

**CITY OF CLAREMONT, NH
2010 MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

HOUSING CHAPTER
REVIEW DRAFT: MAY 14, 2010

CHAPTER _: HOUSING

1 Introduction

The time period where the writing of the housing section of the Claremont Master Plan is occurring reflects a period of national economic strength that has turned to a period of national economic weakness. Claremont, though weathering the period of economic weakness fairly well, has had sectors of the housing market and those with need that have indeed been affected by the economic weakness. It will be imperative that this data be updated on a yearly basis by this, or a future Housing committee to review it for accuracy. It is also realized that the U.S. Census of 2000 may be used as a baseline for regional and local data, but current data from the Claremont Planning and Development and Assessing Departments, as well as the Claremont Housing Authority and the Claremont Board of Realtors may be the most accurate reflection of the current housing conditions. This is due to programs and zoning requirements implemented by the city government from 1996 to 2002 to remove substandard housing and to increase home lot sizes for future growth and new construction. These initiatives impacted the number of existing multi-family housing units and opportunities to construct new multi-family housing projects. The data from the 2010 census will be vital to better reconciling local data to reflect current housing conditions in Claremont.

This chapter of the Master Plan presents Goals and Objectives that have been, and will remain integral to the housing philosophy for the City of Claremont regardless of economic conditions or growth trends. The Goals and Objectives provide a long term plan for the growth of Claremont for the next decade.

2 Historic and Current Housing Patterns

Development patterns in Claremont, as in most northern New England communities, have been clearly shaped by the physical landscape and regional and national economies. Historically, development in Claremont focused on the level plateau along the Sugar River; forming the Downtown area. Early mills and other industries located here to utilize the Sugar River as a power source. The central business district formed adjacent to the mill district in the downtown and residential neighborhoods grew nearby to serve the workforce. Geographically, residents lived in close proximity to employment, stores, and services.

When water power ceased to be a factor in the location of industry, Claremont's industries gradually spread out to other parts of the City that with large tracts of land and easy transportation access. These new development areas included River Road, Claremont Junction, and Washington Street. Over time commercial areas have also developed along regional highways, south along Pleasant Street and Charlestown Road, west along Washington Street, and to a lesser extent east along Main Street.

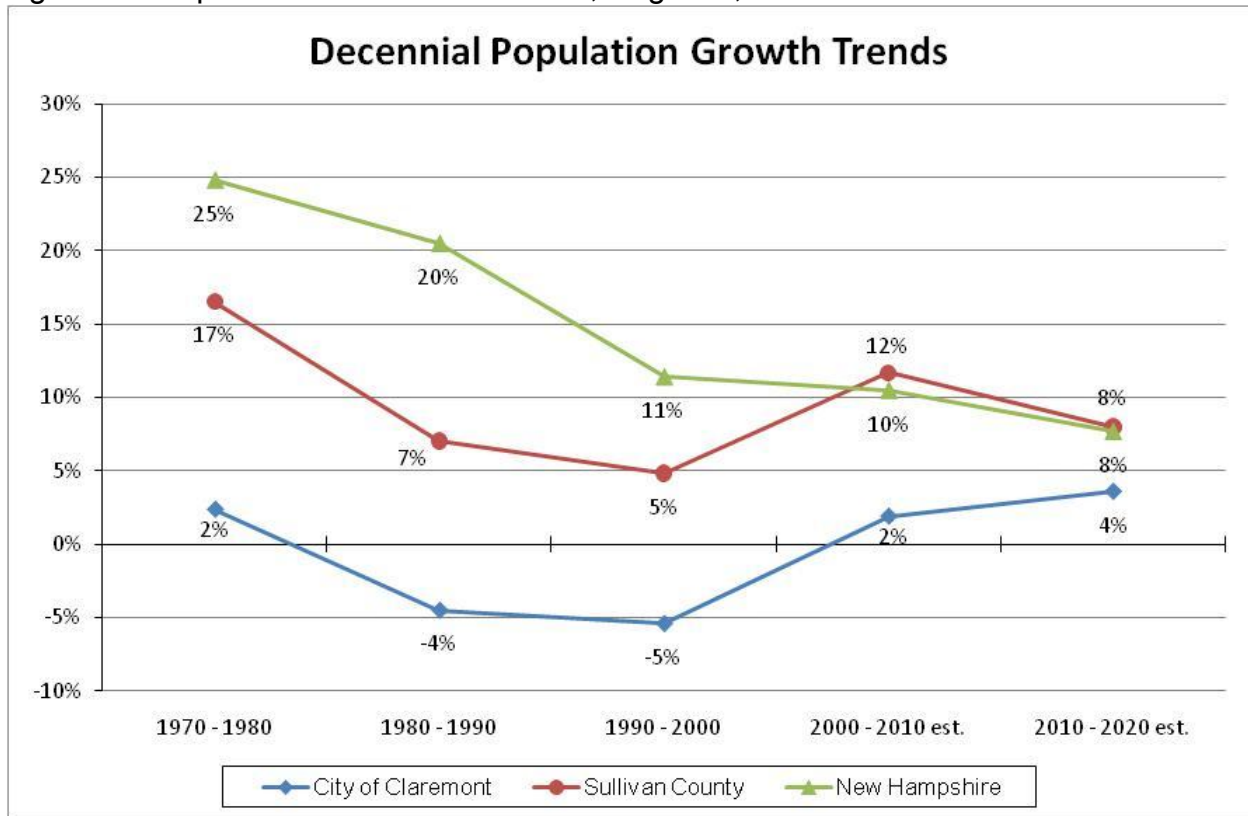
This residential growth has taken several forms: single-family subdivision, conversion of larger houses to multi-family buildings, new multi-family buildings, and several mobile

