

Windham & Windsor Housing Trust

# **HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Windham and Windsor County 2011



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT) engaged consultant John Ryan, Principal of Development Cycles, Montpelier VT, to provide a Needs Assessment for Brattleboro and portions of Windham and Windsor Counties in support of WWHT's next five-year planning effort. The goal of the assessment is to profile housing needs in individual communities, identify areas of opportunity for WWHT, and provide important context for understanding need in relation to other regional centers within Vermont. The following summarizes key findings from that assessment.

### **BRATTLEBORO**

In December 2006, Development Cycles reported the following changes in Brattleboro's housing needs from 2003-2006 as follows:

- Dramatic increases in the median cost of homeownership
- Significant private investment in small-scale rental properties
- Continued job-loss and stagnating wages
- Significant recent increases in demand for subsidized housing from low-income residents unable to pay market rents
- Accelerated split between wealthier and poorer residents
- Increased purchase of housing by wealthier non-residents and new residents from higher cost areas

Over the past five years, housing prices have flattened and the market demand for small-scale rental properties has diminished. Job losses, stagnating wages, and increased demand for deep-subsidy rental units have accelerated. The income split between homeowners and renters, as well as the purchase of housing by newly relocated households, continues to grow. The biggest demographic changes appear to be a rapid concentration of the county's young adults to housing within Brattleboro, and conversely, the spreading of the county's elderly to more rural communities. Overall, the rental housing market can be viewed as stable with vacancy rates, well below that of the state and comparable communities. At the same time, key renter populations are slowly losing the means to pay for their apartments.

### **ROCKINGHAM, SPRINGFIELD & WINDSOR**

Declines in the elderly population, fewer renter households, and lower than expected gains in young adults, mark each of these three more urban centers.

- Windsor has the strongest economy of the three, as both rents and home prices rise the closer one gets to the Hanover/ Lebanon employment hub. Rental vacancy rates in Windsor appear high despite increases in both jobs and wages suggesting that many employed renters working in Windsor may not be choosing to rent in that community. Windsor also has the smallest share of renter households among the four largest towns in the WWHT service area, with less than half the number of Springfield and less than a quarter of the renters who live in Brattleboro.
- Rockingham has actually fared somewhat better than Brattleboro in terms of employment retention, wage gains, and rental price increases since 2006. It has a relatively large share of renters living in small multi-family properties compared to the other three comparable communities and also has the smallest share of its renters living in subsidized housing.
- Springfield continues to lag behind the county and state in terms of job retention and rental occupancy. Its rental costs and homeownership costs are significantly lower than area and statewide medians. A surprisingly high percentage of its younger households do own their homes, however, suggesting that it may be emerging as a place with new energy and commitment compared to Brattleboro, Rockingham and Windsor. Sales activity is light in each of the three communities, but each also has a smaller inventory of unsold homes than many communities in the state.

## **WILMINGTON & LUDLOW**

Conflicting data, resulting from changes in the way the Census counts residents in resort communities, makes it hard to interpret housing trends in these two communities. The underlying issues of seasonal employment, low wages, and a shifting seasonal rental market continue to exist. These conditions, combined with the availability of very low off-season rental costs, limits potential for a newly constructed rental development in either community. At the same time, Ludlow does offer multi-family rental stock at per unit prices low enough allow for a rehabilitation-based development.

In both communities, housing prices are elevated because of the competition from vacation owners; still the low volume of primary residential sales activity offers little promise for a homeownership development project in these communities. Currently, there is an inventory of properties for sale in both communities equal to several years worth of homes at recent sales levels.

Fig. EX-1

**SUMMARY OF KEY DATA**

Brattleboro, Rockingham, Springfield, Windsor, Ludlow, Wilmington & Vermont,  
 2000-Current

GENERAL	Brattleboro	Rockingham	Springfield	Windsor	Vermont
Population (2010)	12,046	5,282	9,373	3,638	625,741
Households (2010)	5,562	2,197	3,903	1,492	256,442
Average Household Size (2010)	2.17	2.40	2.40	2.44	2.44
% Households with Children (2005-9)	23.0%	28.9%	26.8%	26.5%	25.8%
% Living Alone (2005-9)	40.2%	33.8%	29.8%	24.3%	27.8%
Median Household Income (2005-2009)	\$38,301	\$45,343	\$40,290	\$49,231	\$51,284
Local Jobs (2010)	10,922	2,238	4,209	1,610	293,001
Job Change 00-10	-11.4%	-9.0%	-14.2%	4.8%	-1.1%
Average Wage (2010)	\$37,444	\$35,932	\$38,593	\$39,106	\$39,430
Wage Change 00-10	22.5%	40.1%	31.1%	56.9%	36.3%
Resident Unemployment Rate (2010)	6.8%	7.8%	8.4%	6.2%	6.2%
Median Primary Residence Sale Price (2010)	\$199,000	\$135,000	\$124,500	\$147,500	\$194,000
Change 00-10	81.3%	68.8%	55.6%	73.5%	63.0%
Average New Home Permits/ Year (2000-2010)	15	5	12	6	1,930
Effective Homestead Tax Rate (2010)	1.056	0.747	1.1906	1.1055	n/a
Crime Index (2009)	76	75	73	76	n/a
<b>RENTERS</b>					
Total Renter Households (2010)	2,707	923	1,246	572	70,665
% <i>Renters (of All Households)</i>	48.7%	42.0%	31.9%	38.3%	27.6%
Householders 15-34 (2005-9)	808	239	679	299	44,677
% <i>Renters</i>	78.7%	73.2%	51.8%	67.2%	61.8%
Total Households with Individuals 65+ (2005-9)	1,443	590	1,179	451	53,136
% <i>Renters</i>	28.3%	36.4%	29.7%	29.9%	20.7%
Subsidized Elderly' Disabled Units (2011)	239	98	171	74	3,370
% <i>of all Elderly Renters</i>	58.8%	46.7%	47.6%	53.6%	41.0%

