

Sustainable Housing for Vermonters

How are we doing?

Kati Gallagher, Sustainable Communities Program Director
Jon Groveman, Policy & Water Program Director



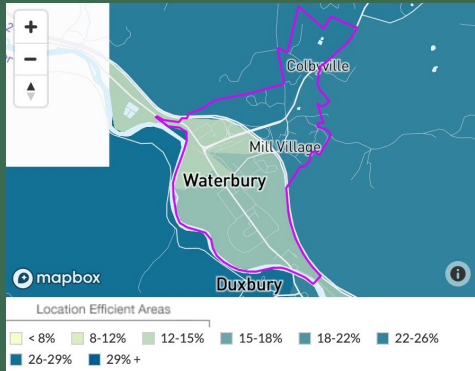
Where we grow matters.



FIGURE 28. COMPARISON OF DISPERSED AND CONCENTRATED GROWTH, CONCENTRATED JOBS SCENARIOS FOR MORRISVILLE

Vermont Smart Growth Report (VTrans)

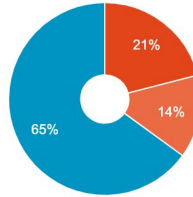
Where we grow matters.



Average Housing + Transportation Costs % Income

Factoring in both housing *and* transportation costs provides a more comprehensive way of thinking about the cost of housing and true affordability.

- Housing
- Transportation
- Remaining Income



Transportation Costs

In dispersed areas, people need to own more vehicles and rely upon driving them farther distances which also drives up the cost of living.



\$10,674

Annual Transportation Costs



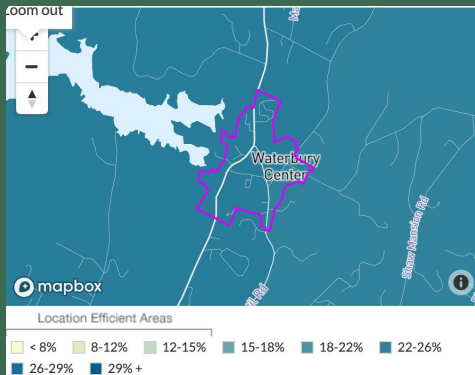
1.49

Autos Per Household



7,774

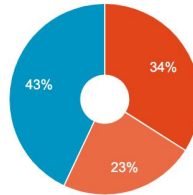
Average Household VMT



Average Housing + Transportation Costs % Income

Factoring in both housing *and* transportation costs provides a more comprehensive way of thinking about the cost of housing and true affordability.

- Housing
- Transportation
- Remaining Income



Transportation Costs

In dispersed areas, people need to own more vehicles and rely upon driving them farther distances which also drives up the cost of living.



\$17,718

Annual Transportation Costs



2.15

Autos Per Household




23,075

Average Household VMT




But we need more homes.

 Boston Real Estate Times

State at a Crossroads: 11th Vermont Development Conference to Tackle Housing, Infrastructure, and the Future of Growth

Burlington, VT—Vermont stands at a pivotal moment — with decisions about housing, infrastructure, and growth shaping the state's communities...

4 days ago

 Vermont Public

Even with more Vermont homes on the market, prices are still rising

In 2024, the statewide median sale price for a primary home was about \$353,000 — a 9% jump from the prior year. That's according to state...

1 month ago

 WCAX

Vt. home buyers still struggling amid increase in available housing

Vt. home buyers still struggling amid increase in available housing ... amid increase in available housing. Published: Jun. 3, 2025 at 3:11 AM PDT.

Jun 3, 2025



Business spikes in Vermont as need

share of Vermont's homeless population is living
are sleeping in a vehicle or outside...

Homeless situation worsening despite

Investigation worsening despite millions invested ...
Vermont has spent around \$800 million over...



Vermont's Statewide Planning Goals

“to maintain Vermont’s historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside”



Why is it so hard?

