



ADU READY?

A COMPARATIVE MUNICIPAL ZONING ASSESSMENT OF
ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) REGULATIONS

AUGUST 2026



CAPITAL DISTRICT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

One Park Place | Suite 102 | Albany, New York 12205-2676
www.cdrpc.org

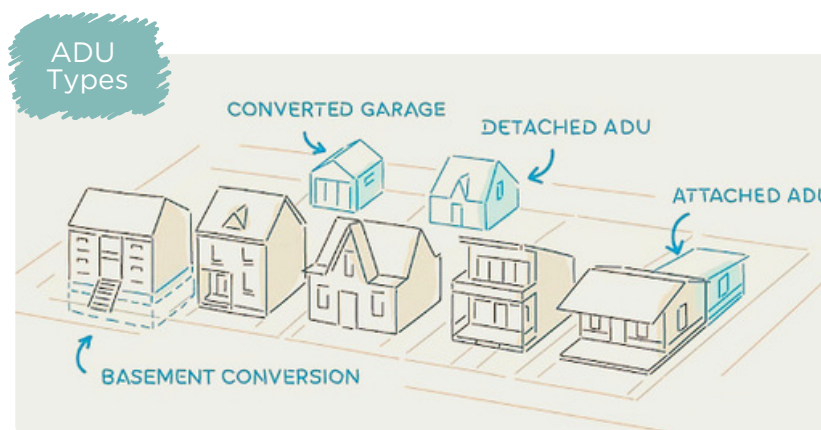
Financial assistance for the preparation of this report was provided through grants from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation and through the New York State Department of Transportation at the direction of the Capital Region Transportation Council.



INTRODUCTION

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), are an important part of the conversation about housing in the United States. In New York State initiatives like the [Plus One ADU Program](#), looks to increase the housing supply by providing financial assistance for the construction of ADUs. An ADU is a smaller, independent living space located on the same property as a primary home. It can be attached to the main house, built above or within an existing garage, converted from a basement, or constructed as a separate building in the backyard. They generally include their own living, sleeping, cooking, and bathroom areas, allowing residents to have an independent living space.

ADUs help address housing shortages by expanding housing supply, improving affordability and increasing residential density within established neighborhoods without requiring large-scale redevelopment. They also provide housing options for older adults seeking to age in place, young adults entering the housing market, caregivers, and smaller households. Research from cities including Seattle, Portland, and Minneapolis confirms that reducing regulatory barriers to ADU development can expand housing choices and serve as a catalyst for broader zoning and land use reforms. While ADUs alone cannot resolve the housing crisis, they offer communities a flexible and incremental strategy for creating additional housing opportunities within existing neighborhoods.¹



Source: Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency

¹ Mukhija, Vinit, and Shine Ling. Accessory Dwelling Units and Beyond: How Can Cities Overcome Barriers to Increasing Zoning Capacity in Single-Family Neighborhoods? Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Jan. 2022, Working Paper WP22VM1.



METHODS

This analysis examines how communities in Albany, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Rensselaer counties regulate Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The research team began by identifying the various terms communities may use to describe ADUs, including ‘accessory dwelling unit,’ ‘accessory apartment,’ ‘in-law apartment,’ ‘secondary dwelling unit,’ ‘garage apartment,’ and ‘accessory residential unit.’ The team then used artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, to analyze relevant zoning sources, such as eCode360 and municipal websites, and identify provisions related to ADUs using these search terms. Data collection was conducted between November 2025 and August 2026. The results returned by the AI tools were reviewed against the underlying zoning sources to verify the findings. Where communities used terminology other than the search terms identified above, those provisions were not captured through the AI-assisted search and therefore may not be reflected in the analysis. Accordingly, the analysis treats AI-assisted searches as a method for identifying potentially relevant regulations, rather than as a definitive determination that a municipality lacks ADU-related provisions when those provisions are not identified through the AI-assisted search. The results were compiled into a standardized comparative rubric using the following criteria:

1. whether ADUs were permitted
2. the types of ADUs allowed
3. size requirements
4. parking requirements
5. owner-occupancy rules
6. restrictions on tenancy or occupancy.

Each criterion was assigned a score, enabling comparisons across municipalities and the identification of broader patterns in ADU regulation throughout the Capital Region.