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Subsidized Family Rental Units (2011)	452	66	241	82	9,257
<i>% of all Non-Elderly Renters</i>	19.6%	14.2%	27.8%	22.1%	16.0%
HUD Two-Bedroom FMR (2011)	\$998	\$998	\$904	\$904	\$681-\$1,197
Median 2 Bd Rent ( <i>inc. utilities Sep-11 ads</i> )	\$935	\$920	\$855	\$920	n/a
Median Renter Household Income (2005-2009)	\$24,400	\$26,100	\$24,950	\$26,342	\$29,780
<50% AMI (2000)	55.2%	46.1%	48.2%	37.9%	39.7%
50-79% AMI (2000)	17.6%	19.6%	25.5%	24.3%	24.4%
80+% AMI (2000)	29.2%	34.3%	26.3%	27.8%	35.9%
% of Rental Units in Duplex Buildings (2005-09)	12.6%	25.6%	14.7%	9.5%	16.8%
% of Rental Units in 3+ Buildings (2005-09)	72.8%	62.0%	65.5%	53.4%	51.6%
Rental Vacancy Rate	5.8%	12.0%	9.3%	12.7%	7.0%

**NOTE: THE 2005-2009 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS) ESTIMATE IS BASED ON A RUNNING AVERAGE SO THAT THE DATA SHOULD BE SEEN AS AN INDICATOR OF REALITY AT SOME UNKNOWN POINT WITHIN THAT FIVE YEAR SPAN. AS THE ACS CONTINUES TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION ANNUALLY, IT IS HOPED THAT MORE RELIABLE TRENDS WILL OCCUR THAN ARE POSSIBLE TO INFER IN THIS FIRST FIVE-YEAR PERIOD WHERE THE AVERAGING IS PRESENTED.**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT) engaged consultant John Ryan, Principal of Development Cycles, Montpelier VT, to provide a Needs Assessment for Brattleboro and portions of Windham and Windsor Counties in support of WWHT's next five-year planning effort. The goal of the assessment is to profile housing needs in individual communities, identify areas of opportunity for WWHT, and provide important context for understanding need in relation to other regional centers within Vermont. The following summarizes key findings from that assessment.

### **SCOPE OF WORK**

Development Cycles completed the following work tasks:

1. Evaluated key changes in the Brattleboro housing and labor market since the last Needs Assessment in 2006
2. Prepared comparative housing needs profiles of several individual communities including: Springfield, Windsor, Rockingham, Ludlow, and Wilmington
3. Evaluated other opportunities for meeting identified need
4. Prepared a comparative housing needs profile of Windsor County highlighting similarities and differences with Windham County as well as placing that county's need in a statewide context (see Appendix A)

### **METHODOLOGY**

The consultant utilized a wide range of sources to conduct this assessment, including: the 2010 US Census, the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, the 2000 US Census, Housingdata.org, PolicyMap.com, City-Data.com, homes.com, HUDuser.org, Economic & Labor Market Information from the VT Department of Labor, school enrollment reports from the VT Department of Education, and demographic and other information from the VT Department on Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living.

The consultant utilized these sources to evaluate key changes in demographic, income, housing, and employment along a wide range of indicators, including:

- Population
- Young Adult Population
- Households
- Households by Type
- Elderly Households
- In and Out-Migration
- Employment
- Local Jobs
- Wages
- Household Income
- Poverty Rate
- Rental Housing Costs
- Vacancy Rate
- Subsidized Housing Market Characteristics
- Ownership Housing Costs
- Sales Activity
- Homes On Market
- Foreclosure, Delinquency and Work Out Activity

### **LIMITATIONS**

The study has a number of key limitations to consider when reviewing the findings and recommendations provided:

- The most current information was drawn largely from the Census Bureau's 2010 Census SF-1 report and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. Where the ACS information overlapped with 2010 Census Data, often-large differences occurred between ostensibly similar data. Though the consultant attempted to highlight or adjust areas where these differences occurred, it is important to recognize the limitations of the data presented by the American Community Survey, especially at the community level.
- The study assumes that relatively stable conditions will persist over the period under consideration. Specifically, it assumes that neither Vermont nor the United States will suffer a major decline or depression.
- The study bases all dollar amounts on the 2011 value of the dollar unless otherwise noted. In order not to overstate the available levels of opportunity, the projections are not adjusted to reflect the effects of future inflation.
- The information, estimates, and opinions contained in this report were derived from sources considered reliable. The consultant assumes the possibility of inaccuracy of individual items and for that reason relied upon no single piece of information to the exclusion of other data, and analyzed all information within a framework of common knowledge and experienced judgment.

## II. BRATTLEBORO

The following section summarizes key changes in demographic, economic and housing market conditions in Brattleboro since 2006.