Permitting Requirements for Single Family Home



■ By Right: 70% ■ Requires a Public Hearing: 5% ■ Unzoned: 25%

Permitting Requirements for Four Family plus Building (like apartment buildings)



■ By Right: 2% ■ Requires a Public Hearing: 34% ■ Prohibited: 39% ■ Unzoned: 25%

(we made it illegal)

[Vermont Livability Map](#)

Why is it so hard?

Three in four Americans believe it's better for the environment if houses are built farther apart

Which comes closer to your view? (%)



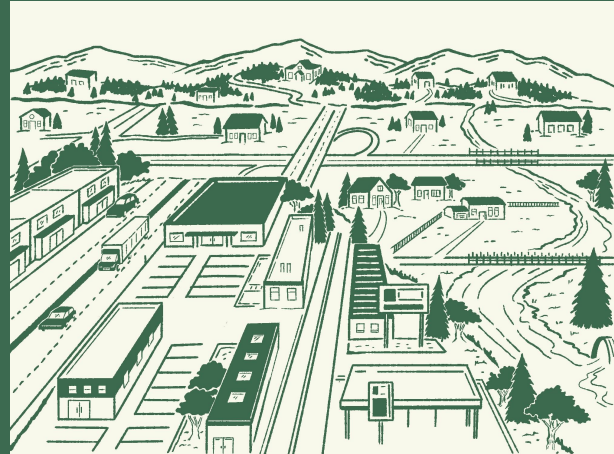
Why is it so hard?



When we make this illegal
& undermine public
investments...

We end up with this:

- fewer homes,
- vacant downtowns,
- car dependency...



The Good News: Vermont is Modernizing Its Land Use Policy

- **Re-legalized** Missing Middle Homes
- Removed excessive parking requirements
- Removed discretionary powers from local boards
- Limited zoning appeals
- Created new housing targets



