



TEL 802.846-4490 FAX 802.846-4494

EMAIL info@ccrpcvt.org WEB www.ccrpcvt.org

30 Kimball Avenue • Suite 206 • South Burlington • Vermont 05403

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HOUSING POSITION STATEMENT

As Adopted by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission on March 27, 2006

BACKGROUND

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission recognizes that the housing shortage and the condition of older residential buildings are critical problems facing Chittenden County and supports state policies that encourage well-planned residential development and enforce safety standards for homes.

Vermont has learned through rehabilitation of its older multi-family residential buildings, and through tragic fires in such locations causing loss of life, that a majority of these older buildings do not meet modern code requirements for materials, access & egress, electrical wiring, plumbing or fire detection & suppression equipment such as smoke or carbon monoxide detectors.

Additionally, there is a serious shortfall in the number of units for sale and available for rent in the County's lower and middle price ranges. The CCRPC completed a housing study in 2002 that illustrates the depth of the problem. The Commission found that the county had a shortfall of approximately 2,000 units of all types and prices. Further, the Commission found that if the rate of population and employment growth continued at 2002 levels, and the production of new housing units did not increase, then the shortfall would increase to almost 5,000 units by 2010.

Logically, this shortfall in available units had an impact on the cost of housing. As the following table illustrates, in a five year period the cost of a primary residence or a rental unit increased significantly, median prices by 47%, rents by 13%.

Chittenden County Housing Costs

Year	Median Price of Primary Residence Sold	Median Rents (2 Bedroom unit)
2000	\$160,000	\$750
2001	\$175,000	\$780
2002	\$185,250	\$804
2003	\$209,900	\$815
2004	\$235,000	\$848

Source: Vermont Housing Data Bank

MISSION

To serve Chittenden County and its communities through an effective regional planning process characterized by communication, facilitation, education, collaboration, and technical assistance.

HOUSING POSTIONS

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) endorses the following policies that promote safe and affordable housing for its residents of Chittenden County.

CCRPC supports the following policies that have a direct impact on reducing the cost of housing.

- **Housing Land Bank** – This proposes creation of an inventory of surplus state-owned lands and donated privately-held lands screened to determine their suitability for housing development in a manner consistent with Vermont’s land use goals (24 VSA 4303) and applicable regional and municipal plans. A housing land bank established in Vermont should be administered in a way that assures the long-term affordability of any housing built on land from the bank. Land from the bank may be sold, but proceeds from sales should be used to support housing affordable to low and moderate-income households.
- **Housing in Planned Growth Centers** – The Legislature should provide meaningful incentives that will encourage developers to locate new housing in municipally planned growth centers through tools such as Act 250 thresholds that mirror those applied in state-designated downtowns.
- **The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board** – Full funding should be restored to municipal planning grants and to VHCB under the current statutory formula that distributes a portion of revenues from the Property Transfer Tax to affordable housing.

CCRPC supports the following policies that mitigate the consequences of our housing problem and provide assistance to families seeking housing.

- **Temporary Housing Assistance** – Provision of at least level funding (at FY2006 levels) for this program of last-resort housing for Vermonters who face homelessness. The maximum eligibility for assistance should remain at 84 days.
- **Homeless Shelters and Services** – Provision of adequate funding for homeless shelter operating costs and prevention services through the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity to respond to the statewide trend toward longer stays in shelters.
- **Employer Assisted Housing** – Creation of incentives, such as tax credits or other financial tools, for public and private employers to provide tangible assistance to low and moderate-income employees seeking housing.

CCRPC supports the following policies that are intended to improve the safety of housing.

- **Inspection at Time of Sale** – Stipulation that rental housing units comply with the Vermont Rental Housing Health Code, the Uniform Fire Code, and Vermont Life Safety Code at the time of transfer of ownership or, if not completed prior to the sale, that a follow-up inspection be conducted to assure compliance. The cost of necessary repairs should be a matter worked out between the buyer and seller.
- **Statewide Rental Housing Code Enforcement System** – Creation of a statewide rental housing code enforcement system for multi-family housing that is not owner-occupied. Such an enforcement system should not replace city codes or code inspectors currently in effect. Municipal codes should be at least as restrictive as statewide codes. Code Inspectors would be funded, to the extent possible, through an annual apartment registration fee.