

# The Global Warming Solutions Act and the Vermont Climate Action Plan



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# Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee in the GWSA

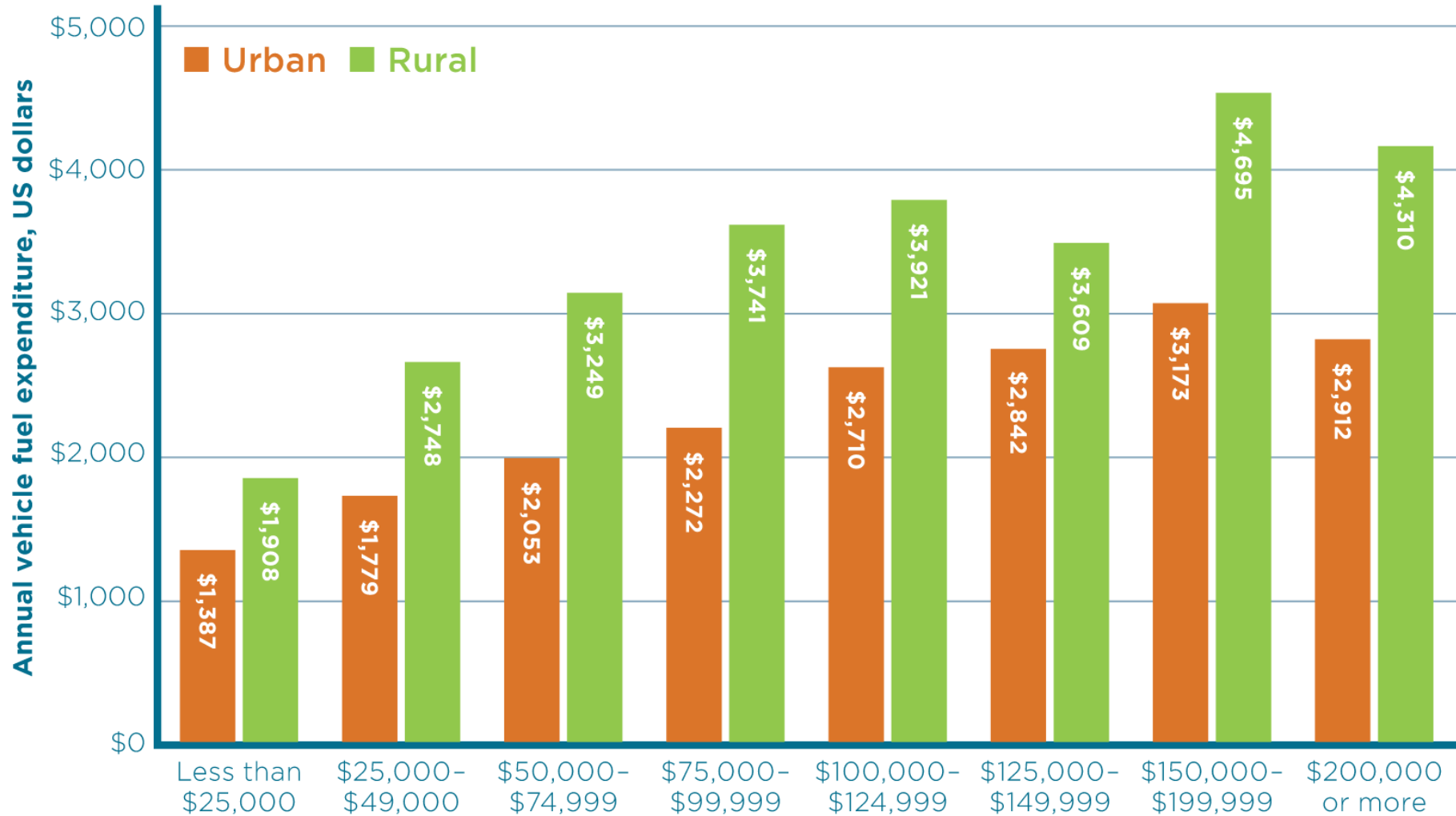
*The Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee shall focus on the pressures that climate change adaptation will impose on rural transportation, electricity, housing, emergency services, and communications infrastructure, and the difficulty of rural communities in meeting the needs of its citizens. 10 V.S.A. § 591*

The Climate Council charged the subcommittee to identify, evaluate and analyze existing and new strategies and programs that build resilience and prepare the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.

# Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee

- Subcommittee developed five pathways that focus on:
  1. Increasing capacity for planning and implementation
  2. Investing to enhance resilience in infrastructure
  - 3. Supporting reduction of fossil fuel use in rural communities**
  4. Adaptive and resilient land use development
  5. Access to safe, accessible, energy efficient, and affordable housing
- Pathway 3 includes two key strategies:
  - Providing tools and resources to ensure accessible data on fossil fuel use is available to municipalities, and to establish best practices on fossil fuel use reduction
  - Expanding access to programs for weatherization, electrification, and utility upgrades for rural communities

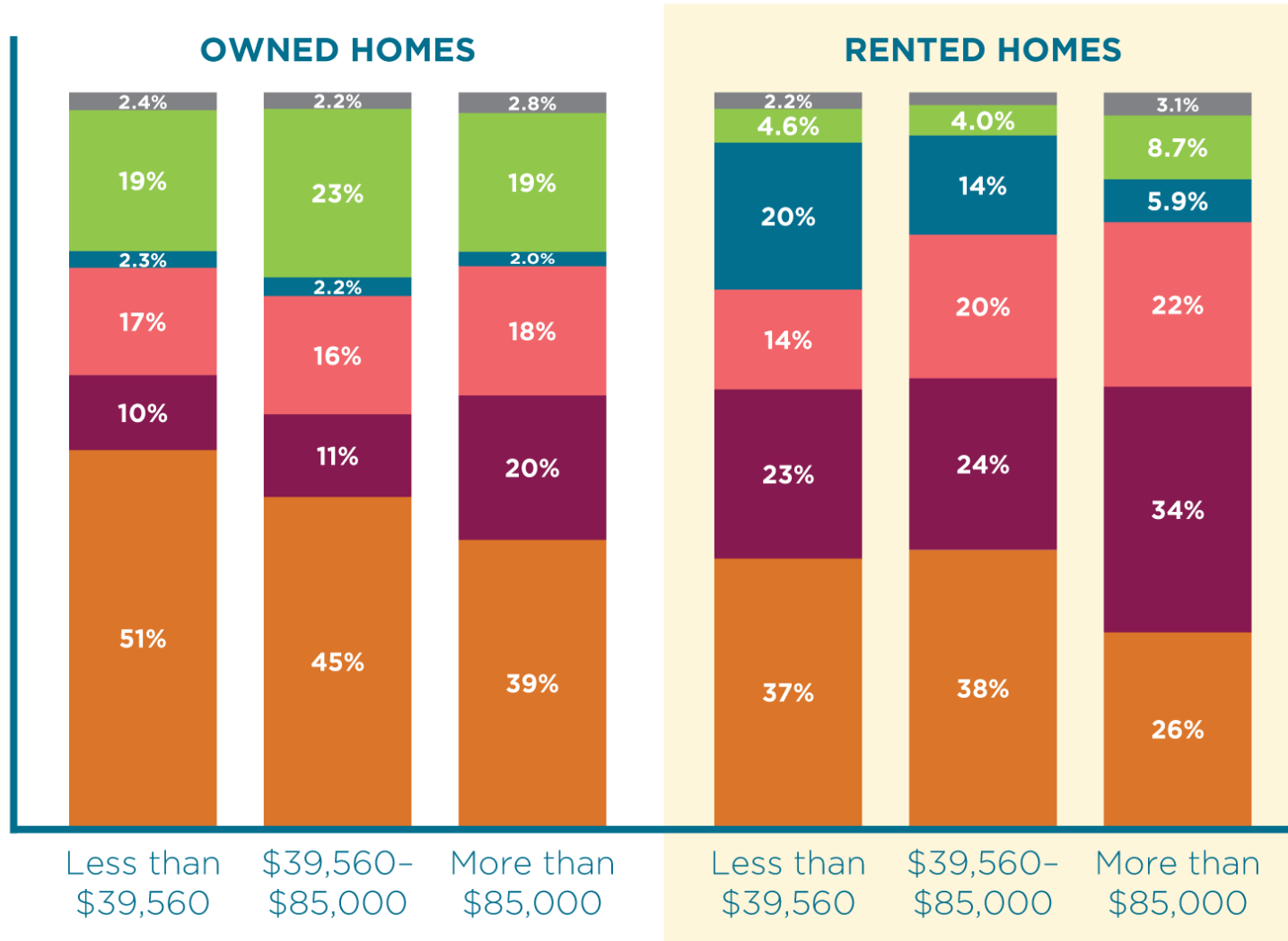
# 2017 annual vehicle fuel expenditure by income and location-type, northeast U.S.



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Household Travel Survey, 2017.

