

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Planning Commission
January 17, 2023 @ 6pm
APPROVED MINUTES

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87517183985>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Luc Dupuis called the meeting to order @ 6:05pm. This meeting was a hybrid of in-person and Zoom.

Planning Commission Board Members: Luc Dupuis – Chair; Ken Thompson – Vice Chair; Tom Conley; Scott Bessette (arrived @ 6:14pm) (ALL WERE IN-PERSON)
absent – Bruce Ryan

Town of Highgate Staff: Heidi Britch-Valenta – Town Administrator;

Wendi Dusablon – Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk (BOTH WERE IN-PERSON)

Public / Other: Emily Klofft, NRPC (IN-PERSON); Greta Brunswick, NRPC (VIA ZOOM); Barry Lampke, NRPC (VIA ZOOM)

II. ZONING BYLAW MODERNIZATION

Greta Brunswick, Barry Lampke, and Emily Klofft, all from North West Regional Planning (NRPC) participated in this discussion. Greta shared some slides with information including: housing needs assessment; schedule for the project; education and engagement; bylaw language based on feedback within the communities to allow for more housing development; overview of the current housing landscape and trends; current housing landscape and trends; housing characteristics; owning vs. renting; median income info; cost of housing info; affordability and cost burden; unmet housing needs; and recommendations to better meet our needs. Emily Klofft added to the conversation with data at the town level, to include: median income; ability to afford; cost burden; population growth; household growth; numbers of housing units; seasonal units; family and non-family households; and conclusions. There was discussion on all topics, specifically with regard to senior households and the need for a more diverse range of affordable housing, and how tax rates are affected. Some of the questions Scott Bessette had with regard to tax rates were not part of the data collected. This project is narrowly focused on zoning bylaws and zoning barriers. The bylaws will be audited in the following topic areas: dimensional standards; parking standards; allowable uses; street standards; accessory dwelling units; and development review process. This topic will be back on the agenda next month and municipal zoning is just one piece of the puzzle. Emily shared info on “missing middle” housing and gave examples. The need for a village wastewater system was discussed as a necessity in order to offer more possibilities for housing. Scott had questions about incentives for towns to embrace these changes. Statewide we do not have enough housing options and both rental and homeowner costs are soaring. Each individual community is feeling these things differently. This project aims to ensure that zoning bylaws will not inhibit the goal of more housing options - another tool in our toolbox. Barry added to the conversation that people are not finding homes to rent or buy. Workforce housing was discussed. With all the potential in the future at the airport and other locations we need to think about housing that allows our businesses and industry to thrive. We lack senior housing options also, that causes older residents to be priced out of their homes. Further conversation took place about taxes and upkeep. Scott had more questions about tax rates and what, for example, 100 new homes at the average cost of \$250,000.00 would do to or for our tax rate. Greta added that a tax analysis has not

been completed. Scott wants all the data if he is going to be a representative of the town through this process and he wants to know the affect on tax rates. Emily pointed out that finding a balance of what is appropriate for our town is the goal. Greta looks forward to meeting again next month and diving into our bylaws and tweaking our standards as appropriate to encourage housing and / or reducing barriers. Greta and Barry exited the Zoom meeting. Emily stayed for the Town Plan update discussion.

III. TOWN PLAN UPDATE

The group went through the implementation chapter, chapter #11 of the Town Plan, to include: social and economic resources; natural and cultural resources; transportation; community facilities and services; all hazards resiliency; land use; neighboring communities and the region; and enhanced energy plan. There was discussion, questions and some edits along the way. New FEMA maps are expected in communities sometime in 2023. Next month we will review the energy chapter and Emily hopes to have everything in one document for review.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

- Heidi shared a few quick updates with the PC.
- Green Mountain Transit is scheduled for the February meeting. So next month looks to be very busy with Zoning Bylaw Modernization, Town Plan, and GMT.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ken Thompson to approve the minutes from December 20, 2022, as written. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED**.

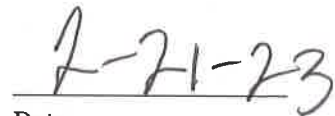
VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Scott Bessette to adjourn the meeting @ 7:53pm. The motion was seconded by Tom Conley – **APPROVED**.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk & Public Meetings Clerk



Date

Minutes approved by:

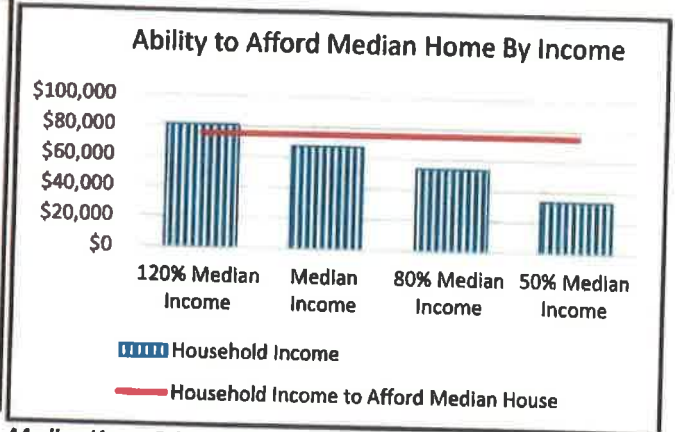
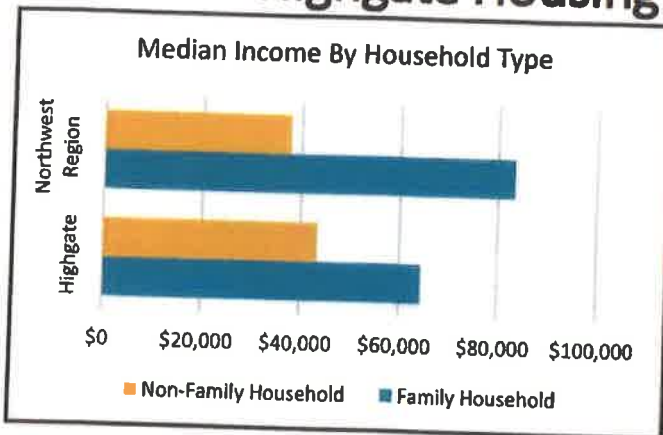


Luc Dupuis, Planning Commission Chair



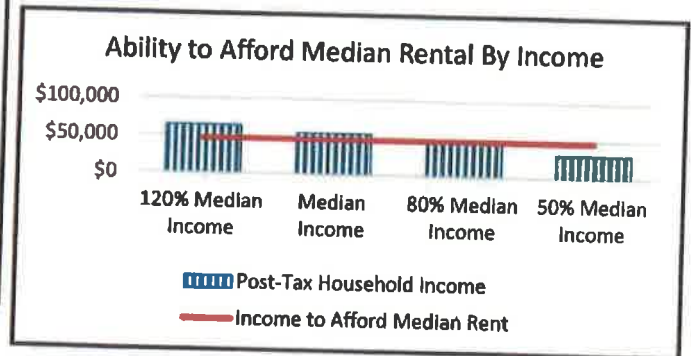
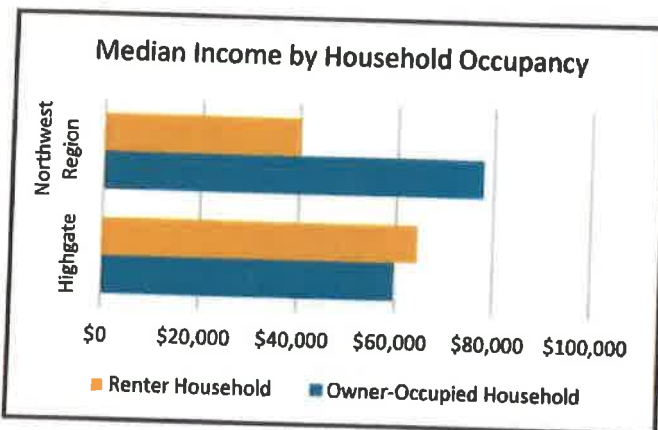
Date

Highgate Housing Needs Assessment



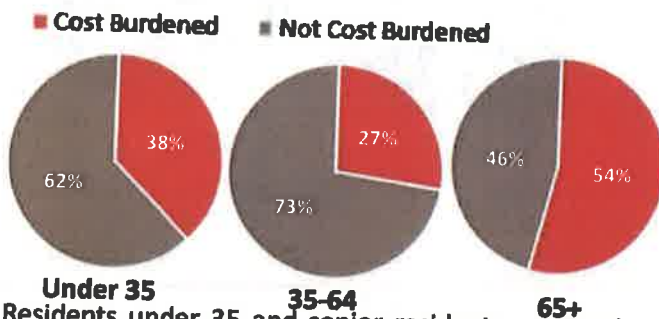
Family households have higher average median income than non-family households, similar to the regional trend. New non-family households will need more affordable options than family households, on average.

Median Home Price: VT Property Tax Records via Housingdata.org
Homeownership is not affordable to median income households. To afford the median house price of \$259,000, a household would need to earn \$74,665 a year, while regional median household income is only \$67,000. However, this gap is relatively small, so these households may be able to find some affordable options.



Renter and owner-occupied households in Highgate have relatively similar median incomes. However, there are high margins of error that make this data hard to interpret.

Rental units are more affordable option in Highgate, with rental units being affordable to median income residents, and only slightly unaffordable to low-income renters. Regionally, low vacancy rates have made finding rental housing challenging.