Fairlee



Waterbury



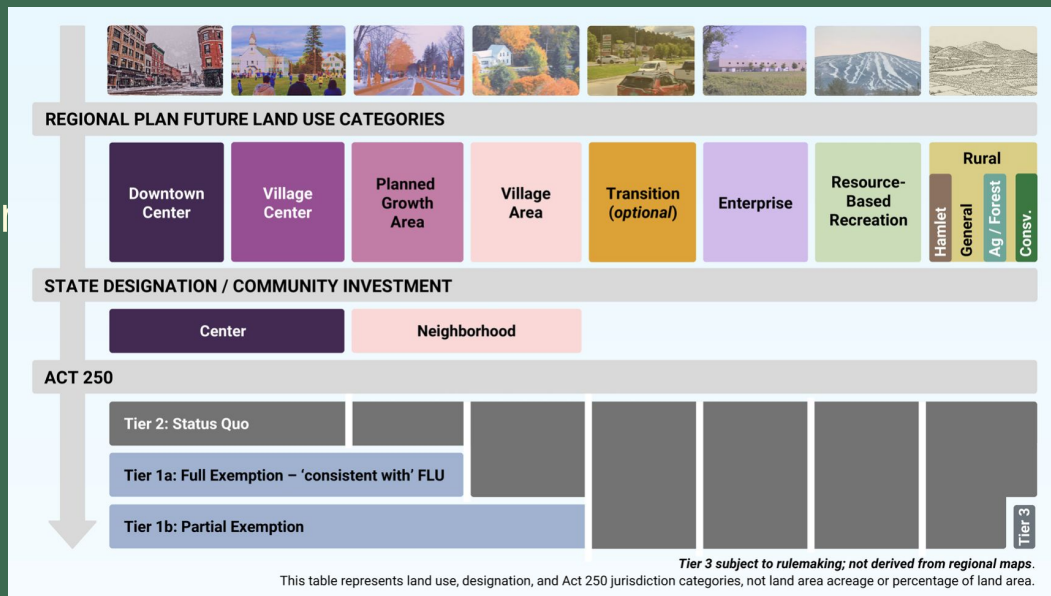
Bristol



Chester

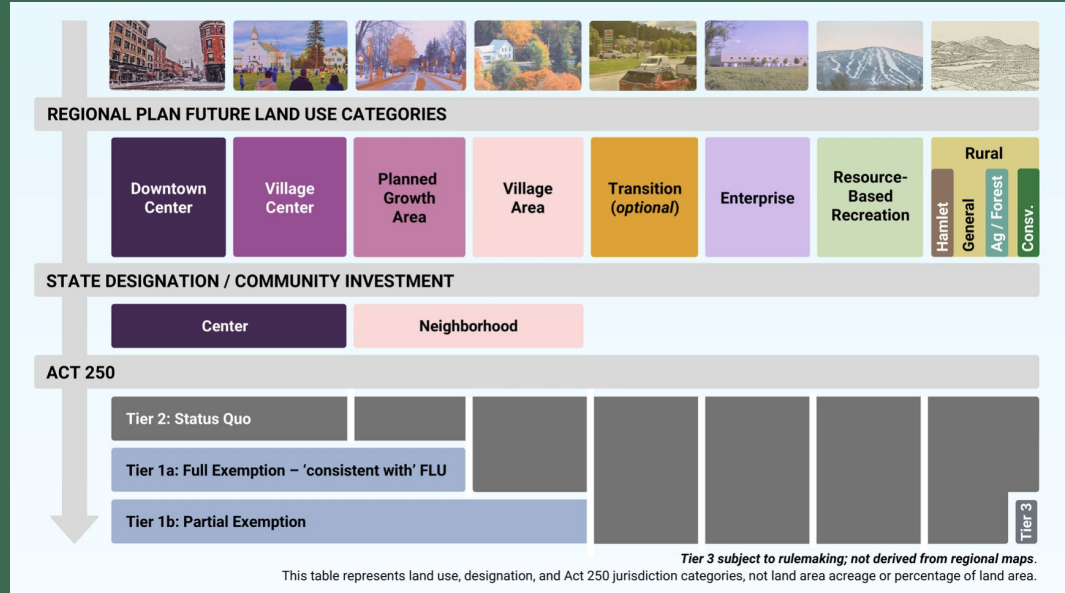
The Good News: Vermont is Modernizing Its Land Use Policy

- Streamlined Act 250 permitting
- Strengthened regional and municipal planning
- Expands and simplifies state designations for investment & benefits



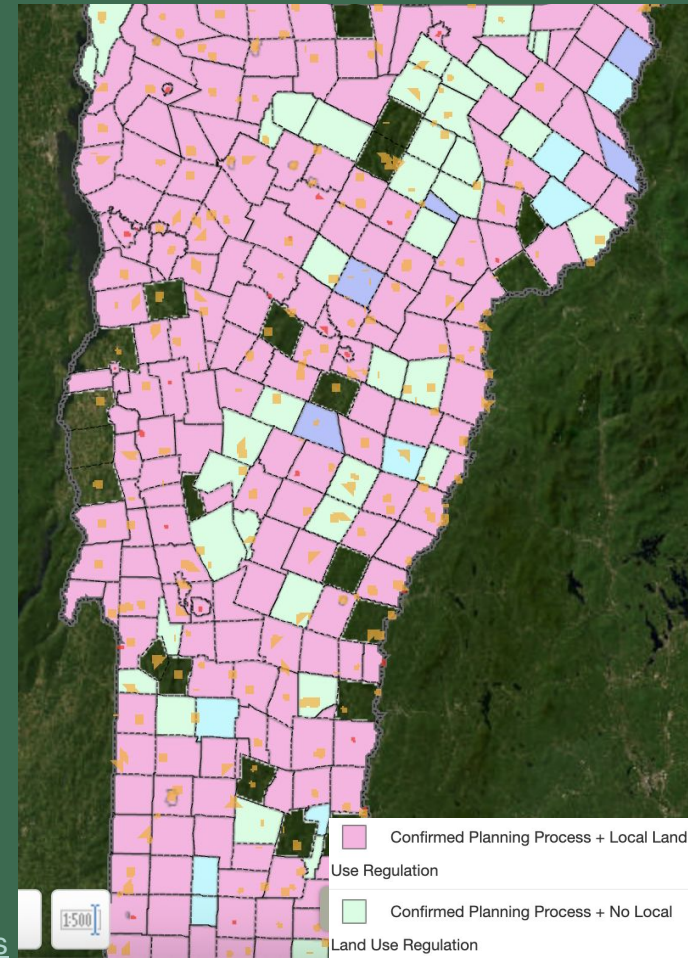
The Good News: Vermont is Modernizing Its Land Use Policy

