

# Sustainable Housing for Vermonters

*How are we doing?*

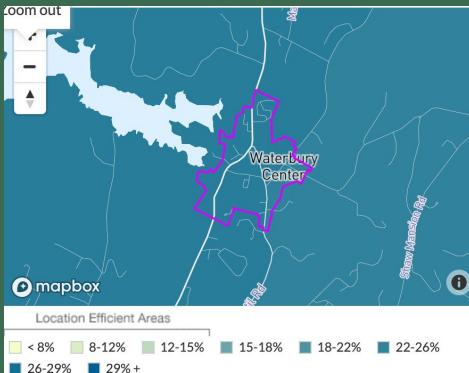
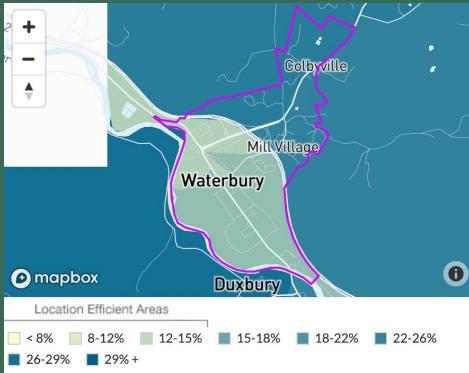
Kati Gallagher, Sustainable Communities Program Director  
Jon Groveman, Policy & Water Program Director



# Where we grow matters.



# Where we grow matters.



## 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

## 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

uation worsening despite millions invested ...  
mont 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?

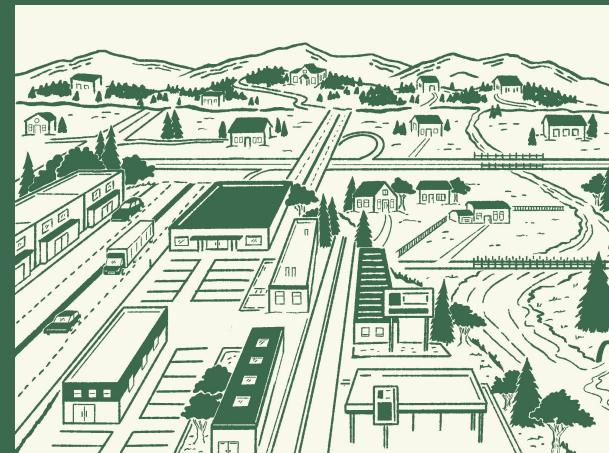


We end up with this:

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



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



# 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



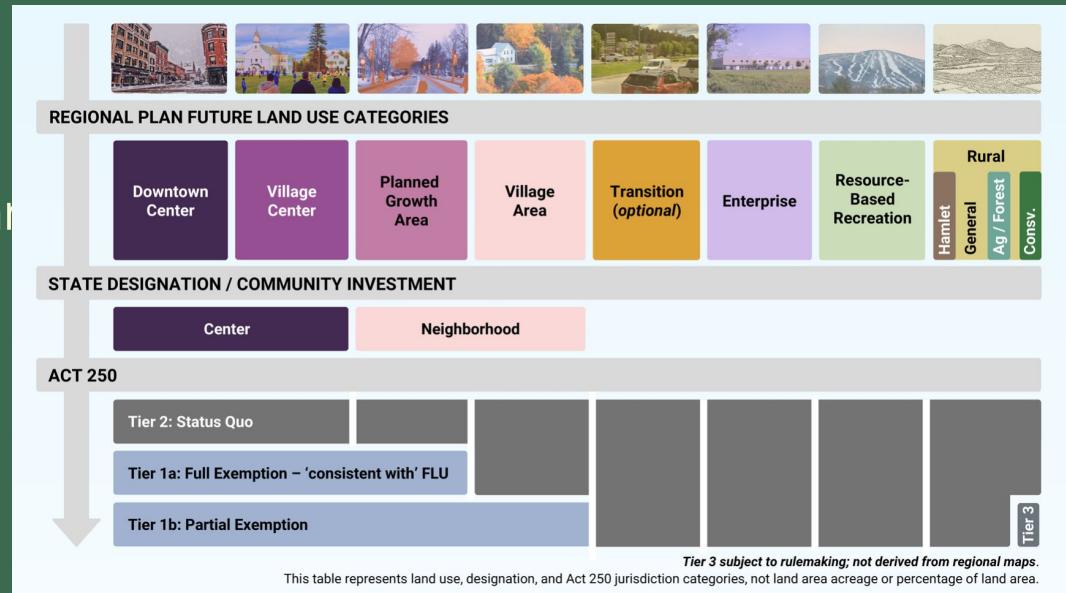
Bristol



Chester

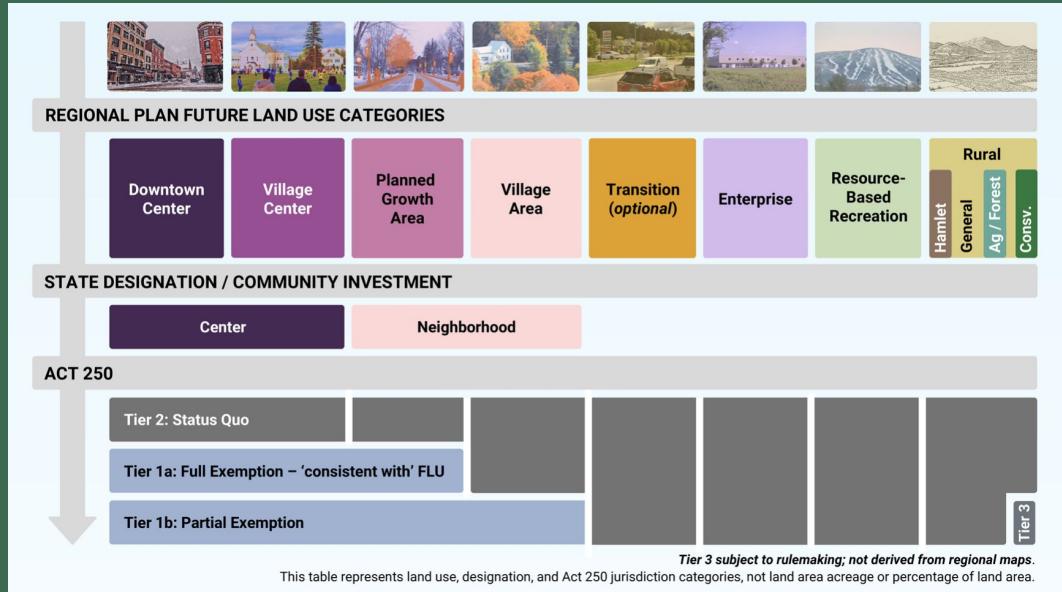
# The Good News: Vermont is Modernizing Its Land Use Policy

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



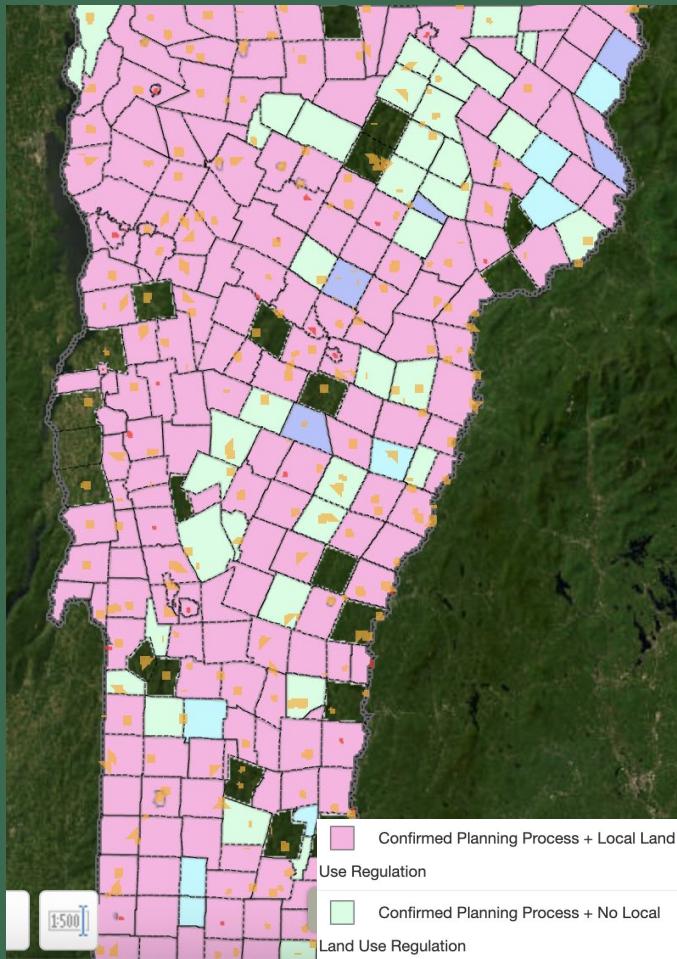
# The Good News: Vermont is Modernizing Its Land Use Policy

