



HOUSING STUDY UNDERHILL, VERMONT

DECEMBER 2020

PAGE	SECTION
1	Demographic Profile
4	Housing Profile
8	Development Pattern
12	Findings and Recommendations
A-1	Housing Survey Results

CONTENTS

CREDITS

Funding for the 2020 Underhill Housing Study was obtained from the Municipal Planning Grant Program, administered by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.

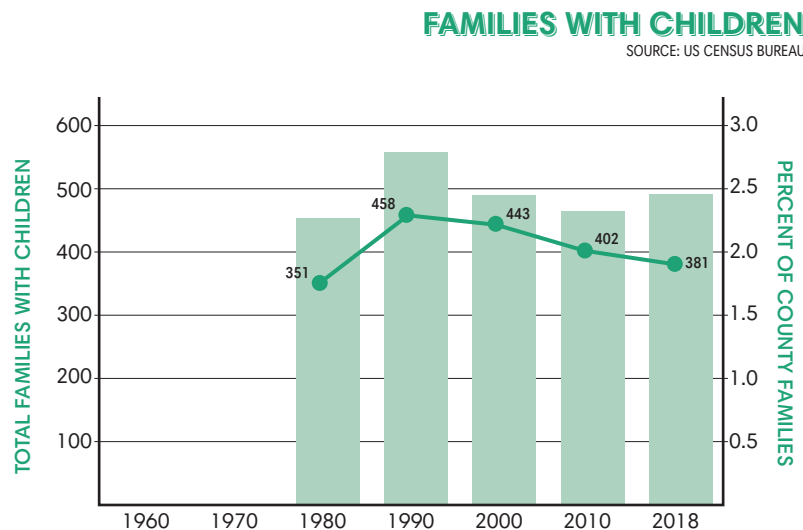
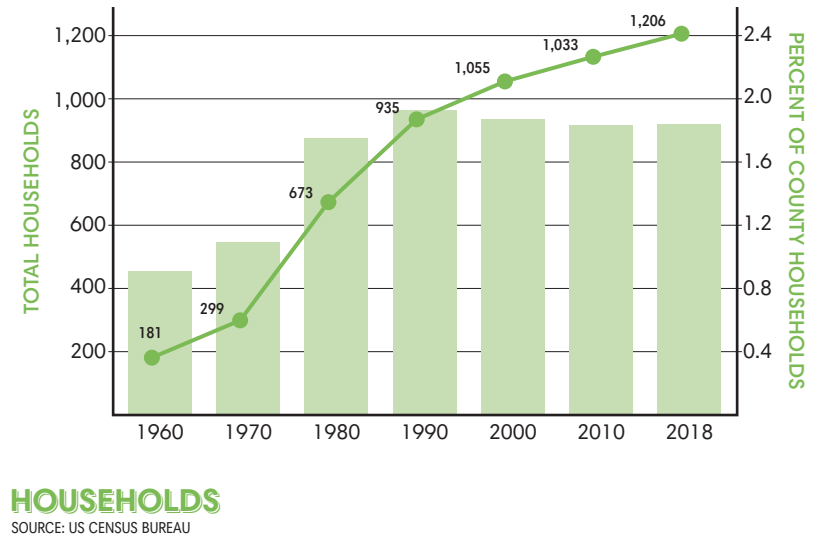
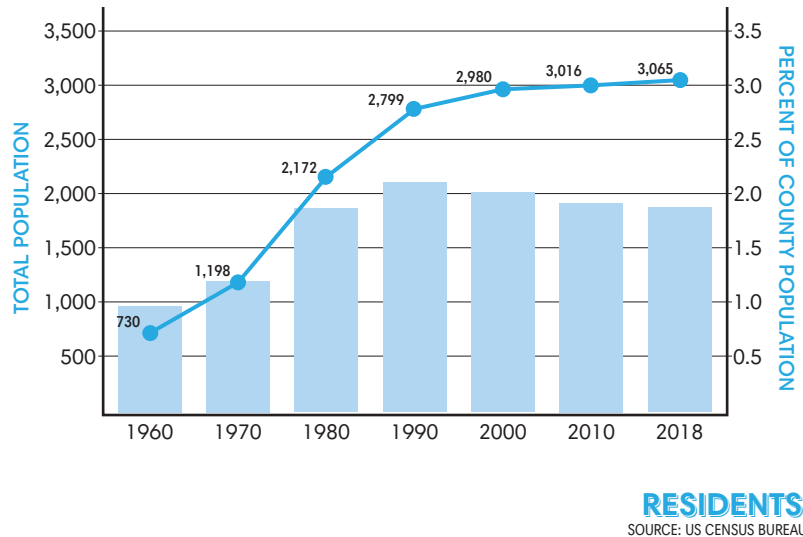
Brandy Saxton, AICP of PlaceSense prepared this 2020 Underhill Housing Study under the direction of the Underhill Planning Director, Andrew Strniste, and the Underhill Planning Commission:

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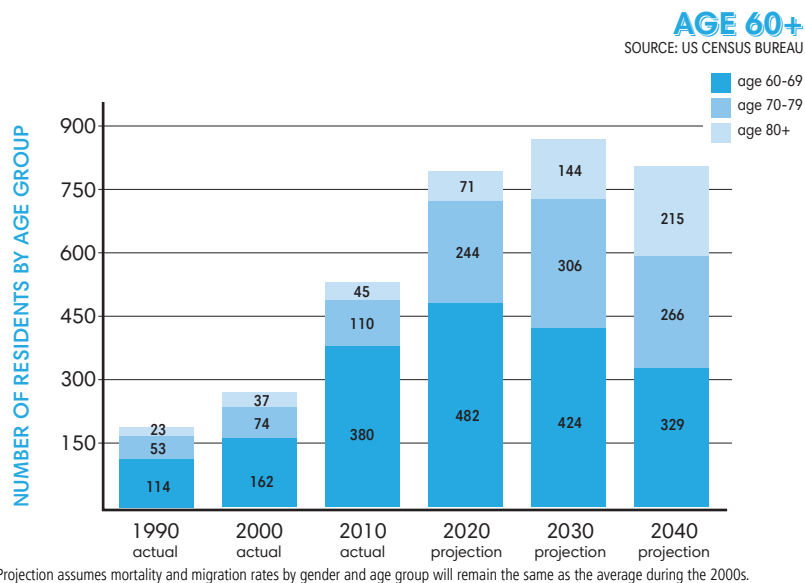
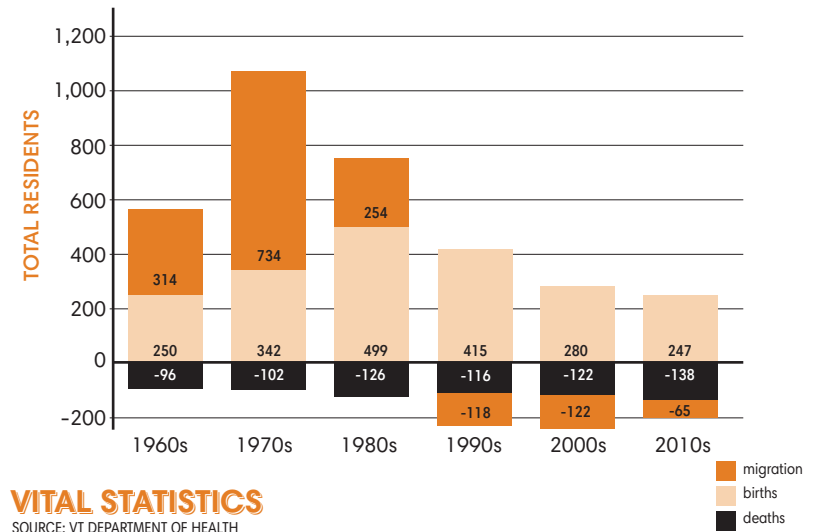
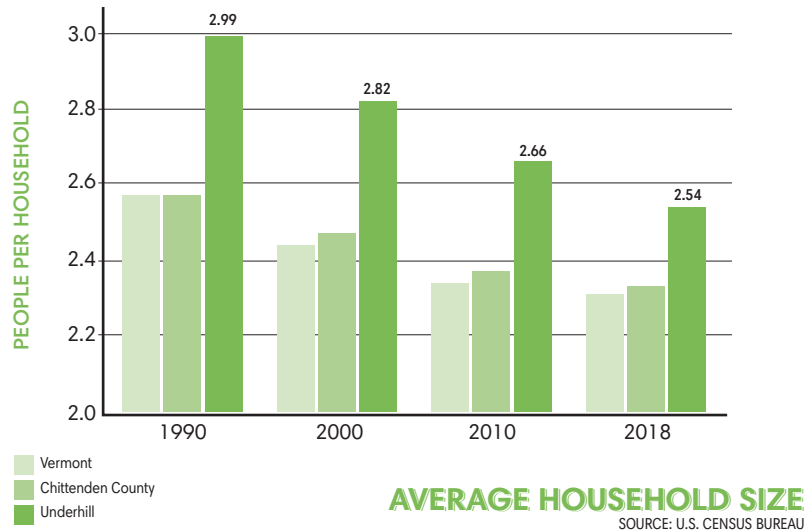
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reduce the minimum lot size in the Underhill Flats and Underhill Center zoning districts to ½ acre.
2. Reduce the minimum lot frontage in the Underhill Flats and Underhill Center zoning districts to 80 feet.
3. Specify a maximum residential density distinct from minimum lot size in all zoning districts.
4. Allow up to two single-family dwellings on a lot and continue to allow more with PUD approval.
5. Revise the accessory dwelling unit provisions to align with state statute and regulations.
6. Increase the number of dwellings that may be served by a shared driveway from 3 to 5.
7. Encourage a diversity of housing types in the village and rural residential zoning districts.
8. Revise zoning districts to allow for village residential growth and to ensure land zoned for rural residential development is suitable for housing.
9. Undertake a village wastewater alternatives study to seek affordable solutions that would address the major barrier to furthering the town's housing objectives and the state's land use planning goals.
10. Call upon the state to recognize that Vermont's housing crisis is also an infrastructure crisis and to address the needs of rural communities for affordable water and wastewater solutions.
11. Establish a housing fund aimed at preserving the affordability of existing homes for future residents.



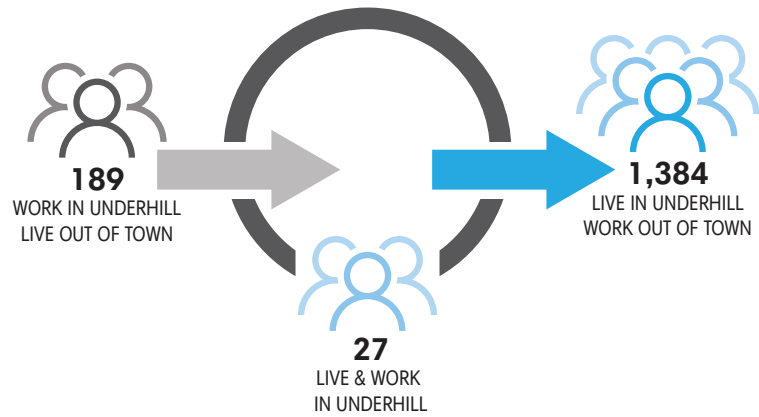
“families with children are no longer the driving force shaping Underhill’s demographic trends

Underhill grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the regional economy, completion of Interstate 89 and baby boomers starting families. The rate of population growth slowed significantly in the 1990s and has largely stagnated during the past 20 years. The number of households has grown at a faster rate than the number of residents as households have become smaller. Families with children, who represented more than half of all households living in town in 1980, now account for less than one-third of households.

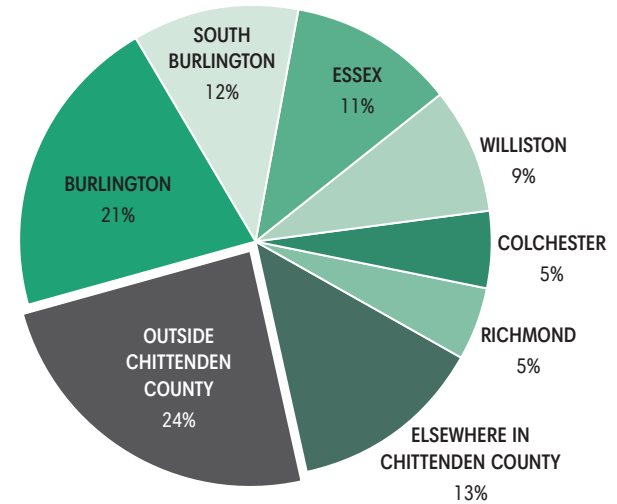


“by 2030 all baby boomers will be age 65 or older and most households will consist of 1 or 2 people

Baby boomers arrived in Underhill starting in the late-1960s. In the 1970s, people moving into town accounted for 75% of the population growth. The boomers started families. In the 1980s, natural increase (births minus deaths) accounted for 60% of the town's population growth. As those children grew up and moved away, average household size began declining. Currently, about 60% of households in Underhill consist of 1 or 2 people. During the past 20 years, the increase in number of residents has been less than the amount of natural increase – meaning that more people have been moving out of Underhill than have been moving in. The 2020 Housing Survey results indicate that most boomers hope to “age in place” and remain in their current home as long as feasible.