Tools for our smallest communities are focused here



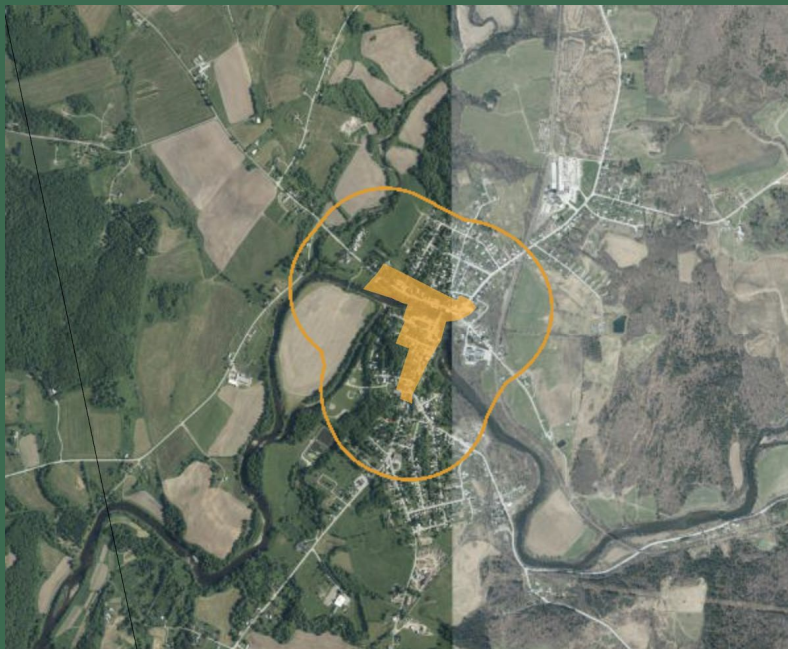
Tier 1B Areas

- Opt-in
- Town plan
- Zoning & subdivision bylaws
- Exclude or regulate flood hazard areas & river corridors
- Has water, wastewater OR adequate soils for development
- Zoning administration