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

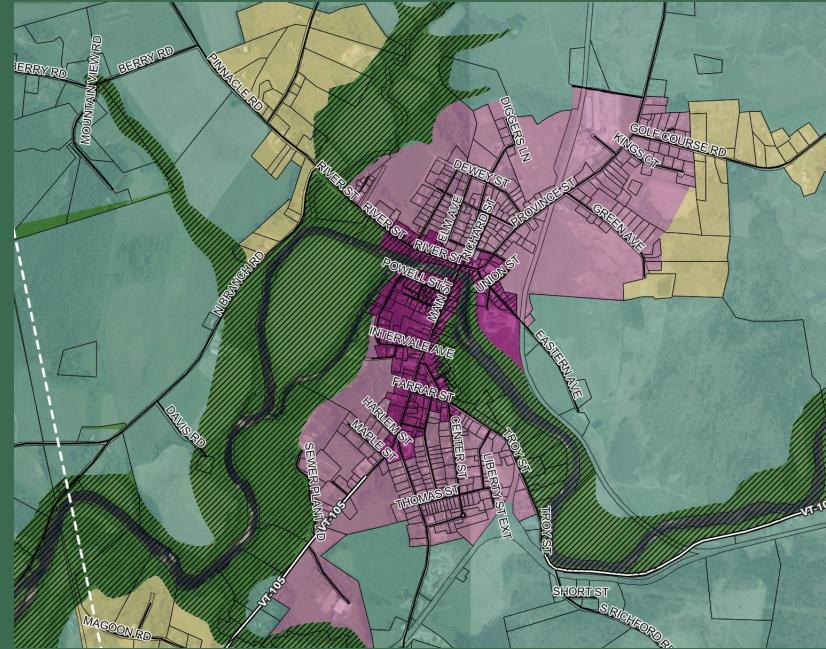


# Tier 1B Areas: Richford, pop. 2,346

Act 250 trigger: 10 units



Act 250 trigger: 50 units (within pink area)

