

2/28/2024

The Bennington Housing Committee, comprised of a diverse group of community leaders, housing experts, and concerned citizens, began meeting regularly at the start of 2023. We have identified several key challenges that necessitate legislative intervention. Among these, the scarcity of low- and middle-income housing stands out as a critical barrier to attracting and retaining a vibrant workforce, supporting families, and ensuring the overall prosperity of Bennington. After diligent analysis, stakeholder engagement, and reflection on the current state of housing in Bennington, it has become clear that without immediate and decisive action, we risk exacerbating the hardships faced by our residents and hindering potential economic growth and development in our region.

In light of these challenges, we are particularly encouraged by the direction proposed in House Bill H.719 and S.311. This bill represents a significant step forward in our collective efforts to increase the quality and availability of housing options for Vermonters. H.719 and S.311 focus on incentivizing and supporting housing development aligns with our identified needs and offers a promising framework for addressing the multifaceted aspects of the housing crisis in Bennington and across the state.

To complement the initiatives outlined in H.719, we also advocate for the following actions, which we believe are essential for a comprehensive approach to solving our housing challenges:

1. **Regulatory Reform:** Streamline permitting processes and reduce regulatory barriers to facilitate the development of new housing projects, particularly in designated growth areas.
2. **Funding and Incentives:** Expand and diversify funding sources for housing development, including grants, low-interest loans, and tax incentives, to make projects more financially viable.
3. **Support for Comprehensive Solutions:** Promote a holistic approach to housing that includes not only the construction of new units but also the rehabilitation of existing buildings, support for vulnerable populations, and development of workforce housing.

We firmly believe that with your support for H.719, along with the additional measures we have outlined, we can make significant progress in addressing the housing needs of our community. This legislative session presents a critical opportunity to enact meaningful changes that will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of Vermonters and the future of our state.

We are ready and eager to engage in further discussions on how we can collectively support and implement these initiatives. Your leadership and commitment to addressing the housing crisis will be instrumental in ensuring that Bennington and Vermont can thrive.

Thank you for considering our perspectives and for your ongoing commitment to serving our community. We look forward to the possibility of working together to bring about meaningful improvements in housing accessibility and affordability in Bennington.

Sincerely,

Bennington Housing Committee