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

- Total Population: Brattleboro has had a stable population for 50 years. The last decade saw little growth anywhere in southern half of the state or in the Northeast Kingdom, while population growth continued to concentrate in counties surrounding Burlington.
- 18-34 Year Old Population: Brattleboro saw dramatic (24.3%) growth in younger adults following a statewide trend. It appears that all of the net growth in younger adults for Windham County is occurring in Brattleboro, with nearly a third of the county's young people living in that town (up from 25.5% in 2000).
- 65 and over Population: According to Census data, the total number of seniors 65 and over actually declined slightly in Brattleboro, though both the county and state grew by 16.1 percent and 17.5 percent respectively. This represents a significant shift of older adults away from the community. The likeliest explanation for this is that the county's younger seniors are aging in place in communities other than Brattleboro. In data that is hard to interpret, the Census combines a declining elderly population with a 10 percent increase in the number of households with an individual 65 and over. Given the other data available, it seems likely that the increase in such households is more likely than a decrease in the elderly population. Regardless, with enough subsidized elderly housing to serve nearly 60 percent of all elderly renters in Brattleboro, it appears that there is ample subsidized independent housing in the community for seniors.
- Households: Despite the increases of 500 young adults, household growth has been closer to 200 and rental households grew by only about 120 over the decade. For the first time in 30 years the average size of renter households has begun to increase, as more unrelated households form.

Figure II.1  
**Key Demographic Trends**  
 Brattleboro, 2000-Current

Brattleboro	Current Year	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	% Change VT	% Change Windham County
Total Population	2010	12,005	12,046	0.3%	2.8%	0.7%
18-34 Year Olds	2010	2,044	2,540	24.3%	28.3%	3.4%
65 and over	2010	1,997	1,954	-2.2%	17.5%	16.1%
% of Population	2010	16.6%	16.2%	-2.5%	14.6%	15.3%
Total Households	2010	5,364	5,562	3.7%	4.2%	5.0%
Average Household Size	2010	2.24	2.17	-3.1%	-4.1%	-3.7%
Renters	2010	2,589	2,707	4.6%	0.3%	4.6%
% Renters	2010	48.3%	48.7%	0.8%	-3.8%	-0.4%
Ave Renter Household Size	2010	1.75	1.86	6.2%	-1.6%	-2.4%
Owners	2010	2,775	2,855	2.9%	5.8%	5.2%
Households w/ Individual 65 & Over	2010	1,311	1,443	10.1%	20.4%	13.4%
Renter Householder 65+	2005-2009*	398	408	2.5%	9.6%	7.7%
Owner Householder 65+	2005-2009*	874	982	12.4%	25.1%	16.5%

*Adjusted by Development Cycles in response to Census anomalies.*

**SOURCE:** US Census Bureau, VT Center for Rural Studies, American Community Survey

## ECONOMIC CHANGES

- **Employment:** Residential employment has remained stable since 2000 and has actually improved slightly since 2006. At the same time, the number of unemployed residents has more than doubled from 2.9 percent in 2006 to 6.8 percent in 2010. This is the result of young adults entering a local job market that has continued to shed jobs.

*Note: Residential employment indicates the number of residents in a given community who are employed and is distinct from the number of jobs in that community whose workers may reside both within and without the community.*

- **Local Jobs:** From 2000-2006, Brattleboro lost nearly 1,000 local jobs; since 2006 it has dropped another 475. Currently, there are about 11,000 jobs in the community. Both goods-producing and service-providing industries lost jobs in the past decade. The loss of goods-producing jobs is happening statewide. The town's loss of 7.1 percent of its service-providing jobs

contrasts with a 5.5 percent gain statewide and a 3.7 percent gain in the rest of the county.

- Wages: Brattleboro's average wage went up by 2.25 percent/ year, less than half the rate of inflation for the decade (CPI:4.8%/ year). At the start of the past decade, Brattleboro's average wage was \$1,600/ year higher than the state's average; now it is \$2,000/ year less. The shift was most noticeable among lower-paying service jobs where the average wage statewide increased by more than 40 percent compared to just 24 percent in Brattleboro.
- Household Income: Brattleboro's median household income rose at a rate of just under two percent annually during the 2000s and now stands at \$38,301. This compares to the statewide median of \$51,284. The median income household in Vermont can afford to pay as much as \$325/ month more for housing costs than the median Brattleboro household (using 30% of income). In the rest of Windham County, the median household can actually afford to pay more than their counterparts statewide. The median renter household earns less than half the amount of the median homeowner in Brattleboro. With an income of \$24,400, the median income renter household in town would have to spend 45 percent of their gross income to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the current market median of \$935/ month.
- Renter Income by AMI: There is no data more current than 2000 to look at renter incomes as a percent of the Area Median Income. At that time, 38.6 percent of renters in Brattleboro were extremely poor (<30% AMI) and 65 percent has incomes below 65 percent of AMI. If anything, renter incomes in town have concentrated further among those earning less than 50 percent of AMI. HUD will likely update their data on AMI distribution sometime in 2012. According to the ACS data for 2005-2009, median renter income in Brattleboro rose by only 12 percent or much lower than either the rate of wage increases or inflation.
- Poverty Rate: The Census data suggests that Brattleboro's poverty rate declined from 10.1 percent of those for whom the rate was calculated, to 9.5 percent. This represents a 5.9 percent drop in poverty at the same time that the county and state rose by over 10 percent. While this drop is hard to believe given the other income data provided, it may be explained in part by the increase in the number of working residents per household. With more unrelated and larger households, Brattleboro may be seeing an increase in the young working poor at 30-50 percent of AMI who are living above poverty by sharing housing costs or continuing to live with family members.

