

Raising Homes: It Takes a Village to Grow Housing

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As he travels Vermont, Tyler Maas sees a possible remedy to the housing crisis hiding in plain sight. It is the accessory dwelling unit, or ADU — the rather unwieldy name for a converted shed, home or garage apartment that can multiply the residential capacity of a single lot.

"The ADU potential is everywhere — that's the beauty of it," said Maas, who, as ADU program director for the Vermont State Housing Authority, regularly sings their praises to town housing committees, nonprofit agencies and other groups. To Maas, encouraging the construction of ADUs is one relatively easy way for towns to address a shortage of middle-income housing.

"Everyone talks about hitting the 'missing middle,' and this really is it," he said.

This shortage of mid-priced homes is increasingly the concern of Vermont's municipalities, which are trying to fill the void with the limited tools at their disposal.

Although Vermont lawmakers have directed millions of dollars to affordable housing programs for low-income residents in recent years, the state also has a severe shortage of homes for people who earn too much to qualify for those programs — the teachers, nurses, police officers and other middle-wage earners who are in high demand for thousands of vacant jobs. And there's very little state or federal support for such housing.

Everybody is about affordable housing, but you can't get there unless you set the stage, and the stage is water and sewer," said Katie Buckley, an official at the Vermont League of Cities & Towns who helps communities make use of federal aid. "Water and wastewater is sort of foundational for everything.

Towns are stepping in to fill that vacuum by revamping their zoning bylaws, joining with private landowners to encourage development of affordable housing and taking advantage of

state programs aimed at reducing regulatory hurdles for new projects. Communities are tapping into a torrent of new federal funding to tackle one of the biggest obstacles to housing development across much of Vermont: a lack of public infrastructure.

[Read the complete *Seven Days* article](#), which was originally published on June 15, 2022.

About this series of articles in *Seven Days*

Seven Days is examining Vermont's housing crisis — and what can be done about it — in their *Locked Out* series. Send tips to lockedout@sevendaysvt.com. These stories are supported by a grant from the nonprofit Journalism Funding Partners, which leverages philanthropy and fundraising to boost local reporting. For more information, visit jfp-local.org.