



**LEBANON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
**APRIL 8, 2026 - 3:30 PM**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR**  
**REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM**  
**LEBANONNH.GOV/LIVE**

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**1. Call to Order**

The April 8, 2026 Economic Development Commission (EDC) meeting is hereby called to order.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

A. January 14, 2026

**3. New Business**

A. Update on Barrows Street Project

B. Update on Proposed Child Care Facility

C. Discussion on the New Hampshire Housing Report, "Who Can Afford to Live in New Hampshire?", from October 2025

D. Status of Zoning Amendments

E. Roster Update and Discussion

**4. Future Agenda Items**

**5. Next Meeting Date**

A. May 13, 2026

**6. Other Business: None**

**7. Adjournment**

Meetings are open for in-person and remote attendance. Members of the public who wish to attend remotely may do so by going to [LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/live) where you will find instructions on how to enter the meeting. Members of the public will be able to participate and ask questions through the City's virtual platform or by phone. Please note: Should technical difficulties occur during the meeting that disrupt virtual or phone connection(s), the meeting will continue without remote access capabilities.

Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs additional accommodation, please contact the ADA coordinator at City Hall by calling 603-448-4220 at least 72 hours in advance so that the City can make any necessary arrangements.

DRAFT

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2026 – 3:30PM  
Council Chambers – City Hall – or remote via Virtual Platform  
MINUTES**

**EDC MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dan Nash (Chair), Councilor Chris Simon (City Council Rep), Andrew Key, Eric Stacy, Dean Cashman, Brendan Callahan, Chip Brown

**EDC MEMBERS ABSENT:** Councilor Tim McNamara (City Council Rep)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Deputy City Manager David Brooks, City Manager Andrew Hosmer

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1  
2 **1. CALL TO ORDER:**

3 The January 14, 2026, Economic Development Commission meeting was called to order at 3:30pm.  
4

5 **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

6 A. November 12, 2025  
7

8 *Motion by Mr. Cashman to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2025, as presented.*

9 *Second by Mr. Callahan.*

10 *\*The Vote on the MOTION was approved (6-0-1, with Mr. Key abstaining).*  
11

12 **3. NEW BUSINESS:**

13 A. Update on 20 Spencer Street Redevelopment  
14

15 Mr. Brooks explained that this project has already been through the Planning Board process and has approval for an  
16 80 unit multifamily project involving 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units. In the fall of 2024, the project applied for capital  
17 subsidy funding through the New Hampshire Housing Finance but did not meet the scoring criteria to be eligible for  
18 funding. Last year, the legislature did not add additional money to the Affordable Housing Fund and New  
19 Hampshire Housing canceled its 2025 funding round. Presumably, they will cancel the 2026 funding round as well.  
20 In the meantime, New Hampshire Housing has cobbled together approximately \$13M and is making it available to  
21 projects based on the 2024 funding round scoring. The applicant for the project is pursuing that funding. Staff and  
22 the applicant have also been discussing the possibility of using the Downtown TIF District where that property is  
23 situated for the benefit of the project. The legislature changed a statute to explicitly allow TIF funds to be used for  
24 multifamily housing, especially workforce and affordable housing. The City Council would need to take actions to  
25 readopt the Downtown TIF District and include the specific that new legislative authorization. There is also some  
26 legislation pending this year regarding the idea of credit enhancement agreements. Through this, the community  
27 could use something like a TIF District by which some of the increment that will be generated through a  
28 development project would then get returned to that project. This would enable the project to qualify for a higher  
29 level of debt financing through other lenders.  
30

31 The Commission discussed an extended timeline or easing the criteria for extensions for the planning process.  
32

33 B. Update on Main Street Parcels Redevelopment  
34

35 Mr. Brooks explained that the City entered into a contract with DEW Construction in November to complete due  
36 diligence and determine what might be feasible on the properties. DEW Construction is trying to coordinate with  
37 Twin Pines Housing Trust to do a project on those properties. Once an agreement is in place, schematic designs and  
38 engineering will likely move forward. An update is expected by the end of the month.  
39

40 Mr. Nash asked about the Downtown Lebanon riverfront area and Pellegrino's Market properties. Mr. Brooks  
41 explained that the Council received a presentation on the Downtown Parking Lot Redevelopment Project last May.  
42 The Council heard some ideas but agreed that the City is not currently in a position to take on any of them, as they  
43 all include a substantial upfront investment by the City. This may resurface at some time in the future. He stated that  
44 he believes an extension was granted for the development of new residential units on the property where  
45 Pellegrino's Market is located.  
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**4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

The Commission discussed future meeting days and times and decided to keep the scheduled meeting date on the second Wednesday of the month at 3:30pm.

The Commission discussed future agenda items such as potential zoning considerations, making Lebanon more friendly for businesses, the potential to turf some of the City's fields, potential cheaper alternatives to spur development, etc.

**5. NEXT MEETING DATE:**

A. February 11, 2026

The Commission agreed to meet on February 11, 2026.

**6. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was discussion regarding making the City's website more easily searchable. Mr. Stacy suggested that AI should be used for meeting minutes.

Mr. Stacy stated that he will be resigning from the Commission. It is very difficult to get anything done for his business in Lebanon and so he is selling off his properties.

**7. ADJOURNMENT.**

*Motion by Mr. Key to adjourn the meeting.*

*Second by Mr. Cashman.*

*\* The Vote on the MOTION was approved (7-0).*

*The meeting was adjourned at 4:18PM.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude



# WHO CAN AFFORD TO LIVE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE?

Housing Costs, Income, and the  
Future of the Granite State

OCTOBER 2025

**PREPARED BY  
NEW HAMPSHIRE HOUSING**

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and Education

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# New Hampshire is celebrated for its scenic beauty, strong communities, and exceptional quality of life.

**Rob Dapice, Executive Director / CEO**

To ensure that way of life is a reality for the next generation, we need to make sure everyone, from nurses and teachers to young families and retirees, can find a home that fits their needs and their budget. This report breaks down the numbers, shares the stories, and offers solutions, because housing isn't just about buildings. **It's about people.**

While housing inventory has increased from the historic lows experienced in recent years, affordability has not improved. With few affordable options available, individuals and families across the state are facing growing financial pressure in their search for housing.

New Hampshire's median age is 43.4 (2023 ACS), making it the second oldest state in the U.S. The state depends heavily on in-migration to grow its population, as deaths now outnumber births. According to the *State of New Hampshire, State, County, and Municipal Population Projections: 2020–2050*, future growth will continue to rely on in-migration more than natural increase. In-migration is also critical to replenishing a workforce that ranks among the oldest in the nation.

Expanding access to affordable housing is vital to attracting and retaining younger residents, helping to strengthen the state's demographic balance and support long-term growth. Beyond affordability, lowering barriers and investing in a wider range of housing options can reduce homelessness, provide stability for seniors and working families, strengthen school systems, and ease financial pressures on vulnerable homeowners and renters, especially seniors and those living with a disability.

With bold action, the state can not only address current challenges but also build stronger, more resilient communities where all generations can thrive.