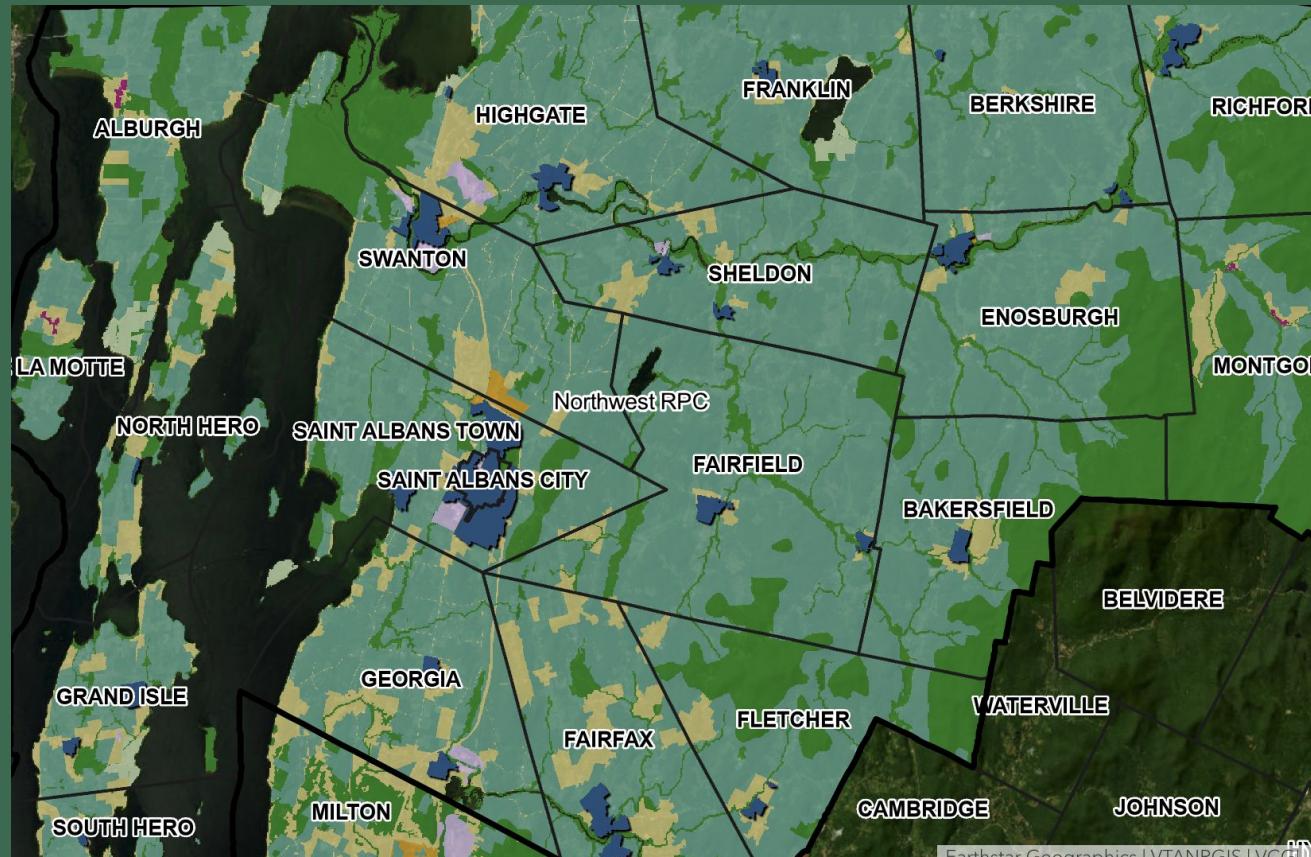


# Tier 1B Areas

(pre-application phase)

Northwest RPC

17/23 opting-in \*so far!