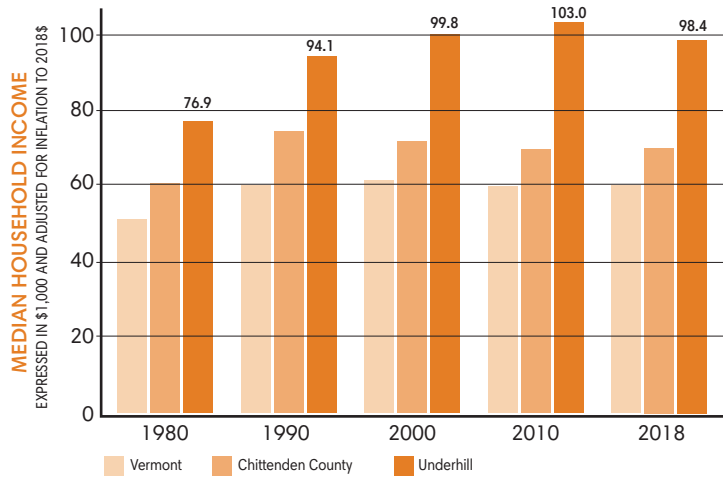


COMMUTING PATTERN
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU ON THE MAP 2017 DATA



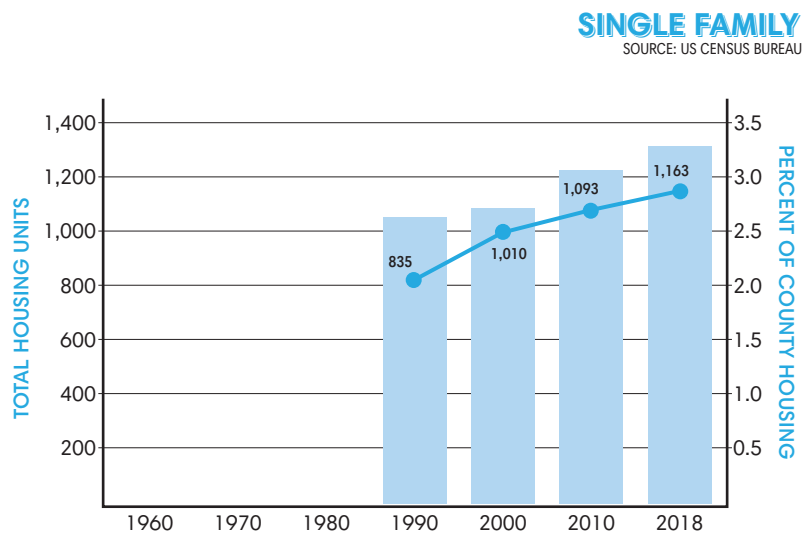
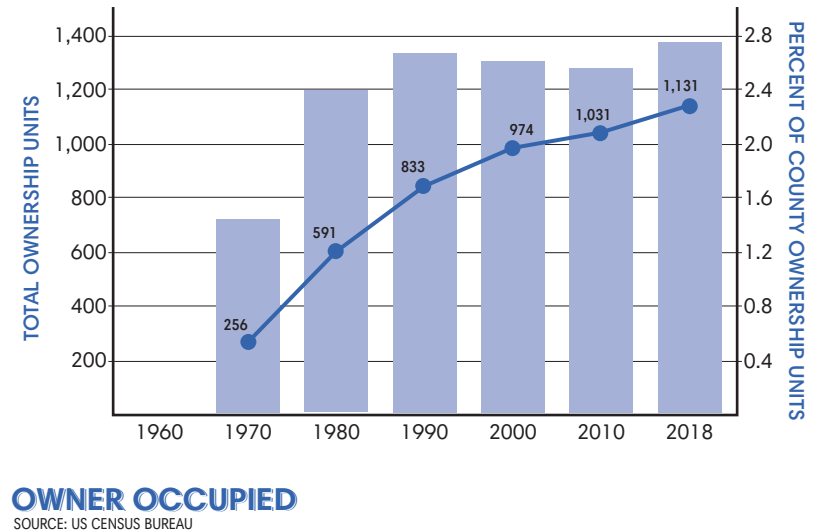
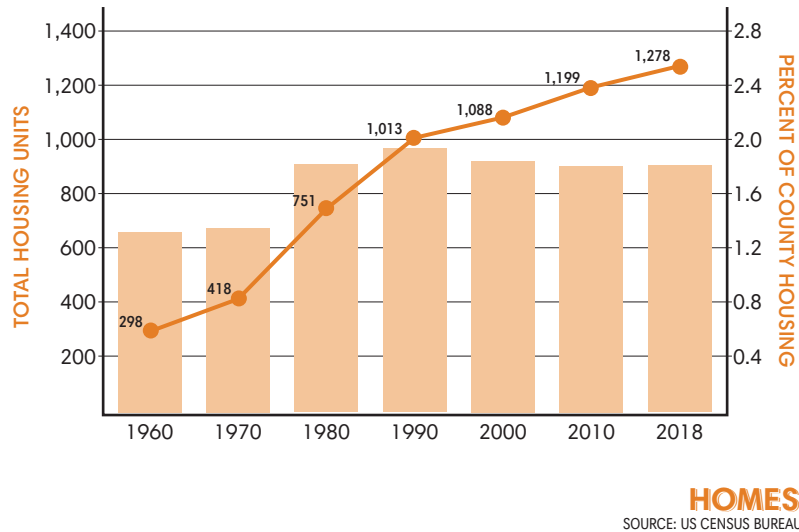
PLACE OF WORK
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU ON THE MAP 2017 DATA

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



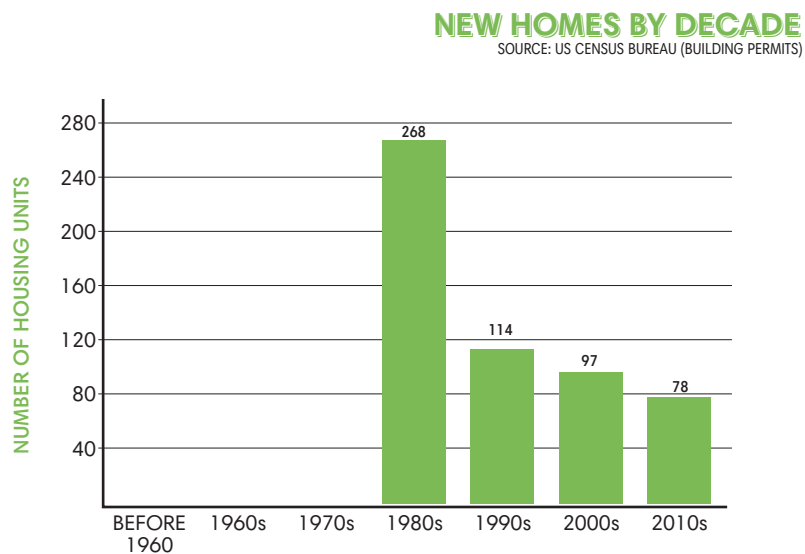
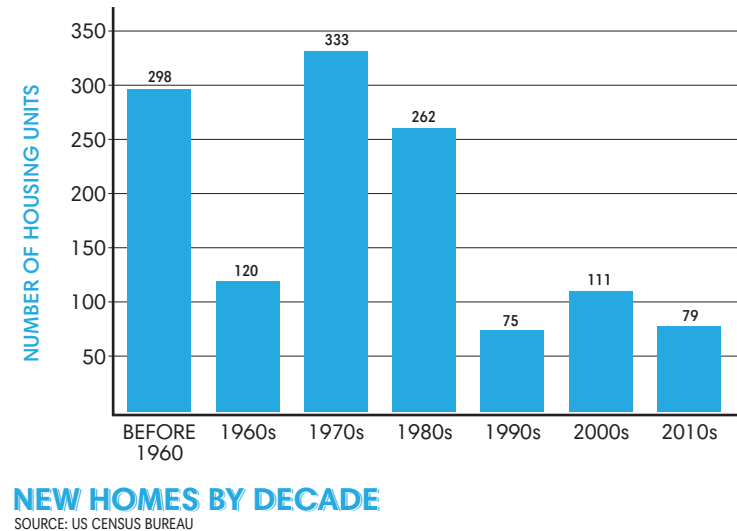
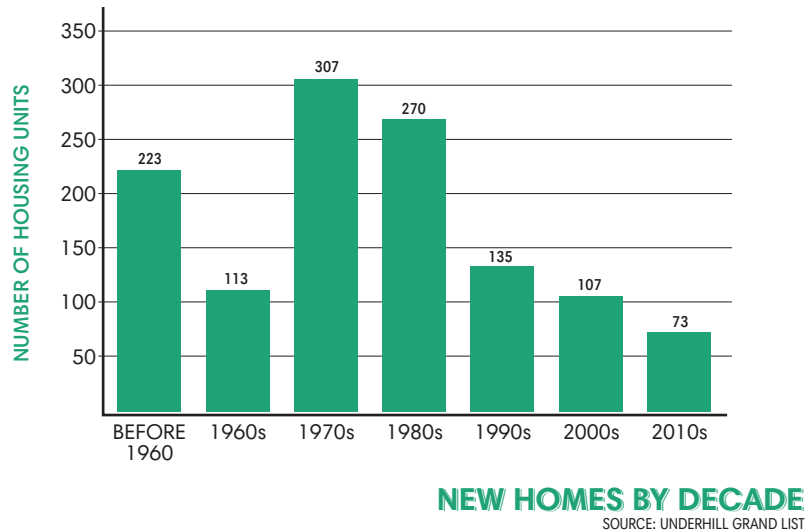
“Underhill is a bedroom community with 98% of employed residents working out of town

The employment centers of Burlington, Essex, South Burlington and Williston are within easy commuting distance from Underhill. More than three-quarters of residents commuting out of town for work have a job in Chittenden County. More than three-quarters also drive to work alone and another 12% carpool with one other person. The number of people working at jobs based in Underhill has not changed significantly during the past 30 years. The number of Underhill residents in the workforce declined during the 2010s consistent with demographic shifts. Median household income in Underhill has been about \$100,000 for the past 20 years (after adjusting for inflation). The town's higher income level reflects the larger percentage of households with two wage earners in Underhill as compared to the county as a whole.



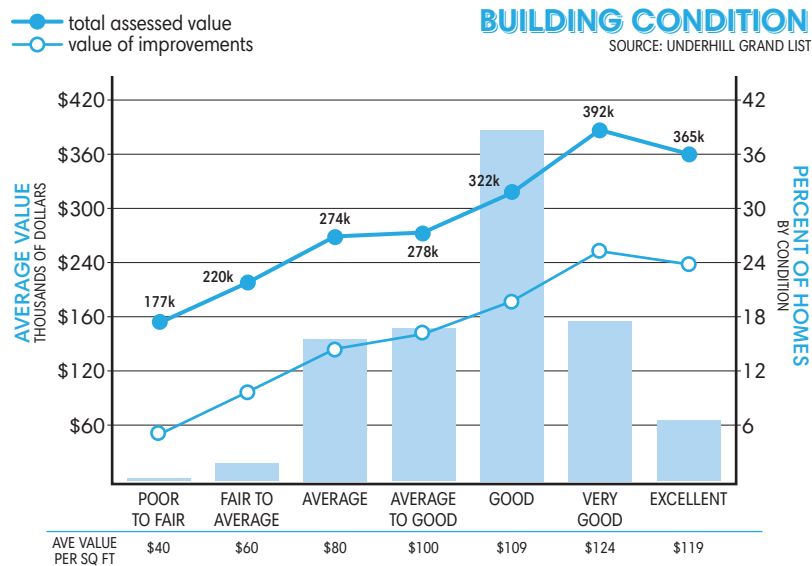
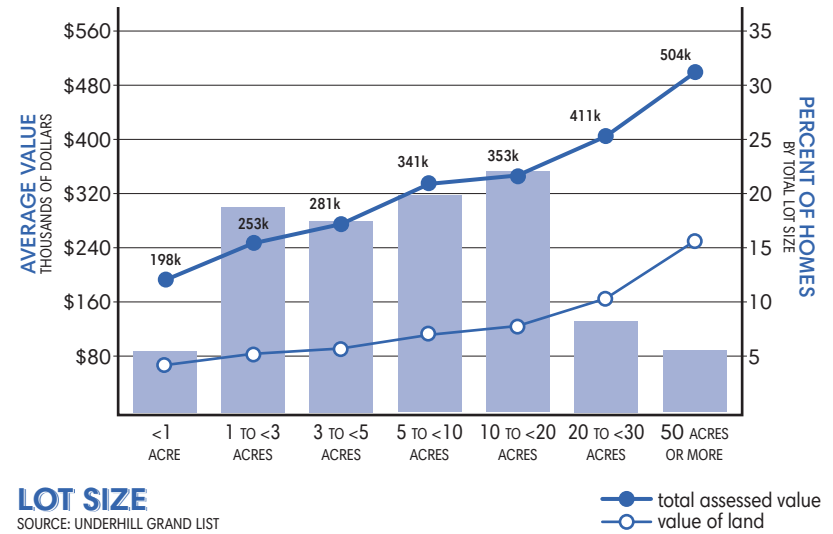
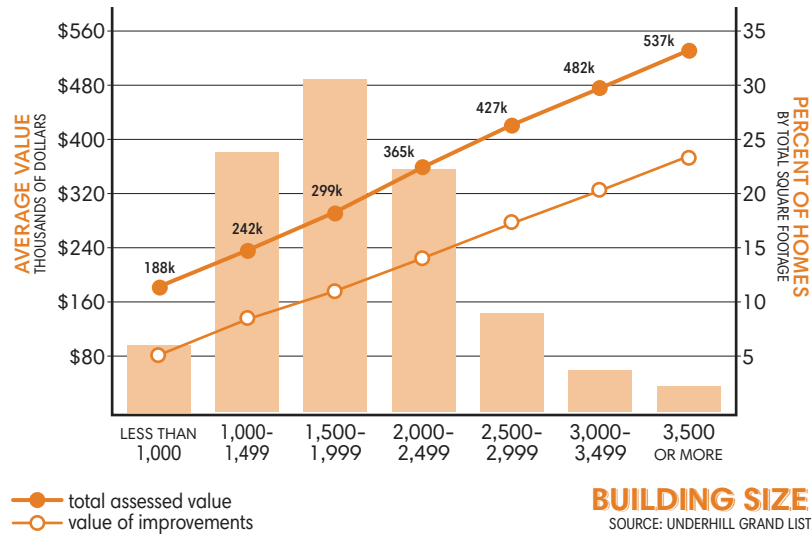
“88% of all homes in Underhill are owner-occupied and 91% are detached single-family units

This compares to 54% of homes in Vermont being owner-occupied and 66% being detached single-family units. Underhill does not offer a diversity of housing options. The results of the 2020 Housing Survey suggest that the majority of residents want the town to remain a community of primarily owner-occupied, single-family homes. When asked about the types of housing that would be appropriate in their immediate neighborhood, single-family homes on large lots was the only response supported by more than 50% of survey respondents. Very few respondents thought multi-family housing (even if only 3 or 4 units) would be appropriate in their neighborhood.