This report provides a data-driven assessment of New Hampshire's housing market and related economic challenges. The report focuses on three key areas:

	<b>HOUSING INVENTORY LEVELS</b>
	<b>HOME PRICING TRENDS</b>
	<b>AFFORDABILITY OF HOMES FOR WORKERS IN HIGH DEMAND OCCUPATIONS</b>

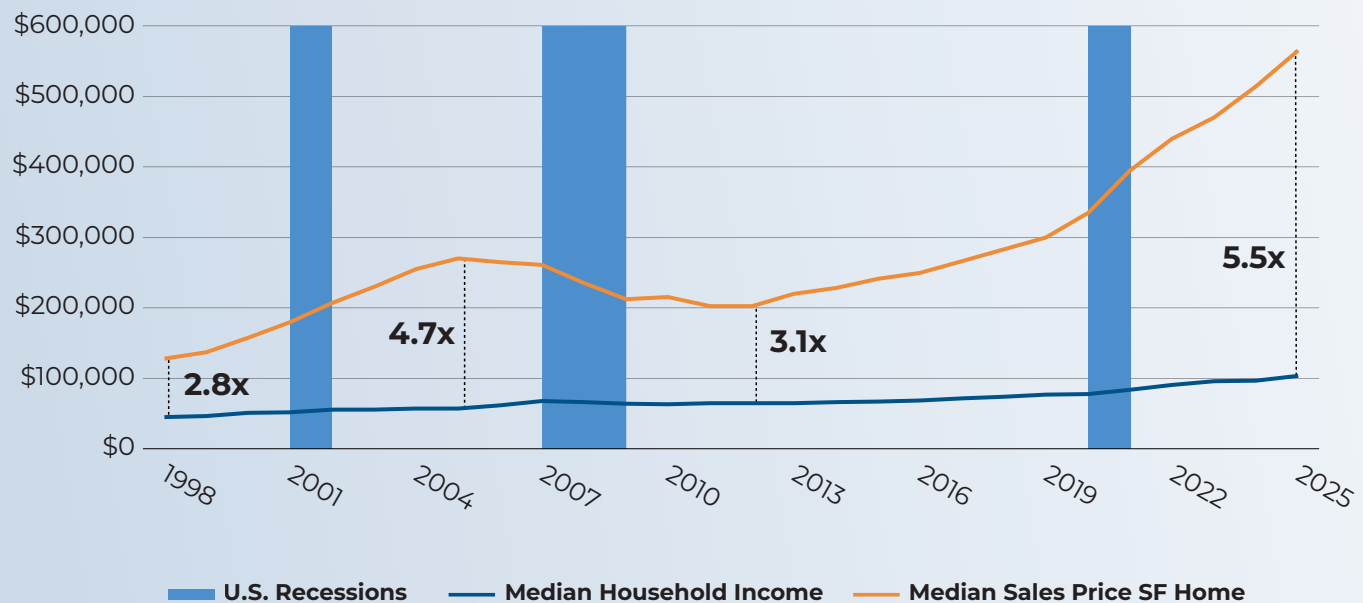
The challenges facing New Hampshire's housing market are complex, but not insurmountable. By confronting the critical issues of housing inventory, home pricing, and affordability for our workforce, we can set the stage for a future in which families can find homes that meet their needs without sacrificing financial stability.

# PRICES HAVE RISEN FASTER THAN INCOMES

Over the past 15 years, a steady increase in home prices, coupled with slower wage growth, has pushed homeownership out of reach for many New Hampshire residents. In 2025, the median sale price of a single-family home was 5.5 times the median household income, nearly double the 2.8 price-to-income ratio observed in 1998 (see **Figure 1**).

Between 1998 and 2025, when you adjust for inflation, the median sale price of single-family homes in New Hampshire went up by **129 percent**, while household incomes grew by only **19 percent**.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1. Comparison of Median Household Income and Home Prices for Single-Family Homes in NH in current dollars (1998–June 2025)**



**Source:** New Hampshire Realtors Association

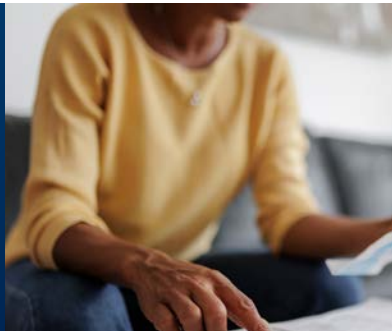
**Notes:** Home prices are the median sale price of all single-family homes in New Hampshire from the New Hampshire Association of Realtors. Incomes are median household incomes from U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Ratios were calculated by dividing the median home price by the median household income.



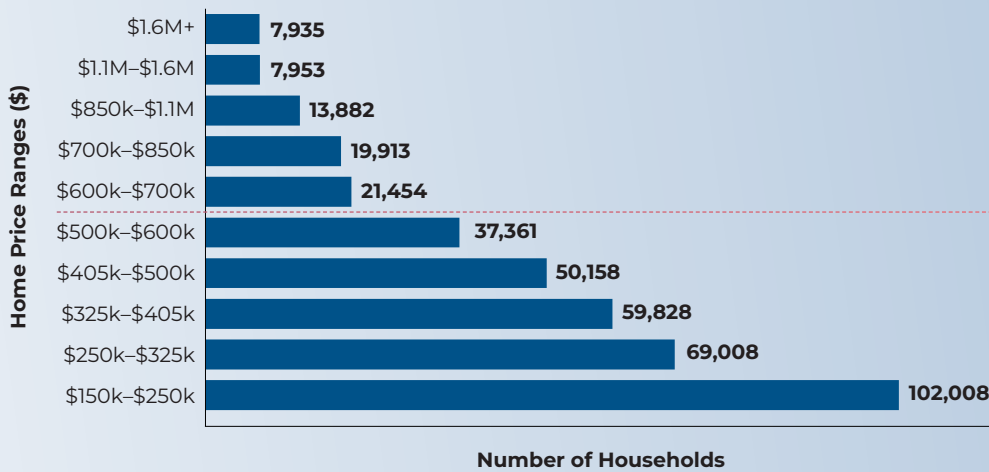
The **median** is the middle value in a set of numbers—half the numbers are higher, and half are lower. For example, if you lined up all household incomes from lowest to highest, the median would be the income right in the middle. The same idea applies to home prices: the median sales price is the price right in the middle—half of homes sold for more, and half sold for less.

As of June 2025, the median sale price for a single-family home in New Hampshire reached a record high of \$565,000.<sup>2</sup> To afford this price, assuming a 5 percent down payment and a 6.67 percent mortgage interest rate, a household would need an income of approximately \$182,000,<sup>3</sup> which equates to earning roughly **\$88 per hour** in a full-time job. Only an estimated **15 percent**<sup>4</sup> of New Hampshire households can afford a home at this price point (see **Figure 2**).

**\$88** per hour  
 THE FULL-TIME WAGE NEEDED TO AFFORD THE MEDIAN HOME IN NEW HAMPSHIRE



**Figure 2. Maximum Home Price Affordable to NH Households**



**\$565,000**  
 MEDIAN-PRICED HOME AS OF JUNE 2025

**Source:** 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample File, U.S. Census Bureau

**Notes:** Affordability calculations are based on estimated household incomes required to afford each home price range. Minimum and maximum income thresholds were applied to the 2023 PUMS data to estimate the number of households falling within each affordability bracket. 161,684 households are excluded from the chart because they are unable to afford homes within the price ranges shown.

**4 out of 5**

CURRENT HOMEOWNERS ARE PRICED OUT OF THE STATE'S MEDIAN SALE PRICE OF \$565,000

**4%**

OF RENTER HOUSEHOLDS COULD AFFORD TO BUY AT THE STATE'S MEDIAN SALE PRICE OF \$565,000

In today's New Hampshire housing market, achieving homeownership has shifted from a common milestone to an aspiration that many struggle to attain. Under current market conditions, most homeowners couldn't afford to buy the house they live in. Nearly four out of five current homeowners are priced out of the state's median sale price of \$565,000, and just 4 percent of renter households could afford to buy at that level.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 47 percent of New Hampshire households cannot afford a home priced above \$250,000.

