

Chapter Nine

Housing

Introduction

Housing is a fundamental pillar of community well-being, economic development, and quality of life. In Bainbridge, changing demographics, economic shifts, and a growing population have brought housing issues to the forefront of local and regional planning conversations. Chapter 9 of the Bainbridge Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan addresses these issues by evaluating current housing conditions, identifying gaps in the housing market, and outlining strategies to ensure all residents — regardless of income, age, or family type — can access safe, affordable, and appropriate housing.

This chapter examines the full housing landscape, from the challenges of affordability and aging housing stock to the opportunities created by infill development, historic reinvestment, and the diversification of housing types. It includes a close look at regional pressures, such as Tallahassee's metropolitan expansion and new economic development in Southwest Georgia, that are influencing housing demand in Bainbridge. It also outlines the role of various public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders in meeting these challenges collaboratively.

The chapter begins by identifying key housing concerns and goals voiced by residents, followed by an analysis of local conditions, demographic trends, and market constraints. It then presents a framework for action, highlighting strategies to increase housing diversity, revitalize neighborhoods, support vulnerable populations, and ensure that housing growth aligns with infrastructure capacity. With a forward-thinking Housing Action Plan, this chapter provides the tools and policy direction needed to create a more inclusive, resilient, and vibrant Bainbridge for current and future residents.

Current Housing Conditions & Market Trends

Bainbridge's housing priorities must address affordability, workforce housing, housing options for families near schools, and housing for aging residents while ensuring quality and diversity in the housing stock. Broadening the range of housing choices, from mixed-income developments to townhomes and multi-family residences, can promote more inclusive neighborhoods. Targeted development in strategic areas, alongside policy incentives, can help meet the city's evolving needs.

Bainbridge's housing landscape is shaped by demographic shifts, affordability challenges, and evolving community needs. With a population of 14,234 (2022 Census Estimate), Bainbridge has experienced steady decade-over-decade growth, and projections suggest continued increases. However, the city faces a significant shortage of available and diverse housing options, particularly for low- and moderate-income households.

Housing Demand & Affordability

- The median household income in Bainbridge is \$42,093, significantly lower than Georgia's median of \$71,355, creating affordability challenges.
- Approximately 27.1% of Bainbridge residents live below the poverty line (2022 estimate), with poverty rates highest among Black (35%) and Hispanic (89%) residents.
- Rental costs have risen, with a significant number of cost-burdened renters in Bainbridge, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
- Homeownership has become increasingly difficult due to rising housing costs and stagnant wages. According to a 2024 estimate by Zillow, households now need to earn \$47,000 more than in 2020 to afford a single-family home.¹

Housing Stock & Condition

- Bainbridge has 5,711 housing units, with 70.9% being single-family detached homes. However, many of these homes are older and in need of repair.
- The recent Housing Needs Assessment identified a significant portion of homes in substandard condition, with some areas facing issues such as aging infrastructure and code violations.
- Vacancy rates indicate a tight housing market — 2% vacancy for homebuyers and 6% for renters. This trend may indicate new housing production has not kept pace with demand.

1 Zillow. 2024. "Home Buyers Need to Earn \$47,000 More Than in 2020." <https://www.zillow.com/research/buyers-income-needed-33755/?msckid=3062b0d35d2f6e6e1eb6a5905c336f9b>.

Demographic & Workforce Trends

- Some of largest employment sectors, like retail and education, have relatively low wages, which generally speaking, makes it difficult for workers to afford live near their jobs.
- Only 31.2% of workers whose job is located in Bainbridge also live in the city, suggesting a need for more workforce housing within city limits.²

Future Housing Considerations

- The city's Opportunity Zone includes 5,138 people, and 53.6% slightly over half of whom are working-age (18-64).³
- The Housing Needs Assessment highlighted that a total of 1,104 new or rehabilitated units will be required to meet the city's housing need of 6,098 units by 2042.⁴
- The city is exploring annexation possibilities near Bainbridge High School, which could provide additional housing development opportunities.

2 City of Bainbridge. "Housing Needs Assessment," pg. 12.

3 See Chapter 6 Economic Development.

4 City of Bainbridge. "Housing Needs Assessment," pg. 37.

Key Community Concerns about Housing

1. Affordability & Accessibility

- How can Bainbridge ensure access to quality, affordable housing for residents across income levels?
- What strategies can help young professionals and lower-income households find suitable housing within the city?

2. Retaining Youth Populations

- How can Bainbridge create housing options and community amenities that encourage young people to stay and build their futures locally?
- What role does housing affordability and availability play in attracting and retaining a younger workforce?

4. Senior Living & Aging in Place

- How can Bainbridge expand senior living options to meet the needs of an aging population?
- What policies or programs can support aging in place, allowing older residents to remain in their homes safely and comfortably?

5. Proximity to Amenities & Essential Services

- How can Bainbridge encourage housing development near jobs, grocery stores, healthcare, and other necessities?
- What steps can be taken to improve access to parks, recreation, and community facilities for all residents?

6. Homeownership & Housing Stability

- What barriers prevent residents from achieving homeownership, and how can they be addressed?
- How can Bainbridge support homeowners with the costs of upkeep and maintenance to prevent housing deterioration?

7. Addressing the Unhoused Population

- What strategies can be implemented to support unhoused individuals in Bainbridge?
- How can the city and community organizations work together to provide transitional housing and services?

8. Dilapidated & Aging Housing Stock

- What programs or incentives can help property owners maintain and improve older housing units?
- How can the city address blighted properties and neglected rental homes to improve neighborhood conditions?

9. Protecting Residential Areas from Incompatible Uses

- What policies can be put in place to prevent incompatible land uses, such as industrial or high-traffic commercial developments, from negatively impacting residential neighborhoods?
- How can zoning and planning efforts ensure long-term stability and livability in Bainbridge's housing market?

Key Community Goals for Housing

1. Help transition residents from public subsidized housing to affordable homes

- Promote housing policies and options that foster independence and long-term stability.
- Encourage development of diverse housing choices across all income ranges.

2. Encourage property maintenance & reduce the percentage of substandard housing

- Eliminate substandard and dilapidated housing.
- Strengthen code enforcement to support property maintenance and enhance neighborhood character.

3. Address Unhoused Status & partner with organizations that can assist

- Collaborate with organizations providing housing and supportive services.
- Assess and respond to the specific needs of unhoused individuals.
- Support low-income families in maintaining stable housing.

