

Press Release

June 7, 2024

St. Albans Town, Vermont. Planners in Franklin County, Vermont continue to engage in a multi-year effort exploring how to reduce regulatory barriers in their zoning bylaws to better meet their housing goals. This effort was supported by the multi-town project - Housing Choice and Affordability in Northwest Vermont. It was funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development as a consortium bylaw modernization grant to the Town of St. Albans and the participating communities of Highgate, Sheldon, Enosburgh and Montgomery. The Town hired the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) to complete the project.

As a result, St. Albans Town adopted bylaw updates in November 2023 to make a variety of housing options easier to develop in residential and mixed-use districts. The Town continues its bylaw modernization efforts as they refine recommendations made by this project for an updated St. Albans Bay zoning district and standards, as well as expanding residential zoning to new areas surrounding the growth centers to support higher density housing options. Other participating municipalities have followed suit with similar bylaw updates under consideration.

Adequate housing serves as a foundation for individuals to lead full and healthy lives, communities to be vibrant and inclusive, and the local and regional economy to grow and prosper. The region's 2020 housing needs assessment completed by NRPC; however, points to our challenges. There is a limited supply of homes on the market and sale prices are at an all-time high. Rental housing is in even more short supply. Meanwhile, NRPC Senior Planner Greta Brunswick explains, cost-burden for housing is felt most for both young and senior residents, the former of which our communities seek to recruit and retain and the latter of which is increasing in number and has special needs.

Communities are working on multiple fronts to promote walkable neighborhoods and a variety of housing options. In St. Albans Town, Highgate and Montgomery bylaw updates are in tandem with efforts to provide community wastewater and increase pedestrian accessibility and connectivity in areas planned for growth. Sheldon is balancing the need for more housing with capacity constraints in the local school. Enosburg Falls is working to find opportunities for new gentle infill within their existing neighborhoods.

In St. Albans Town, planners are now gearing up for a new project to develop a transit-oriented development master plan and subsequent development regulations for the locally and regionally designated growth center areas. This project is funded by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission via a RAISE grant from the US Department of Transportation.

“As one of the regions fastest growing communities and biggest employment and commercial center surrounding the region’s lively downtown center in the City of St. Albans, we are taking deliberate and proactive steps to ensure our regulations are modernized in support of high-density housing and have the planning underfoot to increase, and in some cases, repair walkability and neighborhood connections in the town.” says Director of Community Development, Megan Sherlund.

More information on the project can be found at the project website:
<https://www.nrpcvt.com/housing/housing-choice-affordability-project/>. Please contact Greta Brunswick, NRPC Senior Planner or Megan Sherlund, St. Albans Town Director of Community Development with any questions.