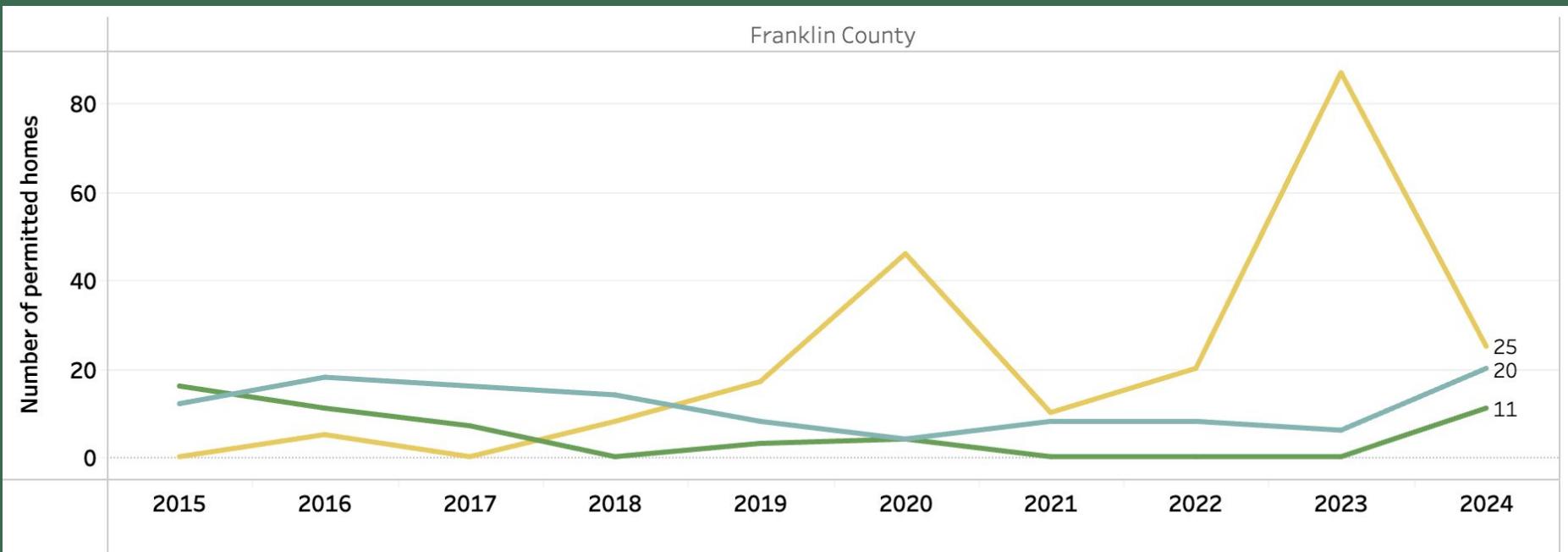


Units in 3- and 4-Unit Multi-Family Structures

Units in 5+ Unit Multi-Family Structures

Units in 2-Unit Multi-Family Structures

# Building Permits by Construction Type

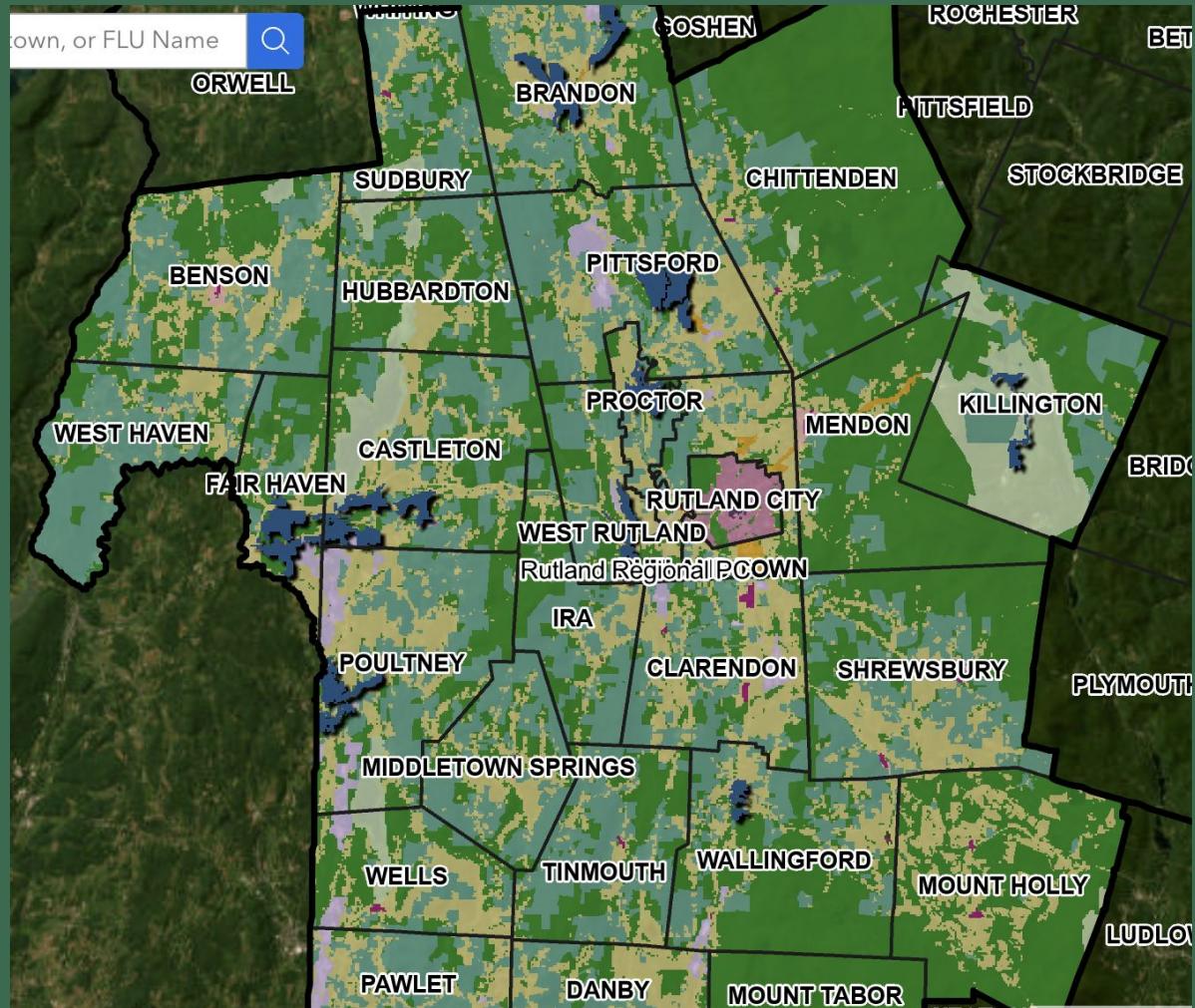


# Tier 1B Areas

(pre-application phase)

