

Zoning for Great Neighborhoods

A project to create new tools and resources to align local regulations with a community's housing needs and goals.



Decent, affordable, and reasonably located homes, more than anything, determine the well-being of every Vermonter. Location and transportation connections are especially important: Where we live can ease or complicate our access to work, schools, recreation, and services. Many Vermont households – including the majority with moderate incomes – must make difficult trade-offs to find a home that is both conveniently located and within their means.

The cost and availability of housing also matter for the state's economy, affecting the ability of businesses to hire and retain qualified workers, in turn influencing decisions about whether to locate, expand, or remain in Vermont. Zoning for Great Neighborhoods aims to help cities and towns address the mismatch between Vermont's available houses and the sharp increase in smaller households including the homes needed for our aging population. Updated local land use regulations are needed to provide housing choices for more Vermonters.

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Through guidance and model regulations, this initiative lays the groundwork to allow a variety of housing types in walkable communities. The project draws on national and in-state expertise from the nonprofit CNU that has produced similar guides through its Project for Code Reform, and the Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions. Their perspectives are important to introducing—and often reintroducing—multi-unit and other flexible housing types that were once traditional forms throughout Vermont, including homesharing and accessory dwelling units.

First, the types of regulatory barriers that prevent homes from being built were identified, typical local regulations were analyzed, and finally, alternative municipal regulations that support the types of homes needed will be recommended and explained. These tools that municipalities can use to allow great neighborhoods, will be issued in Spring 2020.

Led by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, the Zoning for Great Neighborhoods project is underwritten with generous support from the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, AARP-VT, and the Vermont, Green Mountain, and National Association Realtors.

“The lack of suitable, ready-to-move-into homes is a recruiting challenge for many Vermont businesses.”

Lindsay Kurrle

Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development

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