Policy Developments

Role of Key Housing Entities

While local government plays a key role in setting housing policies, it does not construct most new housing developments. Instead, the majority of new housing is built by private developers — independent businesses that respond to market conditions, financing availability, and local regulations. Private developers are not government entities, nor are they obligated to build housing in a specific location or at a specific price unless incentives or mandates are in place. Because of this, the city's role in housing development is largely to create policies that encourage private investment, such as zoning changes, infrastructure improvements, or financial incentives. Understanding this distinction is crucial in shaping expectations for how new housing comes to Bainbridge and what role the city government plays in facilitating its development.



Figure 9.01: New Housing Development adjacent to Chasen Park

Addressing Bainbridge’s housing challenges requires collaboration among several public, private, and nonprofit entities.

- City of Bainbridge Local Government – The city is responsible for local zoning regulations, land use planning, and housing policies, guiding development to align with community needs.
- Bainbridge Housing Authority – This agency manages federally funded public housing programs and administers rental assistance initiatives such as housing vouchers to ensure low-income residents have access to stable, affordable housing.⁵
- Private Developers and Builders – These entities drive new housing construction, including market-rate, affordable, and mixed-use developments. Local Government can encourage private investment through local incentives such as density bonuses or reduced permitting fees.
- Nonprofit Organizations and Housing Advocacy Groups – These organizations provide housing rehabilitation programs, homeownership education, and financial assistance to help low-income residents secure and maintain stable housing.
- Regional and State Agencies – the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWGRC), provide essential funding, policy guidance, and technical assistance to support affordable housing development and neighborhood revitalization.
- Financial Institutions – Local banks, credit unions, and housing assistance programs further contribute by offering mortgage lending, down payment assistance, and financial literacy programs that help residents achieve homeownership and maintain housing stability.

Successful housing initiatives in Bainbridge will require ongoing collaboration among these entities to expand housing choices, improve affordability, and ensure long-term stability in the city’s housing market. By aligning efforts across public and private sectors, Bainbridge can foster a more inclusive and resilient housing landscape that meets the needs of current and future residents.

5 Bainbridge Housing Authority. <https://bainbridgehousing.com/>.



Figure 9.02: Single Family Housing



Figure 9.03: Single Family Housing

Local Housing Trends & Policy Developments

Recent policy developments in Bainbridge focus on enhancing housing options and improving neighborhood livability. There is also a push to revitalize historic districts and other underdeveloped areas through targeted housing policies. Leveraging state tax credits and local incentives to promote the development of new housing and rehabilitating existing structures is a key component in helping address the current imbalance between housing supply and demand.

Regional Housing Trends & Policy Developments

The potential growth in Southwest Georgia and the expansion of metropolitan Tallahassee underlines the need for regional coordination in housing planning. Aligning Bainbridge's local housing strategies with broader regional trends will enable the city to respond effectively to external pressures and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

In Southwest Georgia, gradual demographic shifts are contributing to modest population growth in certain counties, driven by factors such as lower costs of living, aging populations seeking affordable and accessible locations, and younger persons seeking housing options not available in their current location. The region's demographic profile is becoming more diverse, with a growing number of younger, working-age individuals and retirees relocating from more urbanized areas. Additionally, economic development initiatives across the region, including investments in manufacturing, agribusiness, logistics, and renewable energy, are stimulating economic growth and creating new employment opportunities. State tax credits and local incentives attract new businesses and encourage expansions, likely increasing housing demand in communities like Bainbridge. This growth is further supported by ongoing improvements in regional infrastructure, such as broadband expansion and utility upgrades, which enhance connectivity and make the area more attractive for residential and commercial development.

Meanwhile, the expansion of metropolitan Tallahassee is also influencing Bainbridge's development landscape. As Tallahassee continues to grow as a government, educational, and healthcare hub, urban sprawl and the expansion of its metropolitan boundaries create new opportunities and pressures for nearby areas. Bainbridge, within commuting distance of Tallahassee, could become more attractive to those seeking more affordable housing, a quieter lifestyle, or proximity to new employment opportunities while still benefiting from the amenities of a larger city. Additionally, the expansion of Tallahassee includes efforts to foster greater economic integration with surrounding areas in both Florida and Georgia. This trend presents opportunities for Bainbridge to benefit from regional economic initiatives, joint marketing efforts, and a shared labor market. Bainbridge's proximity to Tallahassee presents a unique opportunity for Bainbridge and other nearby communities to attract residents who may work in the metropolitan area but seek more affordable or spacious housing options. This spillover effect could be harnessed by developing new housing that caters to commuters, including multi-family units, townhomes, and single-family homes within planned communities that offer easy access to transportation corridors.

These regional dynamics are creating increased demand for diverse housing options to accommodate different population segments, including affordable rentals, single-family homes, and higher-density developments.

Bainbridge can capitalize on these trends by promoting housing diversity to attract both local and regional populations. However, this growth also brings competition for resources, businesses, and residents, necessitating that Bainbridge position itself competitively within the broader region by offering unique advantages such as lower housing costs, a high quality of life, and a distinctive community character. At the same time, collaborating with regional partners on shared infrastructure, economic development, and housing initiatives will help Bainbridge maximize benefits and address common challenges. By understanding and leveraging these broader regional trends, Bainbridge can strategically plan for future growth, aligning its housing and development goals with the evolving dynamics of Southwest Georgia and metropolitan Tallahassee. This approach will help the city effectively manage growth pressures while maximizing opportunities for sustainable development and community prosperity.

To effectively align with regional growth trends, local housing strategies should focus on revitalizing underutilized properties, encouraging infill development, and supporting affordable housing initiatives. This includes leveraging public and private investments, such as grants and partnerships, to build new housing or rehabilitate existing structures. Addressing infrastructure needs, particularly broadband expansion, is also critical, as it can enhance the attractiveness of remote work options, further boosting demand for housing in Southwest Georgia.⁶ Ultimately, a coordinated housing strategy that anticipates regional growth patterns will position Bainbridge to thrive amidst the changing dynamics of Southwest Georgia and the expanding metropolitan Tallahassee area.