“new home construction slowed sharply in the 1990s and has continued to decline since

The building boom of the 1970s and 1980s transformed Underhill from a rural community to a bedroom community. While most residents describe where they live as rural and much of the roadscape retains a rural appearance, the town can be more accurately understood as a very low-density suburb in Chittenden County. Most of the readily developable land has been subdivided and built on since 1970. What looks like intact rural landscapes have in many cases been fragmented and parcelized. Opportunities for more rural housing are becoming increasingly limited. Most land in town is not serviced by public water and none is served by sewer infrastructure, which is necessary for housing at higher densities. The 2020 Housing Survey suggests that most residents do not currently support more housing being built in their immediate neighborhood.



“the average house lot in Underhill is 14 acres and the average home is 1,900 square feet

Because more than half the homes in town were built during the building boom of the 1970s and 1980s, there is a high level of consistency in terms of building size, construction, materials and condition. More than 70% of homes in town have been built since state and town regulations were put in place. State wastewater rules created an incentive for lots larger than 10 acres by exempting them from permitting requirements through the mid-2000s. Landowners subdivided their road frontage into lots incrementally over time in order to avoid Act 250 jurisdiction. The state Current Use Program, in place since the late 1990s, substantially reduces property taxes on large landholdings. Underhill's zoning has required large lots in many areas of town for decades. The effects of these state and local policies is evident in the dispersed, low-density pattern of rural residential development.

2018 HUD INCOME LIMITS

BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND PERCENT OF COUNTY MEDIAN INCOME

	1-PERSON	2-PERSON	3-PERSON	4-PERSON
120%	\$76,630	\$87,580	\$98,520	\$109,400
100%	\$63,860	\$72,980	\$82,100	\$91,170
80%	\$50,350	\$57,550	\$64,750	\$71,900
50%	\$32,150	\$36,750	\$41,350	\$45,900

AFFORDABLE HOME PURCHASE PRICE BASED ON VHFA HOME PRICE CALCULATOR

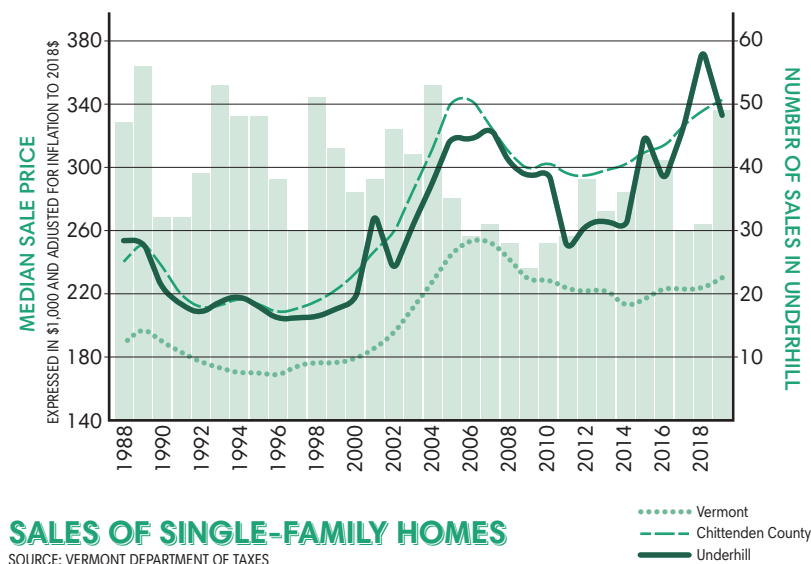
	1-PERSON	2-PERSON	3-PERSON	4-PERSON
120%	\$275,000	\$314,000	\$353,500	\$392,500
100%	\$228,500	\$262,000	\$296,000	\$327,000
80%	\$179,500	\$206,000	\$231,500	\$258,000
50%	\$113,500	\$130,500	\$147,000	\$163,500

AFFORDABLE HOMES PERCENT OF HOUSING STOCK IN 2018

	1-PERSON	2-PERSON	3-PERSON	4-PERSON
120%	54%	70%	83%	91%
100%	34%	48%	62%	75%
80%	18%	25%	35%	46%
50%	10%	12%	14%	16%

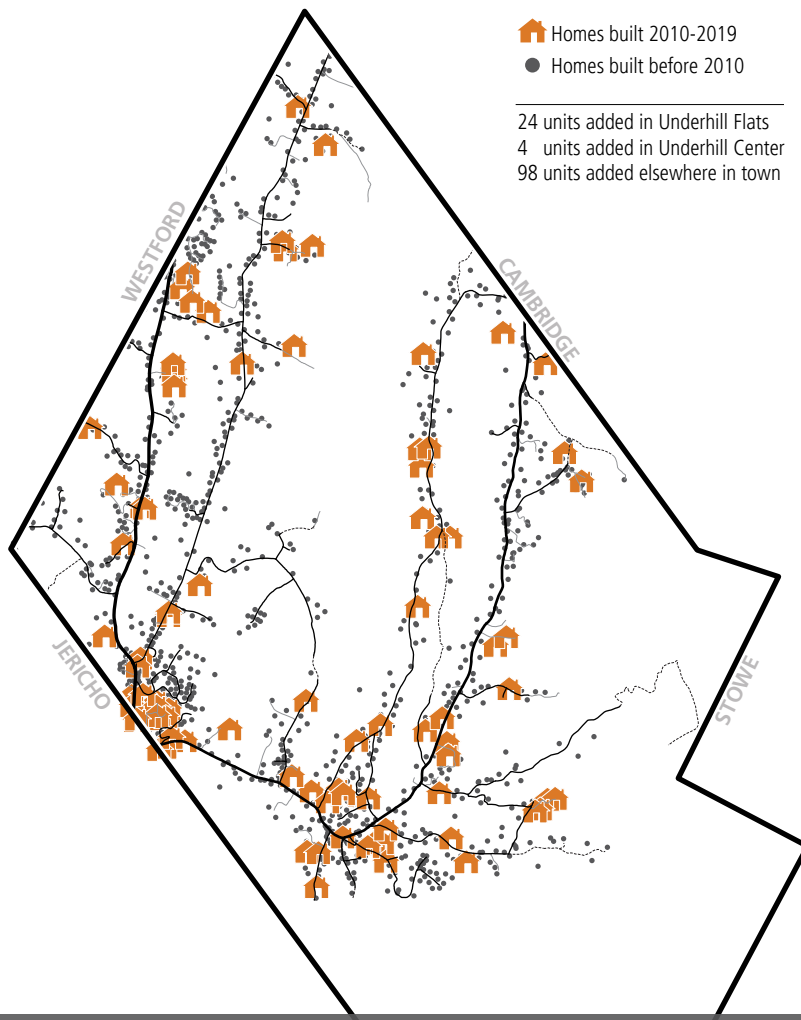
AFFORDABLE HOMES PERCENT OF SALES FROM 2015-2019

	1-PERSON	2-PERSON	3-PERSON	4-PERSON
120%	33%	49%	67%	75%
100%	22%	30%	43%	54%
80%	10%	15%	22%	28%
50%	4%	5%	6%	8%



“the median sale price of the single-family homes sold in Underhill from 2015 through 2019 was \$316,000

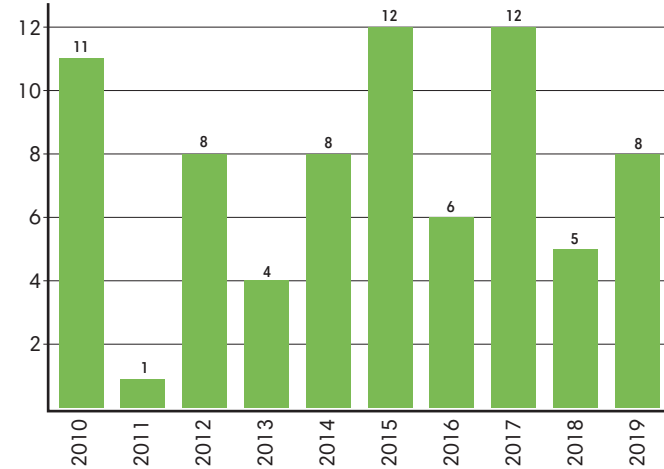
To afford to purchase a \$316,000 home would require an annual household income of at least \$88,000 and \$28,000 in cash for a down payment and closing costs. Less than half of the homes in Underhill would qualify as “affordable” under the state’s definition (housing costs not exceeding 30% of income for a household earning 80% of the county median income). “Affordable” homes comprised less than 30% of recent sales as compared to nearly 50% of single-family residences on the grand list suggesting that “affordable” homes are not put on the market with the same frequency as more expensive homes and/or “affordable” homes are selling at prices higher than their assessed value. From 2015-19, 60% of homes sold for more than their assessed value. On average, sellers had owned their homes for 10 years prior to the sale.



“homes built in the 2010s were dispersed throughout town despite policies seeking to guide most growth to the village areas