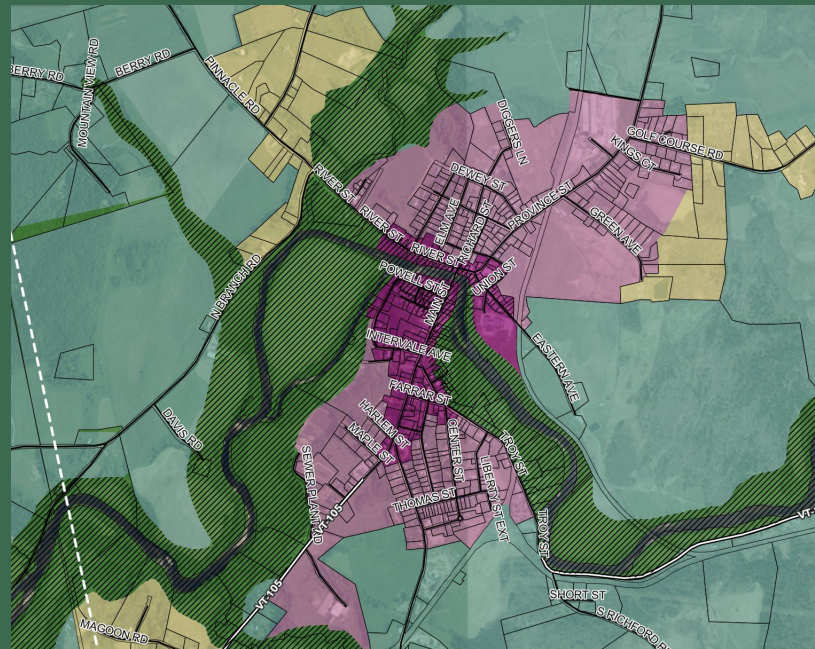


Tier 1B Areas: Richford, pop. 2,346

Act 250 trigger: 10 units



Act 250 trigger: 50 units (within pink area)