6 Decatur County and Cities of: Attapulgus, Brinson and Climax. "Decatur County Comprehensive Plan," pg. 19.

Challenges

Affordability Issues Disproportionately Affect At-Risk Communities

Bainbridge faces several critical housing challenges and opportunities. Affordability remains a significant concern, with a considerable portion of the population classified as “cost-burdened,” meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Affordability concerns are particularly significant for low-income households, seniors, and single-parent families due to their unique financial constraints and challenges. Low-income households, for instance, typically have less disposable income, so a larger portion of their budget is spent on essential costs like housing. When these costs exceed 30% of their income, they are classified as “cost burdened,” often forcing them to make difficult trade-offs between housing and other necessities such as food, healthcare, and transportation. Additionally, low-income households often have limited access to affordable rental units and face difficulties in qualifying for mortgages, which exacerbates their housing insecurity.

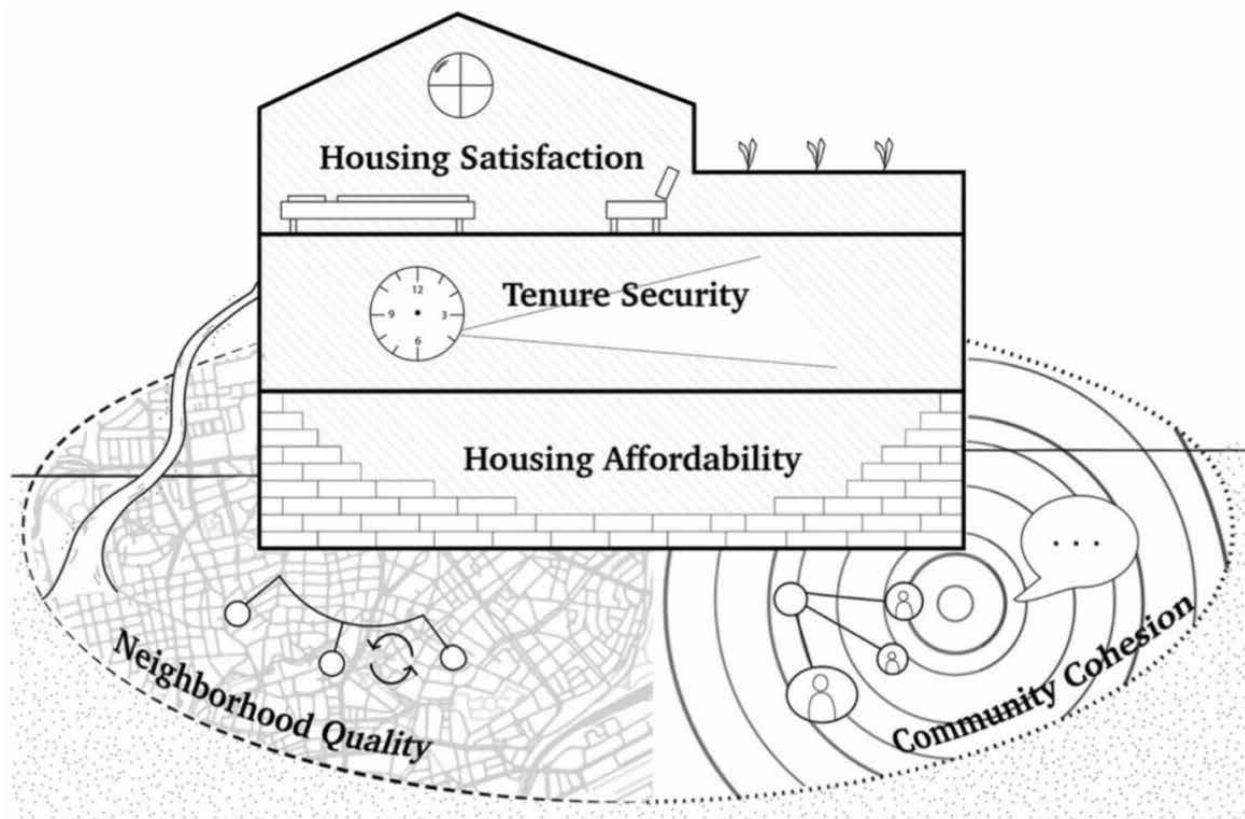


Figure 9.04: Single Family Housing

Seniors, who often live on fixed incomes from social security or retirement savings that do not keep pace with rising housing costs, are also particularly vulnerable. Many face additional expenses related to healthcare or mobility, making it challenging to afford housing that meets their needs, such as accessibility or proximity to healthcare services. Similarly, single-parent families, which usually rely on a single-person income, struggle to cover housing costs while managing other significant expenses, like childcare. With fewer affordable housing options, families may be forced into substandard or overcrowded living conditions, further impacting their overall quality of life and stability.

In addition to the specific vulnerable social groups mentioned above, affordability is a particularly difficult issue in specific locations in the city. West Bainbridge and older neighborhoods suffer from aging infrastructure and high concentrations of dilapidated or substandard housing, deferred maintenance, and consequently, inadequate living conditions for many.

A person's real or perceived likelihood of experiencing an adverse housing event is called housing precarity and may be caused by their relationship with their housing provider, physical qualities, affordability, security, or access to essential services. Five factors affect the security of a person in their housing situation: Affordability, Tenure, Satisfaction, Neighborhood Quality, and Community Cohesion.



Affordability Constraints & Housing Supply/Demand Mismatch

Affordability remains a significant issue in Bainbridge, where 26% of residents live below the federal poverty level. Many households are classified as “cost-burdened,” meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. The challenge is particularly acute for low-income families, seniors, and single-parent households who struggle to find affordable rental or owner-occupied housing. To address these affordability constraints, the city needs to expand the supply and diversity of affordable housing, including workforce and senior housing, continue to focus on rehabilitating substandard units to improve living conditions and available housing stock, and, when it comes to new housing development, increase in the diversity of housing options (e.g., multifamily, mixed-use, etc.).



Figure 9.05: Single Family Housing

There is a mismatch between the existing housing supply and current demand in Bainbridge, characterized by an overrepresentation of single-family homes and a shortage of diverse housing options. The assessment highlights a pressing need for more multi-family units, senior housing, and affordable rental properties to accommodate a broader range of household types and income levels. Demographic trends, including an aging population and a modest influx of younger, diverse households, further underscore the demand for smaller, more affordable housing units, along with amenities and services tailored to both older adults and younger families.