2020 HOUSING STUDY TOWN OF UNDERHILL, VERMONT

NEW RESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES

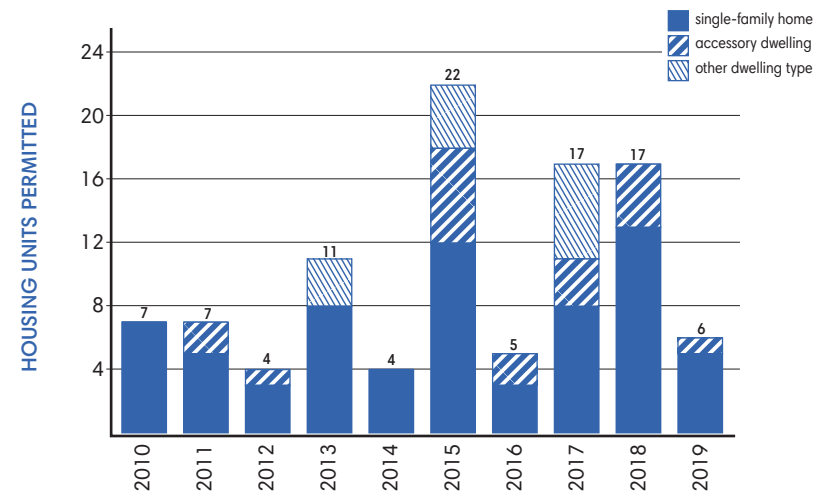


RECENT CONSTRUCTION

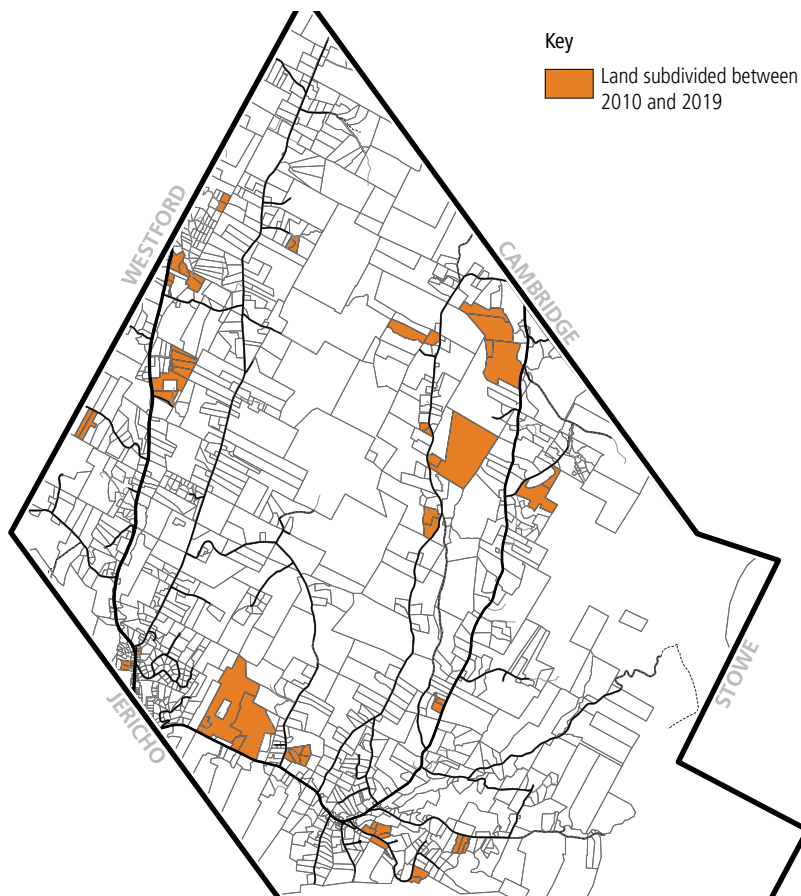
SOURCE: VERMONT E911 DATABASE

RECENT CONSTRUCTION

SOURCE: TOWN OF UNDERHILL ZONING PERMITS

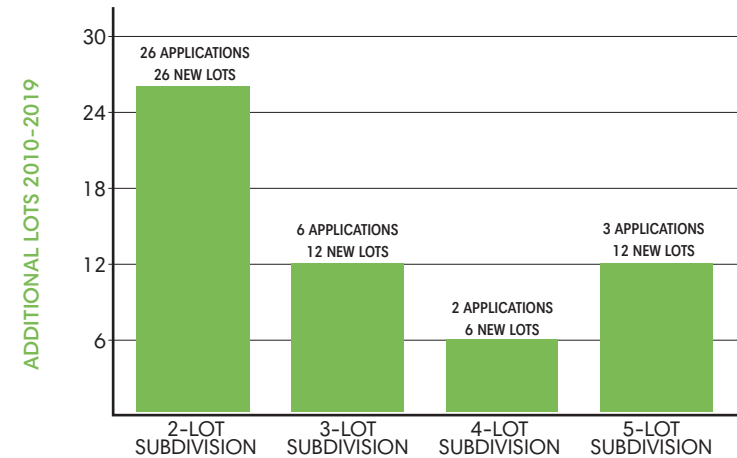


Development Pattern



“lots are created in Underhill primarily through small or incremental subdivisions that are below the Act 250 jurisdiction threshold

Some recent subdivisions have required an Act 250 permit, but that was because the land was already “jurisdictional.” Once a lot is subject to Act 250, all subsequent subdivision and development requires Act 250 approval.

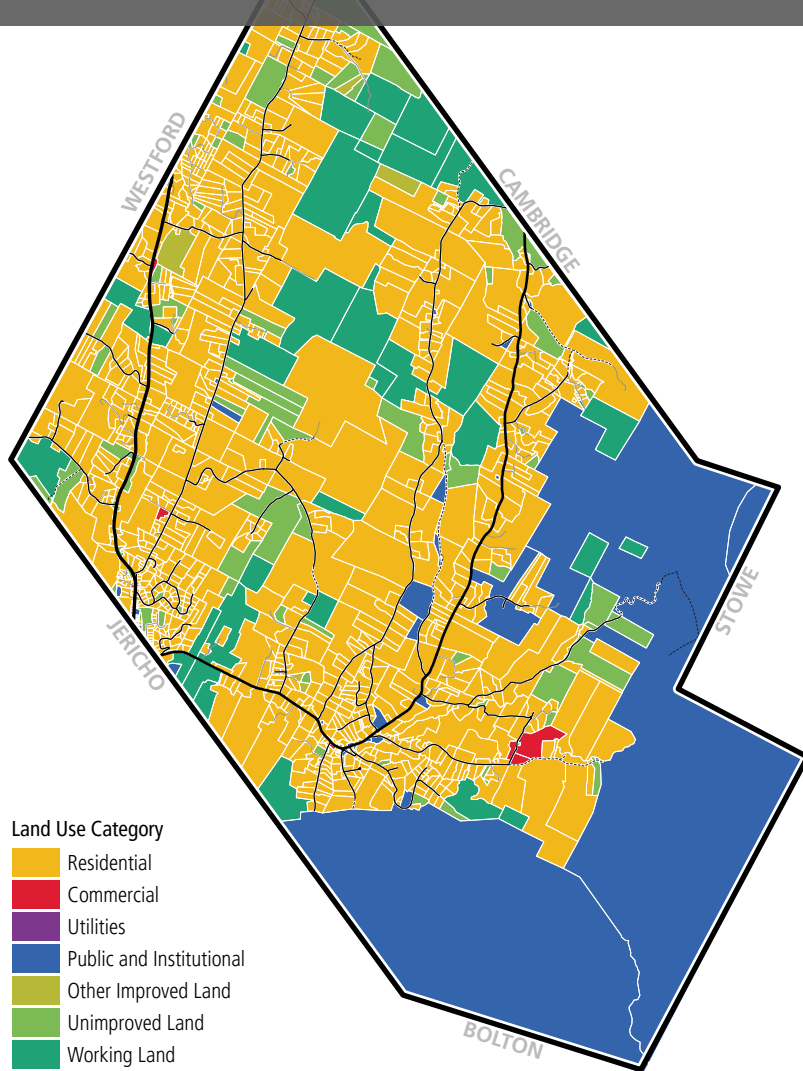


LOTS BY SIZE OF SUBDIVISION

SOURCE: TOWN OF UNDERHILL SUBDIVISION APPROVALS



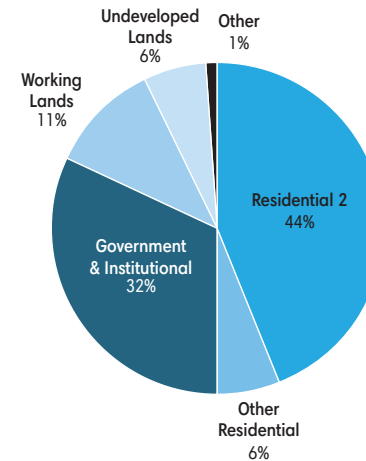
“lots with at least 1 dwelling on them
total 73% of private land in town and
95% of the taxable value



2020 HOUSING STUDY

TOWN OF UNDERHILL, VERMONT

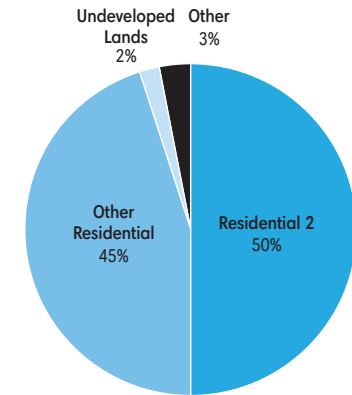
TOTAL LAND AREA BY USE CATEGORY



PROPERTY STATISTICS

2018 UNDERHILL GRAND LIST

TOTAL TAXABLE VALUE BY USE CATEGORY

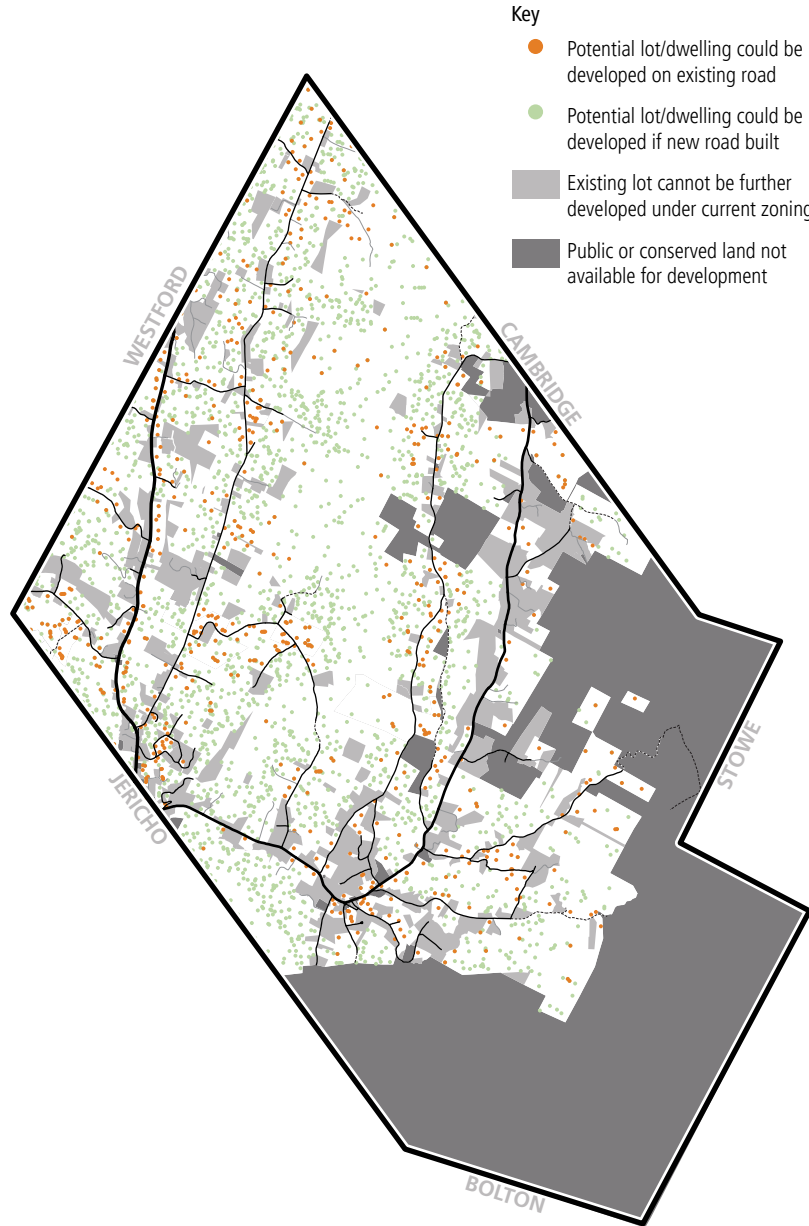


PROPERTY STATISTICS

TOWN OF UNDERHILL GRAND LIST

Use	2004		2018		Change 2004-2018		
	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	Real Value
Residential 2	509	13,929	535	14,161	+26	+233	+46%
Other Residential	581	2,160	632	2,122	+51	-39	+56%
Farm	3	463	4	514	+1	+51	+97%
Woodland	31	2,779	27	3,157	-4	+379	+75%
Undeveloped	123	2,833	104	1,961	-19	-873	+40%
Gov't & Inst.	28	9,853	31	10,316	-3	+463	+69%
Commercial	24	34	19	131	-5	+98	+43%
Utility	6	n/a	5	n/a	-1	n/a	+137%
Total	1,305	32,051	1,357	32,362	+52	+311	+52%

Development Pattern



Zoning District	Analyzed Acres	Existing		Potential Lots or Dwellings	
		Lots	Dwellings	Acreage ¹	Frontage ²
Underhill Center	89	50	50	24	21
Underhill Flats	218	143	133	92	36
Rural Residential	9,980	779	620	2,490	431
Water Conservation	2,387	263	229	250	67
Scenic Preservation	1,772	123	109	85	32
Soil Conservation	7,378	297	97	375	65
Total	21,824	1,655	1,238	3,316	652

¹ This is the total number of lots or dwellings that could be created in the zoning district based on the size of the parcels and the minimum lot size in the district.

² This is the number of lots or dwellings that could be created in the zoning district on existing road frontage.

MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

BASED ON CURRENT PARCEL MAPS, GRAND LIST & ZONING

“a significant percentage of the readily developable land in Underhill has been subdivided and built upon

About 11,000 acres or one-third of the land in town is protected from future development through public or institutional ownership, or private land conservation. Another 3,800 acres is fully built out under current zoning and cannot be further subdivided or developed. The remaining 18,000 acres have potential for future subdivision and/or development under current zoning. More than half of that land could not be subdivided to its full potential without the developer building a road, which significantly increases the cost and complexity of development. This analysis does not take natural resource constraints such as floodplains, wetlands and steep slopes into account, nor did it consider the location of existing development on a lot. Those factors will further reduce how much of a lot's full development potential could be realized.

1 reduce the minimum lot size in the Underhill Flats and Underhill Center zoning districts to ½ acre

2 reduce the minimum lot frontage in the Underhill Flats and Underhill Center zoning districts to 80 feet

Currently, the Underhill Flats zoning district requires a minimum lot size of 1 acre and the Underhill Center zoning district a minimum lot size of 1½ acres. These are larger lot sizes than are typical of the traditional settlement pattern of a small village center. As a result 67% of the existing lots in Underhill Center and 44% of the existing lots in Underhill Flats are nonconforming because they are smaller than the required minimum lot size, which affects how those lots may be used and developed under the town’s zoning regulations. Lowering the minimum lot size to ½ acre will reduce the number of nonconforming lots to 30% in both villages, and would be more consistent with a rural village settlement pattern.

Currently, the Underhill Flats zoning district requires a minimum lot frontage of 150 feet and the Underhill Center zoning district a minimum lot frontage of 100 feet. As a result, 37% of the existing lots in Underhill Flats are nonconforming because they have less lot frontage than required. Narrow, deep lots are typical of the traditional settlement pattern of a small village center. In recognition of that, the Underhill Unified Land Use and Development Regulations include a special provision to allow rear lots in the village districts with less than the minimum frontage. Lowering the minimum lot frontage would reduce nonconformities to 10%, and may facilitate infill housing in the villages as called for in the town plan.

