

HOUSING

The provision of an adequate mix of appropriate housing stock is a critical component to consider when planning for a healthy community. This section is designed to examine conditions related to housing stock in the Houston County planning area. The adequacy and suitability of the area's housing stock to serve the community's current and future needs is analyzed and evaluated through a comprehensive inventory of the following characteristics: housing types and mix, condition and occupancy, cost of housing, cost-burdened households, special housing needs, and jobs-housing balance. In developing the figures, the entire planning area was considered as a whole. References to Houston County in this section signify both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Additionally, where applicable, pertinent information consistent with the Consolidated Plan prepared for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is referenced.

HOUSING TYPES AND MIX

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a housing unit as a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters, or if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, total housing units in Houston County increased between 1980 and 2000 from 27,397 to 44,509 (an increase of approximately 38%).

During the 1980-2000 period, the housing sector that experienced the largest growth was single units (detached), rising from 19,073 in 1980 to 29,298 in 2000. This category comprised 65.8% of total housing units in Houston County in 2000. Housing with 3 to 9 units also experienced a sizable percentage increase during the 1980 to 2000 period. During this period, housing with 3 to 9 units increased from 1,544 to 3,917 (5.6% in 1980 to 8.8% in 2000). Interestingly, the only category to experience a decrease from 1980 to 2000 was housing with 20 to 49 units. This category went from 607 units in 1980 to 454 in 2000. The mobile home or trailer segment increased from 2,450 in 1980 to 5,732 in 2000, a demonstrated increase of 57%. The single unit (detached) and mobile home or trailer segments comprised 78.7% of total housing units in Houston County in 2000.

Table H.1 depicts the total numbers of the various types of housing found in Houston County planning area for the Census years 1980, 1990, and 2000.

Table H. 1

Types of Housing (Numbers)			
Category	1980	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	27,397	34,785	44,509
Single Units (detached)	19,073	22,023	29,298
Single Units (attached)	1,395	1,797	2,162
Double Units	1,136	1,142	1,164
3 to 9 Units	1,544	3,858	3,917
10 to 19 Units	556	1,188	1,040
20 to 49 Units	607	210	454
50 or more Units	632	76	718
Mobile Home or Trailer	2,450	4,193	5,732
All Other	4	298	24

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Overall, Houston County planning area appears to possess an adequate mix of housing types and is witnessing an increasing trend towards construction of single-family and multi-family homes. According to the 2004 Georgia County Guide, in 2001 Houston County issued 1,516 single-family building permits. This represented the highest in the Middle Georgia RDC service area and was also the highest ratio of permits to residents (13.7 per 1,000 resident population). This single-family trend continues in 2005 and is evident by the many new sub-divisions, such as Houston Springs Resort and Manchester Place, which have recently been developed throughout the county and its municipalities. Similarly, in 2001 Houston County issued permits for almost 70% of the multi-family units (534) in the RDC service area and again had the highest ratio of units to residents (4.8 per 1,000 resident population) for this category in the area. It should be noted that an upsurge in home building activity is often an indication that the existing housing stock is not sufficient to meet community demand.

Apartment units, on the other hand, appear to be decreasing as a percentage of the overall housing stock in Houston County. From 1980 to 2000, housing categories 20 to 49 units, and 50 or more units both experienced a notable decrease in percentage. The 20 to 49 unit category went from 2.2% to 1%, and the 50 or more units category went from 2.3 % to 1.6%. The only apartment category to increase in percentage of overall housing was the 3

to 9 unit category, going from 5.6% in 1980 to 8.8% in 2000. Table H.2 reflects the percentages of housing types in Houston County for the Census years 1980, 1990, and 2000.

Table H. 2

Types of Housing (Percent)			
Category	1980	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Single Units (detached)	69.6%	63.3%	65.8%
Single Units (attached)	5.1%	5.2%	4.9%
Double Units	4.1%	3.3%	2.6%
3 to 9 Units	5.6%	11.1%	8.8%
10 to 19 Units	2.0%	3.4%	2.3%
20 to 49 Units	2.2%	0.6%	1.0%
50 or more Units	2.3%	0.2%	1.6%
Mobile Home or Trailer	8.9%	12.1%	12.9%
All Other	0.0%	0.9%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Another category experiencing a notable increase in percent of overall housing in Houston County is the mobile home or trailer category. This category grew from 8.9% in 1980 to 12.9% in 2000. Next to single units (detached), mobile homes/trailers was the category with the second largest percentage of housing stock in Houston County in 2000. There are several possible reasons for the increased popularity of mobile/manufactured homes; a primary one is cost. Mobile/manufactured housing is substantially less expensive to produce and can be easier to finance.

