data indicated that almost two-thirds of the registered parks were established between 1956 and 1970, and that nearly one-third were established in the five-year period from 1966 to 1970 (see Figure 62), after which park establishment appears to have dropped precipitously (assuming that subsequent park closures did not disproportionately affect newer parks).

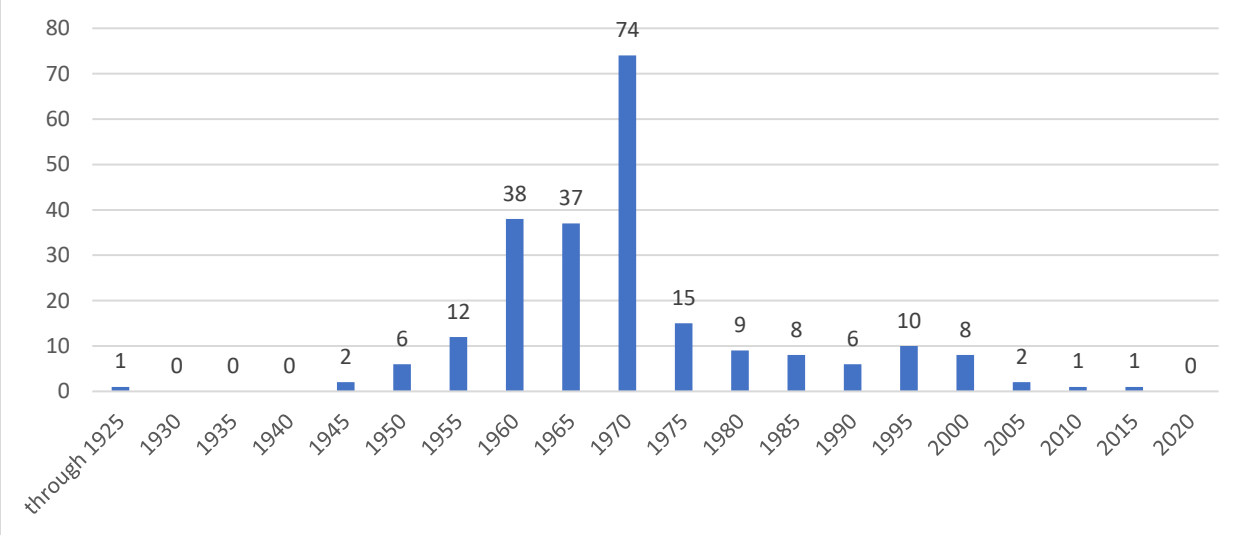

Figure 62. Histogram showing the number of mobile home parks established in each five-year period (axis label indicates end year; eight parks have no recorded establishment date).

[462] Only 12 parks are located more than two miles from a main transportation corridor and none are more than five miles away.

[463] Just over 2,000 mobile home parcels are located more than two miles from a highway, and only 61 parcels statewide are located more than five miles from a main highway.

No strong geographic distribution patterns were evident when considering age; most pre-1950 parks appear to be near major travel corridors (U.S. Highways), but no strong concentrations are visible due to the low overall number of resources from this period (see Figure 63). While only 15 percent of mobile home parks in Vermont are located within one-half mile of an Interstate Highway, nearly 78 percent of these parks were established between 1956 and 1970, compared to just over 62 percent of all parks statewide. Thus, parks currently adjacent to the Interstate Highway corridor are more likely to have been established during the main period of Interstate Highway construction and development in Vermont.