home parks. Between 1995 and 2002 a reduction in derelict buildings by the City removed approximately 150 units of housing throughout the downtown neighborhoods (Appendix A). North of the Sugar River the high density residential area is bounded by the river to the south and west and Hanover Street to the east. To the south of the River, dense residential development extends east out onto South Street and south along Charlestown Road. Residential density has increased in the previously developed area of the City through the construction of several apartment complexes and the conversion of large single family homes to duplex and multi-family apartment buildings. Currently families with young children are primarily clustered in the in-town neighborhoods according to school district data (Appendix B).

The density of housing development decreases with distance from the downtown with moderate density on Maple Avenue and small areas immediately adjacent to the Downtown and low density in the remainder of the residential areas. In the past few decades, low density residential development has occurred in rural areas of the City on land that was previously in agricultural use. One example is the Route 120 area, from Winter Street to Elm Street. Fifteen years ago most of this land was in agricultural use. Today, development is spread all along these roads with scattered areas of agricultural land remaining. This same pattern has occurred to the southwest on Unity Road and Sugar River Drive, to the northwest in the Redwater Brook Road area, to the south along Charlestown Road and Bible Hill Road, and to the east, north of Washington Street and Newport Road.

The historic population trends for Claremont clearly represent a decline in population of 1,070 residents from 1970 (pop. 14,122) to 2000 (pop. 13,151). Over the same period of time the state population growth trends indicate a consistent statewide rate of growth. The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning (NHOEP) staff forecast Claremont population trends to result in growth, rather than decline, in the population. This forecast will be confirmed once the US Census Bureau publishes its 2010 Census. Figure 2-1 and Table 2-1 provide a snapshot of the local, county-wide, and statewide Census-based population trends from 1970 to 2000 and projected through to 2020. Further detailed discussion of housing and population trends is in Appendix A.

Figure 2-1 Population Trend Lines: Local, Regional, and Statewide Trends



Source: NH Office of Energy and Planning, US Census Bureau

Table 2-1 Population Characteristics

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS							
Population							
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010 estimate	2020 estimate	
Claremont	14,221	14,557	13,902	13,151	13,400	13,880	
Sullivan Co.	30,949	36,063	38,592	40,458	45,180	48,800	
N.H.	737,578	920,475	1,109,117	1,235,550	1,365,140	1,470,010	
Percent Change Since 1970							
	1970	1970 - 1980	1970 - 1990	1970 - 2000	1970 - 2010 est.	1970 - 2020 est.	
Claremont	14,221	2%	-2%	-8%	-6%	-2%	
Sullivan Co.	30,949	17%	25%	31%	46%	58%	
N.H.	737,578	25%	50%	68%	85%	99%	
Decennial Percent Change							
	1970	1970 - 1980	1980 - 1990	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2010 est.	2010 - 2020 est.	
Claremont		2%	-4%	-5%	2%	4%	
Sullivan Co.		17%	7%	5%	12%	8%	
N.H.		25%	20%	11%	10%	8%	

Source: NH Office of Energy and Planning, US Census Bureau

3 Existing Housing Analysis

Understanding the historic and current housing patterns in Claremont provides a qualitative understanding of the issues and opportunities in the community. Overall, the following data indicate that housing needs of the population extend beyond the number of housing units to the size, age, quality, and cost of those units. This section focuses on a quantitative assessment of the existing housing stock and how the City may address these issues and opportunities.

