

Here is the Planning Commission's **PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION** of the '**Housing**' section of the **Bethel Town Plan**. By State Statute, the Town Plan is revised every five years. The Planning Commission will hold a duly warned public hearing in mid-June on this and, depending on comments received then, will transmit it to the Select Board, which will hold a hearing at the end of July. Public comments are appreciated. Formal adoption by the Select Board is anticipated by August 13, 2006.

V. HOUSING

A. BACKGROUND

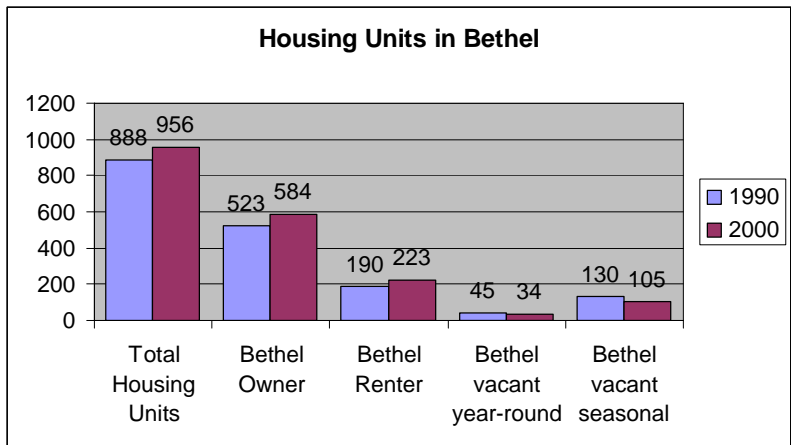
A major function of local housing planning is to meet two community objectives – first, to provide safe and affordable housing for our present and future population and second, to enable a suitable density and distribution of housing throughout the community. Additionally, growth in housing affects the capacity to provide facilities and services. Housing built in the absence of adequate planning for its impact on schools, roads, and other public services can overburden the ability of the taxpayers to pay for these services.

This section discusses the amount, type, location, and affordability of existing housing and the needs for future housing. Other sections of this Plan also include information on housing. The data presented in this section are extracted from two sources – U.S. Census Bureau's Vermont State Data Center and Town Grand List Records (Form 411). Data collected from these sources do not match exactly due to variations in record keeping and classifications. Notwithstanding, they are considered relevant and reliable data sets for analysis.

B. NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS

A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters, or if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Population & Housing, 1990 to 2000 changes in housing units in Bethel were: 8% increase in total housing units, 12% increase in owner occupied, 17% increase in renter occupied, 24% decrease in vacant year-round, 19% decrease in vacant seasonal housing units. The following graph shows the change from 1990:



Surrounding Towns, County, & State Change In Housing Units, 1990 - 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Population & Housing, 2000)

Housing Units	1990	2000	% Change
Stockbridge	488	528	8%
Royalton	1,161	1,281	10%
Rochester	737	768	4%
Randolph	1,830	1,905	4%
Bethel	888	956	8%
Barnard	607	629	4%
Windsor County	29,849	31,621	6%
Vermont	271,214	294,382	9%

C. HOUSING TYPE, OWNERSHIP, and PRICE

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census for Bethel indicated that 693 units or 72% of its housing consisted of single-family homes. This represented the largest component of the Town’s housing stock followed next by 103 mobile homes (11%)

In 2000 there were 584 owner-occupied units and 233 renter occupied units (85% of total housing units), these rates included mobile homes as well as conventional homes. There were 139 vacant units including seasonal and vacation home properties. Comparison to total housing units (956): 61% owner-occupied, 24% renter-occupied, and 15% vacant.

Grand List Reports filed annually with the Vermont Department of Taxes (Form 411) provide valuable information regarding ownership characteristics in addition to valuations. Year-round, vacation, and mobile homes valuations are represented in the table below:

Valuations of Residential Property, Bethel – 2005 (2005 Form 411)

Housing Type	Listed Value	Percent of Total
Residential (Year Round)	68.9 m	86%
Vacation Homes	6.9 m	9%
Farms	1.5 m	2%
Mobile Homes	3.1 m	4%

Farms and residential properties combined represented eighty-eight percent (88%) of the total Grand List values according to the 2005 report. These valuations, however, are inclusive of the acreage of the entire parcels on which the properties are located.

HOUSING PRICES

[Source: From Vermont Housing Data]

AVERAGE PRICE OF PRIMARY RESIDENCES SOLD

Year	Bethel	Windsor County	Vermont	Year	Bethel	Windsor County	Vermont
2000	\$96,553	\$129,754	\$126,605	2000	\$147,500	\$234,927	\$175,940
2001	\$92,496	\$139,081	\$138,592	2001	\$118,900	\$268,297	\$180,573
2002	\$120,173	\$164,401	\$154,347	2002	\$129,150	\$275,071	\$204,217
2003	\$100,098	\$177,965	\$166,358	2003	\$75,998	\$289,458	\$232,204
2004	\$153,681	\$187,067	\$183,236	2004	\$184,813	\$429,041	\$275,460

D. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing is ‘affordable’ if a household making an area’s median income is paying no more than 30 percent of its income on housing. Housing costs for homeowners are: principal on mortgage payments, interest, property taxes, and insurance. Housing costs for renters are rent and utilities.

In 2004 the median purchase price for a home in Vermont rose to \$165,000; this would require an annual income over \$62,000. The median household income in Vermont is just over \$43,000 (In 1999 Bethel’s was \$34,141). Based on Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) calculations, this income would purchase only a \$114,600 home.

A salary of \$27,914 (\$13.32 per hour) is required to afford the \$698 average Fair Market Rent for a modest, two-bedroom apartment. The median gross monthly rent (rent plus utilities and fuel) for Bethel in 2000 was \$492.

The Directory of Affordable Rental Housing (DoARH) lists only two subsidized rental housing facilities in Bethel: Depot 1 Apartments with 15 units and Depot II Apartments with 10 units.

E. Emerging Housing Trends in Windsor County

Compared to area towns, property values and sales activity in Bethel are typical, excepting Barnard and Pomfret, which have substantially higher values in both the year-round and second-home market.

A study of Windsor County housing supply and demand is relevant to Bethel’s future planning for housing. According to the *Windsor County 2005 Housing Needs Assessment*:

Renter Households

- Low-income Windsor County residents struggle with a high priced market with few rental housing options.
- Households earning \$37,047 per year (80% of the estimated 2005 county median household income) can afford to pay about \$926 monthly for rent (including utilities.)
- It is estimated there are 4,632 low-income households in Windsor County and only 2,400 units available, creating a shortage of 2,231 affordable rental units in 2005.
- Subsidized housing built by Windsor County's affordable housing developers provides for about 24% of low-income renter households in 2005.

Owner Households

- By 2010 in Windsor County there will be a need for an additional 813 owner-occupied homes to meet the expected demand of 18,453 households.
- A gap between incomes needed to purchase a home and purchase prices is expected to increase by about \$80,000 between 2000 and 2010.
- The increases in median incomes during this time will not keep pace with the significant purchase price escalation.

Source: Gent Communications analysis of data from Census (2000) and Claritas (2005, 2010)

[See Appendices A, B & C for 'Goals,' 'Planning Principles,' and 'Recommendations for Action,' respectively, specific to Housing and other sections of this Town Plan.]