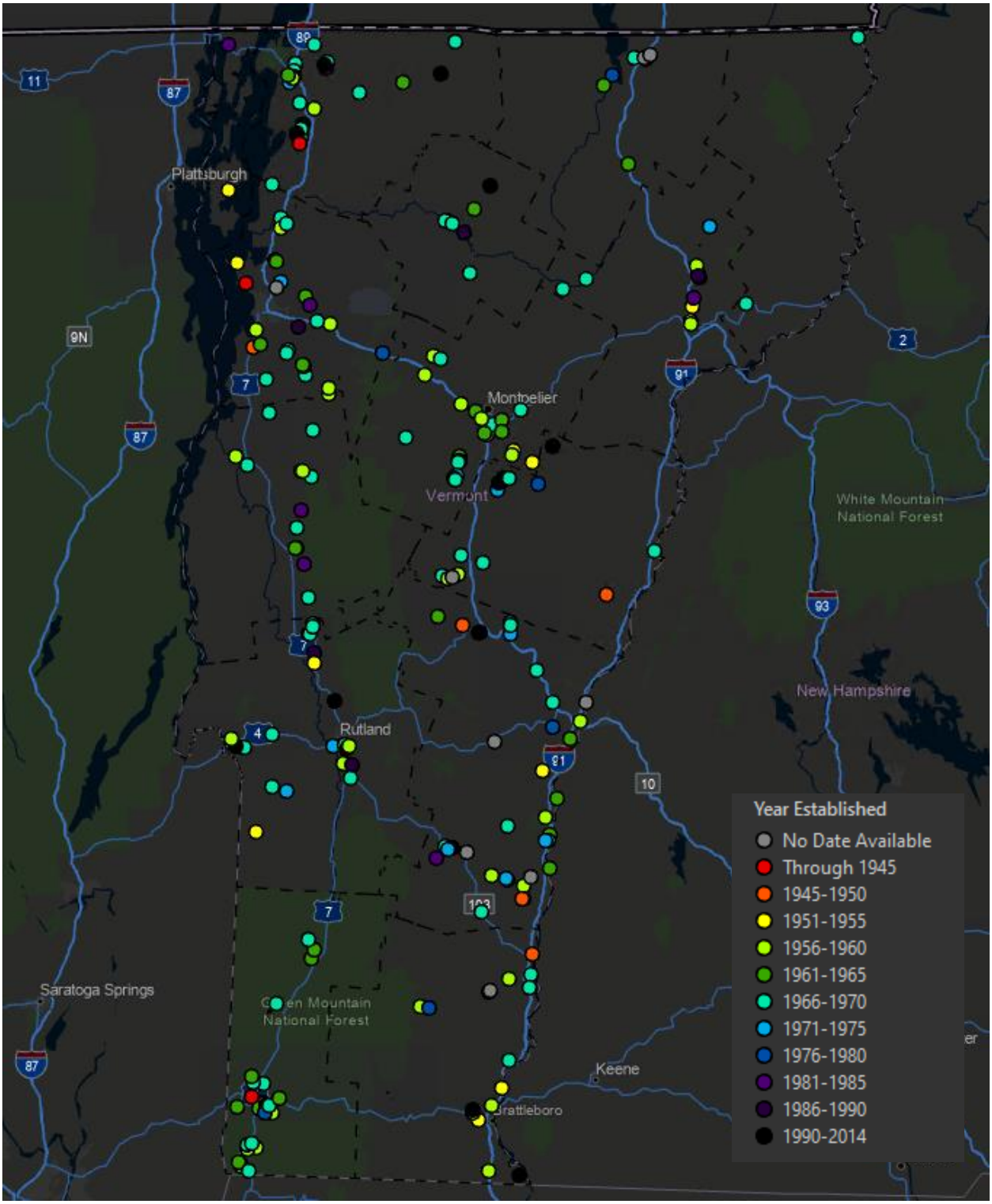

Figure 63. Registered parks color-coded by age.

D. Additional concentrations

After reviewing the density map at the town level (approximately 1:80,000 scale), Mead & Hunt identified 16 additional concentrations not registered as parks. Likely used as seasonal communities, these properties consist of multiple mobile homes on a single parcel. The vast majority of these unregistered

concentrations are located in close proximity to a recreational attraction; more than half are located on the shore of Lake Champlain, while several are close to ski resorts in southern Vermont (see Figure 64).