Over the past five years, the median sale price of a single-family home in New Hampshire has increased by 71 percent,<sup>6</sup> rising from \$340,000 in June 2020 to \$565,000 in June 2025. In contrast, the estimated median household income for 2025 has grown by only 33 percent,<sup>7</sup> highlighting a widening gap between home prices and income growth.

The median household income for homeowners in New Hampshire is \$115,080,<sup>8</sup> among the highest in the nation but still well below what is needed to afford the state's current median home price. The challenge goes beyond first-time buyers—it also limits mobility for existing homeowners, creating a bottleneck that reduces inventory and pushes prices even higher while dampening labor market dynamism.

# LOW INVENTORY = HIGH COSTS

Following the Great Recession, New Hampshire's housing inventory temporarily increased, reflecting a market saturated with homes for sale. In June 2009, the overall market had 13.9 months of supply, 12.7 months for existing homes and 24.7 months for new construction, well above the six-month threshold that typically signals a balanced market. This oversupply created favorable conditions for buyers. Inventory gradually tightened over the next decade and then fell sharply after 2020, reaching a critical low in 2021 with just 0.5 months of overall supply, 0.4 months for existing homes, and 1.6 months for new construction (see **Figure 3**).

**Figure 3. NH Months Supply of Inventory by Property Type, Years 2009–Present**



**Source:** This analysis is based on data from PrimeMLS for the state of New Hampshire, compiled and analyzed by New Hampshire Housing. Manufactured homes are included in the single-family category. The data excludes land, timeshares, seasonal camps and cottages, multi-family properties, age restricted properties, and commercial or industrial real estate.

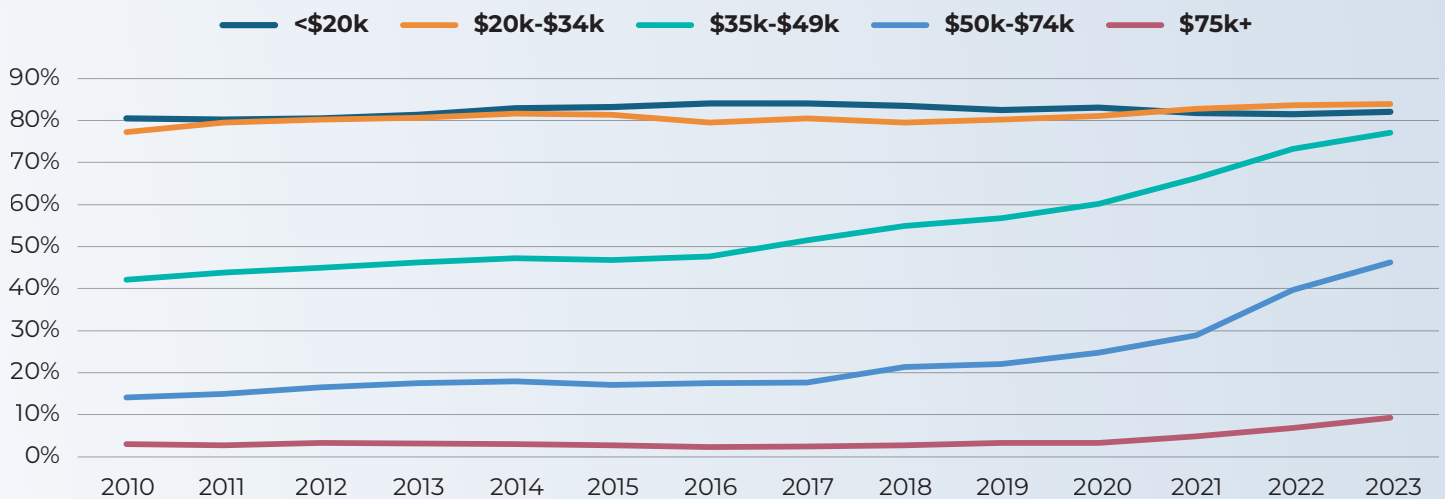
Inventory has inched up since 2023 but remains far below the six-month supply that signals a balanced market. As of July 2025, the total supply is just 2.1 months; 1.9 for existing homes and 4.4 months for new construction. Existing home inventory has hovered near record lows for four years. While new construction has added some supply, it hasn't kept pace with demand, and much of it is priced beyond the reach of many buyers. Building permit data<sup>9</sup> underscores this trend, showing that single-family permitting has remained well below levels needed to address the shortage. In May 2025, the median sale price of a newly built home hit \$717,500, a 75 percent jump from \$410,442 in 2020.<sup>10</sup>

# THE DAUNTING MATH FOR FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS

Comparing single-family home prices to renter income reveals additional points of stress for renters who would like to become homeowners. In 2024, the median price of a single-family home was nearly nine times higher than the estimated median renter household income of \$56,814,<sup>11</sup> putting homeownership out of reach for many renters. The latest data indicates that 51 percent of New Hampshire renters are cost burdened, meaning they spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs.<sup>12</sup>

Housing affordability challenges now affect renters across a broad range of income levels, not just those with the lowest incomes. In 2010, 42 percent of renters earning \$35,000–\$49,999 were cost burdened; by 2023, that share had risen to 77 percent (see **Figure 4**). Similar increases are seen among renters earning \$50,000–\$74,999 and even among those earning \$75,000 or more.

**Figure 4. Share of Renter Households Spending More Than 30% of Income on Housing, by Income Range**



**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2010-2023, "Tenure by Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months". Table B250106.

When renters are cost burdened, they have less money for both essentials such as food, healthcare, childcare, transportation, and for long-term goals like saving for a home, paying student loans, or building retirement security. In New Hampshire, nearly half (48 percent) of renter households are led by people under 45, many of whom are starting families, advancing careers, and working toward homeownership.

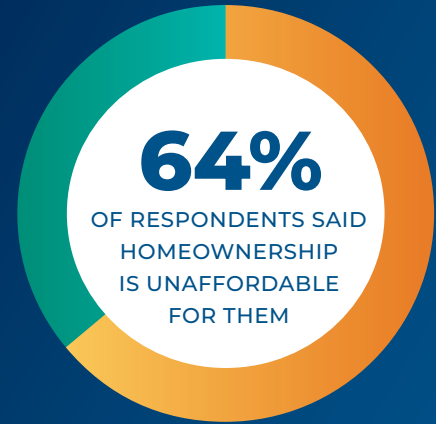
When homeownership feels out of reach, it can delay major life milestones such as marriage, starting a family, or retirement. For young professionals, the inability to buy a home may prompt them to leave New Hampshire for more affordable states, weakening the state's skilled workforce and long-term economic vitality.

**48%**  
 OF RENTER HOUSEHOLDS ARE LED BY PEOPLE UNDER 45, MANY OF WHOM ARE STARTING FAMILIES, ADVANCING CAREERS, AND WORKING TOWARD HOMEOWNERSHIP

# NH HOMEBUYING SURVEY— VOICES FROM THE FIELD

The New Hampshire Homebuying Survey, conducted in late 2024, revealed both the data and the human stories behind today's housing challenges. While survey findings showed that 64 percent of respondents said homeownership is unaffordable for them,<sup>13</sup> the personal stories bring to life just how far out of reach the American dream has become for many Granite Staters.

