**If you are reading this document, it means that you are seriously considering if partnering with Habitat for Humanity of Rutland County is right for you. We are pleased and are eager to answer your questions.**

*We will consider four distinct criteria when reviewing your potential to become a Habitat homeowner:*

* *Residency*
* *Willingness to Work with Habitat*
* *Need*
* *Ability to Pay*

*Residency* – You must have lived in or worked in Rutland County for a full year at the time you apply. If you meet the other criteria, we urge you to apply when you meet the residency requirement. There are other affiliates that serve Vermont, New York, and New Hampshire. If you don’t live in Rutland County, we encourage you to contact the affiliate that serves your area. [Click to find an affiliate that serves your area.](https://www.habitat.org/where-we-work/united-states-canada)

*Willingness to Work with Habitat* – When you partner with us to build your home, you enter into a long-term partnership that continues from the time you are selected to the day that you pay your last mortgage payment.

* Homebuyer Partner – A volunteer will work with you closely from the time of selection through the end of the first year of living in your home. Your mutual goal is to ensure a successful transition to living in your new home and in a new community, maintaining your home, and managing all expenses.
* Sweat Equity - It does not matter if you have never pounded a nail or are an experienced builder or are somewhere in between you will be working side by side with volunteers building your home. Typically, over 120 different people contribute a minimum of four hours. Some will contribute as many as 300+ hours. Each person 18 or older in the Habitat family contributes 200 + hours on average. When circumstances make it difficult to contribute all the hours building, the homebuyer partner helps to set up a plan that will meet the spirit of the sweat equity requirement.
* The value of each family member’s time building goes beyond the tangible result, building a bedroom wall, for example. It is very motivating for volunteers who contribute time, money, and materials to see the family that will live in the home working with them to make their dream of homeownership come true.
* Habitat homeowners become the face of Habitat in the community. Every dollar raised to pay for the materials and professional labor comes from the Rutland community. From time to time, we will invite community members to come to awareness gatherings, groundbreaking, and home dedication ceremonies. Participation in those events helps us to attract more volunteers and to secure the funds we need to help you and more hard-working residents of Rutland County.

***Need –*** Your**c**urrent housing is unsafe, overcrowded, temporary, or inadequate in very basic ways such as:

* Serious structural damage or problems with heat, water, electrical, or sewage systems that the landlord cannot or will not repair.
* Too small for the size of family
* Neighborhood unsafe for children
* Current monthly housing expenses exceed 50% of annual gross income.
* Commuting an excessive distance to/from work can be too expensive to be sustainable for the long term.
* All things being equal, a larger household is likely to have greater needs.

***Ability to Pay -*** Since home buyers will be purchasing a home, an adequate and stable source of income, a low debt load, and a good credit history are needed. A credit score of about 680 is desired. Habitat can assist you in evaluating your financial readiness for homeownership. We work closely with [**NeighborWorks of Western Vermont**](https://www.nwwvt.org/). They offer excellent workshops for first-time homebuyers and managing family finances.

Monthly payments to Habitat will continue for the length of your interest-free mortgage, which could be for 30 years. Your monthly payment will cover the mortgage payment, real estate taxes, and property insurance. A homeowner might expect to pay $700-$900 per month to Habitat. Monthly payments are set so they are not more than 30% of a family’s annual income. Total income range:

**Acceptable Median Income Range

 Family Size 50% to 80%\***

 **1….…………...$26,150-$41,800**

 **2………………$29,850-$47,800**

 **3………………$33,600-$53,750**

 **4………………$37,300-$59,700**

 **5………………$40,300-$64,500**

 **6………………$43,300-$69,300**

 **7………………$46,300-$74,050**

 **8………………$49,250-$78,850**

\*Example – The acceptable range for a family of 4 is between $37,300 and $59,700 (50-80% of the median income for Rutland County, Vermont.

Habitat homes house many households today who did NOT meet the financial criteria but whose hard work and determination enabled them to qualify. If you believe that you do not qualify now, we encourage you to work with us and other organizations like [NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](https://www.nwwvt.org/) to get your household ready to enjoy the benefits of homeownership and to assume the responsibilities of owning your own home.

If you have any questions, please call 802-747-7440 or write rutlandhabitat@gmail.com. We are here to help. If you don’t ask, you won’t know if you qualify or what steps you need to take to qualify. We hope you are ready to take the next step!