Reducing the minimum lot size and frontage could eliminate barriers to creating more housing in the village centers and it will simplify administration of the zoning regulations by reducing the number of nonconforming lots. However, it is unlikely to have an immediate impact on housing supply because infrastructure (water and sewer) will continue to pose a substantial barrier to additional development in the village centers irrespective of any change in the zoning district dimensional standards.

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size	% of Lots Smaller than Minimum ¹	Lot Size (acres)		
			Median ²	70 th Percentile ²	90 th Percentile ²
Underhill Flats	1 acre	44%	1.1	0.5	0.1
Underhill Center	1.5 acres	67%	0.9	0.5	0.3
Rural Residential	3 acres	22%	7.4	3.7	1.9
Water Conservation	5 acres	42%	5.2	4.4	1.3
Scenic Preservation	10 acres	46%	10.3	4.9	1.3
Soil Conservation	15 acres	46%	16.4	7.7	2.2

¹ This is the percentage of lots in the district that are smaller than the minimum lot size.

² 50% of lots in the district are larger than the median size, 70% are larger than the 70th percentile size, and 90% are larger than the 90th percentile size.

MINIMUM LOT SIZE ANALYSIS

UNDERHILL PARCEL MAPS (2019)



3 specify a maximum residential density distinct from minimum lot size in all zoning districts

Underhill's current Unified Land Use and Development Regulations specify a minimum lot size in each zoning district (ranging from 1 to 15 acres). In all zoning districts, a lawful lot may be developed with a single-family or a two-family dwelling. In the village districts, a multi-family building (up to 5 units in Underhill Flats and 3 units in Underhill Center) could be approved on a lot. Underhill's regulations do not specify that a lot must have at least the minimum lot area for each dwelling unit. Effectively, this means the maximum residential density is 2 dwellings per the minimum lot size for the district outside the villages. In Underhill Flats it would be 5 dwellings per acre and in Underhill Center it would be 2 dwellings per acre. The maximum residential standard would be a replacement for the cap on the number of units in a multi-family building. Linking the number of units to the size of the lot is a more effective means of regulating multi-family housing. If there are community concerns about building size or mass, those would be more appropriately addressed through maximum lot coverage, building footprint and building mass/form standards.

Zoning District	Current Minimum Lot Size	Recommended	
		Minimum Lot Size	Maximum Residential Density
Underhill Flats	1 acre	0.5 acre	6 dwellings per acre ¹
Underhill Center	1.5 acres	0.5 acre	4 dwellings per acre ¹
Rural Residential	3 acres	3 acres	1 dwelling per 1.5 acres
Water Conservation	5 acres	5 acres	1 dwelling per 2.5 acres
Scenic Preservation	10 acres	10 acres	1 dwelling per 5 acres
Soil Conservation	15 acres	15 acres	1 dwelling per 7.5 acres

¹ One of the requirements for state Neighborhood Development Area designation is that housing be allowed at a density of at least four dwellings per acre.

LOT SIZE AND RESIDENTIAL DENSITY



Specifying both a maximum residential density and a minimum lot size is a way to allow large village homes to be converted to multi-unit buildings. Village homes, like those found in Underhill Flats and Underhill Center, historically housed larger households than live in them today. Many of these homes have carriage houses or other outbuildings that could potentially be converted to housing as well.

For example, the illustration shows a half-acre lot with a 4,500 square foot home. If the zoning allowed 6 dwellings per acre, as recommended for Underhill Flats, this property could have up to three dwelling units on it. With provisions to ensure that parking is located in the side or rear yard, this increased density would have little to no impact on the built form and character of the village. The main house could be broken up into two or three units. The barn could be converted to a dwelling.

- 4 allow up to two single-family dwellings on a lot and continue to allow more with PUD approval**
- 5 revise the accessory dwelling unit provisions to align with state statute and regulations**
- 6 increase the number of dwellings that may be served by a shared driveway from 3 to 5**

Underhill's current regulations specify that there can only be one principal use or structure per lot. However, the regulations allow two-family and accessory dwellings in all districts – essentially making it possible to have two dwellings on a lot provided the units can meet either the duplex or ADU requirements. Allowing two single-family homes is equivalent to a duplex or to a single-family home with an accessory apartment in terms of off-site impacts like traffic. Allowing two dwellings per lot would also make it possible to rent out both the primary and accessory dwellings.

Underhill's current regulations establish different standards for accessory dwellings that are in a structure separate from the primary dwelling. Those standards are not consistent with state statute and also could allow for creation of an accessory dwelling that would not qualify for exemptions or special treatment under various state regulations. Keeping the definition of and standards for accessory dwellings consistent with state law would reduce confusion and complexity for property owners faced with conflicting state and local standards for ADUs. The state mandated requirement for ADUs changed in 2020. A property owner who wanted a second unit that did not meet the requirements for an ADU would likely be able to get approval for the second unit either as a duplex or as a second single-family home on the lot.

The build-out analysis showed that lack of road frontage was a significant constraint for many rural residential parcels. Currently, Underhill allows up to three properties to share a driveway. Increasing that to five may facilitate the creation of one or two more house lots in proximity to existing development. This should be done in conjunction with requiring a shared driveway agreement between the owners.

As of October 12, 2020, state law mandates the following. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) may be up to 900 sf, irrespective of the size of the primary unit. ADUs can no longer be limited to one bedroom. The property owner can live in either the primary or accessory unit. Conditional use approval can only be required if a single-family home would also require conditional use approval.

“ **24 V.S.A. § 4412(1)(E)** No bylaw shall have the effect of excluding as a permitted use one accessory dwelling unit that is located within or appurtenant to a single-family dwelling on an owner-occupied lot. A bylaw may require a single-family dwelling with an accessory dwelling unit to be subject to the same review, dimensional, or other controls as required for a single-family dwelling without an accessory dwelling unit. An accessory dwelling unit means a distinct unit that is clearly subordinate to a single-family dwelling, and has facilities and provisions for independent living, including sleeping, food preparation, and sanitation, provided there is compliance with all the following: (i) The property has sufficient wastewater capacity; and (ii) The unit does not exceed 30% of the total habitable floor area of the single-family dwelling or 900 sf, whichever is greater.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS



7 encourage a diversity of housing types in the village and rural residential zoning districts

Underhill's housing stock is highly homogeneous and overwhelmingly comprised of single-family homes (91%). The current Unified Land Use and Development Regulations prevent or severely limit opportunity for other forms of housing. Increasingly, such policies are being viewed as discriminatory on their face. State and federal laws require fair and equal treatment of housing by municipalities. The town and its employees and volunteer board members can be held legally accountable for actions or decisions that violate those laws. Both to conform to federal and state law, and to further the goals of the 2020 Town Plan, Underhill should reconsider its approach to multi-family housing in the village and rural residential districts. This will likely require further community conversation in order to change residents' attitudes towards other forms of housing. As pointed out previously, however, in the absence of community infrastructure, state water and wastewater regulations will continue to significantly limit the feasibility of constructing multi-family housing in Underhill irrespective of zoning changes.

RESIDENTIAL USES

Housing Type	Site Plan Review	Underhill Flats	Underhill Center	Rural Residential
Accessory dwelling ¹	No ²	P	P	P
Single-family dwelling	No ²	P	P	P
Two-family dwelling	No ²	P	P	P
Multi-family (3-4 units) dwelling	Yes	P	P	P
Multi-family (5+ units) dwelling	Yes	C	C	C
Rooming and boarding house	Yes	P	P	P
Group home ¹	No ²	P	P	P
Care home	Yes	C	C	C

¹ Required by statute wherever single-family dwellings are allowed.

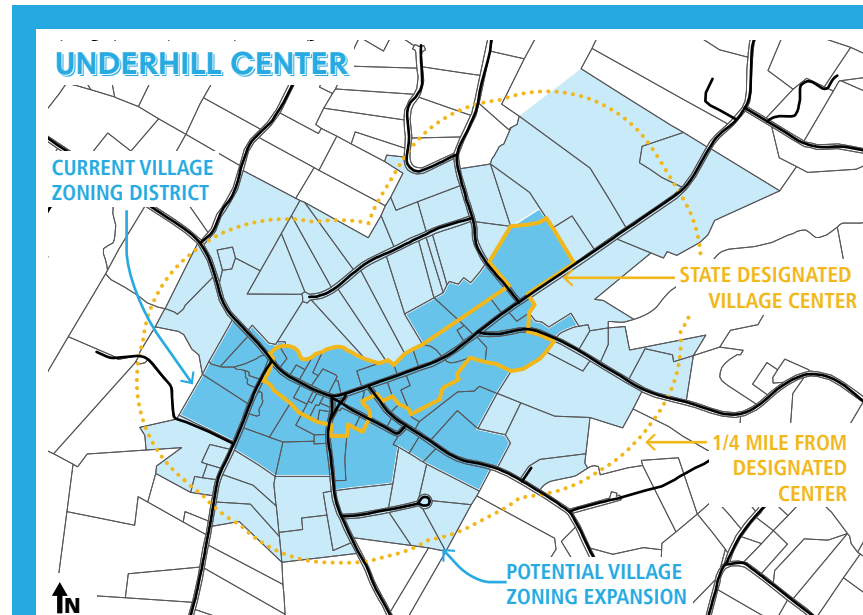
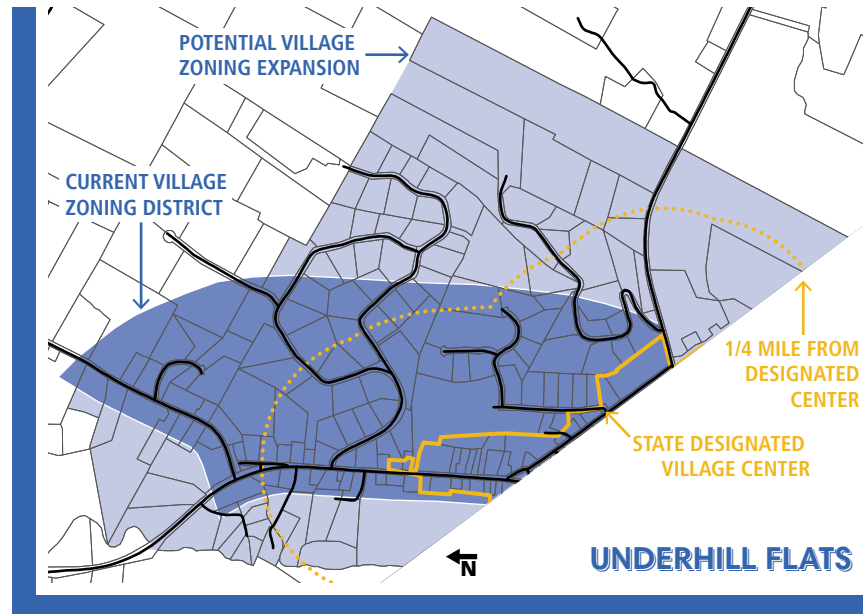
² Site plan review not authorized under state statute for this use.

Accessory dwelling (ADU)	Underhill currently allows ADUs in all zoning districts. If the ADU will be a new detached accessory structure, conditional use is required. 24 V.S.A. § 4412(1)(E) requires that ADUs be permitted wherever single-family dwellings are permitted irrespective of whether it is within the primary dwelling or a detached structure. Section 4.15 of Underhill's current regulations are not aligned with statute. Statute requires the owner to live on the property (in either unit) and the floor area of the ADU to not exceed the greater of either 900 sf or 30% of the floor area of the primary dwelling. Municipalities can be less restrictive than statute, but if they are the resulting ADU may no longer qualify for special treatment under state codes and regulations (including fire safety and wastewater).
Two-family dwelling	Underhill currently allows two-family homes in all zoning districts as a permitted use with site plan approval. 24 V.S.A. § 4416 specifically prohibits requiring site plan review for two-family dwellings. The site plan review requirement in Underhill's current zoning is in violation of state law.
Multi-family dwelling (3-4 units and 5+ units)	Underhill currently allows multi-family dwellings as a conditional use in the Underhill Center and Underhill Flats zoning districts. The number of units within a multi-family dwelling is capped at 5 in Underhill Flats and 3 in Underhill Center. Multi-family dwellings are prohibited in all other zoning districts. This severely limits development of multi-family housing. It is not aligned with the goals, policies and strategies of the 2020 Underhill Town Plan, which seek to expand housing opportunities for residents of varying income, age and needs. 24 V.S.A. § 4414(3) authorizes municipalities to require conditional use approval and establishes the criteria for conditional use review. Three and four unit multi-family dwellings do not have the potential to cause the type of impacts that justify conditional use review (they should be subject to site plan review to address internal site design issues like parking, lighting, trash storage, landscaping, etc.). Further, the scale and form of 3-4 unit buildings is typically not significantly different than that of single-family homes. Given this, what public policy is being furthered by restricting small-scale multi-family housing from zoning districts like Underhill's rural residential district, which has as its stated purpose to accommodate medium density development? Treating 3-4 unit multi-family buildings differently than buildings with 5 or more units is consistent with distinction made by various state and federal regulations (including fire safety, taxation and banking).
Rooming and boarding house	Technically under Vermont state law and regulations, a homeowner with even one "housemate" who pays rent is considered to be operating a rooming and board house. As household sizes decline and housing costs increase, house sharing and other alternative living arrangements are becoming more common. Providing for that use can ensure that a zoning permit can be obtained. The municipality can also have standards for the use such as limiting the number of rental rooms or boarders.
Group home	24 V.S.A. § 4412(1)(G) requires municipalities to treat a group home serving up to 8 people with a disability as a single-family home. Case law has clarified that towns cannot require a zoning permit to change the use from single-family to group home. Statute was changed in 2018 to eliminate the 1,000-ft separation distance. Section 4.10 of Underhill's current regulations are not aligned with statute
Care home	Providing for a continuum of housing options may allow more of residents to remain in Underhill throughout their lives. These may include residential care, nursing or convalescent homes, and hospice or respite care facilities.