Figure II.2  
**Key Economic Trends**  
 Brattleboro, 2000- Current

Brattleboro	Current Year	2000	2006	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	% Change VT	% Change Windham County
Resident Employment	2010	6,170	6,120	6,150	-0.3%	3.6%	2.5%
Unemployment Rate	2010	3.1%	2.9%	6.8%	119.0%	155.6%	154.2%
Total Local Jobs	2010	12,323	11,396	10,922	-11.4%	-1.6%	-4.3%
Goods-Producing	2010	2,295	1,737	1,605	-30.1%	-26.8%	-28.3%
Service Providing	2010	10,028	9,659	9,317	-7.1%	5.5%	1.6%
Average Wage	2010	\$30,578	\$35,013	\$37,444	22.5%	36.3%	34.4%
Goods-Producing	2010	\$38,855	\$41,113	\$45,380	16.8%	31.4%	20.5%
Service Providing	2010	\$28,701	\$33,120	\$35,628	24.1%	40.4%	25.4%
Median Household Income	2005-2009	\$31,997		\$38,301	19.7%	25.5%	21.6%
Renters	2005-2009	\$21,800		\$24,400	11.9%	16.2%	12.6%
Owners	2005-2009	\$47,000		\$58,700	24.9%	21.9%	26.1%
<i>Renter Income by AMI</i>							
<30% of AMI	2000	38.6%				21.6%	18.1%
>30<=50% AMI	2000	16.6%				18.6%	19.0%
>50<=80% AMI	2000	17.6%				24.4%	22.7%
80% AMI or Greater	2000	27.2%				35.4%	40.2%
Poverty Rate (Persons)	2010	10.1%		9.5%	-5.9%	10.5%	10.4%

NOTE: Brattleboro's reported drop in poverty rate is doubtful @ -5.9%

SOURCE: VT Labor Market Information, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, SOCDs CHAS Data

### RENTAL HOUSING MARKET CHANGES

- Rental Housing Costs: Brattleboro's median gross rent has risen consistently with average wages over the past 10 years, just as it has statewide—only the statewide change has been much higher than that of Brattleboro. According to American Community Survey data, Brattleboro has rents about 17 percent below the statewide median. Current advertisements for market rate rents suggest that Brattleboro's rents may not be as low as the ACS

suggests. In a survey of units on the market for rent, Brattleboro remained higher than the other larger communities in the WWHT service area.

*NOTE: the ACS, which clearly identifies a range of variability in the data it presents, may simply be off in its estimate of current rents in the community.*

- **Vacancy Rate:** The Census estimates Brattleboro’s rental vacancy rate at 5.8 percent up from 4.0 percent in 2000. The current rental vacancy rate is significantly lower than for the state (7.0%) or any of the larger communities in the WWHT service area.
- **Subsidized Housing Characteristics:** According to the Vermont Subsidized Housing Inventory, Brattleboro has added 123 new subsidized family rental units and 21 new elderly units since 2000. The Town’s subsidized family housing provides affordable apartments for one in five non-elderly renters and about one in three Very Low income renters (<50% AMI). The 239 units account for 58.8 percent of elderly renters and 77.6 percent of seniors with incomes below 50 percent of AMI.

Figure II.3

**Key Rental Housing Trends**

Brattleboro 2000- Current

Brattleboro	Current Year	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	% Change VT	% Change Windham County
Median Gross Rent	2005-09	\$546	\$665	21.8%	41.2%	27.2%
Rental Vacancy Rate	2005-09	4.0%	5.8%	45.0%	37.9%	69.2%
<i>% of Income Paid for Rent</i>						
Less than 30%		59.1%	56.2%	-4.9%	-14.8%	-10.5%
30-49%		24.4%	24.5%	0.5%	21.7%	16.9%
50% or More		16.5%	19.2%	16.6%	28.2%	22.7%
Median % Paid for Rent		27.4%	29.4%	7.3%	16.4%	12.5%
<i>Subsidized Rental Housing</i>						
Total Family Units (TFU)	2011	329	452	37.4%	6,514	609
TFU as % of Non-elderly Renters	2011	15.0%	19.6%	30.5%	10.7%	12.0%
Total Elderly Units (TEU)	2011	218	239	9.6%	6,113	556
TEU as % of Elderly Renters	2011	54.8%	58.8%	7.4%	52.0%	60.4%

**SOURCE:** Housingdata.org, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, VT Subsidized Housing Inventory

## **HOMEOWNERSHIP COSTS**

- Sales Activity: Sales activity (transactions) in Brattleboro is down 40 percent from 2000 levels and 32 percent lower than in 2006. This lack of sales is consistent with county and statewide trends.
- Homes On Market: On June 28, 2011 the Homes.com website listed 77 homes for sale in Brattleboro. This represents a relatively low 2.8 percent of the owner-occupied housing in the community and is identical to the number of primary residences sold in all of 2010. By contrast, 5.9 percent of Windham County's ownership stock was for sale on that day. The median price of a home in Brattleboro on the market was \$185,000 or \$14,000 lower than the median price of a home sold in 2010. At current interest rates, a buyer with a 10 percent down payment would need income of at least \$45,000 to afford the carrying costs of a median priced home. Only about 15 percent of Brattleboro's current renters have incomes high enough to cover this cost. Still, with long-term interest rates roughly two percent lower than they were in 2006 and with housing prices the same as they were in that year, the median-priced home in Brattleboro actually costs about \$200/ month less than it did five years ago.
- Foreclosure Activity: According to the Vermont Banking division, new foreclosure filings in Windham County average just under 15 per month for 2009 and 2010, dropping to ten per month through July 2011. This data does not provide foreclosure information at the Town level. Countywide, Windham County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> highest in terms of foreclosure activity as a percentage of housing units (0.62% compared to 0.53% statewide), with only Rutland, Franklin and Lamoille Counties having higher rates of foreclosure activity.