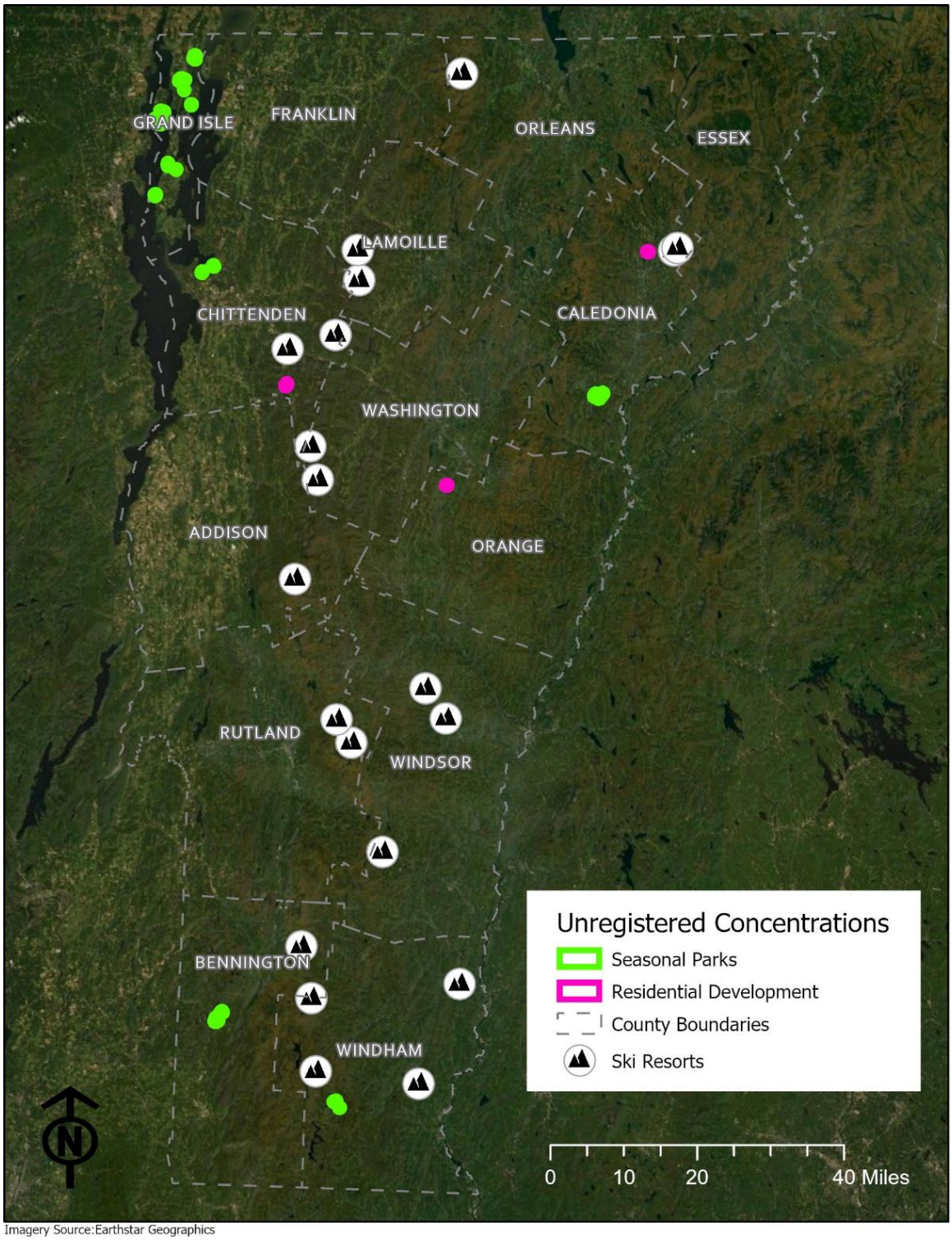

Figure 64. Unregistered concentrations of mobile homes are shown in light green; icons indicate locations of major ski resorts.

While several of the seasonal parks appear to be a mix of mobile homes, permanently sited recreational vehicles (RVs), and transient RVs in a campground setting, many are visually indistinguishable from year-round registered parks, although they are more likely to contain amenities such as swimming pools and docks. These properties were added to the pool of resources used to develop recommendations, and a sample were included during the selective survey fieldwork.

In addition, town-level density map review identified three groupings of mobile homes that are simply residential neighborhoods; these consist of 16 or more contiguous, individually owned, landed mobile homes on typical residential lots and streets. Unlike the seasonal parks, parcel data indicates that these mobile homes appear to be the primary residences of the owners in most cases. Two of the three (located in Williamstown, Orange County and Huntington, Chittenden County) are visually indistinguishable from adjacent site-built residential development, while the third (located in Lyndon, Caledonia County) has a rigid layout that is visually similar to many of the mobile home parks surveyed as part of this preliminary study.

3. Summary of geospatial analysis

The results of the geospatial analysis provided some useful insights and pointed toward several areas for further consideration:

- **Mobile homes parcels are more likely than other parcels to be located adjacent to main transportation corridors**. Half of all mobile home parcels and more than two-thirds of all registered mobile home parks in Vermont are located within one-quarter mile of a State, U.S., or Interstate Highway, compared to one-third of all parcels statewide within this proximity.

- **Distribution of mobile homes and mobile home parks across Vermont mirrors overall population trends in many areas, but this is not universally true.** Consider examination of areas that fall outside the general trend, as well as relationships between towns with very few mobile homes that are surrounded by towns with many mobile homes and parks.

- **No strong statewide trends emerged regarding relationships between population and mobile home park size**, indicating a varied approach to development of mobile home parks from one area to the next (more small parks vs. a few larger parks).

- **Most mobile home parks in Vermont were developed during the Interstate Highway era** (1956 through the 1970s). Preliminary research indicates that some may have evolved out of pre-World War II auto camps or postwar seasonal campgrounds. New park establishment dropped precipitously after 1970, likely due to new state regulations implemented in that year.

- **In addition to year-round mobile home parks, seasonal mobile home parks are found in proximity to recreational areas,** primarily Lake Champlain (Grand Isle County), and to a lesser degree adjacent to ski areas.