Compile a list of all cities, towns, and villages across the four Capital Region counties.



Locate municipal zoning codes through eCode360 or directly from municipal websites.



Organize and categorize ADU policies and calculate scores for each municipality.



Visualize results in an interactive dashboard where users can select a municipality to view ADU regulations and related information.



GRADING AND CRITERIA SCALE

Criterion	Definition	Possible Points
ADU Types Allowed	Number of ADU types permitted by the ordinance. Includes: (a) internal ADUs located entirely within the existing dwelling; (b) attached ADUs connected to the primary dwelling; and (c) detached ADUs located in a separate structure on the same lot.	3 = All three types allowed 2 = Any two types allowed 1 = One type allowed
Maximum Size	Maximum floor area, in square feet or as a percentage of the primary dwelling, of an ADU permitted by the ordinance. Includes maximum size limits for: (a) attached ADUs; (b) detached ADUs; and (c) building expansions or additions associated with the creation of an ADU within a converted structure.	3 = $\geq 1,000$ sq. ft. 2 = 800–999 sq. ft. or uses a $>25\%$ cap 1 = 600–799 sq. ft. or uses a $\leq 25\%$ cap
Permit Type	Type of permit or approval process required by the ordinance to establish an ADU. Includes whether the ADU is permitted by-right, through an administrative or ministerial review process, through a mixed review process, or requires a special use permit (SUP).	3 = By-right or mixed review process 2 = Special Use Permit (SUP) required 1 = Administrative permit required
Parking Requirement	Number of additional off-street parking spaces required by the ordinance for the development or establishment of an ADU. Does not include parking spaces already required for the primary dwelling.	3 = No additional parking required 2 = 1 additional space required 1 = 2 additional spaces required
Owner Occupancy Requirement	Whether the ordinance requires the property owner to occupy the primary dwelling or ADU as a principal residence as a condition of establishing or maintaining an ADU.	2 = No owner occupancy requirement 1 = Owner occupancy required
Renter Relationship Requirement	Whether the ordinance requires the occupant or renter of the ADU to be related by family or household relationship to the property owner or primary dwelling occupant.	2 = No relationship requirement 1 = Renter must be related to the owner or primary dwelling occupant

