

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### A TIGHT RENTAL MARKET CONTINUES STATEWIDE

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The 2017 New Hampshire Housing survey of the Granite State's residential rental units confirms what those who have looked for an apartment in Hillsborough, Rockingham, Strafford and Merrimack counties already know: it is really difficult to find an affordable place to rent.

Our telephone survey, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, polled the owners and managers of more than 26,000 unsubsidized (market rate) rental housing units around the state (20% of the total number of units). The survey found that the statewide median gross rent of \$1,263 (including utilities) for two-bedroom units has increased over 4% since 2016 – the fourth year in a row that rents have increased.

Meanwhile, the vacancy rate continues to decline; this year it stands at 1.4% for two-bedroom units. An average vacancy rate of 4% to 5% is considered a balanced market for supply and demand.

All 10 of the state's counties saw an increase in median gross rent, with rents – as expected – highest in the southern counties near the state's largest cities and close to employers as well as the Boston job market. This is also where most of the state's rental housing properties are located. In order to afford the statewide median cost of a typical two-bedroom apartment with utilities, a renter would have to earn 131% of the median renter income, or over \$50,400 a year.

While there has been an increase recently in the construction of new rental housing, these tend to be higher-end units with amenities. Young working professionals and older individuals who are downsizing their households are competing for these units, further driving up rental costs. The ongoing tight housing market also reflects low- to moderate-income households that continue to rent because there's a scarcity of affordable homes to buy.

To stimulate business growth in the state, there is a need for ample affordable housing for workers. New Hampshire Housing last year financed the creation or rehabilitation of more than 1,000 high-quality affordable rental units for working families and seniors, and provided direct rental assistance to thousands of very low-income households. This translates to an investment of about \$150 million into the state's economy last year.

Addressing this need for housing requires an ongoing commitment from both the public and private sectors. In particular, it remains critical that local regulatory policies provide reasonable opportunities for housing development, to meet the needs of a growing economy.

New Hampshire Housing is committed to working creatively to provide housing to meet the needs of our state's residents and businesses. Through these efforts, economic activity and business growth in the state are stimulated; jobs in construction, real estate and lending are supported; and the availability of affordable workforce housing is increased.

## OVERVIEW OF 2017 RESIDENTIAL RENTAL COST SURVEY

New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority conducts an annual statewide survey to monitor rental housing costs and provide housing data to the public and administrators of housing programs.

The telephone survey was conducted on behalf of NHHFA by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center in April 2017. The Survey Center obtained information on 26,461 market rate rental housing units across the state. Rental properties polled included those who participated in last year's survey and those identified through online advertisements published in early 2017.

The calculation of median rents is based on a total sample of 10,830 units. Median rents were determined by using a portion of the unit data gathered from those projects with more than 10 units so as to reduce the bias toward larger apartment complexes.

**Gross rents** are calculated for each property in the survey by taking the rent charged by the landlord (the contract rent) and adding a dollar allowance for those utilities the tenant pays. The addition of allowances for

tenant-paid utilities has the effect of standardizing rental costs. These **utility allowances** are calculated at the time of the rental survey and are based on physical consumption allowances determined by HUD and current energy costs as determined by a separate survey conducted by NHHFA.

**Median gross rents** are presented for various geographic areas and for various unit sizes. The median represents the gross rent at the middle when gross rents are ordered from lowest to highest. Thus 50% of the sample units in each calculation have gross rents below the median, and 50% have gross rents above the median. The median, rather than a mean or average, is used because it is less influenced by extremes in rental costs.

Some median rents are not reported because the sample was not large enough to result in a reliable calculation. In general, median rents were not calculated when the sample contained 20 or fewer units. Despite the suppression of results for categories with small sample sizes, the data for those units have been included in the calculation of the overall median rents.

Finally, a chart for each area summarizing the results of the Residential Rental Cost Survey from 2000 to the present is included here. The median gross rents for two-bedroom units are plotted to show general trends. Please note that since the sample set changes each year, changes in rents may be due to both the change in the sample and changes in utility costs used in calculating gross rents.

### Notes on data reported in this document:

- Categories for which there are insufficient data are notated with \*\*\*\*
- All median gross rents reported include utilities

All data contained in this report, plus additional data in an interactive format, is available on New Hampshire Housing's website at [www.nhhfa.org/housing-and-demographic-data](http://www.nhhfa.org/housing-and-demographic-data).

**2017 Survey Sample Size**