Generally speaking, housing can often serve as an indicator of the economic condition of a community. In times of healthy growth, the housing stock will grow rapidly, but will tend to drop off in leaner times. The housing market in Houston County is heavily influenced by events driven by Robins Air Force Base (RAFB), the county's as well as the region's largest employer. As a result of this unique community characteristic the housing market continues to fluctuate as the population continues to grow due to increased missions at RAFB. Additionally, it is anticipated that the housing market will continue to grow as long as the Base remains viable and new economic development activities continue throughout the county and the region. The fact that RAFB fared well

during the recent round of Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closures process has imparted a sense of community confidence in this regard.

CONDITION AND OCCUPANCY

Age and Condition

Since housing units deteriorate with age, date of construction is sometimes used as an indicator of the condition or quality of a community's housing stock. In particular, housing units greater than 40 years old can often be in need of major repairs. According to U.S. Census, Houston County had a total of 40,911 occupied housing units in 2000, with well over half (65.9%) of the occupied units in Houston County having been built between 1950 and 1989.

The Houston County area appears to have experienced a housing boom between 1995 and March of 2000, with 7,557 housing units being constructed during these years. It is noteworthy that in less than five years time over 18% of Houston County's occupied housing stock was constructed. Census data also indicates that the number of occupied houses built before 1939 decreased slightly in Houston County between 1990 and 2000. This is due to attrition of these resources. In 1990, there were 561 housing units in Houston County constructed in 1939 or earlier; by 2000 the number had decreased to 489. Table H.3 depicts age of construction for all of Houston County's occupied housing stock as reflected by the 2000 U.S. Census.

Table H. 3

Age of Housing		
Category	Number	Percent
Total Occupied Units	40,911	100.0%
Built 1999 to March 2000	1373	3.4
Built 1995 to 1998	6184	15.2
Built 1990 to 1994	4634	11.4
Built 1980 to 1989	8527	20.8
Built 1970 to 1979	8444	20.6
Built 1960 to 1969	6359	15.5
Built 1950 to 1959	3661	9.0
Built 1940 to 1949	1240	3.1
Built 1939 or earlier	489	1.0
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census		

While the number of houses built before 1939 decreased in Houston County, the number of housing units with both complete plumbing and kitchen facilities remained stable. One time honored, broad based measurement used, when evaluating the overall condition of housing stock, consists of the number of housing units with complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 99.45% of the 34,785 housing units in Houston County had complete plumbing and kitchen facilities in 1990. In 2000, the exact same percentage, 99.45% of the 44,509 housing units had complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. This consistently high percentage is indicative of both the relatively newer age and better condition of the housing stock in Houston County. Combined with the recent boom in new home construction experienced by the county since the 2000 Census was completed, the Houston County planning area appears poised to maintain a housing stock characterized as advantageous in both age and condition through the 2010 Census. Table H.4 provides a comparison overview of the condition of the housing stock in Houston County in both 1990 and 2000.

Table H. 4

Condition of Housing		
Category	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	34,785	44,509
Complete Plumbing Facilities	34,610	44,287
Lacking Plumbing Facilities	175	222
Complete Kitchen Facilities	34,586	44,245
Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities	199	264
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census		

Owner and Renter Units

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the number of owner-occupied housing units in Houston County in 2000 was 28,026, which represents 68.5% of all occupied housing units and an increase of 6,920 from 1990. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of renter-occupied housing units grew from 11,327 to 12,885, an increase of 1,558. In 2000 renter-occupied housing units represented 31.5% of all occupied housing in the county. The owner vacancy rate is the proportion of the homeowner inventory which is vacant for sale. In Houston County the owner vacancy rate was 2.1% in 2000. The renter vacancy

rate is the proportion of the rental inventory which is vacant for rent. The renter vacancy rate for Houston County was 11.2% in that same year. These vacancy rates compare favorably with the 2000 rates for both the State of Georgia (1.9% and 8.2%) and the nation (1.7% and 6.8%).