8

revise zoning districts to allow for village residential growth and to ensure land zoned for rural residential development is suitable for housing

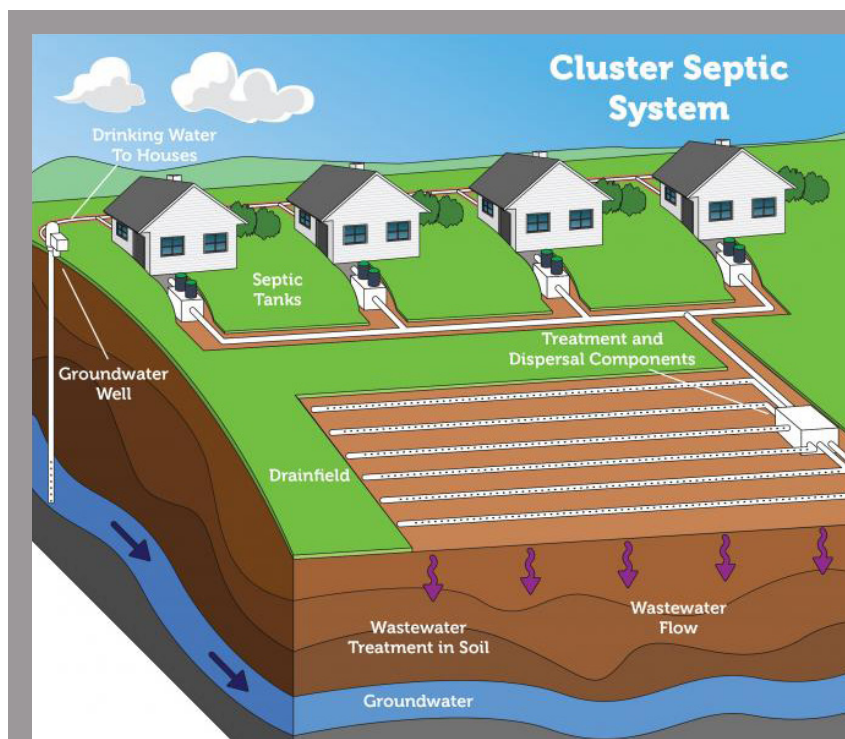
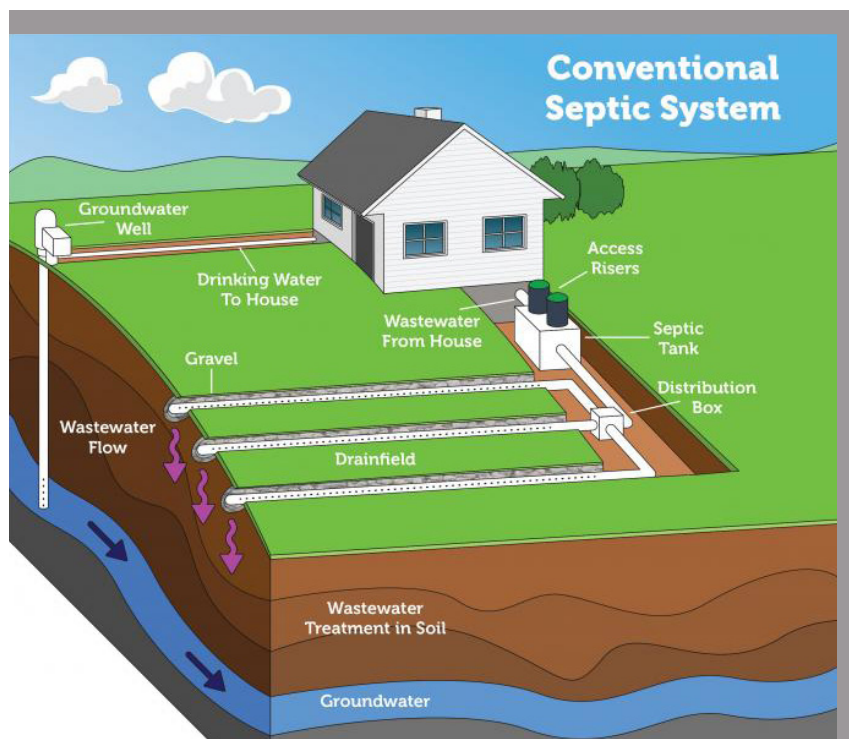
Currently, the Underhill Flats and Underhill Center zoning districts do not provide a meaningful opportunity for residential growth. There are state designated village centers for both areas and the land within 1/4 mile of the centers could be eligible for designation as a neighborhood development area (NDA) if the zoning was revised to meet state requirements. The NDA program offers relief from state permitting requirements and other benefits to encourage additional housing. Underhill could create a village or high-density residential district that at a minimum included land eligible for state designation. Underhill could also consider whether there is other land suitable for more compact housing within proximity of the villages or along the main travel corridors. Criteria to be considered would be the quality of road access, suitability of soils for septic systems, and avoidance of natural hazards and resources.



9 undertake a village wastewater alternatives study to seek affordable solutions that would address the major barrier to furthering the town's housing objectives and the state's land use planning goals

10 call upon the state to recognize that Vermont's housing crisis is also an infrastructure crisis and to address the needs of rural communities for affordable water and wastewater solutions

Underhill Flats and Underhill Center are, like most Vermont village centers, unsewered (Underhill Flats is served by municipal water). The lack of infrastructure is a major barrier to adding more housing within and near the villages as called for in the town plan and consistent with state land use goals. Conventional municipal wastewater treatment plants are cost prohibitive for small communities like Underhill. Alternative solutions are needed to support compact, higher-density development for rural Vermont villages like those in Underhill. Without alternative solutions for villages and other compact settlement areas, the development pattern in Underhill will remain as it has been for the past 50 years – dispersed, scattered, low-density and inefficient – resulting in further loss of rural character and fragmentation of farm and forest lands.



11 establish a housing fund aimed at preserving the affordability of existing homes for future residents

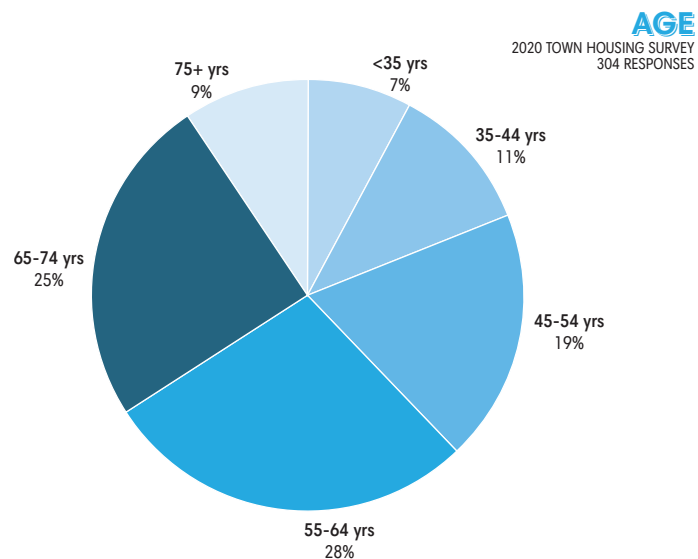
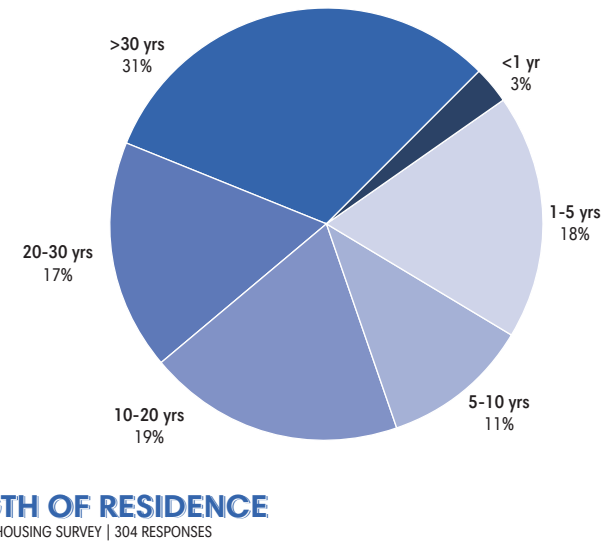
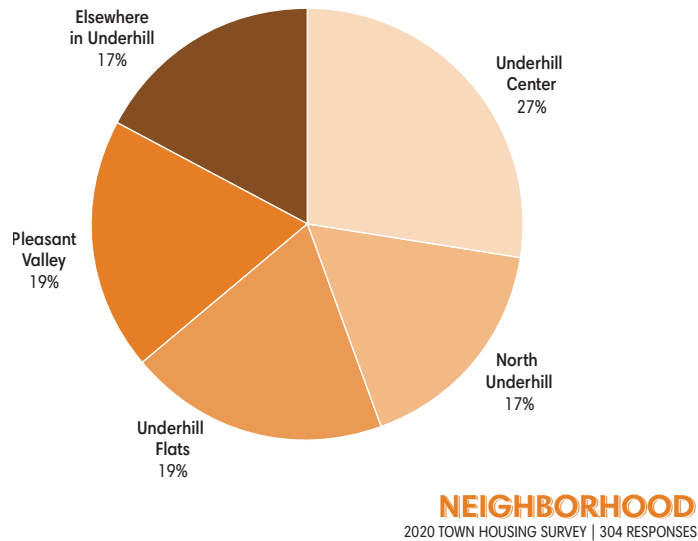
Some Vermont towns have established housing trust funds to support provision of affordable housing in the community. A common approach is to add 1¢ to the municipal tax rate and direct that to the fund each year (this equates to an additional \$10 in taxes for every \$100,000 of taxable property value). In Underhill, 1¢ on the tax rate would raise about \$40,000 a year.

Clearly a housing trust fund on its own in Underhill is not going to be able to raise the money necessary to fully fund construction of affordable housing. Further, state funding to support construction of new affordable housing is directed to the state designated centers (downtowns, village centers, neighborhood development areas, etc.). The lack of infrastructure and zoning to facilitate higher-density housing means that Underhill is unlikely to be able to access state funding.

Underhill could work with an organization like the Champlain Housing Trust and direct money from a local housing trust fund to an existing program. For example, Champlain Housing Trust has a shared equity program that enables people to buy a home without a down payment and with a reduced mortgage. As documented in this report, about half of the single-family homes in town currently meet the state's definition of "affordable." Local funding could be directed toward preserving the affordability of the existing homes at a significantly lower cost per unit than constructing new affordable housing. The money raised through a 1¢ housing trust fund could make it possible for one or two homes each year to be enrolled in a shared equity program that ensures their affordability for future generations.

Funds from a local housing trust could also be directed towards programs offered by organizations such as Champlain Housing Trust and Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity that assist income-qualified homeowners with making needed repairs and energy improvements to their homes. The "affordable" housing stock on the market in Underhill may have deferred maintenance or need energy improvements. Those expenses would add to the total cost of homeownership for potential buyers. Housing trust funds could be used to lower the entry cost of homeownership in Underhill.