Survey participants shared deeply personal experiences, emphasizing how owning a home provides a safe and stable environment for their children, protects against the uncertainties of renting, and allows them to build a lasting foundation for their families' future.



#### **One Cheshire County mother explained:**

“The biggest thing is the security of having a physical space and the financial security of knowing we’re going to have this payment... We want to build on our family in a home. We want to make a home ours, and we can’t do that renting.”

#### **A veteran and father in Sullivan county shared:**

“I’m motivated to pursue homeownership for several reasons, primarily for my kids—to give them a place they can truly call home, one that they enjoy and that’s close to their school. I also want to move away from renting and create a fresh start for myself.”

#### **A former police officer and lifelong New Hampshire resident:**

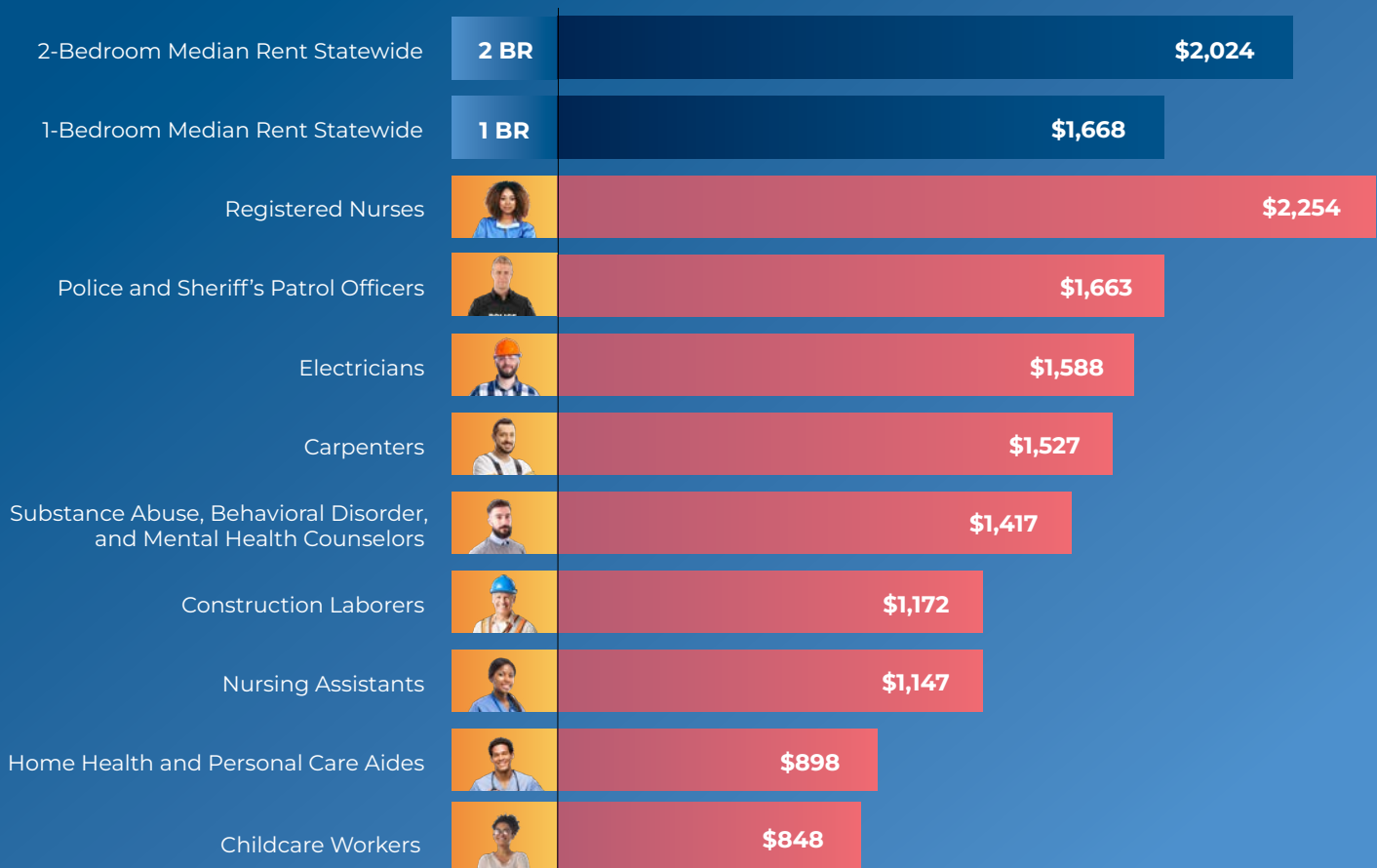
“Homeownership means the freedom to bring my own ideas to life. It’s about the pride that comes with owning something—a home to return to and share with my family.”

These voices reflect a shared truth: while the dream of homeownership in New Hampshire remains strong, it is increasingly out of reach. Without meaningful changes, more families and individuals will struggle to find the stability, pride, and sense of belonging that a home provides.

# HIGH RENTS MAKE IT HARDER TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN ESSENTIAL WORKERS

In New Hampshire, a growing share of the workforce cannot afford the median rent, even while working full-time in essential jobs. As shown in **Figure 5**, many workers in high-demand occupations, including some in the construction, childcare services, and health care fields, earn wages well below what is needed to afford median rents.

**Figure 5. High-Demand Occupations and Affordability**



**Sources:** New Hampshire Employment Security, *New Hampshire Occupational Employment & Wages - 2024*. New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, PY24 Final High Demand Occupations List with WorkKeys, July 2024. CoStar. "Median Effective Rent by Bedroom, 2024." *CoStar Market Analytics*.  
**Note:** Rent affordability assumes 30% of gross monthly income assuming a 40-hour work week. Median hourly wage comes from NH Dept. of Employment Security. To calculate the monthly median wage, the median hourly wage was calculated by multiplying by 40 to calculate the annual wage and then multiplied by 52 and then divided by 12 to calculate the monthly median wage and then multiplied by 30% to calculate the monthly affordable rent.

For example: nursing assistants, construction laborers, and carpenters can generally afford rents ranging from \$1,172 to \$1,527, several hundred dollars below the statewide median rent. This affordability gap makes it difficult for these workers to find stable housing near their jobs. Ironically, many of these workers are the very people needed to build and maintain the housing supply that New Hampshire needs.

The gap between median wages in essential jobs and median rents is not limited to the construction and healthcare industries. As shown in **Table 1**, even with full-time employment, workers in many of the most in-demand fields such as home health and personal care aides, childcare workers, retail salespersons, and restaurant cooks do not earn enough to afford the median effective rent in the state.

**Table 1. Worker Affordability, at Median Wage for Selected Occupations, NH, 2024**

Occupations	2024 Median Salary (FTE)	Max Affordable Rent	Can Afford Median Rent? <sup>14</sup>
Fast Food and Counter Workers	\$30,410	\$760	No
Childcare Workers	\$33,904	\$848	No
Retail Salespersons	\$35,755	\$894	No
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	\$35,922	\$898	No
Cooks, Restaurant	\$39,582	\$990	No
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	\$42,973	\$1,074	No
Nursing Assistants	\$45,864	\$1,147	No
Light Truck Drivers	\$46,197	\$1,155	No
Construction Laborers	\$46,883	\$1,172	No
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	\$56,680	\$1,417	No
Electricians	\$63,523	\$1,588	No
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	\$66,123	\$1,653	No
Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	\$66,518	\$1,633	No
Registered Nurses	\$90,147	\$2,254	Yes
Software Developers	\$134,077	\$3,352	Yes

For instance, home health and personal care aides, who are vital to supporting New Hampshire's aging population, have a median full-time salary of just \$35,922, which equates to a maximum affordable rent of \$898, far below the statewide median. Similarly, childcare workers earn only \$33,904, allowing for rent of up to \$848, making it nearly impossible to live independently without being cost burdened.