Total Possible Points: 16

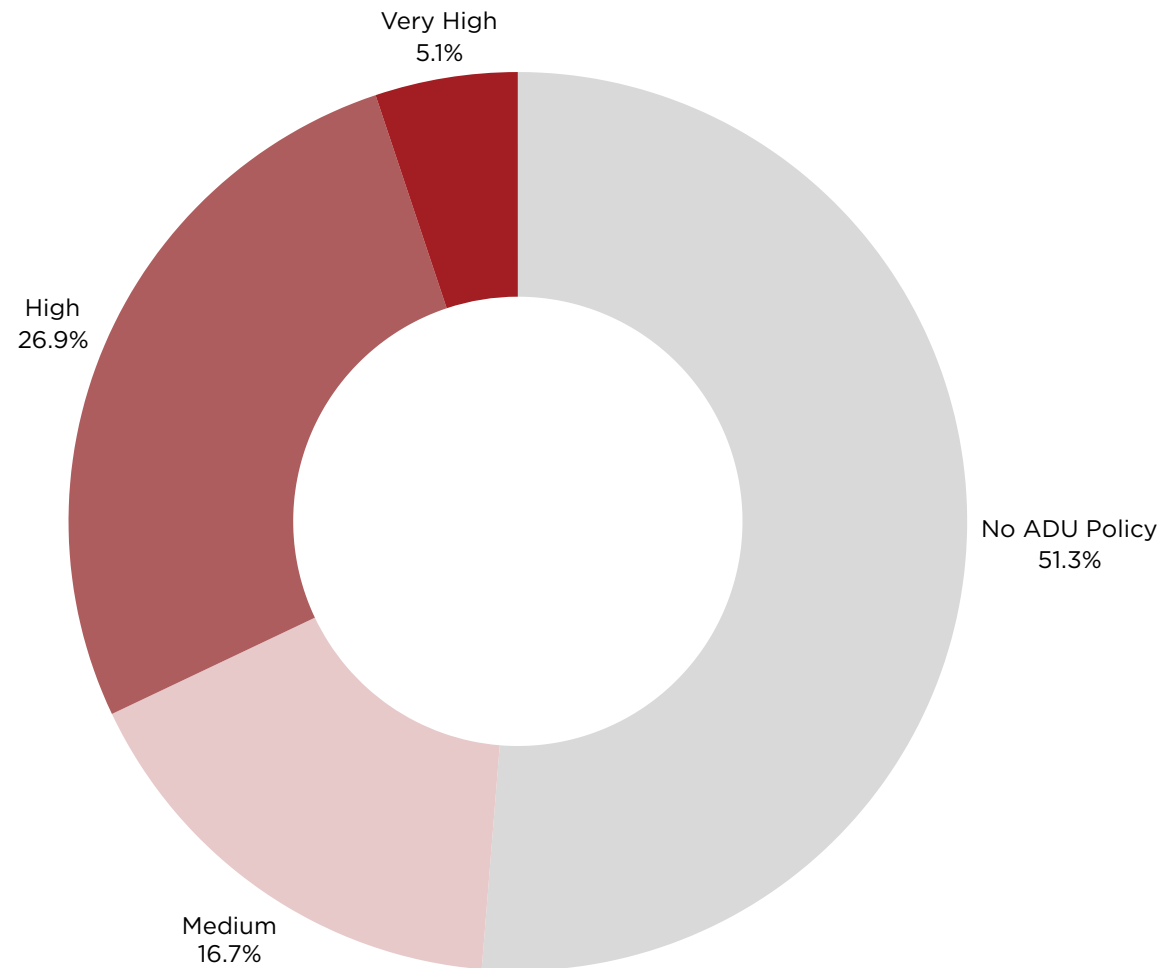


GRADING AND CRITERIA SCALE

Range	Tier
0%	No ADU Policy
1%-20%	Very Low
21%-40%	Low
41%-60%	Medium
61%-80%	High
81%-100%	Very High