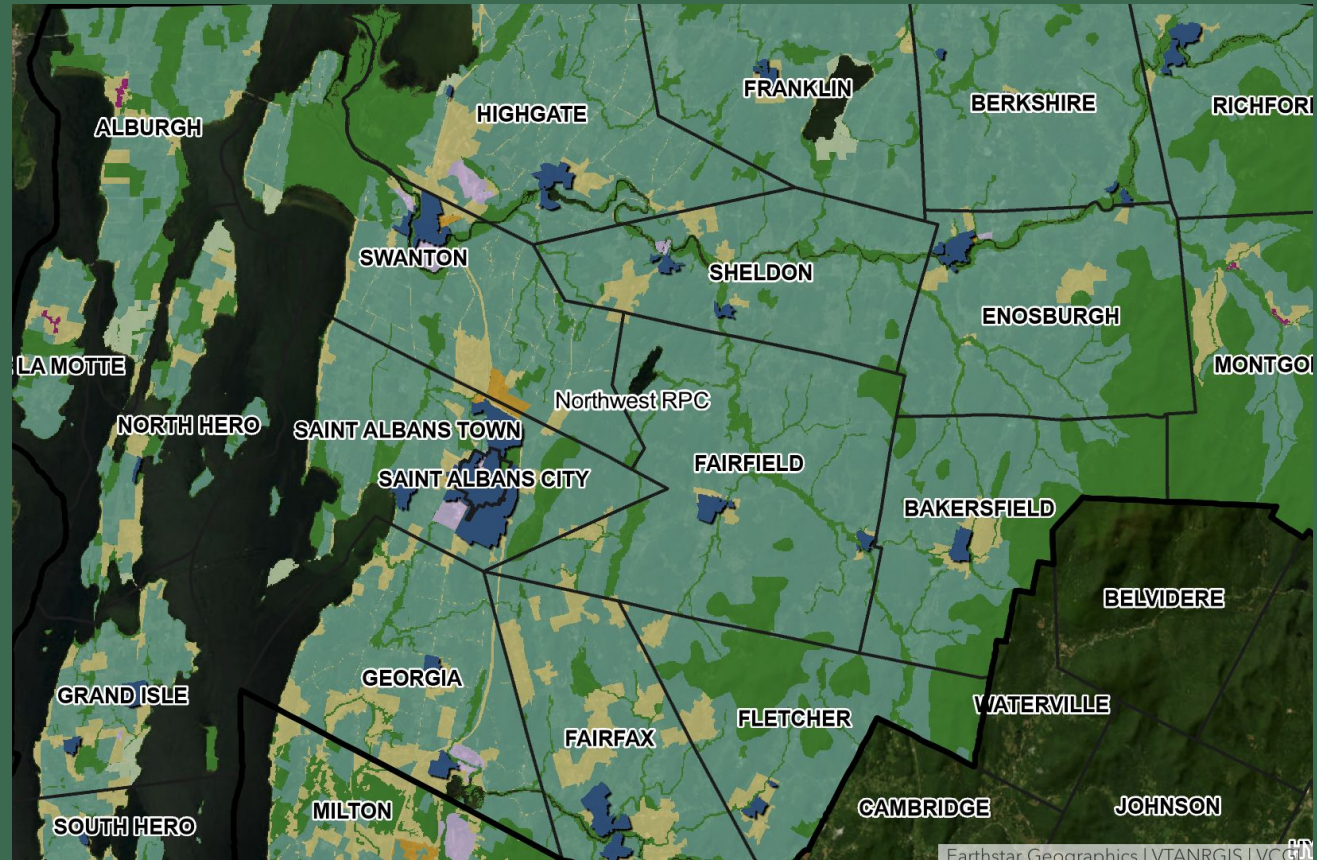


Tier 1B Areas

(pre-application phase)

Northwest RPC

17/23 opting-in *so far!