3.1 Overview of Existing Housing Stock

City tax records indicate that there are approximately 5,553 housing units (both single family and multi-family structures) in Claremont in early 2010. These housing units serve the residential population, which is estimated to be 13,400 in 2010. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 provide summary housing numbers and types of units based on 1990 and 2000 Census data. Table 3-3 and Figure 3-1 summarize the 2010 housing numbers and composition based on the city's assessing database.

The Census data for 2000 indicate that the composition of the housing stock in Claremont is similar to the types of housing throughout the state with the exception that overall NH has a slightly higher proportion of single family units (62%) and fewer multifamily units (31%), likely due to the overall rural nature of NH communities. In 2000, vacancy rates for rental units and homes for sale were 5 percent and 2 percent, respectively. Statewide vacancies are slightly lower, 4 percent for rental units and 1 percent for homes for sale.

Table 3-1 Total Residential Units by Occupancy and Tenure based on US Census Sampling

	1990	%	2000	%	% Change 90-00 Claremont	% Change 90-00 NH
Total Units	6,228		6,074		-2%	9%
Occupied Units	5,610	90% of Total	5,685	94% of Total	1%	15%
Owner Occupied	3,248	58% of Occ.	3,271	58% of Occ.	1%	18%
Renter Occupied	2,362	42% of Occ.	2,414	42% of Occ.	2%	10%
Vacant Units	618	10% of Total	389	6% of Total	-37%	-22%
Vacant For Sale	54	1.6% Vac.	66	2% Vac.	22%	-57%
Vacant For Rent	333	12.4% Vac.	131	5.1% Vac.	-61%	-70%
Vacant Seasonal	40	1% of Total	64	1% of Total	60%	-1%

Source: US Census

Table 3-2 Summary of Residential Unit Types and Tenure based on US Census Sampling

Type	1990	% of Total	% of Total NH	2000	% of Total	% of Total NH	% Change	% Change NH
Total Units	6,228	100%	100%	6,074	100%	100%	-2%	9%
Single Family Units	2,818	45%	59%	3,011	50%	62%	7%	15%
SF Owner Occ.	2,466			2,575			4%	
SF Renter Occ.	202			347			72%	
Multi-family Units	2,899	47%	33%	2,599	43%	31%	-10%	3%
MF Owner Occ.	389			332			-15%	
MF Renter Occ.	2,072			1,992			-4%	
Mobile Home & Other	511	8%	8%	464	8%	7%	-9%	-13%