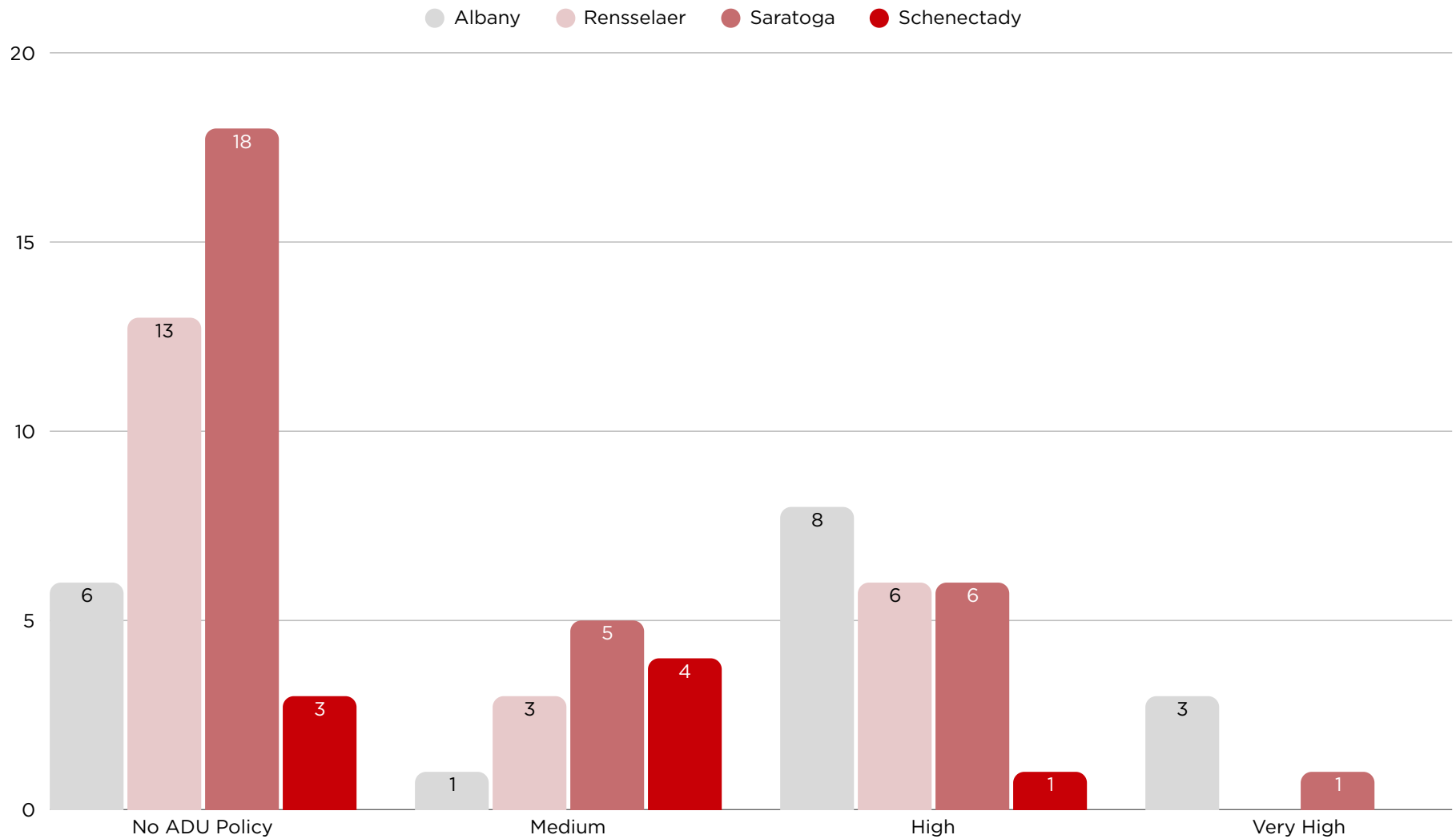


CAPITAL REGION BY ADU TIER





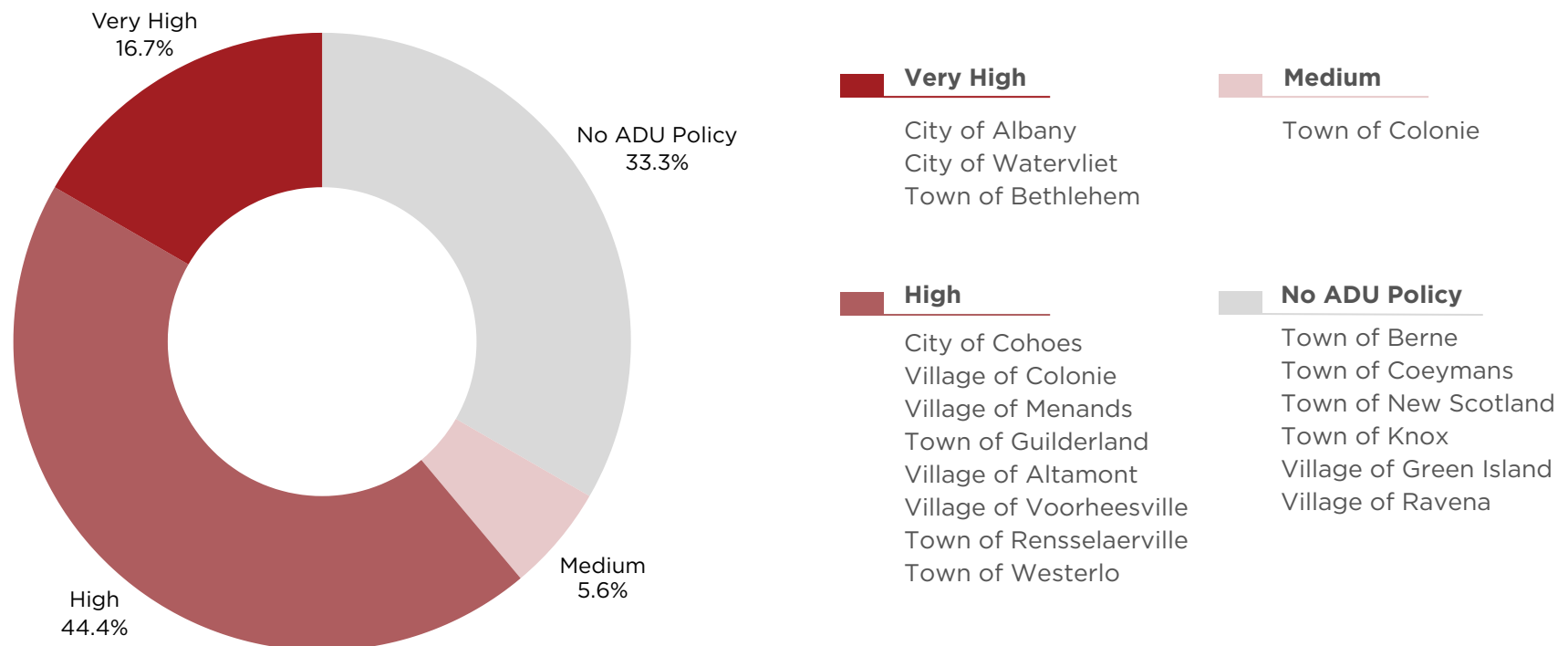
CAPITAL REGION COUNTIES BY ADU TIER





ADU Ranking Tier by Municipalities

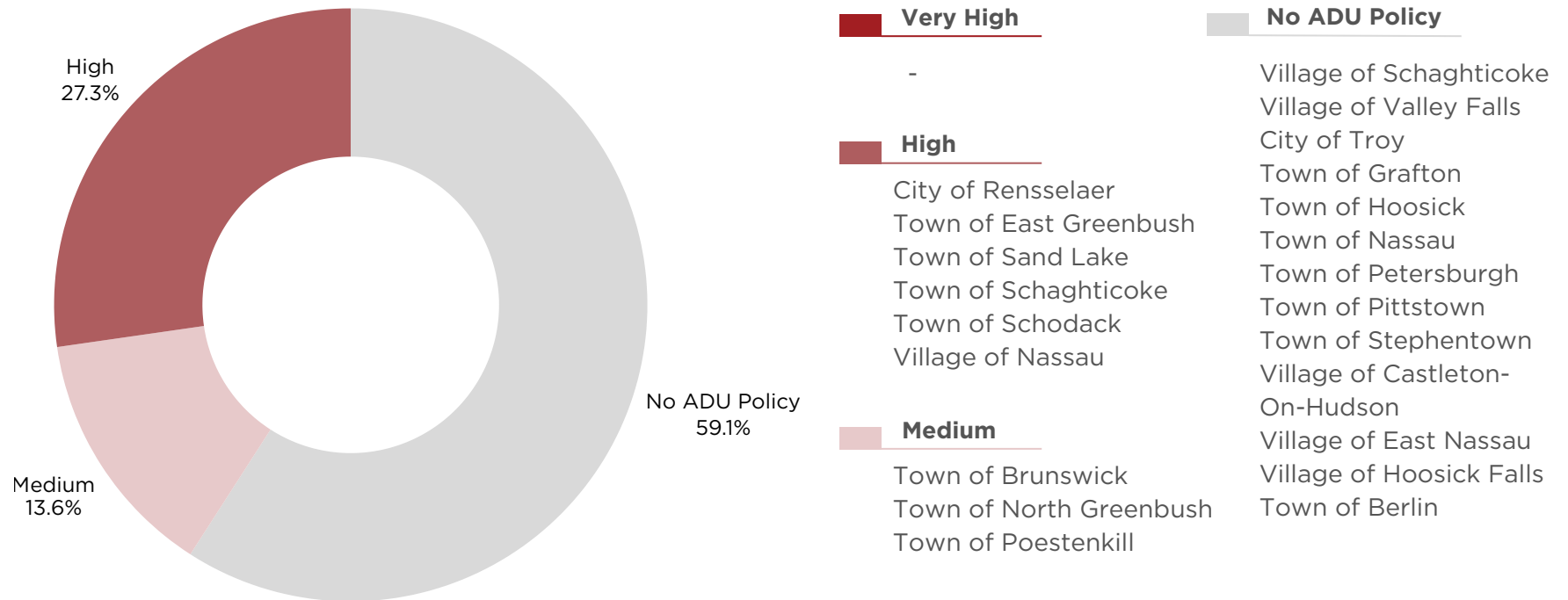
ALBANY COUNTY





ADU Ranking Tier by Municipalities