# Vermont household fuel use by housing type

■ Fuel oil and kerosene 
 ■ Utility gas 
 ■ Bottled, tank and LP gas  
■ Electricity 
 ■ Wood 
 ■ Other



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018.

# Pathways for Adaptation and Building Resilience in Communities and the Built Environment

**Pathway 3:** Support the reduction of municipal, school district, residential, university, and hospital fossil fuel use in rural areas through equitable best practices that address the unique challenges of rural communities.

**Strategy 1: Provide tools and resources** to help assess data needs and establish best practices for rural communities, businesses, and institutions to reduce fossil fuel use.

- Require the collection of fossil fuel usage data for municipal operations for buildings, vehicle fleets, and utilities; identify data gaps and ways to collect that data for measuring change in fossil fuel use going forward.
- Ensure data on fossil fuel usage at the municipal level is available and accessible in one location for municipal and public use.
- Engage higher education institutions to actively participate in developing systems to gather, compile, update, extrapolate fossil fuel data and make that available to the public.
- Identify, develop, and share best practices for reducing municipal, school district, residential, commercial, and industrial fossil fuel consumption. Identify and assess existing practices and note gaps.

Strategy 2: **Equitably expand access to programs** that provide options to rural homeowners, landlords, municipalities, school districts, universities, and hospitals for weatherization, electrification, and utility upgrades.

- Ensure that there is broad and statewide public education and promotion of benefits, economic and otherwise, and opportunities for fossil fuel reduction.
- Evaluate all existing state-funded programs for effectiveness, access, and equity and consider increased funding for weatherization, energy efficiency and electrification programs in order to expand access to all Vermonters, and to expand programs with zero up-front costs. Existing programs may include Efficiency Vermont rebates, HEAT Squad - NeighborWorks of Western Vermont home energy audit program, and the Shared Equity program . In addition, the private sector should be engaged to provide innovative third-party financing opportunities that are paid for over time by the customer.
- Explore Commercial PACE (Property Assessment Clean Energy) program for municipalities and other programs to elevate, such as bonding to support a statewide Tariffed On-Bill Finance Pilot and funding for a revolving loan fund for Public-Serving Institutions with retrofits. There may also be a need to continue providing the funding to support interest rate buydown (IRB) in EVT's Home Energy Loan and Business Energy Loan programs.
- Create new educational programs to increase public outreach for existing energy efficiency, electrification, and utility upgrade programs.

Strategy 2: **Equitably expand access** to programs that provide options to rural homeowners, landlords, municipalities, school districts, universities, and hospitals for weatherization, electrification, and utility upgrades.

- The Public Service Department should ensure that all utilities provide similar opportunities for all customers (rebates, incentives) to encourage fossil fuel reduction, electrification, and energy savings.
- Increase low-income weatherization through the State Weatherization Assistance Program including technical assistance to help households and landlords manage the process.
- Entities that provide rebates for weatherization should stabilize rebate values year to year.
- Expand workforce development programs such as the VT Training Program or the Department of Labor's Workforce Education & Training Fund; cover costs for businesses to train in-house auditors/technicians. Pilot new programs in rural areas where workforce needed is greater.
- Revise state building energy codes and standards to require a minimum 200 Amp service for new construction as electrification expands.
- Provide funding to assist low-income homeowners to upgrade electric service to 200 Amps. Electric utilities and renewable energy developers could provide new incentives and financing options through third-party financing mechanisms, on bill financing, RES Tier III incentives, third-party power purchase agreements, and grants. All programs must include equal access to renters.



Strategy 2: **Equitably expand access** to programs that provide options to rural homeowners, landlords, municipalities, school districts, universities, and hospitals for weatherization, electrification, and utility upgrades.

- Implement a statewide program to support electrification of municipal fleet vehicles ensuring it is designed to allow equitable access and participation to municipalities regardless of tax base.
- Support water and wastewater systems in conducting and implementing energy audits and recommendations for energy reduction and electrification.
- Develop cost-effective programs to support renewable energy development on school and other municipal property and evaluate and eliminate unnecessary statutory barriers related to capital financing and land purchase/lease.
- Help individuals, municipalities, and businesses through the process of weatherization, energy efficiency and fuel switching upgrades by establishing and funding Weatherization and Efficiency Navigators at each Regional Planning Commission (RPC), expanding the services currently available at CAP agencies and VEIC, and ensuring coordination and a whole systems approach among the entities providing services.
- Review and expand existing programs to support landlords in weatherizing rental properties, including St. Johnsbury Rental Housing Improvement Program, and other programs in counties and towns.