COST OF HOUSING

The housing market, like many other aspects of Houston County, is driven to a great degree by the presence of Robins Air Force Base. According to the Robins Air Force Base FY04 Economic Impact Statement, approximately 70% of base employees reside in Houston County with many owning or renting homes in the county (excluding Military Family Housing residents). Additionally, Houston County is home to 10,514 federal retirement annuitants (4,365 military and 6,149 civil service), also owning or renting homes in the county. To a large extent the affordability of housing in Houston County, for residents and workers, is impacted by the strong influence of the high-wage government employment sector.

According to the Georgia Department of Labor, Houston County had a total of 57,321 jobs in 2004. Almost one quarter (24.3%) of those jobs (13,946) were tied directly to RAFB employment. Combined with a significant number of federal retirees as well as over 2,000 Department of Defense contractors who live and work in Houston County, the importance and influence of the Base becomes paramount.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the median residential property value in Houston County in 1990 was \$61,400; by 2000 it was \$88,900. Similarly, the median monthly rent of renter units increased from \$396 in 1990 to \$558 in 2000. From 1990 to 2000 median residential property value and median monthly rent both grew by approximately 30%. With 79.7% of Houston County's resident workforce employed within the county, and with such a large segment of the county's population (both active workforce and retirees) tied directly or indirectly to RAFB, it is evident that housing has continued to remain affordable for residents and workers.

The 2000 U.S. Census reports that there were 17,920 owner-occupied housing units in Houston County with an active mortgage in 1999. This figure represents 76.7% of the

owner-occupied housing units in the county. Out of this 17,960 units, over half (53.9%) had mortgages that represented less than 20% of the homeowners monthly household income. Another 16.6% of the active mortgages represented 20% to 24% of the homeowners' monthly household income. With almost three quarters (70.5%) of the mortgages in the county representing less than 24% of the homeowners' monthly household income, affordable homeownership in Houston County remains a reality. The median monthly mortgage payment in Houston County in 2000 was \$889. This compares favorably with the state median of \$1,039. Additionally, Houston County's median monthly rent in 2000 was \$558, again comparing favorably with the state median of \$613.

COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

Cost-burdened households are defined as those that are paying 30% or more of net income on total housing costs. Severely cost-burdened are defined as those households paying 50% or more of net income on total housing costs. In Houston County, in 1999, the median gross rent as a percentage of household income was 10% and the median mortgage costs as a percentage of household income was 19.2%. These percentages are enviable, but only tell a part of the story. There are still a substantial number of households in the county who are considered to be cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened. To be more precise, 3,528 households spent in excess of 30% of their income towards monthly mortgage costs. Moreover, 2,149 households spent 30% to 49% of their income toward gross rent, and another 1,791 households spent in excess of 50% of their income on rent. Notably, the 1,791 households represented one of the largest numbers of gross rent as a percentage of household income and can be observed in Table H.5. In sum, roughly 16% of the homeowners and 30% of the renters in Houston County are considered to be cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened.

Table H. 5

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (1999)	
Category	Households
Total Households	12,811
Less than 10 percent	857

10 to 14 percent	1,619
15 to 19 percent	2,046
20 to 24 percent	1,549
25 to 29 percent	1,225
30 to 34 percent	900
35 to 39 percent	516
40 to 49 percent	733
50 percent or more	1,791
Not Computed	1,575
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census	

Socioeconomic Factors in Relation to Housing Costs

Among the many socioeconomic factors that contribute to the availability of affordable housing is the size of the household. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, of the 40,911 occupied housing units in Houston County, over one fourth (11,844) are two-person family households. Three-person family households made up the next largest category with 7,691, and certainly worth mentioning were the 864 six-person family households and the 436 family households which had 7 or more persons. The average household size in Houston County was 2.65. Additionally, of all households in Houston County during compilation of the 2000 Census, 1,432 of these were classified as “overcrowded”, or having more than 1 household member per room.

Equally important is the fact that another one fourth (10,690) of the total occupied housing units are non-family households where the householder lives alone or lives with non-family members. By far, the largest category of non-family households is one-person households with 9,055. The majority of these (6,507) are where the householder is 65 years and over. The vast majority of family households (34,404) are where the age of the householder is below 65 years. Tables H.6 provides a reference for types of households by size and age.