Even occupations requiring significant training, such as nursing assistants, mental health counselors, and elementary school teachers, fall short of the income needed to afford rental housing. Among the few high-demand professions that can afford the median effective rent are software developers and registered nurses.

Some argue that renters earning below the median wage should simply choose less expensive apartments. In reality, limited supply and high property values mean asking rents often exceed the median, leaving few affordable options. Unlike homeowners, renters are also more vulnerable to sudden displacement if their building is sold or circumstances change.

# CITY BY CITY: THE RENT REALITY

## How much must workers earn to afford median rent in New Hampshire?

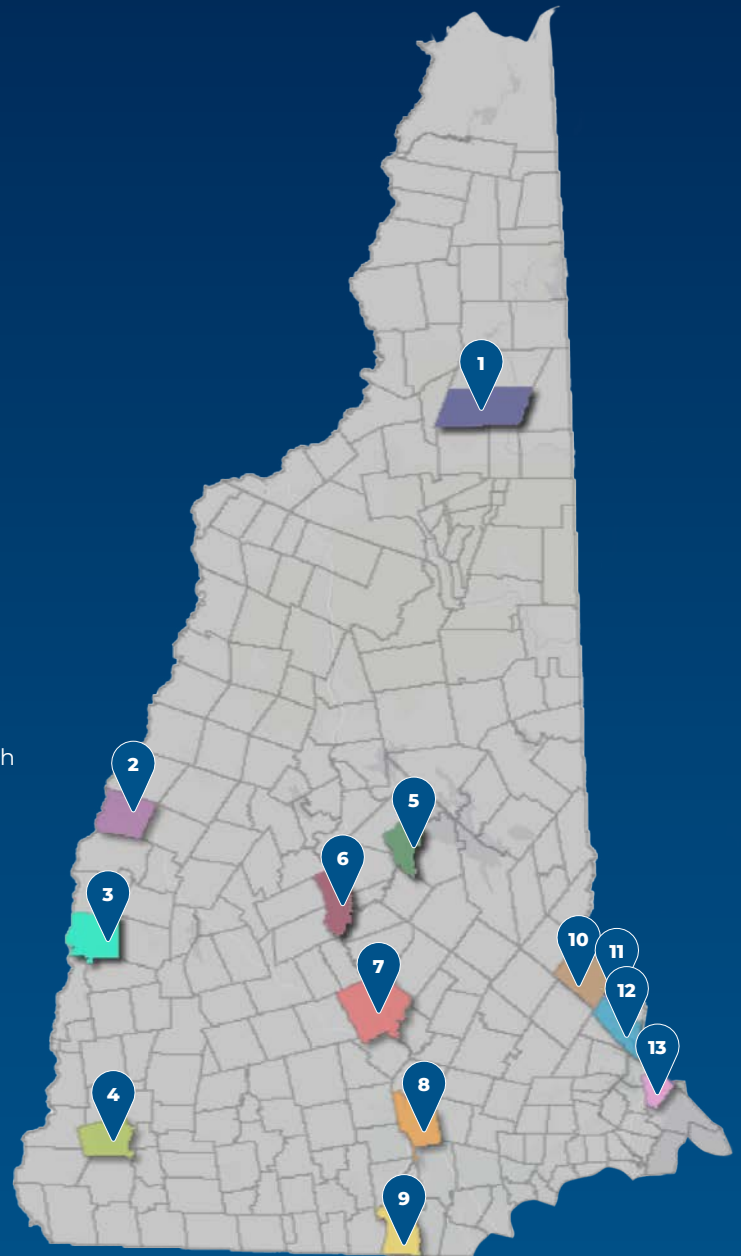
Of the thirteen cities in New Hampshire, only one, Berlin, is affordable for most occupations at the state level. To live in Berlin without being cost burdened, a worker must earn at least \$20.25 per hour, equivalent to an annual salary of \$42,120 (see **Figure 6**).<sup>15</sup> Although rental housing is affordable to most occupations, Berlin accounts for less than 1 percent of the state's labor force.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, approximately 65 percent of the labor force is in the Manchester-Nashua, NH Metropolitan Statistical Area and the Rockingham County-Strafford County, NH Metropolitan Division.<sup>17</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, Lebanon has the highest wage requirement, with a necessary hourly wage of \$46.42 to afford the median effective rent of \$2,414 in 2024 (according to CoStar data). Even essential, high-demand occupations like registered nurses, who earn a median hourly wage of \$43.34,<sup>18</sup> fall short of the income needed to live in the area, underscoring the severity of the housing affordability gap, even for well-qualified professionals.

Portsmouth has the second-highest hourly wage requirement. An individual would have to earn \$45.52 per hour to afford its median effective rent of \$2,367. The city's largest employment sector is Office and Administrative Support Occupations, which includes roles such as customer service representatives, office clerks, and receptionists.<sup>19</sup> The median wages for these occupations fall well below what is needed to afford the city's median rent, highlighting a significant affordability challenge for Portsmouth's workforce.

Figure 6. Hourly Wage Needed to Afford Median Rent in NH Cities, 2024

1. Berlin  
**\$20.25**
2. Lebanon  
**\$46.42**
3. Claremont  
**\$28.92**
4. Keene  
**\$33.10**
5. Laconia  
**\$34.31**
6. Franklin  
**\$23.15**
7. Concord  
**\$29.73**
8. Manchester  
**\$39.40**
9. Nashua  
**\$41.44**
10. Rochester  
**\$37.23**
11. Somersworth  
**\$34.62**
12. Dover  
**\$39.31**
13. Portsmouth  
**\$45.52**