Figure II.4  
**Key Homeownership Market Trends**  
 Brattleboro 2000- current

Brattleboro	Current Year	2000	2006	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	% Change VT	% Change Windham County
<i>Home Sales</i>							
# Primary Residences Sold	2010	128	117	77	-39.8%	-41.8%	-45.7%
Median \$ Primary Residence	2010	\$109,750	\$185,000	\$199,000	81.3%	63.0%	59.0%
Primary Residence Sales Under \$150,000	2010			26.7% <sup>1</sup>			
<i>Homes On Market</i>							
Homes for Sale as a % of Ownership Stock	2011			2.8%		3.7%	5.9%
Median Asking Price Under \$150,000	2011			\$185,000		\$228,750	\$239,500
Over \$300,000	2011			14.3%		22.0%	20.0%
				20.8%		34.4%	34.4%

<sup>1</sup>Excluding Mobil Homes

**SOURCE:** Housingdata.org, Homes.com, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### SUMMARY

In December 2006, Development Cycles reported the following changes in Brattleboro's housing needs from 2003-2006 as follows:

- Dramatic increases in the median cost of homeownership
- Significant private investment in small-scale rental properties
- Continued job-loss and stagnating wages
- Significant recent increases in demand for subsidized housing from low-income residents unable to pay market rents
- Accelerated split between wealthier and poorer residents
- Increased purchase of housing by wealthier non-residents and new residents from higher cost areas

Over the past five years, housing prices have flattened and the market demand for small-scale rental properties has diminished. Job losses, stagnating wages, and increased demand for deep-subsidy rental units have accelerated. The income split between homeowners and renters, as well as the purchase of housing

by newly relocated households, continues to grow. The biggest demographic changes appear to be a rapid concentration of the county's young adults to housing within Brattleboro, and potentially, the spreading of the county's elderly to more rural communities. Overall, the rental housing market can be viewed as stable with vacancy rates, well below that of the state and comparable communities. At the same time, key renter populations are slowly losing the means to pay for their apartments.

### III. ROCKINGHAM, SPRINGFIELD & WINDSOR

In this section, the consultant focuses on two of Windsor County's largest communities, Springfield and Windsor, comparing them with Rockingham, their closest counterpart in Windham County.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Of these three communities only Springfield gained population in the past decade (3.2%). Two of three communities posted declines in renter households, with only Rockingham registering a small increase. The young adult population 18-34 has grown significantly in two of the three towns, but less so in Windsor. Again, these changes have occurred against a statewide backdrop of large increases in the 18-34 year old population. As in Brattleboro, this age cohort has grown without increasing the number of renter households. Young adults continuing to live with parents and larger households of unrelated adults will likely explain part of the current phenomenon. All three communities apparently saw a decline in elderly population, again, despite increase at the state and county level in these populations. The reported elderly population decline in Windsor (-17.6%) seems especially hard to believe given a countywide increase of 11.2 percent, as well as a much smaller decrease (-0.7%) in the number of households with an individual 65 and over. Still, the trend seems to clearly indicate that as residents age into the 'elderly' category, they are doing it in other than the traditional "hub" communities like these three. The demand for age and size appropriate housing options in smaller rural communities will likely grow over the next decade.

Figure III.1  
**Key Demographic Trends**  
 Rockingham, Springfield & Windsor, 2000-Current

	Current Year	Rockingham			Springfield			Windsor		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
Total Population	2010	5,309	5,282	-0.5%	9,078	9,373	3.2%	3,756	3,638	-3.1%
18-34 Year Olds	2010	911	1,022	12.2%	1,512	1,798	18.9%	726	741	2.1%
65 and over	2010	820	816	-0.5%	1,728	1,666	-3.6%	777	640	-17.6%
% of Population Total	2010	15.4%	15.4%	0.0%	19.0%	17.8%	-6.6%	20.7%	17.6%	-15.0%
Households	2010	2,202	2,197	-0.2%	3,886	3,903	0.4%	1,520	1,492	-1.8%
Average Household Size	2010	2.41	2.40	-0.2%	2.34	2.40	2.6%	2.47	2.44	-1.2%
Renters	2010	914	923	1.0%	1,266	1,246	-1.6%	603	572	-5.1%

% Renters Ave. Renter	2010	41.5%	42.0%	1.2%	32.6%	31.9%	-2.0%	39.7%	38.3%	-3.4%
Household Size	2010	2.20	2.28	3.8%	2.07	2.13	3.3%	2.16	1.98	-8.4%
Owners Households w/ Individual 65 & Over	2010	1,288	1,274	-1.1%	2,620	2,657	1.4%	917	920	0.3%
Renter Householder 65+	2005-2009*	603	590	-2.2%	1,215	1,179	-3.0%	454	451	-0.7%
Owner Householder 65+	2005-2009*	219	215	-1.8%	359	350	-2.5%	138	135	-2.2%
		319	330	3.4%	782	799	2.2%	311	315	1.3%

**SOURCE:** US Census Bureau, VT Center for Rural Studies, American Community Survey

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

Of the three communities, Windsor has developed the strongest economy over the past decade, with positive growth in terms of resident employment and local jobs. Average wage gains are much stronger than in its peer communities, as is median household and median renter incomes. Windsor has far fewer extremely low-income residents (<30% of AMI) compared to the other two communities and more renters in the 50-80 percent of AMI category. Windsor's positive economic profile seems at odds with certain demographic and housing indicators, including declining renter households and high vacancy rates.