Table H. 6

Household Types By Age/Size	
Total:	40,911
Householder 15 to 64 years:	34,404
Householder 65 years and over:	6,507
Family Households:	30,221
2-person household	11,855
3-person household	7,691
4-person household	6,594

5-person household	2,781
6-person household	864
7-or-more person household	436
Non-Family Households:	10,690
1-person household	9,055
2-person household	1,330
3-person household	196
4-person household	70
5-person household	25
6-person household	8
7-or-more person household	6
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census	

Another socioeconomic consideration related to housing needs are those households receiving a form of public assistance or those living on fixed incomes. According to the 2004 Georgia County Guide, there were 3,810 monthly average households in Houston County receiving Food Stamps, and 831 monthly average families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Houston County had 2,426 recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and 15,195 receiving Social Security (9,765 retirees, 2,420 survivor benefits, and 3,010 with disability benefits).

In terms of family income, Houston County’s 1999 median household income was \$43,638 and the percent of persons below the poverty level was 10.1%. Both of these statistics compare favorably with the corresponding state averages of \$42,433 and 13.0% respectively. The percent of families in Houston County below the poverty level was 8.4%. Interestingly, in looking at the percentage of families below the poverty level within race/ethnic groups, only 4% of the families below the poverty level were White, while 7.7% were Hispanic, and a staggering 22.4% were African-American. Equally alarming is the 42% rate of African-American, female head-of-households that fall below the poverty level. In looking at some selected housing unit characteristics of households below the poverty level, 1,288 of these households were in owner-occupied housing units and 2,609 were in renter-occupied housing units.

A breakdown of actual incomes show that 8% of households made less than \$10,000 per year and 17% made from \$10,000 to \$24,999 per year. These two categories represent the households most challenged with affordable housing needs. From an employment

perspective, Houston County's historically low unemployment rate (3.8% in 2004) reflects a strong job market. According to the 2004 Georgia County Guide, personal income from service producing industries, the county's largest employment sector, only accounted for 23.2% of Houston County's 2002 personal income totals. Those industries with the smallest average weekly wages in Houston County in 2004 are as follows: \$200 in accommodation and food services, \$248 in arts, entertainment and recreation, \$334 in agriculture, forestry and fishing, and \$407 in retail trade. While retail trade and accommodation and food services comprise the highest percent of employment within the service producing sector in Houston County (11.4% and 10.1% respectively), they are characterized by having some of the lowest average weekly wages in the county. Again, persons employed in these occupations represent the households most challenged with finding affordable housing.

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census also leads to some additional conclusions about local housing costs and availability. For example, homes had a median value of \$90,800 for White householders as opposed to African-American householders whose median value was \$79,900. Also, home ownership is approximately five percent higher among White householders than African-American householders leading to the conclusion that home ownership in the county may be slightly more accessible to Whites. Age is also another factor of cost-burdened households. Those that appear to be most cost-burdened by housing are those who are 75 years and over. Roughly 20% of this demographic spends 30% or more of their income on housing.

SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

The City of Warner Robins is the largest municipality in Houston County with 44,804 residents according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Because of Warner Robins' large population, it faces the greatest challenges related to special housing needs, but also is home to many of the agencies and resources created to assist those with special housing needs. Much of the information related to addressing Houston County's special housing needs is consistent with the Consolidated Plan that was prepared for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by the City of Warner Robins.

Elderly

There is a senior center in Warner Robins operated by the Middle Georgia Community Action Agency. It is estimated that about 90 percent of the current residents are from the City of Warner Robins. The service provides congregate lunch meals during the week by appointment; transportation to and from the center and from the center to shopping areas; information and referral to community services; health programs (e.g. nutrition information, blood pressure screening,); recreation and entertainment; friendly visiting of homebound or hospitalized seniors; and telephone reassurance--daily contact with homebound seniors. In addition, there is a "Meals on Wheels" program providing home delivered meals to seniors.

According to the 2004 Georgia County Guide, there are five nursing homes in Houston County with a total combined bed capacity of 507. Also, Houston County has six personal care homes with 117 residents that serve the needs of the frail elderly. The Census 2000 reported a total of 506 Houston County residents 65 years and over who were in nursing homes. However; the Georgia County Guide reports a 2003 average occupancy rate of only 60.4% for the community's nursing homes. This disparity may be attributed to personal care home residents being misidentified as nursing home residents, as well as variable yearly attrition rates. A telephone survey of the county's five nursing homes reveals a sizable capacity to serve additional residents. One facility, Ridgecrest Apartments, has 60 units of senior housing that are provided at a reduced rent rate based on income. Additionally, a number of home health care agencies provide nursing, physical therapy, homemaker and adult sitting services.