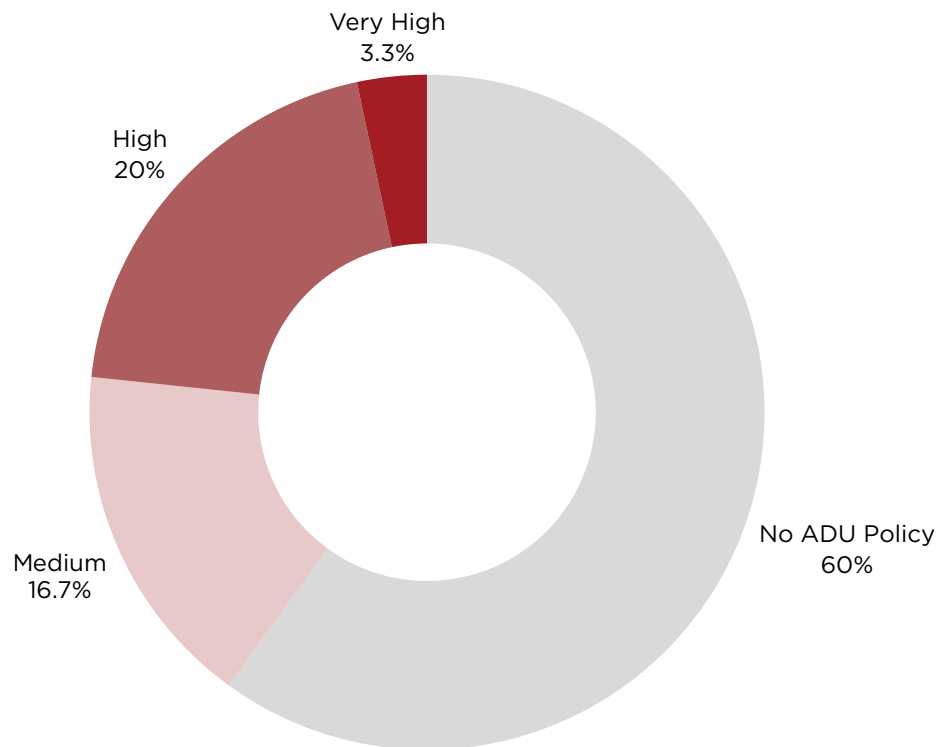
RENSSELAER COUNTY





ADU Ranking Tier by Municipalities

SARATOGA COUNTY



Very High

Town of Charlton

High

City of Saratoga Springs
Town of Ballston
Town of Charlton
Town of Clifton Park
Town of Galway
Town of Greenfield
Town of Stillwater
Town of Wilton
Village of Corinth
Village of Schuylerville
Village of Victory
Village of Stillwater

Medium

Town of Clifton Park
Town of Galway
Town of Greenfield
Town of Stillwater
Town of Wilton
Village of Corinth
Village of Schuylerville
Village of Victory