Bainbridge’s lack of diverse housing options may be directly related to the city’s struggle to retain its younger population and attract new young people to relocate. Young adults, including recent graduates, young professionals, and new families, often have different housing needs and preferences compared to older residents. They may be looking for more affordable rental options, smaller homes, or flexible living arrangements like apartments, townhomes, or shared housing, which offer lower maintenance and proximity to amenities, jobs, and social opportunities.

When a city primarily offers single-family homes, even if some of these homes are available as rental units, it can still limit opportunities for younger people who may not have the financial means or desire to rent or purchase an

entire house. While renting a room in a single-family home can be an option, this arrangement may not provide the affordability, flexibility, or independence that younger residents seek. Many young people prefer more diverse housing choices, such as affordable apartments, townhomes, or multi-family units, which offer different price points, amenities, and a more communal living environment. If these housing types are scarce or non-existent, younger residents may find themselves priced out of the local market or unable to find a living arrangement that suits their lifestyle. Consequently, this lack of suitable housing options can prompt them to move to larger cities or towns where a broader range of affordable, convenient, and diverse living arrangements is available.

Furthermore, without diverse housing options, Bainbridge may struggle to appeal to new young residents looking to relocate. Many young people today prioritize communities with vibrant, walkable neighborhoods that provide easy access to work, social activities, and cultural amenities. A limited housing stock can make it difficult for the city to develop the mixed-use, dynamic neighborhoods that younger people often find attractive. As a result, they may choose to settle in other cities that better match their needs and preferences.

Overall, expanding the range of housing options in Bainbridge could help create a more welcoming environment for young people by offering affordable, flexible, and diverse living arrangements that cater to their unique needs. This, in turn, could encourage more young residents to stay and attract new ones to relocate, fostering a more vibrant, dynamic, and economically resilient community.



Figure 9.06: Multi-Family Housing

A lack of diverse housing options in Bainbridge also impacts the ability of seniors to remain in the community as they age. Many seniors seek housing that is more manageable, accessible, and tailored to their specific needs, such as smaller, single-level homes, apartments, or senior living communities that provide support services and amenities

like elevators, grab bars, or proximity to healthcare facilities. While some seniors may currently rent single-family homes, this type of housing often does not offer the accessibility features or low maintenance living that seniors require, particularly as mobility becomes more of a concern.

Additionally, multi-family housing options, such as senior apartments or assisted living facilities, offer benefits that single-family homes do not. These types of housing provide opportunities for social interaction and a sense of community, which are vital for maintaining mental and emotional well-being and combating the isolation many seniors experience. They also often include services that cater to the specific needs of older adults, such as transportation, housekeeping, meal preparation, and on-site healthcare. Without these options, seniors in Bainbridge may find it challenging to maintain larger, less accessible homes or may feel forced to leave the community to find more suitable living arrangements elsewhere.

By expanding the variety of available housing types, Bainbridge can better accommodate its aging population, helping seniors remain in their community longer and age safely and comfortably. This would not only enhance the quality of life for seniors but also maintain the community's diversity and social fabric, ensuring that older adults remain an active and valued part of Bainbridge's civic and social life. Offering diverse housing options supports a more inclusive community where seniors can continue to live independently or with the appropriate level of support as their needs change.

A lack of diverse housing options in Bainbridge also affects single-parent households and low-income communities, who often face unique challenges not fully met by the predominance of single-family homes. Single parents typically juggle numerous financial and logistical demands, balancing housing costs with other essential expenses like childcare, healthcare, and transportation. Similarly, low-income households may struggle to afford the costs of larger single-family homes, finding themselves priced out of the market or burdened by high rent payments. Both groups need affordable and flexible housing options that provide a safe and stable environment without the high costs or upkeep requirements associated with single-family homes.

For low-income and single-parent households, affordable housing located near essential services — such as schools, childcare centers, public transportation, and employment opportunities — is particularly important. Multi-family housing options, like apartments or townhomes, can offer more affordable rents and are often situated closer to these amenities, reducing commuting costs and time. These housing types also create opportunities for building community and support networks among residents, which can be invaluable for single parents and low-income families who may benefit from shared resources, informal childcare arrangements, or other forms of mutual aid.

Developments incorporating family-friendly features, such as playgrounds, green spaces, community rooms, and safe pedestrian areas, are especially valuable. These amenities provide safe environments for children to play and socialize while enhancing the overall quality of life for all residents. Additionally, more flexible housing arrangements, like duplexes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), or co-housing models, can offer affordable options that support multi-generational living or shared housing situations, allowing extended families or friends to live close by and provide support to one another.

By expanding the range of housing options, Bainbridge can better serve the needs of single-parent households and low-income communities by providing affordable, accessible, and community-oriented housing that meets their specific needs. This inclusive approach helps retain these residents within the community, strengthens social bonds, and ensures that Bainbridge remains a diverse and resilient place where all families can thrive, regardless of their economic situation.



Figure 9.07: Single Family Housing

Concentrations of Dilapidated Housing

Bainbridge faces significant challenges with dilapidated and substandard housing, particularly in older neighborhoods and areas with historic significance. High concentrations of deteriorating or dilapidated housing are found in several parts of the city, such as west Bainbridge, Eureka Heights,⁷ and areas south of West College Street. These conditions not only pose health and safety risks to residents but also detract from the overall aesthetics and economic vitality of the community. Addressing these issues through targeted rehabilitation efforts, code enforcement, and public-private partnerships is essential to improving the quality of the housing stock and attracting new residents.



Figure 9.08: A home in disrepair next to a well-maintained home illustrates local disparities in housing condition

⁷ Neighborhood situated in the western part of Bainbridge, near the intersection of U.S. Highway 84 and Georgia State Route 97. This area is known for its older, more established residential properties, and it has been identified in recent local planning documents as an area that could benefit from revitalization efforts due to the presence of aging or dilapidated housing.

These trends and drivers underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to housing policy in Bainbridge that addresses economic, demographic, policy, affordability, and quality challenges to ensure the city can effectively meet the needs of current and future residents.

Looking Ahead: Increased Demand for Housing

Economic drivers, such as job growth in sectors like advanced manufacturing and clean energy, may increase Bainbridge's housing demand. An influx of new residents and workers requires a proactive approach to ensure that the housing supply catches up to and then keeps pace with demand, particularly in terms of affordable and workforce housing. The 2022 Bainbridge Housing Needs Assessment suggests that targeted infill development and increased density in appropriate areas, especially near downtown and along major corridors, can help address these housing shortages. Such strategies would maximize land use efficiency, reduce urban sprawl, and create walkable, vibrant neighborhoods.