Rockingham has actually fared somewhat better than Brattleboro or Springfield in terms of employment retention, wage gains, and rental price increases since 2006. It has however seen increases in residential unemployment and the fastest rise in unemployment rate

Springfield's economy has fared most poorly of these comparable sized communities during the last decade. It has had the sharpest declines in goods-producing jobs, the highest unemployment rate, and the smallest gain in average wage of the three. It is noteworthy that Springfield has seen some increase in service-providing jobs and a healthy increase in average wage for these jobs.

Figure III.2  
**Key Economic Trends**  
 Rockingham, Springfield & Windsor, 2000-Current

		Rockingham			Springfield			Windsor		
		Current Year	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current
Resident Employment	2010	2,640	2,560	-3.0%	4,460	4,120	-7.6%	1,770	1,860	5.1%
Unemployment Rate	2010	2.40%	7.8%	225.0%	3.3%	8.4%	154.5%	2.9%	6.2%	113.8%
Total Local Jobs	2010	2,458	2,238	-9.0%	4,907	4,209	-14.2%	1,536	1,610	4.8%
Goods-Producing	2010	683	550	-19.5%	1424	670	-52.9%	379	278	-26.6%
Service Providing	2010	1,775	1,688	-4.9%	3,483	3,539	1.6%	1,157	1,332	15.1%
Average Wage	2010	\$25,649	\$35,932	40.1%	\$29,440	\$38,593	31.1%	\$24,925	\$39,106	56.9%
Goods-Producing	2010	\$29,176	\$52,953	81.5%	\$41,012	\$42,498	3.6%	\$28,853	\$44,986	55.9%
Service Providing	2010	\$23,568	\$29,961	27.1%	\$23,680	\$36,347	53.5%	\$22,223	\$37,404	68.3%
Median Household Income	2005-2009	\$33,423	\$45,343	35.7%	\$34,169	\$40,290	17.9%	\$33,815	\$49,231	45.6%
Median Renter Income	2005-2009	\$23,000	\$26,100	13.5%	\$20,050	\$24,950	24.4%	\$24,200	\$31,200	28.9%
Median Owner Income	2005-2009	\$42,500	\$63,500	49.4%	\$43,325	\$50,500	16.6%	\$47,300	\$58,000	22.6%
<i>Renter Income by AMI</i>										
<30% of AMI	2000	23.6%			26.2%			13.6%		
>30<=50% AMI	2000	22.5%			22.0%			24.3%		
>50<=80% AMI	2000	19.6%			25.5%			27.8%		
80% AMI or Greater	2000	34.3%			26.2%			34.4%		
Poverty Rate (Persons)	2010	10.0%	15.9%	59.1%	9.8%	11.9%	21.2%	7.7%	11.7%	53.1%

**SOURCE:** VT Labor Market Information, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, SOCDs CHAS Data

### RENTAL HOUSING TRENDS

Reflective of its stronger economy, Windsor's rental housing market has significantly higher market rents than Rockingham and Springfield. Surprisingly though, Springfield recorded the lowest rental vacancy rate and represents one of very few communities where the vacancy rate actually declined over the last decade. Windsor is the community where renters pay more of their income for rent: the median percentage of income paid for rent in Windsor is 33.7 percent, significantly higher than the average statewide. Of the three communities,

Rockingham houses the smallest percentage of its non-elderly renters in subsidized rental housing. Its 66 family units provide housing for only 14.2 percent of its non-elderly renters. The three communities provided subsidized elderly housing for roughly the same share of elderly renters as each other at roughly the statewide average rate.

Figure III.3  
**Key Rental Housing Trends**  
 Rockingham, Springfield & Windsor, 2000-Current

	Current Year	Rockingham			Springfield			Windsor		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
Median Gross Rent	2005-09	\$488	\$700	43.4%	\$469	\$697	48.6%	\$490	\$754	53.9%
Rental Vacancy Rate	2010	4.1%	12.0%	192.7%	6.6%	9.3%	40.9%	7.2%	12.7%	76.4%
<i>% of Income Paid for Rent</i>	2005-09									
Less than 30%		70.4%	56.4%	-19.9%	68.6%	49.2%	-28.2%	73.5%	54.5%	-25.9%
30-49%		16.7%	19.5%	16.9%	17.8%	28.8%	61.4%	17.0%	32.5%	90.8%
50% or More		12.9%	24.1%	86.9%	13.6%	22.0%	61.8%	9.5%	13.0%	37.8%
Median % Paid for Rent		24.1%	28.6%	18.7%	24.0%	30.9%	28.8%	24.6%	33.7%	37.0%
<i>Subsidized Rental Housing</i>										
Total Family Units	2011	0	66	n/a	219	241	10.0%	75	82	9.3%
Units as % of Non-elderly Renters	2011	0.0%	14.2%	n/a	24.1%	27.8%	15.1%	16.1%	22.1%	37.0%
Total Elderly Units	2011	98	98	0.0%	171	171	0.0%	74	74	0.0%
% of Elderly Renters	2011	44.7%	46.7%	4.4%	47.6%	47.6%	-0.1%	53.6%	53.6%	0.0%

SOURCE: Housingdata.org, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, VT Subsidized Housing Inventory

### OWNERSHIP HOUSING TRENDS

Springfield has by far the most home sales activity but has seen the largest declines in that activity among the three communities. Windsor actually had more sales in 2010 than it did in 2000. More than half of the homes in each of these three communities sold for less than \$150,000. Relatively few homes are available on the market in each community at this time. In each case, the homes for sale represents less than a year's worth of inventory, though the asking prices in each community are far higher than recent sales indicate is likely.