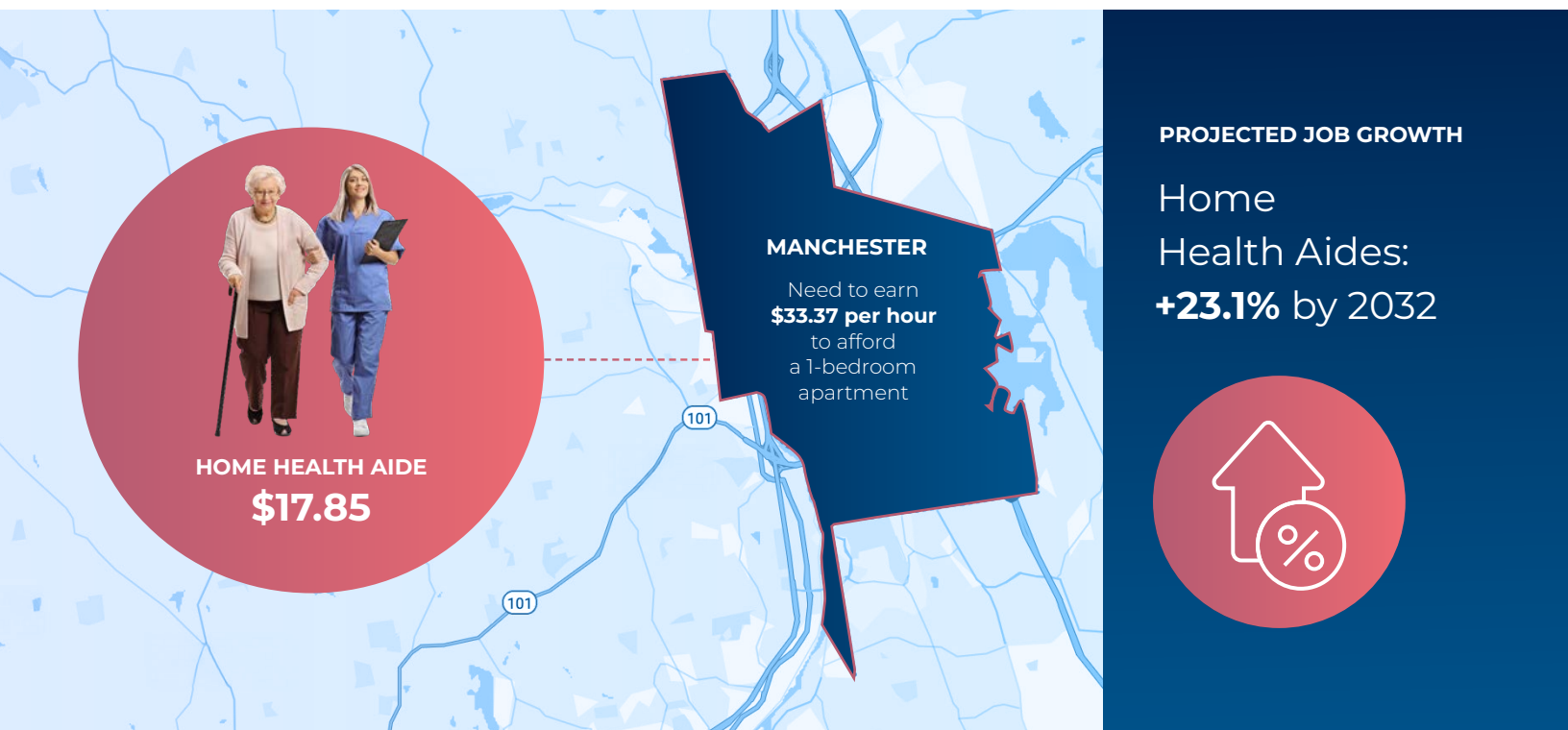


**Source:** Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, GIS User Community, CoStar Group.

**Note:** The hourly wage to afford median rent was calculated by annualizing 2024 median effective rent, dividing by 0.3 (the 30% affordability standard) to find the required income, then converting to an hourly rate (52 weeks × 40 hours).

## What is it like to care for others if you live in NH?

**IMAGINE THIS:** You're a home health aide in Manchester, working full-time caring for seniors and people with disabilities. Your work is essential and the people who depend on your assistance know that you are the reason they can remain in their homes safely and comfortably in the community they love. You earn \$18 an hour. After the apartment building where you were living changes hands, you are evicted so the new owner can make improvements to the property. You are fortunate to find a one-bedroom apartment for \$1,735<sup>20</sup> a month, which happens to be the median rent in the city (not including utilities). You are now paying 60 percent of your monthly income towards rent, leaving just over \$1,100 per month to live on. To afford your new apartment without being cost burdened, you'd need to earn \$33.37<sup>21</sup> an hour, nearly double your pay.<sup>22</sup>



You get a call from a former coworker, who moved to Houston last year. She got a job doing the same thing, earning about a dollar less per hour. She also found an apartment for the median one-bedroom rent in her new home city. Her rent is \$1,200. She pays 41 percent of her income towards rent and has a little over \$1,700 per month leftover after rent. “Come on out,” she says.


### What would you do?

You decide to stay. You love New Hampshire, after all! You take advantage of a training program at the community college and become a nursing assistant, earning \$22 an hour. You're better off now, but still paying about 46 percent of your income to rent your 1-bedroom apartment.

Both of these occupations are projected to grow significantly by 2032—23.1 percent for home health and personal care aides and 4.6 percent for nursing assistants.<sup>23</sup> However, many of the very workers we depend on can't afford to live in the communities they serve, forcing them into long commutes, shared housing, or tough decisions to leave the industry or the region.

# AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES HAVE CAUSED HOMELESSNESS TO INCREASE

Homelessness in New Hampshire has surged in recent years, reflecting the state’s deepening housing affordability crisis. As shown in **Figure 7**, the Point-in-Time (PIT) count of individuals experiencing homelessness rose from 1,605 in 2022 to 2,441 in 2023.<sup>24</sup> This increase of 52 percent was the largest percentage jump of any state that year. While the total count dipped slightly to 2,245 in 2024, the number of unsheltered individuals continued to rise, reaching an estimated 579.<sup>25</sup> This shift reflects the reality that emergency shelters often operate at or near capacity, leaving more people to sleep in vehicles, tents, or unsheltered public spaces.



**52%**  
WAS THE LARGEST INCREASE IN INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OF ANY STATE THAT YEAR

**Figure 7. New Hampshire’s Point-in-Time (PIT) Homelessness Counts (2019-2025\*)**



**Source:** New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, *Point-in-Time (PIT) Count* data, years 2019-2025\*.

\*Preliminary

The increase in unsheltered homelessness is a stark signal of the state’s supply challenges and resulting affordability crisis. As rents continue to rise and the supply of affordable units remains scarce, more families and individuals are unable to maintain stable housing. Seniors on fixed incomes, people living with a disability, and families with children are among those most affected.

Some argue that high rates of drug use and mental illness are the primary reasons homelessness is increasing. However, research has proven that these factors cannot explain high rates of homelessness or increases like those being observed in New Hampshire. Instead, studies show that areas with expensive housing and limited rental availability consistently have disproportionately higher levels of homelessness, even when social services and population traits are comparable.<sup>26</sup>

Without targeted interventions such as expanded affordable housing or rental assistance, New Hampshire risks seeing further increases in homelessness. Left unaddressed, these trends will continue to strain public services and municipal welfare budgets, deepening the social and economic impacts on communities across the state. Adults who become housing insecure have more trouble maintaining employment, contributing to existing workforce challenges for New Hampshire businesses.