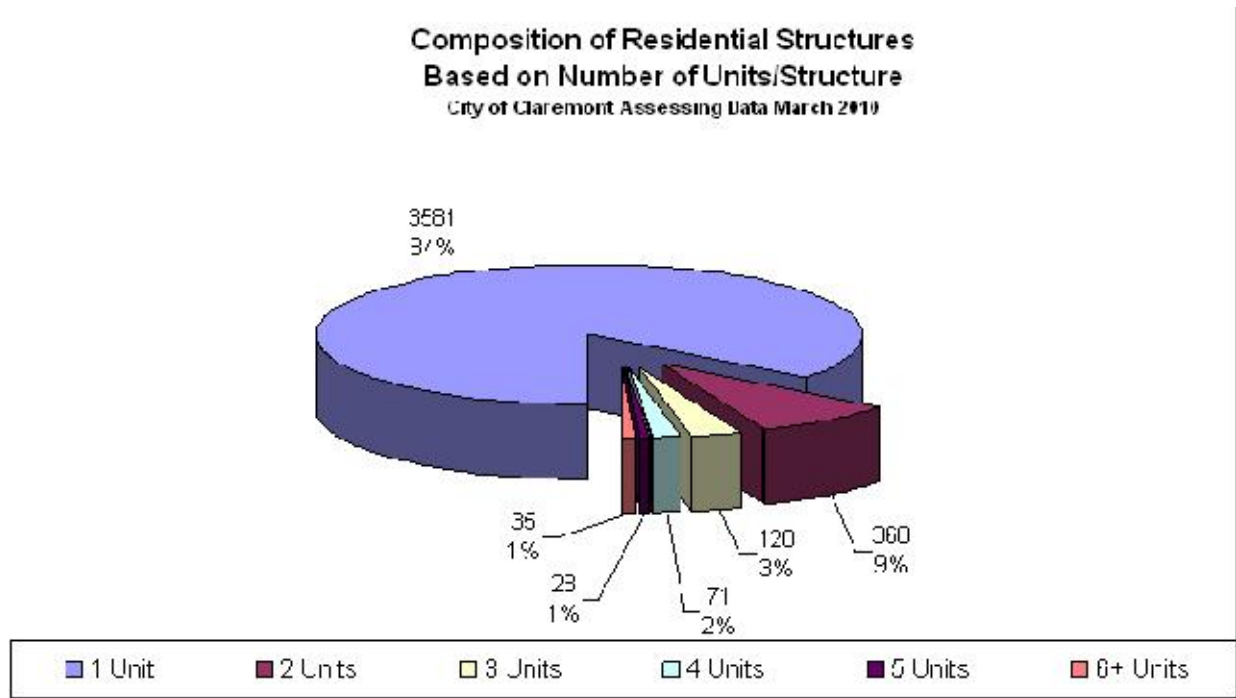
Source: US Census , Units in Structure and Units in Structure by Tenure

Table 3-3 Summary of Residential Structures, 2010

Table: Summary of Residential Structures					
Occupancy	Single and Multi-Family Structures	Condominiums (including Manufactured Housing Parks)	Commercial Apartment Complexes		
1 Unit	3122	458	1		3581
2 Units	360	0	0		360
3 Units	120	0	0		120
4 Units	70	0	1		71
5 Units	28	0	0		28
6+ Units	27	0	8		35
	3727	458	10		
Table: Summary of Residential Units					
Occupancy	Single and Multi-Family Structures	Condominiums (including Manufactured Housing Parks)	Commercial Apartment Complexes		
1 Unit	3122	458	1		
2 Units	720	0	0		
3 Units	360	0	0		
4 Units	280	0	4		
5 Units	140	0	0		
6+ Units	180	0	288		
	4802	458	293		

Source: Claremont Assessing Department

Figure 3-1 Number of Units Per Structure, 2010



Source: Claremont Assessing Department

During the 1990s, Claremont’s housing inventory shifted in character to include a higher proportion of single family housing units and a smaller number of multifamily housing. Claremont lost 154 housing units during the 1990s while the number of units in the state and county grew. This loss is primarily due to the City initiated demolition of substandard multifamily housing in the Pearl, High, Hanover and North Street areas.

Due to the difference in sampling methodologies between the Census information and the Assessor’s database¹ there is limited opportunity to compare the two data sets beyond observing general trends in housing composition. The Census data indicate a reduction in the number of units between 1990 and 2000. The 2010 database results may indicate a further net decrease in housing units in the city (accounting for lost residential units due to demolition or changes in use and new units) between 2010 and 2000. Due to the potential inaccuracy of an “apples to oranges” comparison, it is reasonable to conclude that these numbers indicate no substantial growth in the number of housing units since 2000.

This trend is also happening statewide but to a lesser degree. Claremont’s recent single family housing is developing in the rural areas using open spaces and agricultural land. Notable locations are those near to Thrasher and Cat Hole Road areas north of the downtown.