According to the Vermont Banking division, new foreclosure filings in both Windham and Windsor Counties averaged just under 15 per month for 2009 and 2010, dropping to ten per month through July 2011. This data does not provide foreclosure information at the Town level. Countywide, Windham County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> highest in terms of foreclosure activity as a percentage of ownership housing units (1.4% compared to 1.0% statewide), with only Rutland, Franklin and Lamoille Counties having higher rates of foreclosure activity. Windsor County's 1.1 percent rate was in the middle of Vermont counties.

Figure III.4  
**Key Ownership Housing Trends**  
 Rockingham, Springfield & Windsor, 2000-Current

		Rockingham			Springfield			Windsor		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
<i>Home Sales</i>										
# Primary Residences Sold	2010	48	26	-45.8%	132	64	-51.5%	34	36	5.9%
Median \$ Primary Residence	2010	\$80,000	\$135,000	68.8%	\$80,000	\$124,500	55.6%	\$85,000	\$147,500	73.5%
Primary Residence Sales Under \$150,000	2010		67.0% <sup>1</sup>			63.2% <sup>1</sup>			52.4% <sup>1</sup>	
<i>Homes On Market</i>										
Homes for Sale as a % of Ownership Stock	2011		1.8%			2.8%			2.4%	
Median Asking Price	2011		\$190,000			\$169,000			\$179,000	
Under \$150,000	2011		29.2%			47.9%			22.7%	
Over \$300,000	2011		16.7%			20.5%			13.6%	

Excluding Mobil Homes SOURCE: Housingdata.org, Homes.com, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

## SUMMARY

Declines in the elderly population, fewer renter households, and lower than expected gains in young adults, mark each of these three more urban centers.

- Windsor has the strongest economy of the three, as both rents and home prices rise the closer one gets to the Hanover/ Lebanon employment hub. Rental vacancy rates in Windsor appear high despite increases in both jobs and wages suggesting that many employed renters working in Windsor may not be choosing to rent in that community. Windsor also has the smallest share of renter households among the four largest towns in the WWHT service area, with less than half the number of Springfield and less than a quarter of the renters who live in Brattleboro.
- Rockingham has actually fared somewhat better than Brattleboro in terms of employment retention, wage gains, and rental price increases since 2006. It has a relatively large share of renters living in small multi-family properties compared to the other three comparable communities and also has the smallest share of its renters living in subsidized housing.
- Springfield continues to lag behind the county and state in terms of job retention and rental occupancy. Its rental costs and homeownership costs are significantly lower than area and statewide medians. A surprisingly high percentage of its younger households do own their homes, however, suggesting that it may be emerging as a place with new energy and commitment compared to Brattleboro, Rockingham and Windsor. Sales activity is light in each of the three communities, but each also has a smaller inventory of unsold homes than many communities in the state.

## IV. WILMINGTON & LUDLOW

In this section, the consultant focuses on two similar ski resort communities, Wilmington in Windham County and Ludlow, in Windsor County.

### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Changes in the way the Census treats seasonal residents creates challenges to understanding true demographic shifts in these two resort communities. The table below indicates sharp drops in virtually every demographic category, including those that grew significantly at the county level. Little can be reliably inferred from this demographic data, except to note the similarities between these like communities. A couple of items do stand out: the Census reported a significant drop in elderly renters in Wilmington but a relatively large increase in Ludlow. The same is true for rental housing generally. The opening of an elderly housing project in West Dover that serves the Wilmington area could help explain some of the drop in elderly renters. The opening in 2006 of the 36-unit Gill River II elderly housing does correspond to the additional senior renters in Ludlow. Given new Census counting, nearly a quarter of Ludlow's population is now 65 and over.

Figure IV.1  
**Key Demographic Trends**  
 Wilmington & Ludlow, 2000-Current

	Current Year	Wilmington			Ludlow		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
Total Population	2010	2,225	1,876	-15.7%	2,449	1,963	-19.8%
18-34 Year Olds	2010	384	351	-8.6%	383	340	-11.2%
65 and over	2010	323	319	-1.2%	471	451	-4.2%
% of Population	2010	14.5%	17.0%	17.1%	19.2%	23.0%	19.5%
Total Households	2010	992	866	-12.7%	1,060	930	-12.3%
Average Household Size	2010	2.24	2.17	-3.4%	2.31	2.11	-8.6%
Renters	2010	321	300	-6.5%	300	319	6.3%
% Renters	2010	32.4%	34.6%	7.1%	28.3%	34.3%	21.2%
Ave. Renter Household Size	2010	1.99	2.02	1.2%	2.02	1.92	-5.0%
Owners	2010	671	566	-15.6%	760	611	-19.6%
Households w/ Individual 65+	2010	226	233	3.1%	299	306	2.3%
Renter Householder 65+	2005-09	40	36	-10.0%	57	78	36.8%
Owner Householder 65+	2005-09	175	184	5.1%	203	214	5.4%

*Note: Drops of this magnitude must represent changes in the way the Census counted seasonal residents.*

**SOURCE:** US Census Bureau, VT Center for Rural Studies, American Community Survey

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

In contrast to the Census drops in population, state labor market data indicates that both communities showed moderate increases in resident employment, as well as sharp rises in unemployment over the course of the decade. Taken together, they suggest more residents live in the communities than the Census indicates. Ludlow actually seems to have increased goods-producing jobs in the past several years. Average wages are up far more sharply in Wilmington than Ludlow, however, where service wages especially trail statewide levels dramatically. In 2000 (the most recent available year), a far greater share of Ludlow renters qualified as Very Low Income (41.9%) compared to Wilmington (31.7%). Owner incomes in Wilmington have not increased much since 2000 and now trail their counterparts in Ludlow by nearly 20 percent. Poverty rates in the two towns are comparable.