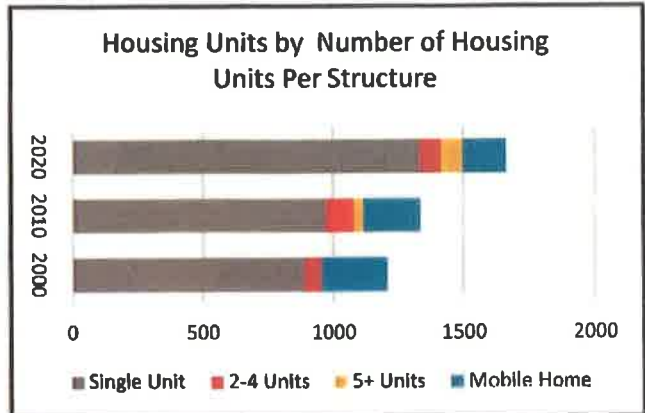
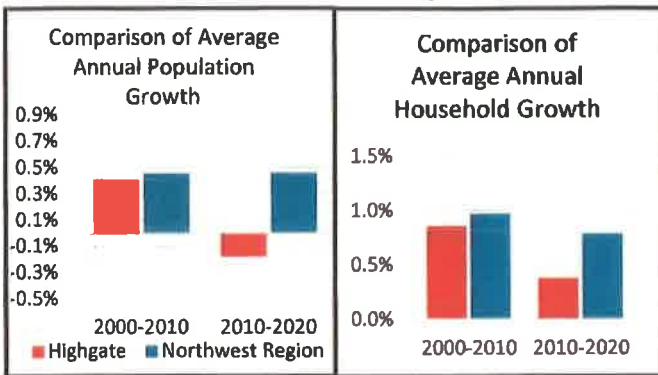
Under 35
Residents under 35 and senior residents are much more likely to be cost-burdened. Region-wide, residents identifying as a race other than white-alone are more likely to be cost-burdened at all income levels.

Conclusions

Household growth has slowed in Highgate compared to the region overall. The majority of new homes constructed are single-family homes, and the number of renters has decreased. Homeownership is somewhat unaffordable, and cost-burden for housing is high amongst both young residents and senior residents. Rental housing is affordable, but there is limited availability. Additional small multi-unit development could address the housing needs of Highgate residents.

Highgate Housing Needs Assessment

A project funded by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Bylaw Modernization Grant Program



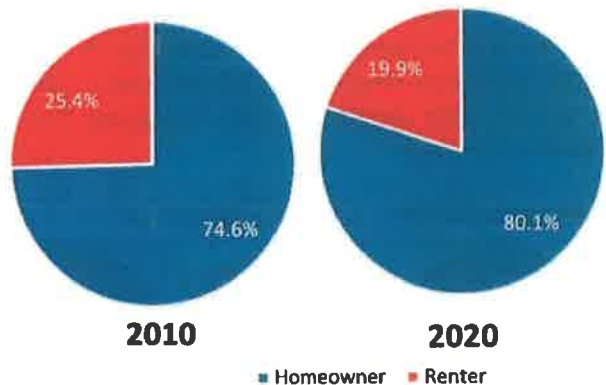
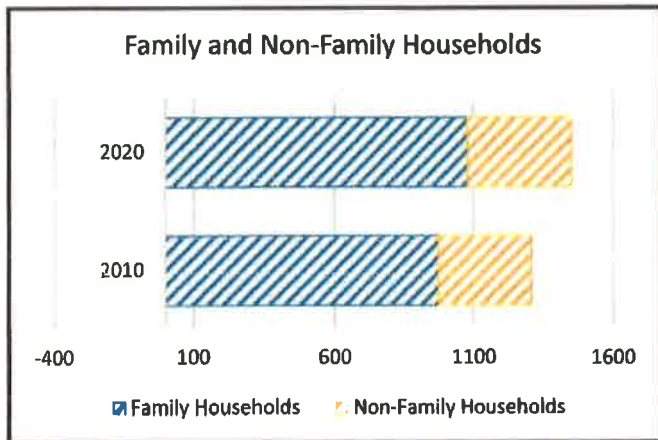
While Highgate had high population growth from 2000-2010, since 2010 population has decreased somewhat, despite continued regional growth. Despite population loss, the number of households has grown somewhat due to smaller household sizes. Both family and non-family households have grown in Highgate.

According to the 2020 Census, there are 1600 housing units in Highgate. The number of housing units in Highgate has grown mainly through increase in single unit homes. There also appears to have been some increase in multi-unit structures in Highgate, although there is a high margin of error on this data.

Non-family households refers to any household where members are not related by birth, adoption or marriage. Roughly 3.3% of Highgate's population lives with nonrelatives excluding unmarried partners and 2.4% of those over 21 are living with their parents. It is likely that some of these residents would prefer to form their own households. 1% of occupied housing units are crowded, having more than 1 person per room in the home.

 **5.8 % Seasonal Units**

5.8% of units in Highgate are seasonal, somewhat less than the regional average. There is no data on the number of short-term rentals in Highgate.



1600 Housing Units

The number of renters has decreased slightly in Highgate over the last 10 years. This data is also reflected in the Grand List, which states that 79% of residential properties of 1-4 units in Highgate are home-owner occupied.

Household, Family and Total Housing Units: US. Census

All data from 2020 US American Community Survey except where otherwise noted.