Moreover, there is significant potential for reinvestment in historic districts, leveraging Bainbridge's older neighborhoods' unique character and charm. The 2022 Housing Needs Assessment recommends incentivizing the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings to preserve cultural heritage while expanding housing options. In addition, ensuring equitable access to housing is emphasized, particularly for underserved and vulnerable groups. Strategies to promote fair housing practices, remove barriers to affordable housing, and provide support services are essential to achieving this goal.

Economic Shifts

As asserted in Chapter 1, Bainbridge's economic landscape is evolving, moving from a traditional reliance on agriculture to a more diversified base that includes manufacturing and clean energy sectors. The city's economy has been bolstered by significant recent investments in these sectors, such as the \$800 million Anovion Technologies facility, which is expected to create many new jobs. As job opportunities increase, the demand for housing is likely to grow, especially in areas relatively close to these new industrial developments.

Demographic Changes

Demographic shifts are also influencing housing needs in Bainbridge. The city's population has steadily increased over the past decade, with both younger families and retirees contributing to this growth. This trend creates a demand for diverse housing types, such as affordable rental units for younger families and accessible, senior-friendly housing for older residents. The increase in the average household size — from 2.47 persons per household in 2010 to 2.51 in 2020 — suggests a need for larger family homes, while the rise in the number of single-person households, especially among seniors, highlights the need for smaller, more manageable housing units.

The Role of Housing Density in Meeting Bainbridge's Housing Needs

Increasing the variety of housing options through strategic density can help Bainbridge provide affordable and diverse housing while making efficient use of land and infrastructure. Density does not necessarily mean high-rise buildings; it includes a range of housing types, from small-lot single-family homes and townhouses to multi-family apartments and mixed-use developments. Encouraging appropriate levels of density in key areas can improve walkability, increase housing affordability, and create vibrant, connected neighborhoods that better serve Bainbridge's residents.

How Density can Benefit Bainbridge

- **Supports Housing Affordability:** Allowing a broader mix of housing types helps create more attainable housing at different price points, reducing cost burdens for low- and middle-income families.
- **Encourages Walkability and Transit Access:** Concentrating housing near jobs, schools, and commercial areas reduces reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and makes alternative transportation options more viable.
- **Strengthens Local Businesses:** A larger residential base near commercial areas increases foot traffic and economic activity, supporting small businesses and restaurants.
- **Optimizes Public Resources:** Higher-density development in well-planned areas allows the city to make the most of existing roads, utilities, and services, reducing infrastructure costs per household.

Appropriate Locations for Increased Housing Density

Certain areas in Bainbridge are better suited for compact residential development due to their existing infrastructure and proximity to jobs, schools, and services:

- **Downtown and Surrounding Neighborhoods:** The historic district and nearby areas already feature a mix of residential and commercial uses. Adding more multi-family housing and mixed-use developments would support economic revitalization and increase housing availability.
- **Along Major Commercial Corridors:** Integrating housing along Shotwell Street and Scott Street would provide convenient access to businesses and services while promoting a more walkable urban environment.
- **Near Schools and Community Hubs:** Developing housing near educational institutions and public amenities would provide families with easier access to daily necessities while fostering stronger community connections.
- **Near the Riverfront:** Thoughtfully designed residential projects in select riverfront areas could offer scenic living options while maintaining public access to the waterfront and enhancing Bainbridge's identity as a riverfront community.

Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, density should be tailored to fit the scale and character of each neighborhood. In commercial corridors, it may involve multi-story mixed-use buildings, while in existing residential areas, it could mean allowing townhomes or duplexes. By strategically integrating density where it makes the most sense, Bainbridge can create a more inclusive, livable city while ensuring long-term sustainability.

Opportunities

Effective models for development consider factors such as land use efficiency, infrastructure capacity, transportation accessibility, and economic feasibility. By drawing from best practices in urban planning, mixed-use development, and placemaking, Bainbridge can promote growth that balances residential, commercial, and recreational uses while preserving the city's character and livability. The following models outline strategies that can help guide future development, ensuring that new growth enhances connectivity, strengthens neighborhoods, and supports long-term prosperity.

Strategic Locations for Housing Growth

As Bainbridge continues to grow, identifying strategic locations for new housing development will be critical to meeting community needs while maintaining the city's character. Housing growth should be guided by a balanced approach that prioritizes access to jobs, schools, services, and amenities while making efficient use of existing infrastructure. While higher-density development may be appropriate in some areas, the emphasis is on supporting a diverse range of housing options — including single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments — in locations that best align with Bainbridge's long-term goals.

Downtown & Surrounding Neighborhoods

Downtown Bainbridge and its adjacent neighborhoods present a strong opportunity for residential growth. As highlighted in the 2022 Bainbridge Housing Needs Assessment, targeted infill development in this area — particularly along Shotwell Street and Scott Street — can expand housing options while supporting economic activity. New housing near downtown would be an attractive option for residents who want convenient access to shops, restaurants, and cultural amenities. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings further provides an opportunity to blend new housing with Bainbridge's rich architectural heritage.

Historic District Immediately Southeast of Downtown

The historic neighborhoods southeast of downtown offer a strong foundation for reinvestment in Bainbridge's housing stock. Many homes in this area are well-suited for rehabilitation, which would allow for the preservation of historic character while improving affordability and livability. Encouraging renovations that respect the historic integrity of these homes, expanding preservation programs, and introducing compatible infill development can help revitalize the area while ensuring longtime residents can remain in the neighborhood. Thoughtful planning in this district should balance preservation efforts with new housing options that reflect the neighborhood's existing scale and design.



Figure 9.09: Single Family Housing



Figure 9.10: Multi-Family Housing

Corridors Leading to Major Employment Centers

With Bainbridge's industrial sector growing, ensuring that workers have access to well-located, affordable housing is critical. Rather than placing residential neighborhoods directly next to industrial zones, the city can focus on encouraging housing development along corridors that provide convenient access to employment centers. By prioritizing workforce housing in well-connected areas, Bainbridge help keep commute times reasonable for workers while lowering their transportation costs.