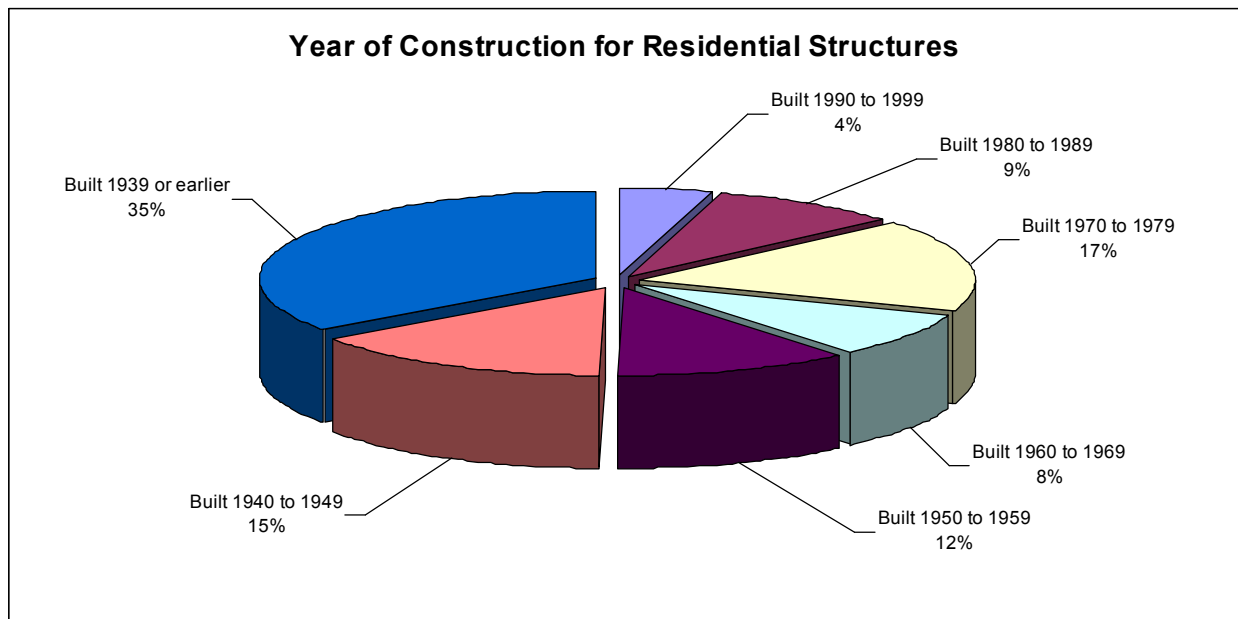
¹ Census housing information is created by interviewing a sample of the population in a community and then estimating results for the whole community.

The Census data also indicate a general trend toward a smaller average household size. This reduced household size in a static or growing population can cause corresponding growth in housing demand. In 2000 single-parent and non-family households now comprised the majority (54 percent of total) of households in the City. This trend suggests the need for smaller, more affordable housing units to accommodate smaller, single-income households.

Single family homes are predominantly located at low densities in the outskirts of the City, but are also located within densely developed inner City neighborhoods like the Bible Hill and Mulberry Street areas south of downtown. The multifamily housing stock is primarily located near the downtown in large buildings like the Claremont Arms on Winter Street and smaller buildings scattered in dense residential neighborhoods like the Prospect, Summer and School Street areas. Mobile homes and other unit types are mostly located in parks in rural areas of the City, like Pine Hill and Sugar River manufactured housing parks on the outskirts of the downtown.

Assuming the availability of housing in the city has had modest growth, if any, a number of issues arise. Figure 3-2 illustrates the construction date of residential structures based on the 2000 census. The age of the structures indicates, generally, periods of growth by decade. For example, the proportion of structures constructed between 1980 and 1990 indicate a substantial decline in new residential construction as compared with the four prior decades. Also, Figure 3-2 illustrates that at least half of the residential structures in the city are at least 50 years old. As much as 85% of the residential structures are more than 30 years old.

Figure 3-2 Proportional Distribution of Residential Structures by Year Constructed



There are many factors that affect the quality of the housing stock including age, quality of construction, and level of maintenance. The poor quality of the housing stock has been cited as the principal housing issue in Claremont. Further, anecdotal information indicates that many individuals and families looking to move to Claremont are interested in purchasing newer residences. The reasons for this preference may range widely from simple personal tastes to more practical interest in a “turn-key” residence where no substantial renovations or maintenance is necessary prior to moving-in.

The existing residential stock will continue to age and maintenance of these structures will become increasingly important. The risk of having such a large proportion of older structures may be that the City is forced to condemn and demolish more substandard structures in the older, interior areas in the city due to property owner neglect. These actions, which are necessary in the interest of the public health and welfare, may disrupt the urban fabric of the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

One component of housing for a community is providing a range of housing types at a range of costs to meet the local needs based on employment and income. Housing needs in the city include specialized elderly housing, foster care, and affordable and federally subsidized housing for lower income households. Along with market-rate and subsidized housing for sale and rent, a recent state statute, RSA 674:58-61, requires New Hampshire municipalities to offer reasonable and realistic opportunities for workforce housing.