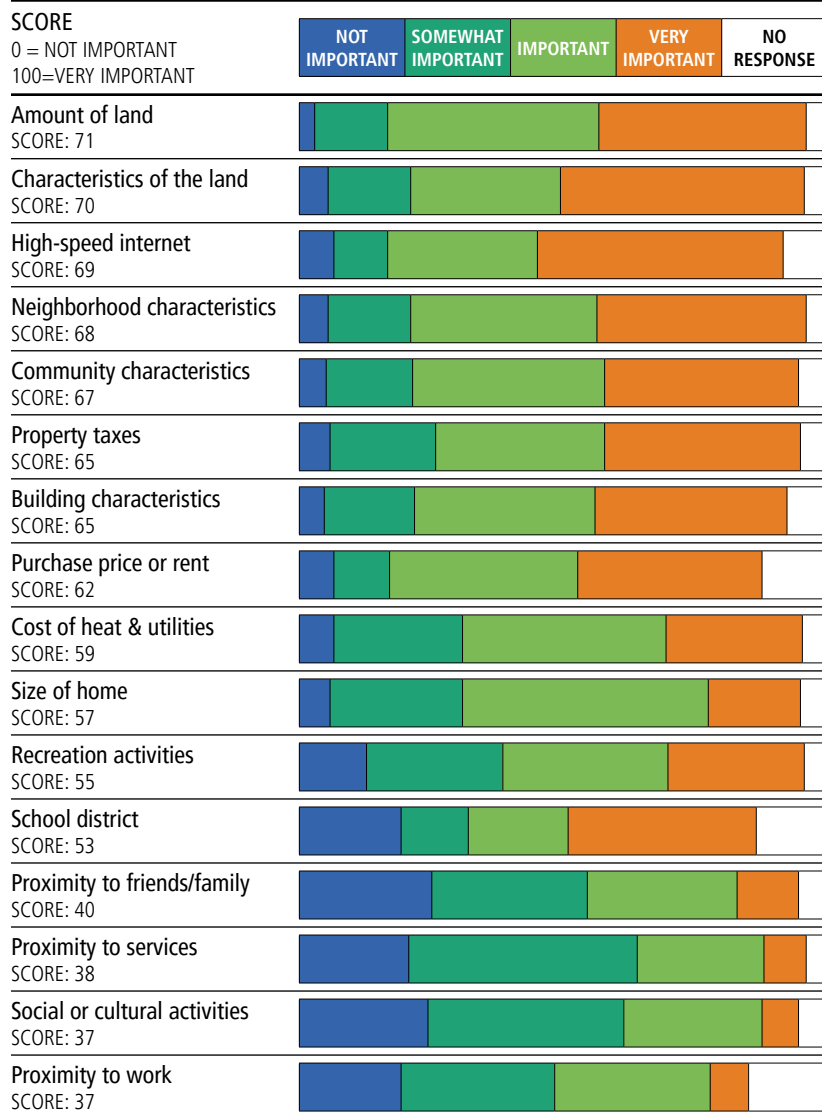




“the 304 people who answered the survey were a representative sample of Underhill residents

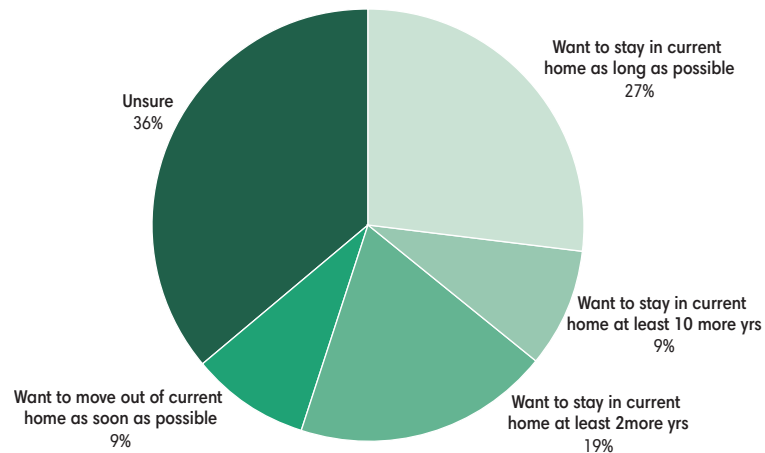
There were survey respondents from all areas of town. People who had moved to Underhill recently answered the survey along with those who had lived in town for decades. The age distribution of respondents was similar to that of the community as a whole.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN CHOOSING TO LIVE IN YOUR CURRENT HOME?



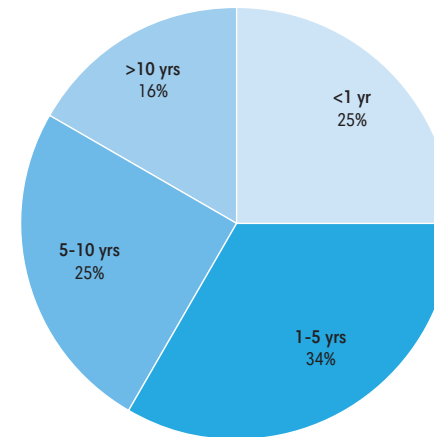
“the land and its character are the most important factors to those who have chosen to live in Underhill

Survey respondents ranked the amount of land and the characteristics of the land as the two most important factors in their choice of home. The attributes of the immediate neighborhood and the larger community also ranked highly. Respondents indicated that availability of high speed internet was very important. Proximity to friends, family, services, activities and work were among the least important factors to survey respondents. For those who have moved to Underhill within the past 10 years, housing costs were also an important factor.



LIKELIHOOD OF MOVING (RENTERS)

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES

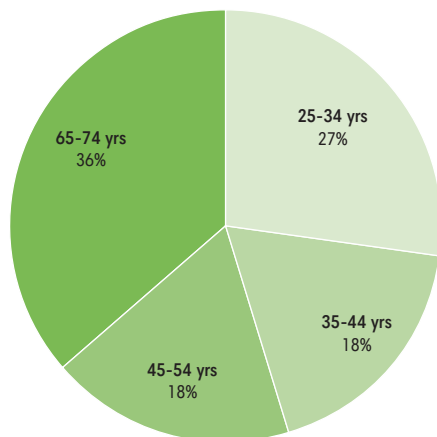


LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (RENTERS)

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES

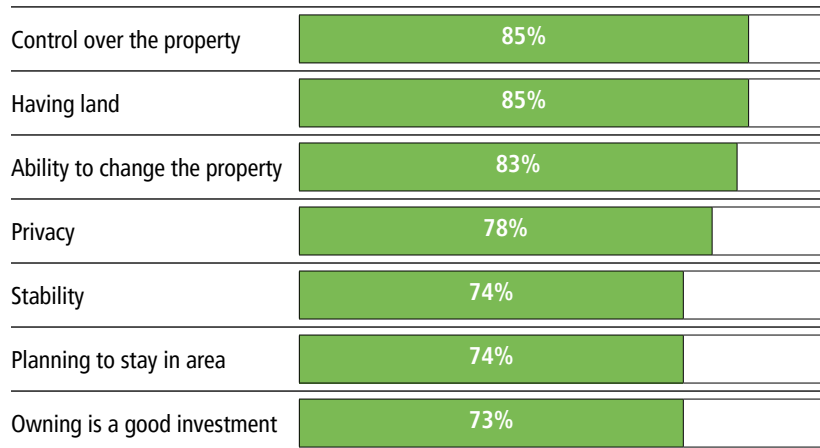
AGE (RENTERS)

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY
304 RESPONSES



“respondents who rented felt that they did not have good options to choose from in Underhill

While only 4% of survey respondents were renters, they represented more than 15% of all renting households in Underhill and can be considered a representative sample. For renters, housing costs were the most important factor in choosing their current home and most indicated they were renting because they could not afford to purchase a home. Several commented about the lack of affordable rentals, particularly with more than two bedrooms, in Chittenden County. Renting respondents were evenly split as to whether or not Underhill was welcoming to renters, and rated their experience renting in Underhill at 7 out of 10 (0=horrible and 10=wonderful). Half of renters were living on the same property as their landlord, and renting respondents were generally satisfied with their landlord.



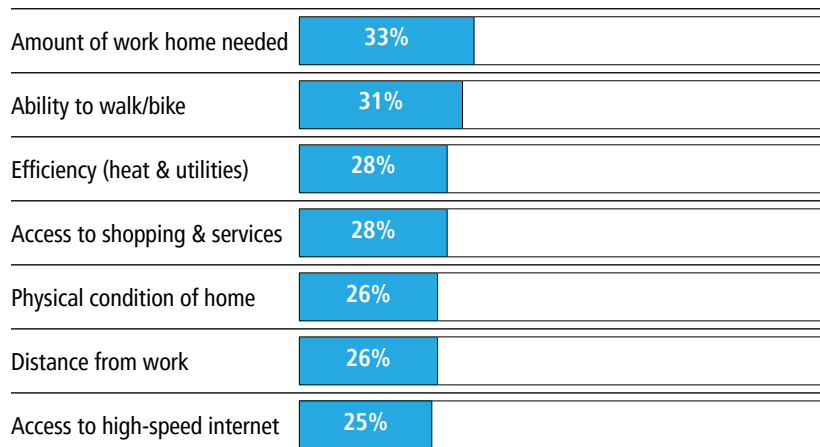
REASONS TO BE A HOMEOWNER

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



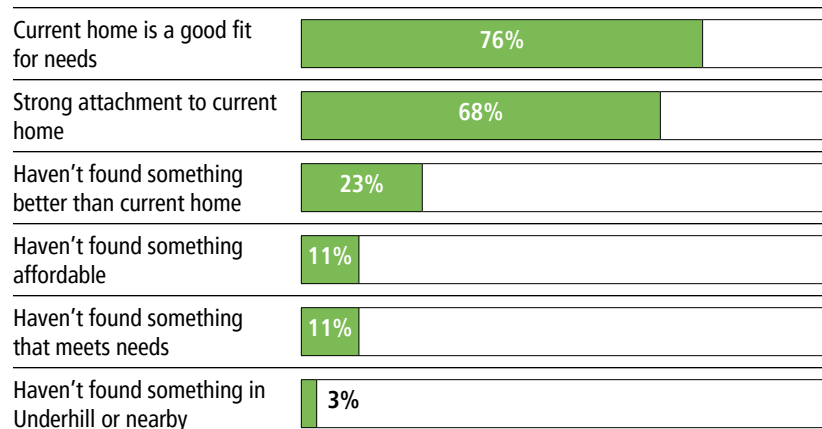
COMPROMISES MADE WHEN BUYING

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



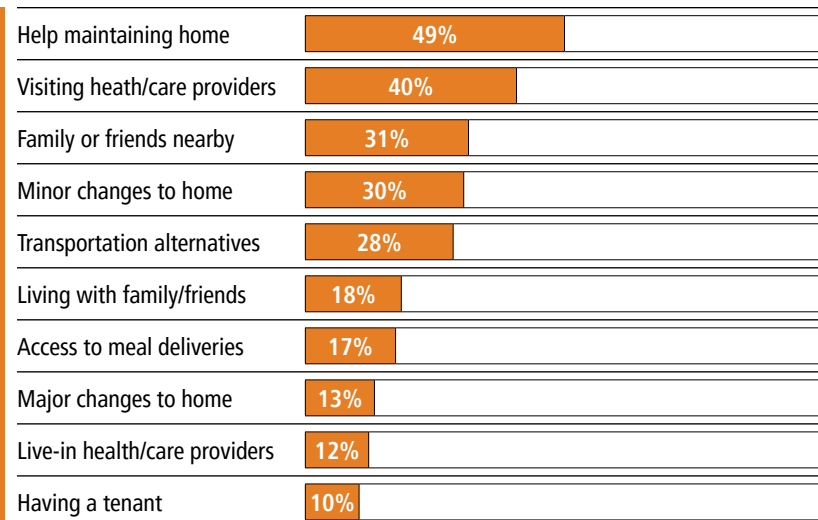
“people in Underhill choose to be homeowners in order to have land and greater control of their living environment

Respondents rated their experience owning a home in Underhill at 8 out of 10 (0=horrible and 10=wonderful). 64% of respondents felt they had good options to choose from when they purchased a home in Underhill. Those who had purchased a home in the last 10 years had a less favorable view than those who bought more than 10 years ago. Only 55% of recent buyers felt they had good options to choose from as compared to 68% of those who bought more than 10 years ago. 34% reported having to compromise on purchase price as compared to 11% of those who bought more than 10 years ago.



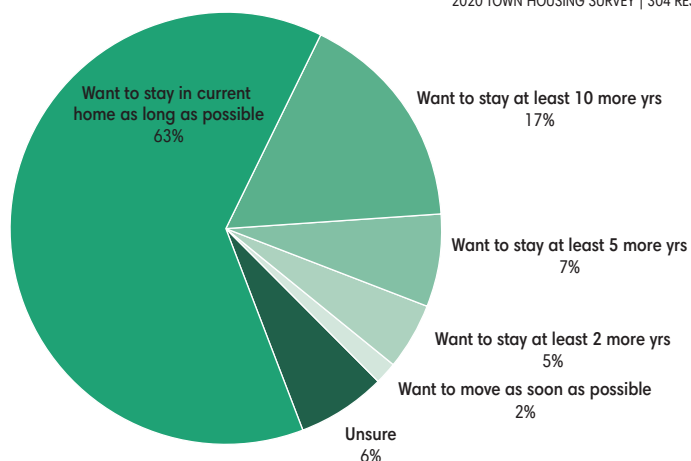
REASONS 55+ STAY IN CURRENT HOME

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



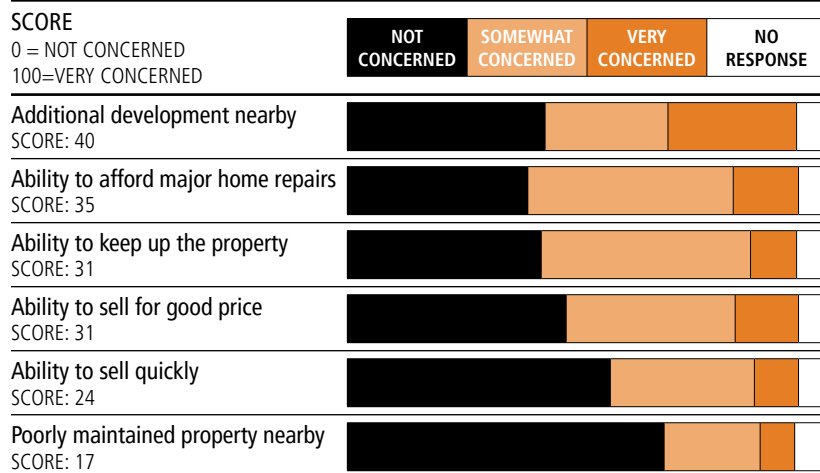
LIKELIHOOD OF MOVING (55+)

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



“most residents age 55+ are planning to stay in their current homes for as long as possible

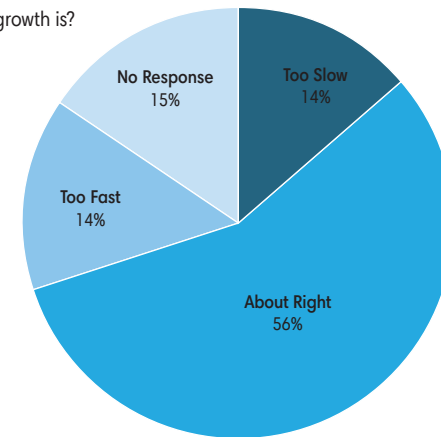
Respondents age 55 or older indicated that their current home was a good fit and they had a strong attachment to it. Many did not think they would be able to find something else in the area that would be affordable and meet their needs. About 15% of people age 55 or older had moved into their current home within the past decade, while nearly half had lived in the same home for 30 years or more.