Along Key Commercial Corridors

Residential development along major commercial corridors like Shotwell Street and Scott Street can help strengthen Bainbridge's economy by placing more residents within walking distance of jobs, services, and retail establishments. Encouraging mixed-use developments and appropriately scaled apartment developments in these areas would improve access to daily necessities while reinforcing commercial activity. These corridors are well-positioned for a blend of residential and retail spaces, supporting a walkable and connected environment.

Near Schools & Community Hubs

Expanding housing options near schools and community facilities would provide families with more convenient places to live, easing daily transportation challenges and strengthening neighborhood ties. Housing near Jones-Wheat Primary School, Hutto Elementary, and Bainbridge's technical colleges could reduce school commute times for students and parents. Similarly, areas near libraries, parks, and recreational centers are well-suited for housing growth, as they provide built-in amenities that contribute to a high quality of life.

Near the Riverfront

Bainbridge's riverfront is one of the defining feature of the city, and carefully planned residential development in select areas could enhance both housing availability and economic activity. Areas south of the Calhoun Street/Dothan Road Bridge and west of downtown along the Flint River offer potential for future housing development that takes advantage of scenic views while ensuring continued public access to the waterfront. Thoughtful planning in areas near the riverfront should balance residential growth with the preservation of open spaces, recreational areas, and public gathering spots.



Figure 9.11: "Flint River Platform Apartments"
New Multi-Family Housing Development



Figure 9.12: Existing Affordable Housing



Figure 9.13: "Pine Ridge Estates"
Multi-Family Housing Development

Infill Development

Infill development is a key strategy for Bainbridge to address its housing needs while enhancing community character and land use efficiency. The city's prior comprehensive plan emphasized the importance of using vacant or underutilized parcels within existing urban areas to accommodate new housing. This approach aims to revitalize neighborhoods, reduce urban sprawl, and make better use of existing infrastructure. Infill development can provide a variety of housing types, from single-family homes to multi-family units, catering to diverse demographic groups, including younger families, professionals, and seniors. By focusing on areas already served by public utilities and services, Bainbridge can create vibrant, walkable communities that appeal to both current residents and newcomers.

Mixed-Use, Affordable Housing Complexes

Mixed-use developments that incorporate affordable housing are increasingly recognized as a best practice for fostering vibrant, sustainable communities. In Bainbridge, developing mixed-use, affordable housing complexes can serve as a model to address both housing affordability and economic revitalization. These complexes typically combine residential units with commercial, retail, or community spaces, creating dynamic environments where people can live, work, and socialize. Such developments are especially suited for areas like downtown Bainbridge and key corridors where there is potential to enhance pedestrian activity and support local businesses.

To successfully implement mixed-use and affordable housing, Bainbridge can adopt strategic policies and incentives that encourage developers to integrate affordable units into new projects. Tools such as inclusionary zoning policies, density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, and expedited permitting can make it feasible and attractive for developers to build housing that serves a diverse range of income levels. Additionally, the city can leverage funding sources like Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and other state or federal programs to help finance these developments. Public-private partnerships can further support these efforts by engaging developers, nonprofit organizations, and financial institutions in collaborative housing initiatives.

Who might benefit from mixed-use developments in Bainbridge?

Mixed-use developments that incorporate affordable housing could benefit a wide range of residents in Bainbridge. This includes low- to moderate-income families who need affordable housing options close to work, schools, and services. Seniors could also benefit from having accessible, affordable housing near healthcare facilities, shops, and community centers, reducing the need for long commutes and enhancing their ability to age in place. Young professionals and single-parent households might find the combination of affordable residential units with nearby amenities and services appealing, as it provides convenience and reduces overall living costs by minimizing transportation expenses and improving access to daily necessities. Additionally, local businesses and entrepreneurs could benefit from increased foot traffic and customer base that mixed-use developments typically generate, helping to boost the local economy.

What are some potential mixed-use development challenges?

While mixed-use developments offer many benefits, they also present several challenges. One potential challenge is securing the necessary funding and financing to develop affordable units within mixed-use projects, as these developments can be complex and expensive to build. Public-private partnerships and leveraging funding sources like Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) or Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) will be essential, but navigating these funding mechanisms can be time-consuming and competitive.

Another challenge is gaining community support, as some residents may be resistant to increased density or changes in the character of their neighborhoods. Concerns about increased traffic, noise, or strain on local infrastructure could lead to push-back from some community members. Additionally, developers might be hesitant to include affordable housing components without incentives like density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, or expedited permitting, which could complicate negotiations and project planning. Finally, maintaining the affordability of mixed-use affordable units over time can be challenging, especially if the area becomes more desirable and property values rise. Continuous efforts will be needed to ensure that affordable housing remains accessible to those who need it most, and that the mixed-use developments continue to serve their intended purpose of fostering a diverse, inclusive, and economically vibrant community.

Why might mixed-use development be a good idea for Bainbridge?

Developing mixed-use, affordable housing complexes in Bainbridge is a good idea for several reasons. First, it addresses the city's need for more diverse and affordable housing options, helping to alleviate housing cost burdens for various income groups and fostering a more inclusive community. Mixed-use developments enhance community vibrancy by creating dynamic spaces where people can live, work, and socialize, promoting a sense of community and reducing the need for long commutes. These developments are particularly suited for downtown Bainbridge and key corridors, where they can revitalize underutilized areas, attract new residents, and encourage economic growth. By combining residential, commercial, and community spaces, mixed-use developments help to support local businesses, increase property values, and create a more walkable and sustainable environment that improves the quality of life for all residents.

While some residents may be resistant to increased density due to concerns about traffic, noise, and infrastructure strain, well-planned development can actually help mitigate these issues rather than exacerbate them. Studies show that compact, mixed-use neighborhoods reduce reliance on cars as the sole transportation option, leading to less traffic congestion over time as residents have more opportunities to walk or bike to nearby services. Traffic impact studies and context-sensitive roadway improvements can further ensure that transportation networks remain efficient. Concerns about noise can be addressed through zoning regulations, thoughtful site design, and buffers that maintain the character of existing neighborhoods while allowing for gradual, well-integrated growth. Rather than straining infrastructure, higher-density development in targeted areas can generate additional revenue for improving roads, utilities, and public services by creating additional public funding through growing the city's

tax base. Additionally, developers' reluctance to include affordable housing can be addressed through structured incentives that make projects financially viable while ensuring affordability is maintained in the long term. When planned effectively, increased density can enhance community vibrancy, support local businesses, and provide needed housing without compromising neighborhood character or quality of life.