The New Hampshire Housing Directory of Assisted Housing lists numbers of housing units per community that are currently subsidized with funding from either the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), USDA – Rural Development, or New Hampshire Housing through permanent financing or rental assistance payment mechanisms. Claremont’s overall housing stock includes approximately 548 or 9% subsidized housing units. Approximately 70% of the assisted housing units in Claremont are housing types for the elderly at the Earl M. Bourdon Apartments (80 units), Hillside Terrace (79 units), Marion Phillips Apartments (100 units) and Sugar River Mills (123 units). This chapter continues to support the long term commitment to elderly citizens being able to stay in Claremont. By comparison the City of Keene (pop. 22,563) housing stock includes approximately 7.9% subsidized units, the City of Dover (pop. 26,884) housing stock includes approximately 7.6% subsidized units, and the City of Lebanon (pop. 12,568) includes approximately 6.5% subsidized units according to the 2000 Census.

Figure 3-4 Household Distribution by Income

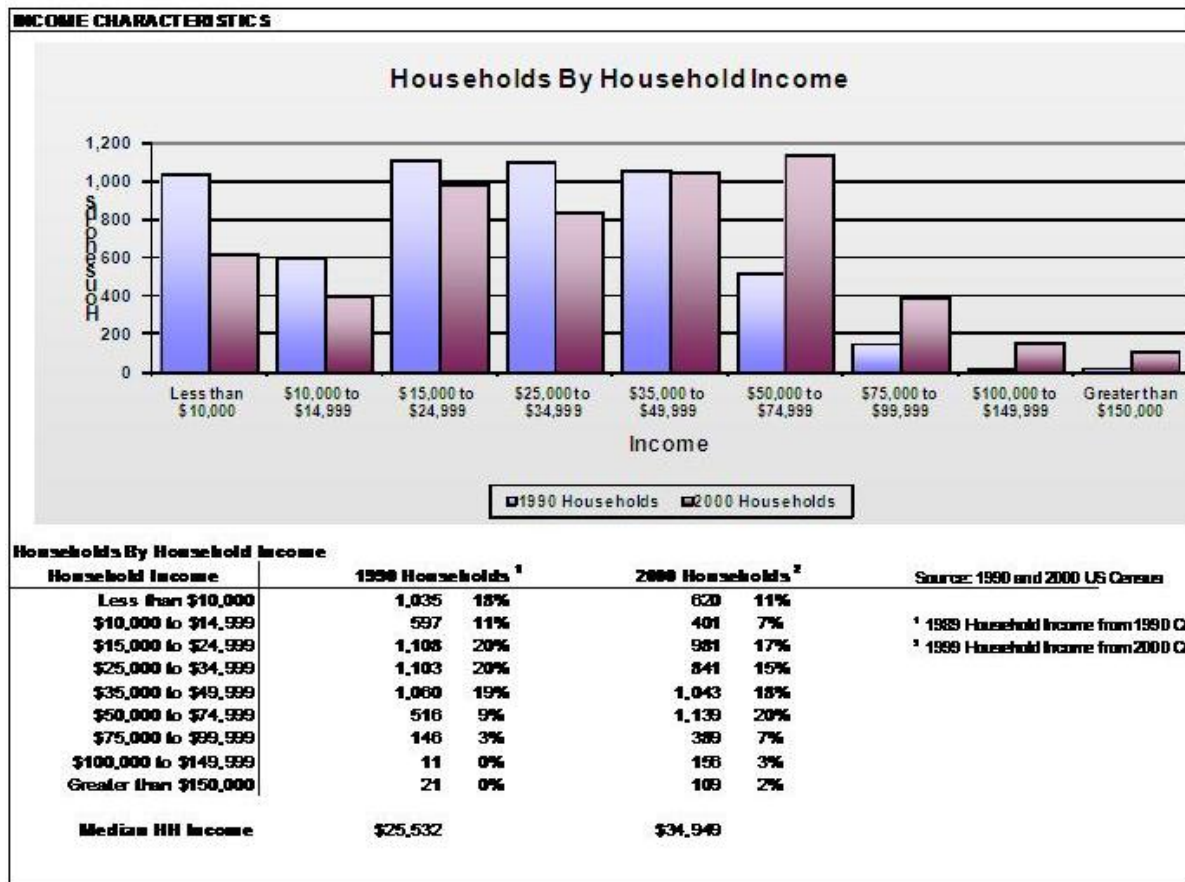


Figure 3-5 Gross Rent Distribution



Source: U.S. Census 2000, SF3, Tables H62

3.2 Housing and the Community

The amount and type of future investment and employment growth will have a key role in determining population and housing conditions in the future. Without continued investment in the City, the population is not likely to grow. The high cost of housing in Lebanon (53 % higher than Claremont) has encouraged some households working in the Upper Valley to live in Claremont where less expensive housing options exist. The interest in living in Claremont while working elsewhere has been facilitated by a median purchase price differential between housing costs in Lebanon (\$245,000) and the less expensive Claremont (\$159,900) (NHHFA, 2006). Claremont rents are also lower by about 13 percent (\$770 compared to \$869). This situation has resulted in a significant number of “reverse commuters” traveling from Claremont to work in Lebanon. Housing workers from another labor market area place pressures on the City’s existing housing stock and limits the amount of housing available to support Claremont’s own employment growth. Further study would be helpful to better understand the nature and extent of this housing population dynamic.

Recent efforts to revitalize the City, such as the redevelopment of the Mill District into hospitality, restaurants and offices, and the increasing trend of Upper Valley workers seeking housing in Claremont, are slowly improving the quality of housing by way of private investment in the City's housing stock. Some of Claremont's downtown building infrastructure and neighborhood areas may be capable of supporting additional population growth, especially if there is a demand for smaller dwelling units.