Units in 3- and 4-Unit Multi-Family Structures

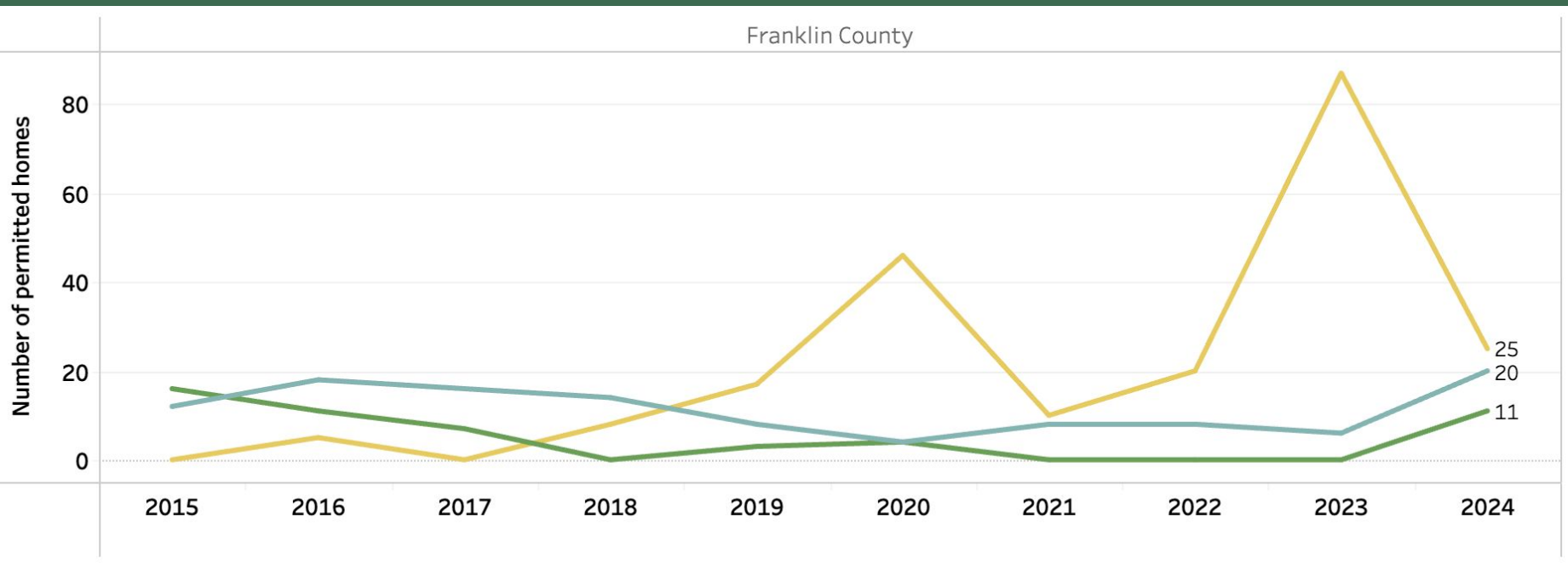


Units in 5+ Unit Multi-Family Structures



Units in 2-Unit Multi-Family Structures

Building Permits by Construction Type

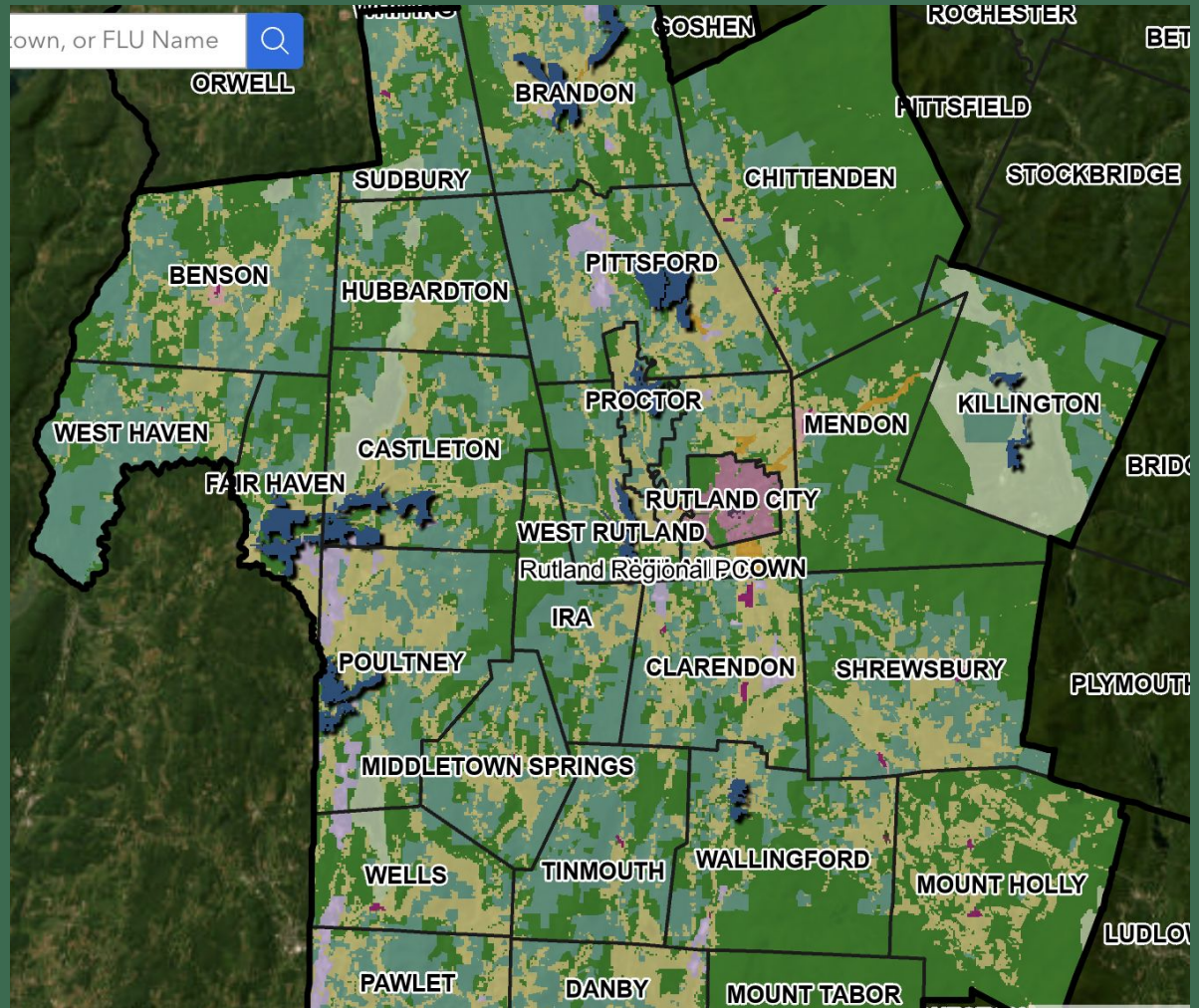


Tier 1B Areas

(pre-application phase)

Rutland RPC

10/27 opting-in *so far!



