

Rutland Ad Hoc Housing Working Group

Legislative Request 1-16-2024

The Rutland Ad Hoc Housing Working Group began in October 2022 to develop short-term and long-term strategies to address the Rutland Region's spectrum of housing needs.

Rutland County residents' housing needs are not being met.

- Rents and housing prices are increasing faster than resident's wages. Half of Rutland County renters live in unaffordable housing, spending 30% or more of household income on housing.
- 816 households live in homes with serious housing quality issues and another 1,147 homes are vacant due to housing quality uncertainty. Rutland County has the oldest housing stock of any Vermont County, with a median home age of 1970.
- 654 people in Rutland County were homeless on January 25, 2023, a 75% increase from January 2022, and a 585% increase from Winter 2019. 139 children were homeless on January 25, 2023, an increase of 265% from January 2022.
- The region's employers are struggling to find workers due to prospective employees struggling to find housing. Most Rutland County households (71%) have 1 or 2 people but only 37% of homes have two or fewer bedrooms.

The Rutland Ad Hoc Housing Working Group asks the Rutland County Legislative Delegation to advocate for these specific action items during the upcoming 2024 Legislative Session.

1. **A bill like H.719** - Support the direction being taken by House Bill H.719, to increase quality housing options available to Vermonters. It is expected that the process will include a quick yet thorough vetting and discussion of immediate actions that can be taken to incentivize and support housing development.
2. **An unrestricted Low-Interest Revolving Loan Fund** - Incentivize private-public partnerships to increase affordable quality housing options using unrestricted low-interest revolving loan funds modeled after the 10% For Vermont Program, as well as a VHIP model program for market-rate housing.
3. **Location-based Act 250 reform** - Create an exemption from Act 250 for municipalities that have the proper infrastructure, regulations, and policies in place (i.e. Department of Public Works, sewer and water infrastructure, zoning regulations, appropriate municipal panel bodies such as Development Review Boards). This will reduce administrative costs and duplicative fees for the developer and reduce the number of resources needed to navigate the permitting process.
4. **Designation-based Act 250 reform:** Waive Act 250 requirements for workforce housing planning for state-designated areas. This will again reduce administrative costs and duplicative fees for the developer and reduce the number of resources needed to navigate the permitting process.
5. **Improving Act 250 Administrative Efficiency** - Speed up the Act 250 review process by supporting increased field staff and professional board members for processing Act 250 permit applications.
6. **Landlord Relief** - Support reform for landlord relief regarding landlord/tenant disputes.

Who is the Rutland Ad Hoc Housing Working Group?

We comprise members from the Housing Trust of Rutland County, the Rutland Housing Authority, NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region, Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Rutland Redevelopment Authority, Rutland City Hall staff, Rutland Town Select Board, a Legislator, as well as a realtor, developer, and finance specialist.

For further information, please contact any of the following:

- Ed Bove, Executive Director, Rutland Redevelopment Authority ebove@rutlandvtbusiness.com
- Devon Neary, Executive Director, Rutland Regional Planning Commission devon@rutlandrpc.org
- Lyle Jepson, Executive Director, Chamber & Economic Development Lyle@rutlandeconomy.com