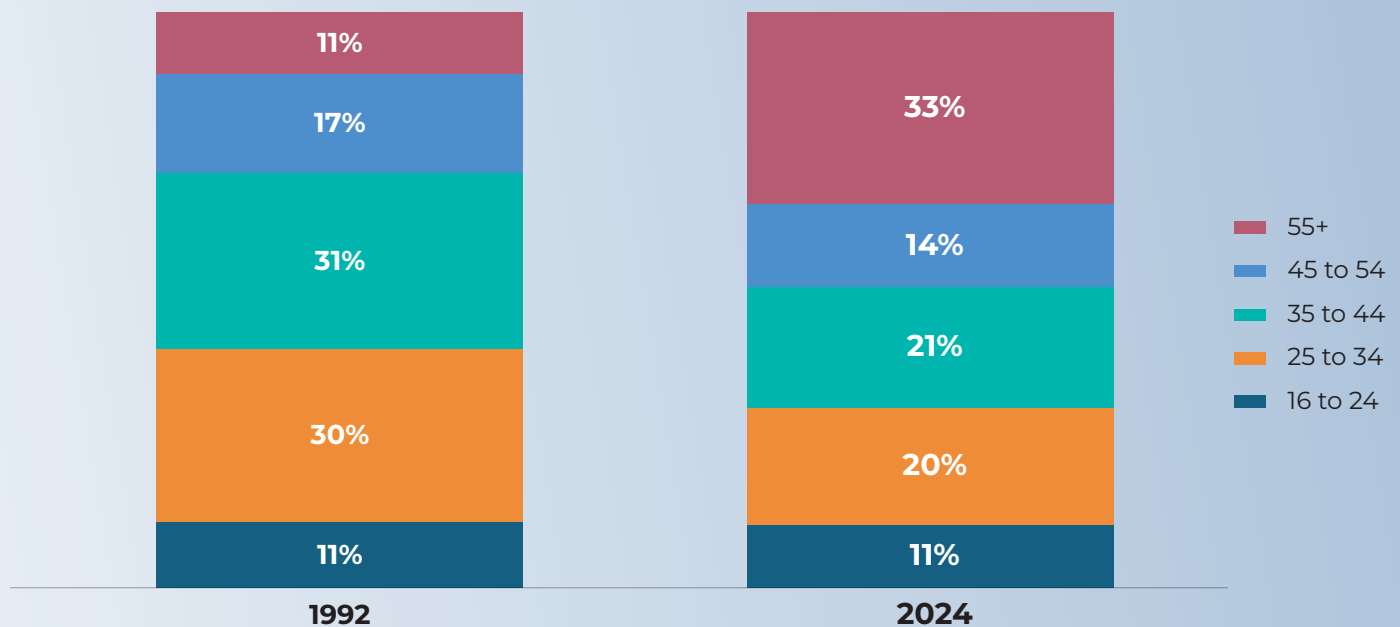
# WORKFORCE CHALLENGES IN AN AGING STATE

The growing affordability challenge affects more than just individual households. It also has far-reaching consequences for New Hampshire's businesses and overall economic vibrancy. When people cannot afford to live near their jobs, it leads to longer commutes, higher turnover, and a smaller, less stable workforce. These challenges also make it harder for businesses to attract and retain workers.

Low-paid but essential occupations, like home health aides and mental health counselors are vital to supporting New Hampshire's aging population. As of 2024, 27 percent of New Hampshire's population are aged 60 or older,<sup>27</sup> and projections show that seniors will make up about 30 percent of the population between 2030 and 2050.<sup>28</sup> Ensuring affordable housing for caregivers is therefore critical. Without it, workers may leave the profession or move out of state, worsening labor shortages and putting vulnerable seniors at risk.

The workforce itself is also aging. In 1992, just 11 percent of workers were aged 55 or older; by 2024, that number had tripled to 33 percent (see **Figure 8**). This growing reliance on older workers, especially in fields like healthcare, makes housing affordability an urgent workforce issue. Without targeted investments in affordable housing, New Hampshire risks worsening workforce shortages, increasing caregiver burnout, and a decline in services for its most vulnerable residents. The consequences would be felt across the public health systems, communities and the economy statewide.

**Figure 8. Labor Force Share by Age Group in NH, 1992 vs 2024**



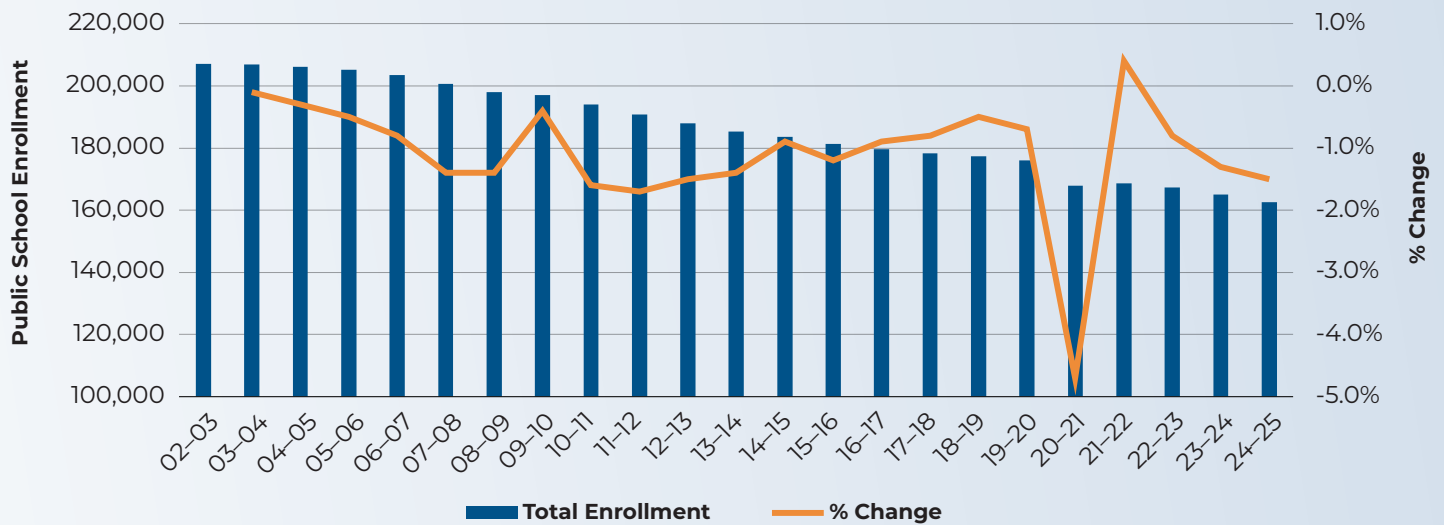
**Sources:** U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (March) Supplement, 1992 and 2024. Analysis includes variables on labor force participation and age. Age data were recoded into five distinct age group categories for comparison.

# DECLINING SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS AFFECT MANY NH COMMUNITIES

New Hampshire's public and private school enrollment has steadily declined over the past two decades. In 2002–03, more than 207,000 students were enrolled statewide (see **Figure 9**). By 2024–25, that number had dropped to 162,660, a 21 percent decrease. Most years saw modest annual declines of 0.5 percent to 1.5 percent, but the 2020–21 school year stands out with a sharp 4.7 percent drop, largely due to pandemic-related disruptions. Because of this, the 2020–21 data should be viewed as an outlier rather than part of the long-term trend.



**Figure 9. Public School Enrollment Counts by School Year**



**Source:** New Hampshire Department of Education, *State Totals: Ten Years Public and Private Fall Enrollments*  
**Note:** Only includes Preschool to Grade 12

New Hampshire's school-aged population is likely to continue to shrink, due to sustained decline in birth rates. In 2024, New Hampshire recorded just 11,761 births<sup>29</sup> —the lowest in modern history—resulting in a birth rate of 8.5, meaning about 8 or 9 births for every 1,000 people. That's among the lowest in the nation and nearly half the rate of 16.1 per 1,000 recorded at the peak in 1987.<sup>30</sup> This reflects broader social and economic shifts that have been unfolding for more than two decades. Additionally, a recent study found that the average number of public school students per housing unit in New Hampshire has declined, dropping from 0.39 to 0.29 since 1990.<sup>31</sup> Using four case study communities in New Hampshire, the study also found that new homes built between 2014 and 2023 only added 0.16 students per housing unit. In other words, for every 100 new homes built, only about 16 new students were added to local schools—far fewer than many might expect. This challenges the common concern that new housing will overwhelm school systems.

### FAR FEWER STUDENTS THAN MANY MIGHT EXPECT



# WHY SHRINKING SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AFFECTS EVERYONE



## Property Taxes and School Budgets

Fewer students mean less state and federal funding for schools, even as operating costs remain the same. This forces communities to choose between raising local taxes or cutting programs, staff, and services.