Building Permits by Construction Type



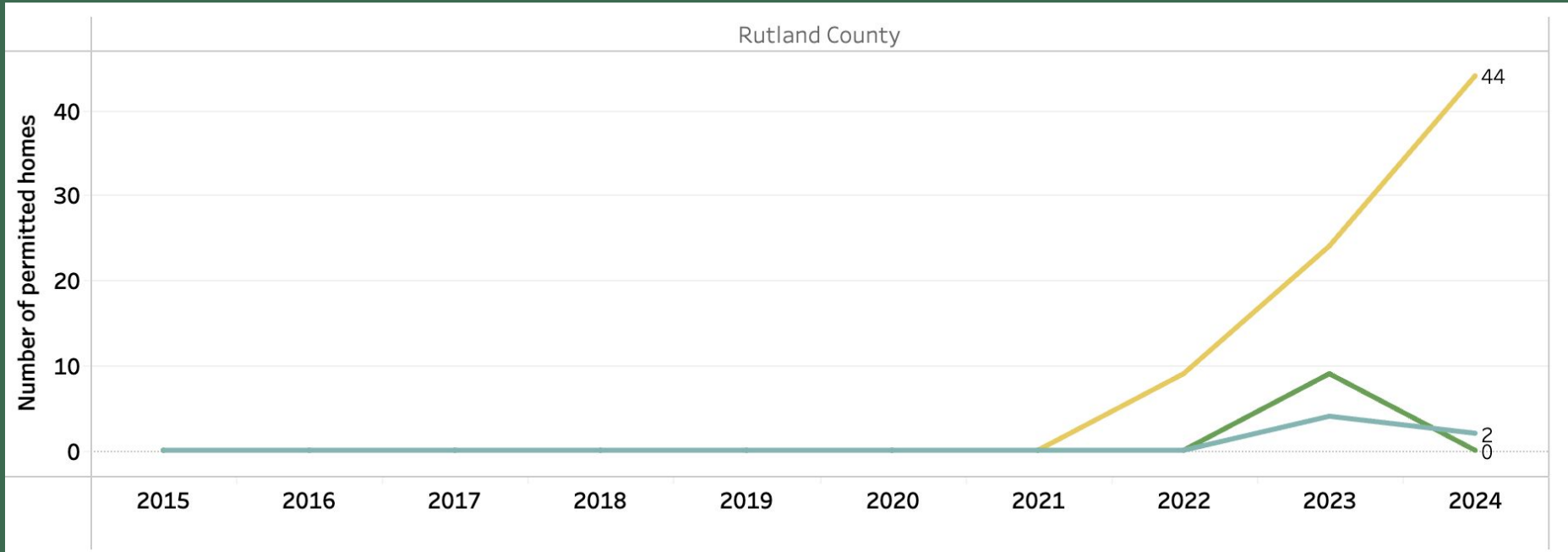
Units in 3- and 4-Unit Multi-Family Structures



Units in 5+ Unit Multi-Family Structures



Units in 2-Unit Multi-Family Structures



We made monumental changes to modernize Vermont's land use system—changes meant to support housing *and* build resilience.

This kind of reform requires care and intentionality to implement well.

We're digging out from decades of under building. It will take time to get to where we need to be.

Weakening environmental protections will not solve the housing crisis—but it would risk accelerating climate and environmental pollution, resource loss, and put more Vermonters in harm's way.

What's Next?

- Make it easier and more accessible for developers of all sizes to work through the state's permitting process by reinstating permit navigators
- Improve and facilitate the Act 250 appeals process for housing
- Limit arbitrary zoning appeals for housing
- Address non-primary homeowner use of existing homes
- Explore ways to enable more effective use of land, such as through land value taxation or a land bank
- Fully fund VHCB, the Land Access & Opportunity Board, and expand the Downtown & Village Tax Credit Program