This situation may provide an opportunity for the City since much of the existing housing stock is close to employment. By revitalizing this infrastructure and supporting the continuation of the historic settlement patterns, jobs and housing are located near to each other. This retention of compact development and infill development are consistent with the state's smart growth policy and lessens demands on the transportation system, preserves open space, and at the same time accommodates growth. It is also the most efficient redevelopment approach as it uses existing infrastructure such as roads and water and sewer. The more this population can be accommodated within the City's existing neighborhoods, the less will be the need to accommodate the expanding population in more rural areas with the potential for creating sprawl.

The City will need to provide opportunity for new single-family homes and encourage new or renovated space for multifamily units to accommodate the various population segments. The location of new residential activity is important for the City's future as it has the potential to impact future land use and traffic patterns. Housing is also critical in supporting employment opportunities and shaping the appearance of the City. Availability of quality housing units increases the pool of housing for prospective employees.

The more this population can be accommodated within the City's existing neighborhoods, the less will be the need to accommodate the expanding population in more rural areas with the potential for creating sprawl. The location of new residential activity is important for the City's future as it has the potential to impact future land use and traffic patterns.

4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL #1: *PROMOTE THE RURAL AND URBAN CHARACTER OF CLAREMONT WHILE PROVIDING HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL PERSONS OF ALL INCOME LEVELS.*

RECOMMENDATIONS: Update the current Zoning Ordinance with respect to providing contemporary tools to position for orderly progress while protecting the quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Encourage building where there is existing water and sewer. Consider extensions of water and sewer services to allow housing development within the current boundaries of municipal infrastructure.

Objective 1 Encourage a gradual increase in the housing supply through rehabilitation of older homes and new construction.

- Review codes and regulatory processes to conform with historic urban character and promote improving quality and safety of existing housing stock.
- Site plans for the conversion of large, older homes and buildings into multifamily dwellings should be reviewed carefully to ensure that adequate parking, sewage disposal, and fire safety are provided. Although use of existing structures to meet housing needs should be encouraged, conversion should not take place at the expense of the health and safety of occupants.

Objective 2 Update the zoning ordinance to reflect future land use patterns in urban and rural areas that enhance traditional growth patterns and promote housing development in areas served by municipal water and sewer.

- Improve all existing neighborhood housing and identify need through data collection of current housing stock.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Maintain affordable housing for low and/or fixed income households.

Objective 1 Pursue innovative combinations of financing mechanisms for housing rehabilitation programs, including private-public partnerships involving public funds, and private non-profit groups.