HOMEOWNER CONCERNS
2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES

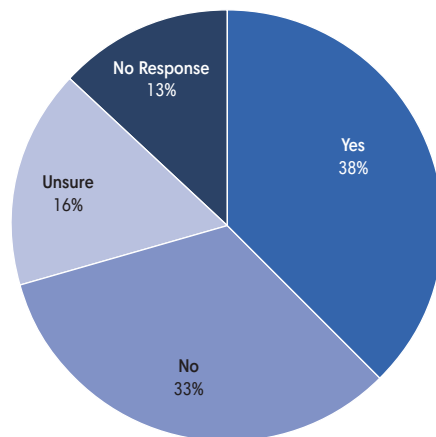
During the 2010s, the number of homes in Underhill increased by about 7 each year.

Do you think the rate of housing growth is?



RATE OF GROWTH
2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES

REGIONAL SHARE
2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



Do you agree that Underhill has a responsibility to provide a share of the additional housing needed in the Chittenden County region?

“people choose Underhill because it is not a developed area and they are seeking the quiet, privacy and views afforded by the rural setting

Additional development occurring nearby is seen as a significant concern by many Underhill residents – it is seen as potentially undermining the quiet, privacy and views that residents currently enjoy. Survey respondents generally thought that the current rate of housing growth (averaging 7 homes per year) was about right despite recognition that it is well below historical growth rates and of the need for housing across the region. When asked in the context of whether more housing would be appropriate in their neighborhood, respondents were split on the question of whether Underhill had a responsibility to provide a share of the housing needed in the region.

Single-family, large lot	63%
Small homes / cottages	39%
Single-family cluster w/ open space	33%
Single-family, small lot	29%
Accessory apartments	21%
Duplexes	17%
Manufactured/modular homes	14%
Multi-family, 3-4 unit	9%
Multi-family, 5+ unit	2%

APPROPRIATE HOUSING IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



APPROPRIATE HOUSING SOMEWHERE IN UNDERHILL

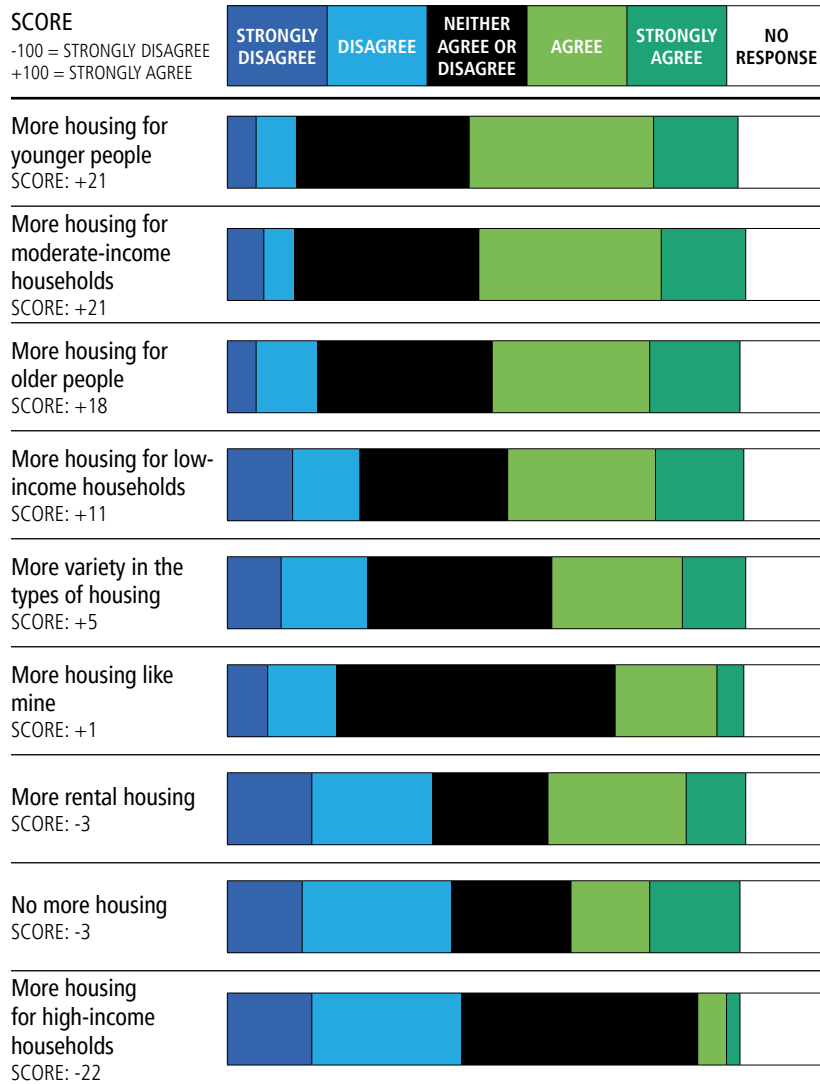
2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES

Single-family, large lot	66%
Small homes / cottages	57%
Single-family cluster w/ open space	53%
Single-family, small lot	50%
Accessory apartments	38%
Duplexes	39%
Manufactured/modular homes	27%
Multi-family, 3-4 unit	31%
Multi-family, 5+ unit	12%

“many Underhill residents consider single-family homes on large lots to be the only appropriate type of housing in their neighborhood

Underhill's current housing stock is predominately single-family homes on large lots. A majority of respondents feel that more housing of this type would be appropriate in their neighborhood, but there was not majority support for any of the other housing types. 18% of respondents indicated that none of the listed housing types would be appropriate in their neighborhood. Concern about additional housing in their neighborhood is greater amongst those who have bought a home more recently than those who have owned their home for many years. The follow-up question confirms that a significant number of residents would be more supportive of additional housing as long as it was not in their neighborhood. This response was similar for people living in rural and in village areas.

IN YOUR IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORHOOD, SHOULD THERE BE...?



“Underhill residents look most favorably at housing that is similar to what already exists in town

As noted earlier, many Underhill residents chose the community in the late '70s through early '90s as a place to raise families and respondents generally expressed a positive view about that experience. Survey respondents expressed support for another generation having the ability to make a similar choice and for current residents to be able to remain in town as they age. These responses suggest that many residents essentially want to maintain Underhill largely as it is today (or perhaps was when they moved in) – a rural bedroom community that offers an opportunity for homeownership to moderate-income families. Support for more housing, of any sort, is quite weak with more respondents expressing no opinion or indicating that they do not support more housing in their neighborhood.



Small homes / Cottages
60%



Clustered homes
53%



Homes on large lots
51%



Homes on small lots
43%



Modular homes
37%



Small apartment buildings
29%



Townhouses or condos
25%



Mixed-use buildings
7%



Large apartment buildings
4%

WHICH WOULD BE A GOOD FIT IN UNDERHILL?

2020 HOUSING STUDY
TOWN OF UNDERHILL, VERMONT

“the scale and amount of yard/open space were important factors in whether respondents thought the pictured housing would fit in Underhill

Survey respondents were most supportive of housing that looked similar to homes that already exist in Underhill. In the photo preference, the small homes/cottages and clustered homes scored better than the homes on large lots unlike in the earlier questions about the type of housing that would be appropriate in Underhill. This speaks to the importance of building placement, building size, site design and architectural character in whether people view housing as “fitting” into a rural setting.

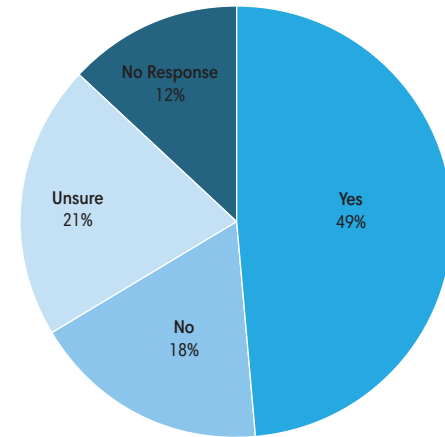
Appendix A: Housing Survey Results

RESPONDENTS RATED
THE IMPORTANCE
OF BUILDING MORE
HOUSING AS
35 OUT OF 100

RESPONDENTS RATED THE
IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING
RURAL CHARACTER AS
70 OUT OF 100

PLANNING GOALS
2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES

Can Underhill protect rural character
and increase the amount of housing
in town?



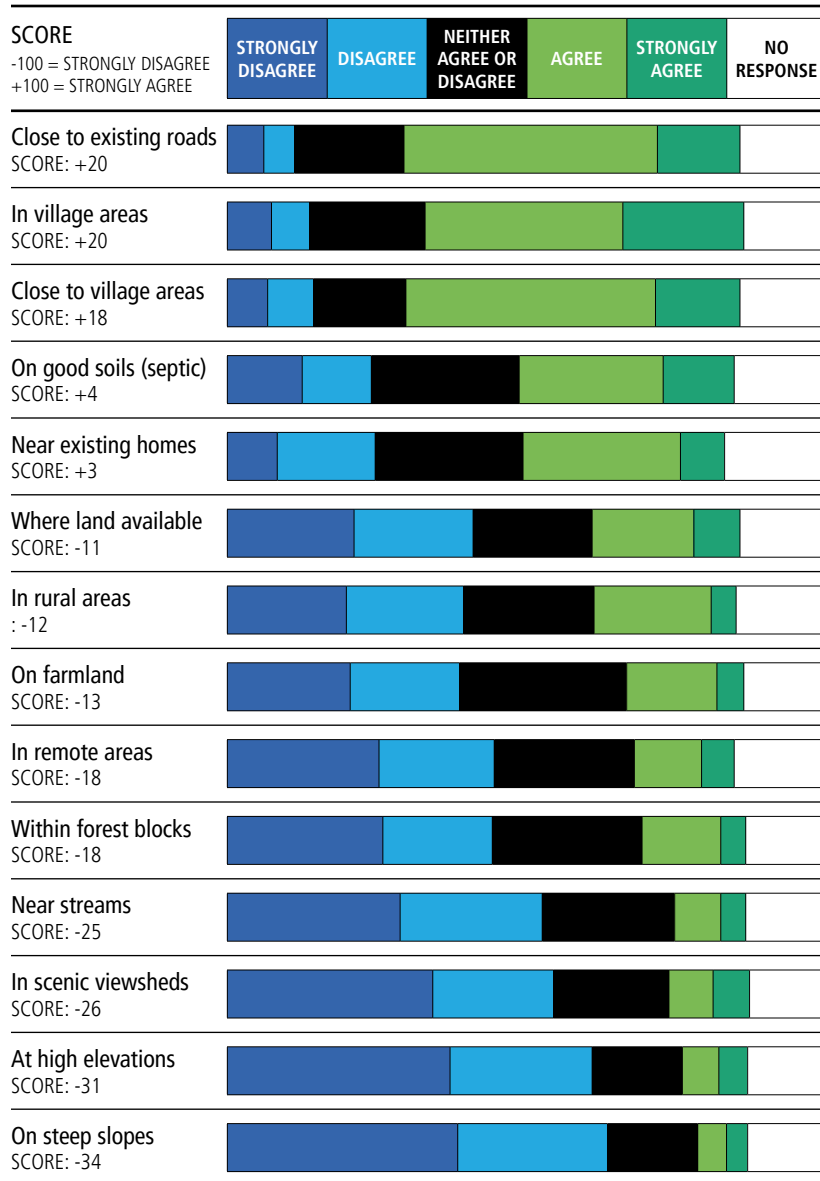
PLANNING GOALS
2020 TOWN HOUSING SURVEY | 304 RESPONSES



**“most Underhill residents think that
protecting rural character is more
important than building homes**

Planning is about balancing competing objectives. The Underhill Town Plan calls for both protection of rural character and increasing the amount of housing in town. Nearly half of respondents thought it was possible to do both.

SHOULD MORE HOUSING BE BUILT...?



“Underhill residents generally support town land use policies intended to protect natural resources

Survey respondents indicated a preference for locating housing in and near village areas and close to existing roads. Survey respondents who lived in the village areas were significantly less supportive of building more housing in or near the villages, however. Support for new housing in villages scored 12 out of 100 among respondents living in villages, as compared to 34 out of 100 for those living in rural areas of town. Survey respondents living throughout town overwhelmingly agreed that building on steep slopes, high elevations, scenic viewsheds and streambanks was not desirable. Much of the remaining undeveloped land in Underhill is characterized by one or more natural resources. As noted previously, the readily accessible and easy to develop land has largely been built on already.