## Fewer Families, Aging Communities

With median home prices exceeding \$565,000 and rents increasingly unaffordable, younger households are struggling to stay or put down roots in New Hampshire. As families leave or are priced out, towns lose critical working-age residents, weakening their workforce and long-term growth.



## Program Cuts and School Closures

Declining enrollment threatens the stability of local school districts, leading to program reductions, school consolidations, or closures. These changes can reduce educational quality and make communities less attractive to new families, fueling a cycle of population decline.



## Lower Home Demand and Community Vibrancy

School quality and enrollment trends directly impact home values and community appeal. As schools shrink or close, housing demand may weaken, and neighborhoods risk losing vitality.



## Fewer Future Workers and Leaders

Today's students are tomorrow's nurses, teachers, tradespeople, and business owners. Fewer children in schools today means a smaller, potentially less prepared future workforce impacting the state's long-term economic health.

Solving the housing crisis is not just about providing shelter, it's essential to sustaining strong schools, stable neighborhoods, and thriving communities across New Hampshire.

# THE BOTTOM LINE

New Hampshire's housing challenges are reshaping the state's economy, workforce, and community life in profound ways. Rising home prices and rents, paired with slower wage growth, have made it harder for many residents to find housing that fits their needs. Essential workers—including nurses, teachers, childcare providers, and service staff—face growing barriers to living in the communities they serve.

While much of the new construction has focused on higher price points, the modest increase in housing inventory shows momentum that can be built upon. By lowering barriers to allow the market to provide diverse housing options, and investing with targeted interventions like the Affordable Housing Fund, New Hampshire can better align its housing market with the needs of the state.

The stakes are clear. When families are cost-burdened, ripple effects extend across the state, from workforce shortages in essential services to enrollment declines in local schools. But with the right policies and investments, these challenges can be transformed into opportunities to strengthen New Hampshire's communities, support its schools, and ensure that vital services remain resilient.

At its core, this is not just a housing issue—it's a people issue. Addressing it means ensuring that every resident can share in the state's long-term prosperity, stability, and quality of life.

If New Hampshire is to preserve its identity as a desirable place to live and work, bold action can make the difference. Expanding the supply of affordable housing, ensuring the workforce can live locally, and investing in supportive infrastructure will help families stay rooted and communities thrive.

The future stability of New Hampshire's economy, schools, and neighborhoods depends on meeting this challenge—and with thoughtful action, the state is well-positioned to rise to it.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

New Hampshire's housing future is not out of our hands—we shape it.

**Whether you're a resident, employer, business owner, or community leader, your voice matters. Here are some ways to get involved:**

## GET INVOLVED LOCALLY



### Attend or participate in local municipal meetings

Planning and zoning boards, along with governing bodies such as Select Boards, Town or City Councils, and Boards of Aldermen play a critical role in shaping housing development. Your presence and input can influence what gets built, and where.



### Serve on a local board or committee

Towns often need residents to serve on land use boards, housing committees or commissions, or economic development committees.

## SUPPORT HOUSING ADVOCACY



### Support or volunteer with housing advocacy organizations, such as:

- **Housing Action NH:** a statewide affordable housing coalition in New Hampshire that advocates for policies and investments to increase the availability of affordable housing.
- Regional workforce housing coalitions (Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast, Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition, Vital Communities (Upper Valley), and the Monadnock Housing Collaborative).
- **Home for All:** To prevent housing insecurity and homelessness by expanding access to diverse affordable, deeply affordable, and supportive housing throughout the Greater Seacoast region.
- **Manchester Neighbors Welcome:** The Manchester Neighbors Welcome Coalition is a new coalition effort convened by 603 Forward and New Hampshire Youth Movement. We are coming together to support common-sense municipal zoning changes that will bring about more attainable housing choices for all Manchester residents.



### For businesses and local leaders

Small businesses are among the stakeholders most affected by housing challenges, and the most important voices in community matters. Consider making your voice heard by engaging directly and through these organizations.

- Connect with your **local Chamber of Commerce** and the **BIA, New Hampshire's State wide Chamber**.

**You don't need to be a policymaker to have an impact. Your engagement, big or small, helps ensure that New Hampshire remains a place where people can live, work, and thrive.**

# RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Looking to learn more or take the next step? These tools can help:

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & ADVOCACY TRAINING

- **[NH Office of Planning & Development-Planning and Zoning Training](#)**  
The Office of Planning and Development (OPD) at the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs offers training and resources.
- **[New Hampshire Municipal Association \(NHMA\)](#)**: NHMA supports effective municipal government by leveraging the collaborative strengths of New Hampshire cities and towns through education, training, advocacy, and legal services.
- **[New Futures](#)** works to improve the health and well-being of all Granite Staters through public policy change and civic empowerment.
- **[The Forward Foundation](#)** was organized to increase the participation of working-age people in New Hampshire in democracy by expanding their knowledge, supporting their leadership growth, and researching and developing public policy that will encourage such participation.
- **[Stay Work Play](#)**: showcases all that makes life in New Hampshire exceptional—from thriving careers and vibrant communities to outdoor adventures and family-friendly living. Whether launching a career, finding community, or building a life of balance and purpose, Stay Work Play connects young people to the Granite State's best opportunities for housing, jobs, and events.
- **[NH Listens](#)**: is a community engagement initiative of the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire that fosters inclusive, respectful dialogue on complex local and statewide issues to promote community-led solutions.
- **[Plan NH](#)**: With a mission to foster excellence in planning, design, and development, and a vision of vibrant communities across the state, Plan NH serves as a collaborative forum for professionals dedicated to shaping healthy, thriving towns and neighborhoods.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & INFORMATION

- New Hampshire Housing Community Engagement and Advocacy Tools: [nhhfa.org/housing-challenges-solutions/](http://nhhfa.org/housing-challenges-solutions/)
- New Hampshire Housing Publications and Data: [nhhfa.org/publications-data/](http://nhhfa.org/publications-data/)
- UNH Cooperative Extension. [extension.unh.edu/community-economic-development/community-leadership](http://extension.unh.edu/community-economic-development/community-leadership)



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3. Estimated affordable purchase price is New Hampshire Housing's calculations using 30% of income, 5% downpayment, 30-year mortgage at 6.67%, estimated PMI, and estimated 2024 taxes for NH statewide. Interest rate is the average of the 30-year Freddie Mac interest rate for January-June 2025.
4. This calculation estimates the share of households in New Hampshire that can afford a \$565,000 home, based on an income threshold of \$182,000. Using 2023 PUMS 5-year estimates data, the number of households with incomes at or above this threshold was divided by the total number of households in the state.
5. Using 2023 5-year PUMS data, variables included household income and tenure. Tenure was recoded into two groups—renters and homeowners—while household income was recoded to identify households earning at least \$182,000.
6. Percentage change is based on nominal values and is unadjusted for inflation.
7. Estimated 2023 median household income is derived from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) and adjusted for inflation using a factor of 1.08, based on projections from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).
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15. Author's calculation based on 2024 median effective rent from CoStar data. The figure is annualized, divided by 0.3 (the 30 percent affordability standard), and converted to an hourly wage using 52 weeks × 40 hours.
16. Author's calculation using July 2025 data from New Hampshire Employment Security, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS): Current Unemployment Rates, July 2024*. The share was derived by dividing Berlin's labor force count by the statewide labor force count. Available at: nhes.nh.gov/elmi/statistics/documents/laus-current.pdf.
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