Rutland RPC

10/27 opting-in \*so far!



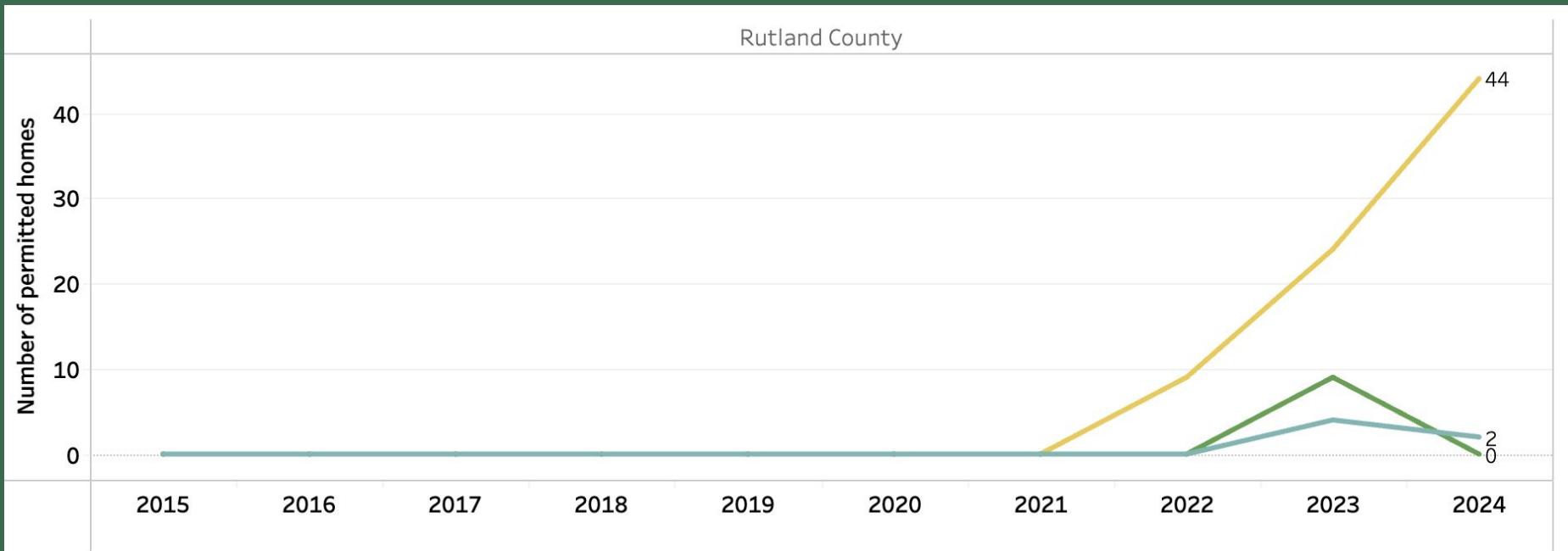


Units in 3- and 4-Unit Multi-Family Structures

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# Building Permits by Construction Type



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