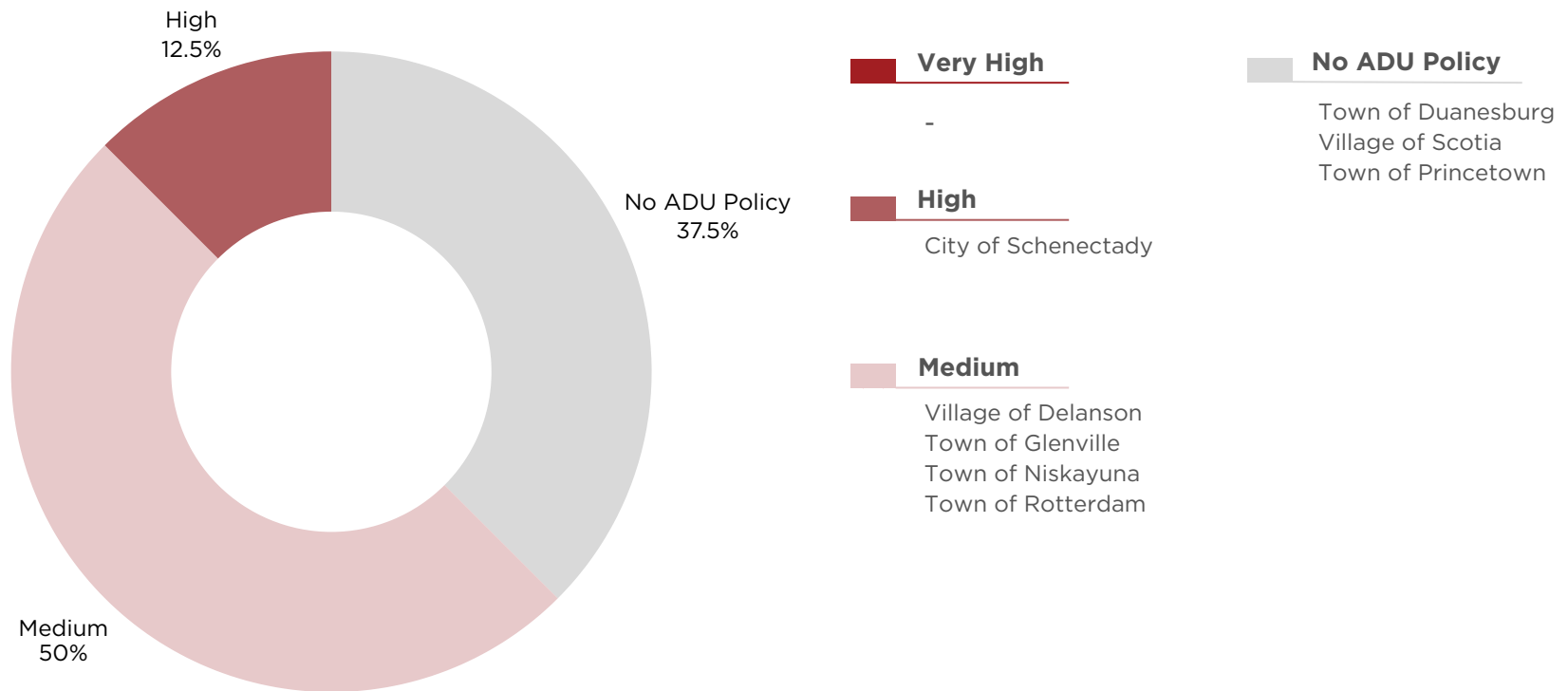
No ADU Policy

Town of Corinth
City of Mechanicville
Town of Day
Town of Edinburg
Town of Hadley
Town of Halfmoon
Town of Malta
Town of Milton
Town of Moreau
Town of
Northumberland
Town of Providence
Town of Saratoga
Town of Waterford
Village of Ballston Spa
Village of Galway
Village of Round Lake
Village of South Glens
Falls
Village of Waterford



ADU Ranking Tier by Municipalities

SCHENECTADY COUNTY



CLOSING THOUGHTS

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) offer a flexible way to expand housing choice, improve affordability, and meet changing household needs while preserving neighborhood character. This analysis shows that communities across the Capital Region regulate ADUs in markedly different ways. Policies vary in terminology, permitting requirements, dimensional standards, parking rules, owner-occupancy provisions, and occupancy restrictions.