Objective 2 Pursue tax incentives to allow the aging population to remain in their homes.

Objective 3 Encourage the market for assisted living communities in Claremont to provide for local need.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Encourage housing that supports current and future economic development.

Objective 1 Provide reasonable and realistic opportunities for the development of workforce housing, including rental and multi-family housing consistent with New Hampshire’s newly enacted Workforce Housing Statute, NH RSA 674:58 through 61, and changes thereof.

- Encourage types of housing that lower development costs such as condominiums and clustered single family homes. While they lower development costs, and, in turn, make home ownership more affordable, clustered development reduces municipal service costs and protects open space areas to provide an attractive asset to the community.
- Ensure that the zoning ordinance affords reasonable opportunities for the citing of panelized, modular, or other types of home building that is done primarily off site.
- Continue to provide opportunities for the development of low density residential areas.

Objective 2 Consider density adjustments based on lot classification of available municipal water and sewer service areas.

Objective 3 Encourage private-public partnerships by cooperating with the efforts of private non-profit groups working toward developing affordable non-public housing. This should include cooperation with any future efforts to transform public housing projects into single family ownership.

Objective 4 Actively pursue access to internet technology in all Claremont neighborhoods.

GOAL #2: MAINTAIN THE CHARACTER OF CLAREMONT’S TRADITIONAL RURAL AND URBAN BALANCE AND ENCOURAGE SMART GROWTH AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES.

Objective 1 Maintain the traditional compact settlement patterns of Claremont to efficiently use land, resources, and investments in infrastructure.

- Ensure that new building construction and redevelopment of historic buildings in the City Center enhance the small-city, historic character of Claremont. Consider building materials, architecture, signage, lighting and landscape features that complement the historic district.

- Encourage any future site design to provide pedestrian linkages with the rest of the City Center. Any development should strengthen the Center's tremendous potential as a pedestrian oriented area with a concentration of various shops, entertainment, services and housing.
- Consider traditional growth patterns when adopting new zoning regulations in order to reinforce the historic built environment.

Objective 2 Foster the traditional character of Claremont's city center and neighborhoods by encouraging human scale development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life.

- Foster existing community gathering centers such as Monadnock and Broad Street parks, Arrowhead, the Library and Opera House and encourage new pocket parks or other opportunities that would strengthen Claremont's residential neighborhoods

Objective 3 Incorporate a mix of uses to provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services, and social opportunities for all citizens of Claremont.

- Study mixed uses, professional and home occupations, and multiple housing types that would be compatible with traditional smaller scale redevelopment in the downtown area.

Objective 4 Preserve Claremont's working landscape by sustaining farm and forest land and other rural resource lands to maintain contiguous tracts of open land and to minimize land use conflicts.

- Investigate zoning that preserves open space and sustains agricultural and other rural land uses.
- Consider designation of city land that protects the Rice and White Water reservoirs as a city forest.

Objective 5 Provide choices and safety in transportation to create a livable and walkable community that will increase accessibility for people of all ages, whether on foot, bicycle, or in motor vehicles.

- Continue to seek available grant funding to improve or build new sidewalks and pathways.

Objective 6 Protect environmental quality by minimizing impacts from human activities and planning for and maintaining natural areas that contribute to the health and quality of life in Claremont.

- Encourage planned unit development or open space zoning features that would protect agricultural lands or wildlife habitat, preserve unique features or protect open space for aesthetics or passive use while providing new housing opportunities compatible with these purposes.

Objective 7 Involve the community in planning and implementation to ensure that development retains and enhances the sense of place, traditions, goals, and values of Claremont.

Objective 8 Manage growth locally, but work with neighboring towns to achieve common goals and address common problems more effectively.

GOAL #3: COORDINATE CITY CODE INCLUDING LAND USE ORDINANCES WITH THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1 Review City zoning ordinance for consistency with the vision and goals of the Master Plan.

- Review and make appropriate amendment proposals to ensure that the zoning ordinance complements these master plan objectives.

Objective 2 Review other City ordinances for consistency with the vision and goals of the Master Plan.

- Review and make appropriate proposals to insure that other City ordinances and regulations complement these master plan objectives.

Objective 3 Ensure quality building proposals.

- Review site plans with this objective in mind.