Figure IV.2

### Key Economic Trends

Ludlow & Wilmington, 2000- Current

	Current Year	Wilmington			Ludlow		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
Resident Employment	2010	1,280	1,380	7.8%	1,260	1,320	4.8%
Unemployment Rate	2010	3.0%	7.8%	160.0%	3.3%	8.1%	145.5%
Total Local Jobs	2010	997	982	-1.5%	1812	1883	3.9%
Goods-Producing	2010	94	57	-39.4%	256	343	34.0%
Service Providing	2010	903	925	2.4%	1556	1540	-1.0%
Average Wage	2010	\$19,541	\$27,943	43.0%	\$21,910	\$26,781	22.2%
Goods-Producing	2010	\$21,735	\$39,586	82.1%	\$28,106	\$35,470	26.2%
Service Providing	2010	\$17,952	\$26,616	48.3%	\$20,111	\$23,401	16.4%
Median Household Income	2005-09	\$37,396	\$45,536	21.8%	\$36,969	\$44,276	19.8%
Renters	2005-09	\$24,200	\$32,400	33.9%	\$23,200	\$25,000	7.8%
Owners	2005-09	\$48,500	\$54,900	13.2%	\$44,600	\$67,500	51.3%
<i>Renter Income by AMI</i>							
<30% of AMI	2000	9.8%			20.3%		
>30<=50% AMI	2000	21.9%			21.6%		
>50<=80% AMI	2000	28.8%			28.4%		
80% AMI or Greater	2000	39.5%			29.7%		
Poverty Rate (Persons)	2010	9.3%	10.2%	9.7%	7.6%	10.1%	32.5%

**SOURCE:** VT Labor Market Information, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, SOCDs CHAS Data

## RENTAL HOUSING TRENDS

As resort communities with April being the slow season, vacancy rates are typically elevated. That said, they are especially high in this Census, more than doubling in both communities. The typical movement of resort renters between “make do” high season and low cost offseason accommodations make it difficult to provide year-round rental housing options in these communities. Wilmington’s lack of elderly housing is partially explained by a new development in nearby West Dover.

Figure IV.3  
**Key Rental Housing Trends**  
 Ludlow & Wilmington, 2000- Current

	Current Year	Wilmington			Ludlow		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
Median Gross Rent	2005-09	\$588	\$713	21.3%	\$520	\$671	29.0%
Rental Vacancy Rate	2005-09	5.3%	14.6%	175.3%	8.5%	18.1%	111.5%
<i>Percent of Income Paid for Rent</i>	2005-09						
Less than 30%		60.3%	52.5%	-12.9%	64.7%	58.3%	-9.9%
30-49%		19.7%	33.2%	68.9%	23.3%	22.0%	-5.4%
50% or More		20.0%	14.2%	-28.8%	12.0%	19.7%	64.0%
Median % Paid for Rent		25.2%	29.1%	15.5%	26.4%	29.0%	9.8%
<i>Subsidized Rental Housing</i>							
Total Family Units	2011	7	7	0.0%	25	25	0.0%
Units as % of Non-elderly Renters	2011	2.2%	2.3%	7.0%	8.3%	7.8%	-6.0%
Total Elderly Units	2011	0	0	0.0%	24	60	150.0%
% of Elderly Renters	2011	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.0%	77.0%	82.7%

**SOURCE:** Housingdata.org, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, VT Subsidized Housing Inventory

## HOMEOWNERSHIP TRENDS

In two communities dominated by vacation home sales, few primary residences change hands. The sale of primary homes is down dramatically from 2000 levels. The median values of the few homes that do change hands have tracked exactly between the two communities.

Figure IV.4  
**Key Homeownership Market Trends**  
 Ludlow & Wilmington, 2000- Current

		Wilmington			Ludlow		
		2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current	2000	Current	% Change 2000 to Current
<i>Home Sales</i>							
# Primary Residences Sold	2010	26	6	-76.9%	17	7	-58.8%
Median \$ Primary Residence*	2010	\$119,000	\$200,000	68.1%	\$119,000	\$200,000	68.1%
Primary Residence Sales Under \$150,000*	2010		16.7%			14.3%	
<i>Homes On Market</i>							
Homes for Sale as a % of Ownership Stock	2011		16.8%			27.3%	
Median Asking Price	2011		\$234,900			\$300,000	
Under \$150,000	2011		11.5%			9.0%	
Over \$300,000	2011		38.2%			50.3%	

*Excludes mobil homes.*

**SOURCE:** Housingdata.org, Homes.com, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### SUMMARY

Conflicting data, resulting from changes in the way the Census counts residents in resort communities, makes it hard to interpret housing trends in these two communities. The underlying issues of seasonal employment, low wages, and a shifting seasonal rental market continue to exist.

In both communities, housing prices are elevated because of the competition from vacation owners; still the low volume of primary residential sales activity offers little promise for a homeownership development project in these communities. Currently, there is an inventory of properties for sale in both communities equal to several years worth of homes at recent sales levels.