Homeless

The Salvation Army provides temporary lodging assistance (usually one night in a hotel/motel) to transients needing emergency shelter. It also distributes food, clothing, assists families with rent and utilities in emergency situations, and assists with purchase of medicine when needed. In 1999 the Salvation Army provided emergency rental assistance to 132 individuals to prevent them from becoming homeless. In addition, the

Community Outreach Service Center has the capability to provide separate housing services for up to fifteen males and eight females with children.

International Bread of Life Emergency Housing provides shelter for the homeless. It has 9 beds and provides meals and job counseling. Additionally, there are approximately 25 providers of food or meals to homeless and low income persons in Warner Robins, with most of their supplies coming from the Middle Georgia Community Food Bank. Most of these providers are churches. Of these providers, 18 operate pantries giving away food, and 13 operate kitchens providing meals. In addition, the Middle Georgia Food Bank directly distributes 200 bags of food to elderly low income residents each month. Based on the food bank's estimate of four pounds of food to one meal, that is an average of around 13,000 meals per month.

The Houston County Office of the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS), a Division of the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) administers the Aid to Families with Dependent Children and the Food Stamp programs in Houston County. Food Stamps are available for homeless persons. The office also provides information and refers people needing other types of social assistance to appropriate providers. In addition, the office provides an energy assistance program for low income households; they can apply for funding to assist a family with a child that is threatened with homelessness; and for families threatened with homelessness due to mismanagement of finances. The office can become a protective payee and assume management of the family's finances to ensure that their resources are used effectively to maintain their housing status.

The Middle Georgia Community Action Agency assists households at or below the poverty level with payment of rent, mortgage, and utility bills. There are a number of churches in the community who also assist low income families threatened with homelessness. Also, the City of Perry was recently awarded a 2005 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to assist with the construction of a facility to house and educate homeless women and children.

Victims of Domestic Violence

The Salvation Army Safe House provides shelter for victims of domestic violence. It has a capacity of 24 beds. Many of the special needs persons in Warner Robins and Houston County are assisted by the Phoenix Center Behavioral Health Services. This Center operates several programs and works with providers of other programs in a three-county area: Houston, Crawford and Peach counties. These counties have a total population of 146,928, of which Houston County represents 75 percent of the total, and the City of Warner Robins 33 percent. The City of Perry's soon to be constructed homeless shelter will also assist women and children who are the victims of domestic violence. Also, the Houston County Drug Action Council operates the Governor's Hotline providing safety and shelter information and assistance.

Migrant Farm Workers

Currently, there are no special housing services provided to migrant farm workers in Houston County.

Persons with Mental, Physical or Developmental Disabilities

There is a 10-bed group home and a 2-bed duplex for the mentally ill in Warner Robins, operated by the Family Support Alliance for the Mentally Ill. However, four of the group home beds are provided to private payers. The other six are under contract to the Phoenix Center Behavioral Health Services. The Alliance seeks to move clients from the closely supervised group home to the more lightly supervised duplex and ultimately to independence. The Alliance also offers and operates a life-skills workshop. In 1999, 42 individuals utilized the services provided by the Alliance. Phoenix Center Behavioral Health Services also contracts about 45 apartments for residents of Warner Robins to transition the severely mentally ill back to independent living. Phoenix Center receives approximately 30 to 40 requests for supported housing annually.

Additionally, there are two group homes with four beds each in Warner Robins operated by the Houston County Association for Exceptional Citizens/Happy Hour. The capacity is four individuals per group home, which are classified as permanent and transitional

housing depending on the need of each individual. The Association also operates a workshop, to which report about 165 clients per month, all of whom are qualified to live in the group homes. All of the Association's clients are developmentally disabled; some are also physically handicapped. Phoenix Center Behavioral Health Services also contracts about 17 apartments for residents of Warner Robins who are developmentally disabled to transition them to a more independent life. These organizations and associated programs provide vital services to the community. The demand for these services appear to be increasing. It will be critical that the necessary support for these and similar programs continue to be fostered.

Persons with AIDS/HIV

Currently, Houston has no special housing services available for persons with AIDS or who are HIV positive.

