

Growing Forward: Housing in Houston County Communities

Housing at a Glance

- Total housing units in the Houston County planning area increased from 27,397 to 44,509 or approximately 38% between 1980 and 2000.
- To a large extent, the cost and availability of housing is driven by employment parameters driven by Robins Air Force Base (RAFB), the area's largest employer.
- The Houston County area experienced a housing boom between 1995 and 2000, with the addition of 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.
- Overall, housing stock is both relatively newer in age and in better condition in the Houston planning area than in the surrounding area and state.
- The housing sector that experienced the largest growth was single units (detached). This category comprised 65.8% of total housing units at the end of this period.
- Housing with 20 to 49 units is the only sector that was seen to decrease.
- Apartment units appear to be decreasing as a percentage of the overall housing stock in Houston County.
- Well over half (65.9%) of the occupied units in Houston County having been built between 1950 and 1989.
- In 2000, renter-occupied housing units represented 31.5% of all occupied housing in the county. The demand for rental units has steadily increased from 1980 through 2000.
- From 1990 to 2000 median residential property value and median monthly rent both grew by approximately 30%.

Affordability

- In terms of family income, the 1999 median household income for residents in the Houston County planning area was \$43,638 and the percent of persons below the poverty level was 10.1%. Both of these statistics compare favorably with corresponding state averages.
- The percent of families living below the poverty level was 8.4% in 2000. The breakdown of this statistic in terms of ethnicity is skewed heavily towards the African-American demographic.
- Housing costs in the planning area are generally lower than state averages.
- The Houston County area had a larger percentage of households in income ranges above \$50,000 in 1999 compared with the statewide percentage.
- An analysis of commuting patterns indicates that it is unlikely there is a jobs-housing imbalance issue in the community.
- A smaller percentage of workers residing in the Houston County area worked in another county than compared with statewide percentages.
- The unemployment rates in the planning area from 1992 to 2001 were lower than the rates for the region and the state.
- The homeownership rate in the planning area was higher than in the state in 2000.
- Homeowners and renters in the Houston County environs had lower monthly housing costs than their counterparts statewide.
- The median value of owner-occupied housing in the planning area (\$88,900) was lower than the state's median (\$111,200).
- The median value of mobile homes in the Houston County area (\$37,600) was higher than the state median (\$33,600).
- Most of the new and existing homes sold in Region 6 were in the Houston County planning area.
- The average sales price for new and existing homes in the studied area was lower than the corresponding average price statewide.

- Compared to the state, homeowners and renters in the Houston County area 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.
- The Houston County planning area had a larger percentage of vacant housing units than the state in 2000.
- The Houston County planning area 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 the Houston County area increased at a rate faster than the respective growth in all housing units.
- 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 planning area has a sufficient ratio of homes to jobs.

Encroachment

- Incompatible residential development related to noise conditions in the vicinity of Robins Air Force Base poses a concern to the community.
- Houston County and the City of Warner Robins are attempting to develop long-term mitigation plans that address incompatible residential development.
- Prioritization and identification of funding mechanisms to acquire those properties most adversely affected is necessary and in progress.