Reinvestment in Historic Districts

Bainbridge's historic district is a valuable asset that contributes to the city's unique character, cultural heritage, and economic vitality. Reinvestment in these areas is crucial for preserving their historical significance while promoting modernization and adaptive reuse. To encourage reinvestment, Bainbridge should implement a range of strategies and incentives that promote both preservation and modernization efforts.

One effective strategy is to provide financial incentives, such as low-interest loans and tax abatements, to property owners who undertake restoration or rehabilitation projects that maintain the historic integrity of their buildings. The city can also explore utilizing historic tax credits, which are available at both state and federal levels, to make such projects more financially viable. These incentives can help offset the higher costs often associated with restoring historic properties, making it more attractive for private developers and homeowners to invest in these areas.

Moreover, Bainbridge can promote public-private partnerships to support the adaptive reuse of historic buildings for modern purposes, such as converting old warehouses or schools into mixed-use developments, community centers, or cultural spaces. This not only preserves the architectural heritage but also brings new life and economic activity to underutilized spaces. Additionally, implementing design guidelines that encourage context-sensitive development and modernization while maintaining the aesthetic qualities of historic districts can help strike a balance between preservation and progress.

Educational initiatives and community engagement are also important for fostering a sense of pride and ownership among residents. Workshops, walking tours, and collaborative events can raise awareness about the value of historic preservation and encourage community members to participate in reinvestment efforts.

Meeting the Needs of Underserved & Vulnerable Populations

To promote an inclusive and equitable housing environment, Bainbridge must focus on strategies that ensure all residents, particularly underserved and vulnerable populations, have access to affordable and quality housing. This approach requires targeted efforts to address the unique needs of low-income families, seniors, people with disabilities, and minority groups, who often face the greatest challenges in securing stable and affordable housing.

As mentioned earlier, for seniors and individuals with disabilities, this could include expanding the stock of accessible housing units and offering incentives for home modifications, such as installing ramps, grab bars, and accessible bathrooms. Providing supportive housing services that combine affordable housing with healthcare and social services is also critical to meeting the needs of these groups.

For low-income families and single-parent households, policies should focus on increasing access to affordable rental units and homeownership opportunities through down payment assistance programs and other financial supports. Additionally, efforts should be made to develop family-friendly housing that includes multi-bedroom units, safe recreational spaces, and proximity to essential services like schools and childcare.



Figure 9.14: Bainbridge Housing Authority

Meeting the needs of underserved and vulnerable populations involves embedding equity considerations into housing initiatives and regularly reviewing policies to identify and eliminate any discriminatory practices or unintended consequences. Prioritizing transparency and engaging the community in decision-making processes through public forums, focus groups, and surveys can ensure diverse voices are heard and integrated into housing strategies.

Additionally, the city should establish clear metrics and benchmarks to measure progress toward equity goals, such as reducing the number of cost-burdened households, increasing the stock of accessible and affordable housing, and improving conditions in historically underserved neighborhoods. Transparent and accountable policymaking will help build trust and demonstrate commitment to fair housing practices.

Policy & Advocacy for Sustainable Housing

To promote sustainable and equitable housing in Bainbridge, it is crucial to advocate for policy changes and initiatives that address both immediate housing needs and long-term community resilience. This section outlines key recommendations for policy reforms and advocacy efforts that will help create a more inclusive, sustainable, and affordable housing environment.

Methods to Measure Progress Toward Housing Goals

To measure progress toward housing goals, Bainbridge should employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data collection will involve tracking metrics such as the number of new affordable housing units built, the rate of housing rehabilitation projects, changes in the cost-burdened population, and vacancy rates in key areas. These data points can be gathered from a range of sources, including local government databases, building permits, housing authority reports, and surveys.

Qualitative methods will complement this data by capturing community feedback through regular engagement activities, such as public meetings, focus groups, and surveys. This approach allows for an understanding of residents' experiences and perceptions regarding housing conditions, accessibility, and affordability, providing insights into the effectiveness of the city's housing policies and initiatives. Combining both data types will provide a comprehensive picture of housing progress, enabling the city to make evidence-based decisions.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) & Regular Reporting Mechanisms

Establishing clear KPIs is crucial for tracking progress and ensuring that housing policies are meeting their objectives. Some recommended KPIs for Bainbridge's housing strategy could include:

- **Number of Affordable Housing Units Developed:** Track the number of affordable housing units constructed or preserved annually, segmented by type (e.g., rental, ownership) and affordability level.
- **Percentage of Cost-Burdened Households:** Measure the percentage of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs, with a focus on reducing this figure over time, especially for low-income and vulnerable populations.



Figure 9.15: Single Family Housing



Figure 9.16: Single Family Housing

- **Rate of Housing Rehabilitation:** Monitor the number and percentage of dilapidated housing units rehabilitated or brought up to code, particularly in targeted neighborhoods.
- **Diversity of Housing Types:** Assess the range of housing types being developed, such as multi-family units, single-family homes, senior housing, and accessible units, to ensure diverse housing needs are met.
- **Tenant Stability and Retention Rates:** Track the stability and retention rates of tenants in affordable housing units, particularly in projects that have received public funding or incentives.

To maintain accountability and transparency, Bainbridge should implement regular reporting mechanisms. This includes producing an annual housing report card that summarizes progress against each KPI and highlights successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. The report should be made publicly accessible and presented in community meetings to ensure residents are informed and have the opportunity to provide feedback. Additionally, establishing a housing advisory committee composed of local stakeholders, including residents, developers, non-profits, and policymakers, can provide ongoing oversight and recommendations for policy adjustment.

By setting clear KPIs and establishing regular reporting mechanisms, Bainbridge can create a culture of transparency and accountability, ensuring that housing strategies are effectively meeting the needs of all community members and adapting to changing circumstances. This monitoring and evaluation framework will support continuous improvement and alignment with the city's long-term housing goals.

To effectively implement Bainbridge's housing strategies and ensure progress toward achieving the city's housing goals, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is essential. This framework will utilize methods to measure progress and identify areas needing adjustment, ensuring that housing policies are responsive to changing conditions and community needs. By defining key performance indicators (KPIs) and establishing regular reporting mechanisms, Bainbridge can maintain accountability and transparency in its housing initiatives.