Persons Recovering from Substance Abuse

Phoenix Center offers four transitional housing units for recovering substance abusers in Warner Robins. Phoenix Center also operates an outpatient treatment program in Houston County. In 1999, Phoenix Center treated 932 individuals for outpatient care and detoxification, though some of these may have been repeat clients. They estimate that about half to three-fourths of their clients are residents of Warner Robins. The Houston County Drug Action Council also provides drug counseling, rape prevention training, and operates the Governor's Hotline providing safety information and assistance. Additionally, the Houston County Drug Action Council is proposing to house homeless, recovering substance abusing young mothers and their children, provide literacy and/or job training, assist with job placement, and provide other assistance to reintegrate these families into society as self-supporting families in long-term housing.

Houston County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state, and with that growth come the many challenges often faced by communities that experience such rapid population and demographic change. One of those challenges is meeting the housing needs of the growing community, particularly those with special needs. Analysis

indicates that existing services within the county appear adequate to address the community's current special housing needs. More importantly, Houston County appears poised to further develop and enhance existing outlets to facilitate future demands on these services. Insuring that this course of events does indeed come to pass will be an important responsibility to meet for the citizens and leaders of the entire Houston County planning area community.

JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE

In order to determine whether sufficient affordable housing is available within Houston County, that allows those who work in the community to also live in the community, housing costs are compared to wages and household incomes of both the resident and nonresident workforce. Additionally, an assessment of the county's commuting patterns will help determine whether there is a jobs-housing imbalance in the community. Finally, potential barriers which may prevent a significant proportion of the community's nonresident workforce from residing in Houston County are evaluated.

Housing Costs versus Wages and Household Incomes

As mentioned previously, the presence of Robins Air Force Base is a major factor in the jobs-housing balance in Houston County. To a large extent, the cost of housing as well as the availability of housing is driven by the Base, the area's largest employer. Any addition or subtraction of missions at the Base, and the assigned personnel associated with those missions, has a corresponding affect on the area's housing market. For example, as Table H.3 indicated, Houston County experienced a housing construction boom beginning in 1995 after receiving new missions as a result of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions. The county is positioned to experience similar housing growth, but perhaps on a smaller scale, after the most recent 2005 BRAC recommendations.

Table H.7 provides a helpful visual breakdown of the distribution of income for households and families in Houston County. One of the most noteworthy observations is the nearly 43% of Houston County households that make in excess of \$50,000 annually.

With such a large government employment sector, and with the government sector paying some of the highest wages (see Table E.1 in the preceding Economic section) in the county, Houston County’s 2000 median household income of \$43,638 is higher than the median household income for the State of Georgia (\$42,433).

Table H. 7

Household Income Distribution		
Category	Households	Percent
Total	40,959	100.0
Less than \$10,000	3,155	7.7
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2,112	5.2
\$15,000 to \$19,999	2,190	5.3
\$20,000 to \$24,999	2,847	7.0
\$25,000 to \$29,999	2,672	6.5
\$30,000 to \$34,999	2,830	6.9
\$35,000 to \$39,999	2,691	6.6
\$40,000 to \$44,999	2,591	6.3
\$45,000 to \$49,999	2,327	5.7
\$50,000 to \$59,999	4,566	11.1
\$60,000 to \$74,999	4,823	11.8
\$75,000 to \$99,999	4,664	11.4
\$100,000 to \$124,999	1,806	4.4
\$125,000 to \$149,999	849	2.1
\$150,000 to \$199,999	573	1.4
\$200,000 or more	263	0.6
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census		

Additionally, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the median residential property value in Houston County in 2000 was \$88,900. The median monthly rent of renter units in Houston County was \$558. These figures compare very favorably with the state medians of \$111,200 and \$613 respectively. Houston County also reflects 713 vacant homes for sale and 1,656 vacant rental units in the 2000 Census. The renter vacancy rate for Houston County was 11.2% in that same year. Again, this rate compares favorably with the 8.2% rental vacancy rate recorded by the State of Georgia. One conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that the county’s lower than average housing costs, combined with higher than average vacancy rates, plus above average household wages, all indicate sufficient affordable housing is available within the county to allow many of those who work in the county to also live there.