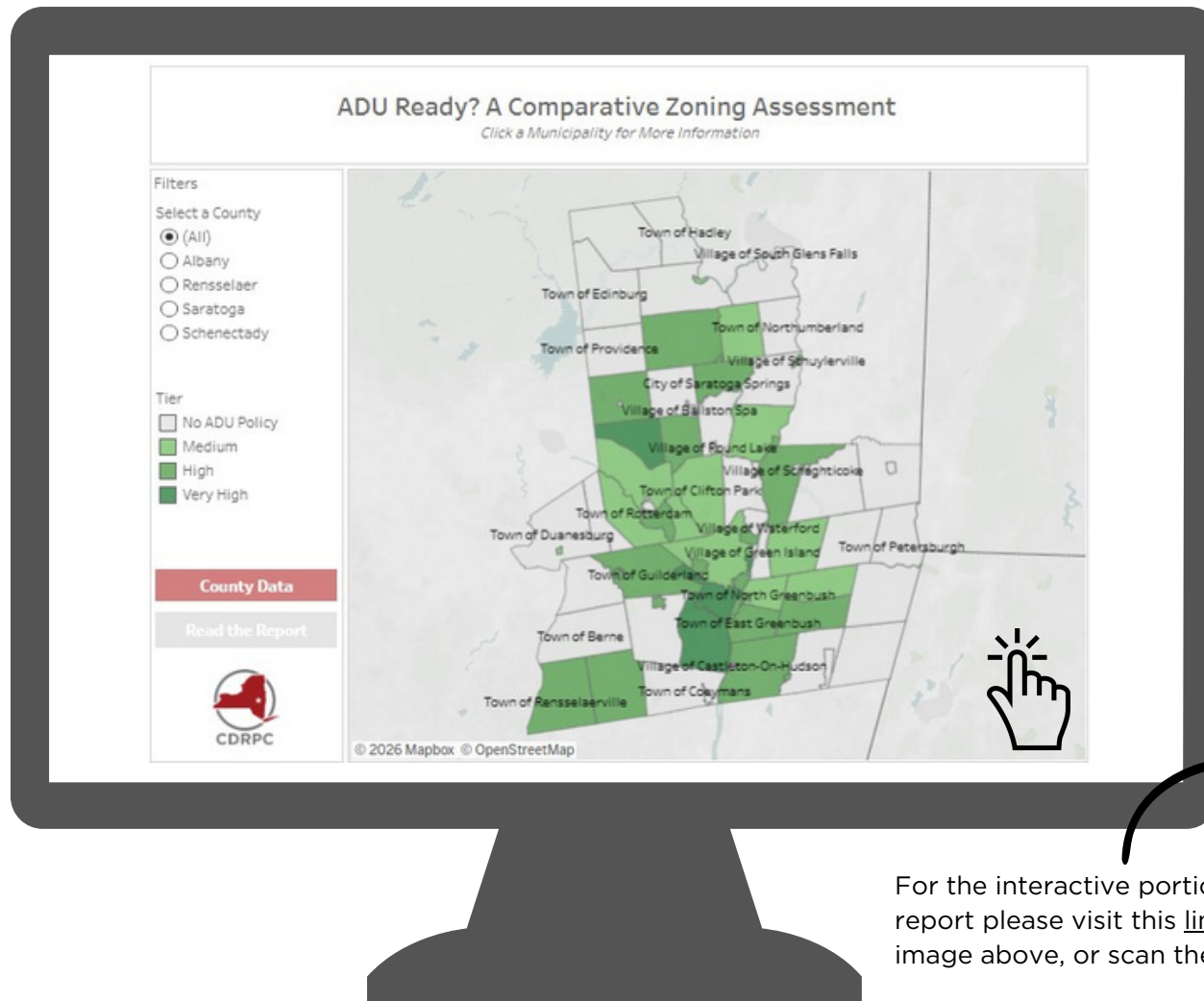
Many communities have created clear pathways for ADU development, while others retain regulations that may limit their feasibility. These differences underscore the influence of local zoning on housing opportunities. As housing affordability and availability remain pressing regional concerns, ADUs can add housing within existing neighborhoods without large-scale development or major infrastructure investment.

This analysis provides a baseline for comparing municipal approaches to ADU regulation and identifying opportunities for policy review. ADUs are not a complete solution to the Capital Region's housing challenges, but they offer a practical way to increase housing supply, support aging in place, accommodate multigenerational households, and broaden housing options for residents across income levels. As communities revise their zoning regulations, ADUs will likely remain an important part of regional housing and land-use policy discussions.



Source: Albany, California

INTERACTIVE TABLEAU DASHBOARD



For the interactive portion of this report please visit this [link](#), tap the image above, or scan the QR code.







CDRPC BOARD MEMBERS



Albany County

Jasmine Higgins
Second Vice Chair

Lawrence R. Schillinger
Willard A. Bruce
Kristin Swinton
Carolyn McLaughlin



Rensselaer County

Mike Stammel
Secretary / Treasurer

Judith H. Breselor, AICP
James D. Shaughnessy
Thomas Choquette
Dan Casale



Saratoga County

Joseph Grasso
Chair

Opal Hinds, Esq
Jason Kemper
Agatha Reid
Craig Warner



Schenectady County

David J. Hogenkamp
First Vice Chair

Haileab Samuel
Gary Hughes
Charles Davidson
Yi-Mei- Han