Recommendations for Policy Changes or Advocacy Efforts

Zoning Reforms

Zoning reforms are essential to expanding housing choices and promoting sustainable development in Bainbridge. Current zoning regulations may limit the development of diverse housing types, such as multi-family units, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and mixed-use developments, which are critical for meeting the needs of a growing and diverse population. Reforming zoning laws to allow for greater density in targeted areas, such as near public transit routes, downtown districts, and employment centers, can encourage the development of affordable housing and reduce urban sprawl.

Furthermore, zoning policies should be revised to support infill development and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, particularly in underutilized areas and historic districts. This approach can help preserve community character, minimize environmental impact, and provide additional housing options without the need for expansive new developments.

Incentives for Green Building Practices

Promoting green building practices is vital to reducing the environmental impact of housing and enhancing community resilience. Bainbridge should establish incentives for developers to adopt sustainable construction methods and materials, such as energy-efficient building designs, low-carbon materials, and renewable energy systems. Offering financial incentives, such as tax credits, density bonuses, or expedited permitting for projects that meet or exceed green building standards, can encourage the integration of these practices into new housing developments.

Additionally, policies should support the retrofitting of existing housing stock to improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance climate resilience. This can include promoting weatherization programs, providing grants or low-interest loans for energy-efficient upgrades, and adopting stricter energy codes for new construction and major renovations. By advocating for these changes, Bainbridge can reduce its carbon footprint, lower utility costs for residents, and create healthier living environments.

Support for Affordable Housing Funding at State & Federal Levels

Securing adequate funding for affordable housing is a critical component of Bainbridge's housing strategy. The city should actively advocate for increased state and federal funding for affordable housing programs, such as the Low-

Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. These funding sources are vital for developing new affordable housing units, preserving existing affordable stock, and supporting rental assistance programs.

To strengthen advocacy efforts, Bainbridge should collaborate with regional partners, such as other municipalities, housing authorities, and non-profit organizations, to form a unified voice in pushing for more robust affordable housing funding. The city can also engage with state and federal legislators to highlight local housing challenges and advocate for policies that address these needs, such as increasing the allocation of tax credits for affordable housing projects or expanding eligibility for federal housing subsidies.

Regional Coordination & Integration

To align its housing strategies with regional efforts, Bainbridge should adopt a collaborative approach that involves active participation in regional planning initiatives and partnerships with neighboring municipalities, regional planning commissions, and economic development organizations. This coordination can help Bainbridge tap into broader resources, share best practices, and advocate for common regional priorities, such as infrastructure investments and housing affordability programs.

One effective method for regional alignment is to participate in regional housing studies and market assessments that provide insights into shared challenges and opportunities. By understanding broader housing trends, Bainbridge can tailor its local policies to complement regional efforts, such as focusing on housing types that are undersupplied in the region or prioritizing areas for development that align with regional growth corridors.

Bainbridge can also collaborate on regional infrastructure projects, such as expanding the regional public transit system to focus on shorter, local trips; improving road connectivity; and enhancing utilities like water and broadband access. These initiatives not only support housing development but also foster economic growth and improve quality of life across the region. Additionally, establishing regional housing task forces or working groups can facilitate ongoing dialogue, coordinate policy responses, and ensure that housing efforts are integrated across municipalities.

Lastly, Bainbridge should advocate for regional funding opportunities, such as grants or state and federal programs that support collaborative housing and economic development initiatives. By presenting a unified regional case for funding, Bainbridge and its partners can enhance their competitiveness for resources and attract investment that benefits the entire region.

By focusing on regional coordination and integration, Bainbridge can position itself to respond effectively to broader economic and housing trends, leverage shared resources, and ensure that its local housing policies contribute to a more resilient and inclusive regional economy.

Housing Action Plan

The Housing Action Plan for Bainbridge is designed to address affordability, diversify the housing stock, improve housing conditions, and align residential development with infrastructure capacity and community needs. The plan focuses on targeted initiatives that promote long-term stability, equitable growth, and economic vitality.

Housing Goals & Recommendations

1. Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities

- 1.1: Increase the supply of affordable housing through incentives such as tax credits, density bonuses, and public-private partnerships.
- 1.2: Support the development of mixed-income housing projects that integrate affordable and market-rate units.
- 1.3: Leverage state and federal programs like Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to fund new affordable housing.
- 1.4: Strengthen rental assistance programs to support cost-burdened households.

2. Encourage Infill Development and Revitalization

- 2.1: Identify vacant and underutilized properties for redevelopment to create new housing without contributing to sprawl.
- 2.2: Streamline the permitting process for infill development to encourage investment in underdeveloped areas.
- 2.3: Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings for housing while preserving community character.
- 2.4: Expand code enforcement to prevent housing deterioration and improve neighborhood aesthetics.

3. Strengthen Workforce and Middle-Income Housing

- 3.1: Encourage the development of workforce housing near employment centers to reduce commute times and transportation costs.
- 3.2: Partner with employers to explore employer-assisted housing programs for essential workers.
- 3.3: Support zoning updates that allow for a broader range of housing types, including duplexes, townhomes, and small-scale multi-family developments.

4. Support Homeownership and Housing Stability

- 4.1: Expand down payment assistance programs to help first-time homebuyers access the housing market.
- 4.2: Provide financial literacy and homeownership education programs to support sustainable homeownership.
- 4.3: Develop initiatives to assist homeowners with maintenance costs, including grants or low-interest loans for home repairs.

5. Improve Senior Housing and Aging-in-Place Options

- 5.1: Encourage the development of accessible senior housing options, including independent living, assisted living, and age-friendly communities.
- 5.2: Provide incentives for home modifications that allow seniors to safely age in place.
- 5.3: Expand partnerships with service providers to support older residents with housing-related needs.

6. Address Homelessness and Housing Insecurity

- 6.1: Partner with nonprofit organizations to expand transitional and supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- 6.2: Develop an action plan for addressing homelessness through outreach, case management, and wraparound services.
- 6.3: Strengthen coordination between housing programs and workforce development services to create pathways to long-term stability.

7. Ensure Housing Growth Aligns with Infrastructure Capacity

- 7.1: Conduct infrastructure assessments to determine the feasibility of residential development in targeted growth areas.
- 7.2: Prioritize investments in roads, utilities, and public services to support new housing development.
- 7.3: Promote sustainable building practices that reduce infrastructure demands and environmental impact.