Commuting Patterns

Once again, the presence of RAFB has a significant impact on the commuting patterns related to employment within the county. According to the RAFB FY04 Economic Impact Statement, over 5,800 Base employees commute from surrounding counties, with neighboring Bibb County contributing the most; 2,210 employees, and Peach County next with 876 employees. The U.S. Census Bureau – 2000 County-To-County Flow Files reveal that Bibb County contributes a total of 8,570 employees to Houston County, representing the largest contribution at 16.1%. Similarly, the largest percentage of Houston County residents who leave Houston County for employment (7.4%), commute to Bibb County. These numbers reveal that a significant portion of the more than roughly twenty percent of workers who commute to Houston County for employment, are linked to the Base either directly or indirectly.

An analysis of various data related to commuting patterns indicates that it is unlikely there is a jobs-housing imbalance issue in the community. With higher than average housing vacancy rates, lower than average housing costs, burgeoning housing construction, consistently low unemployment, and a staggering 79.1% resident employment rate, all indications are that Houston County has a sufficient ratio of homes to jobs.

Potential Barriers

There are no barriers to speak of that would prevent non-resident employees from living in Houston County. It should be noted that the percentage of non-resident workers is minimal (20.9%), and it can be assumed that for the vast majority, decisions for living outside of Houston County are for reasons other than housing availability or cost. Suitable and affordable housing is readily available in Houston County and Houston County and its three municipalities are all active proponents of continued controlled growth and economic development.

It is worth noting that much of the data that was evaluated and presented in this section on Housing is substantiated in the report entitled: Georgia - State Of The State's Housing for Service Delivery Region 6. This report was prepared for the Georgia Department of

Community Affairs in July 2003 by the Housing and Demographic Research Center at the University of Georgia. This following provides a summarization of some of the significant findings as reported:

- The 1999 median earnings and median household income in Houston County were higher than the corresponding medians in Georgia.
- A smaller percentage of workers residing in Houston County worked in another county than compared with statewide percentages.
- The unemployment rates in Houston County from 1992 to 2001 were lower than the rates for the region and the state.
- Houston County had a larger percentage of households in income ranges above \$50,000 in 1999 compared with the statewide percentage.
- The homeownership rate in Houston County was higher than in the state in 2000.
- Homeowners and renters in Houston County had lower monthly housing costs than their counterparts statewide.
- The median value of owner-occupied housing in Houston County (\$88,900) was lower than the state's median (\$111,200).
- In contrast, the median value of mobile homes in Houston County (\$37,600) was higher than the state median (\$33,600).
- Most of the new and existing homes sold in Region 6 were in Houston County.
- The average sales price for new and existing homes in Houston County was lower than the corresponding average price statewide.
- Compared to the state, homeowners and renters in Houston County were less likely to be cost-burdened in 1999.
- African American homeowners were more apt to be cost-burdened than Whites in both Houston County and in the state.
- Houston County had a larger percentage of vacant housing units than the state in 2000.
- Houston County had a larger percentage of mobile and manufactured homes and a smaller percentage of multi-family apartment buildings with five or more units than the state.
- Over the past decade, single-family attached units in Houston County increased at a rate faster than the respective growth in all housing units.
- Houston County issued more single-family building permits in 2001 than in each year from 1997 to 2000.

Residential Encroachment of Robins Air Force Base Environs

In 2004, the Middle Georgia RDC completed the Robins Air Force Base and Middle Georgia Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) which identified potential encroachments and incompatible development that might pose potential threats to public safety and restrict the ability of the Base to complete its missions. The study revealed numerous incompatible uses and encroachment in the Base Environs, primarily residential land use conflicts in the City of Warner Robins, Bibb and Houston counties.

In Houston County, there are approximately 45 residences located east and west of State Route 247 just north of RAFB. These residences have been located here for many years and are considered incompatible relative to noise. Flight activity emanating from Robins Air Force Base may pose a long term threat to the health and safety of these residents. Non-attenuated residential use occurs in the DNL 65-79 Noise Contours. However, housing located in the DNL 75-79 Noise Contour poses a greater concern.

Houston County and the City of Warner Robins are attempting to develop long-term mitigation plans that address this incompatible residential development. Both communities are attempting to identify funding mechanisms to acquire these properties and relocate the residents where necessary. The Middle Georgia RDC estimates that the total cost to purchase these homes in Houston County could run as high as \$2,000,000. The County is attempting to identify and prioritize properties that are considered incompatible under the JLUS noise guidelines and program funds for acquiring the designated properties.