# Aiken-Augusta Regional Housing Study

SRS CRO
COMMUNITY REUSE ORGANIZATION

KB ADVISORY GROUP

Summer 2025

# Introduction

The Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO) engaged KB Advisory Group to conduct a Regional Housing Study to assess housing needs, challenges, and opportunities across the designated study area. This study is intended to provide regional leaders, elected officials, developers, and other stakeholders with insights into current housing dynamics and a framework for future decision-making.

Through this analysis, the report aims to support economic and workforce development efforts by ensuring that housing availability aligns with the region's evolving needs. The findings and recommendations presented here will help inform strategies that promote sustainable growth and enhance housing accessibility across the SRSCRO region.

The Aiken-Augusta region, which in the context of this study includes eight counties, four in Georgia (Burke, Columbia, McDuffie and Richmond) and four in South Carolina (Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell and Edgefield), presents a complex and varied landscape of housing challenges and opportunities.

The drafters of this report would also like to take the opportunity to give a special thanks to all of the local contributors from across the Eight-County region who have made this report possible, which included city and county officials, local real estate professionals and local business leaders. Additionally, more than 1,000 of the region's residents and workers responded to a survey launched in conjunction with this study which has further informed this report's grasp on the region's housing needs.

Thank you in advance to the readers and users of this report for your consideration and time, who this report may empower to create positive impacts on the Aiken-Augusta region's housing market and ultimately contribute towards better lives for the region's workers and residents.

# Table of Contents

# Executive Summary

## A Call To Action

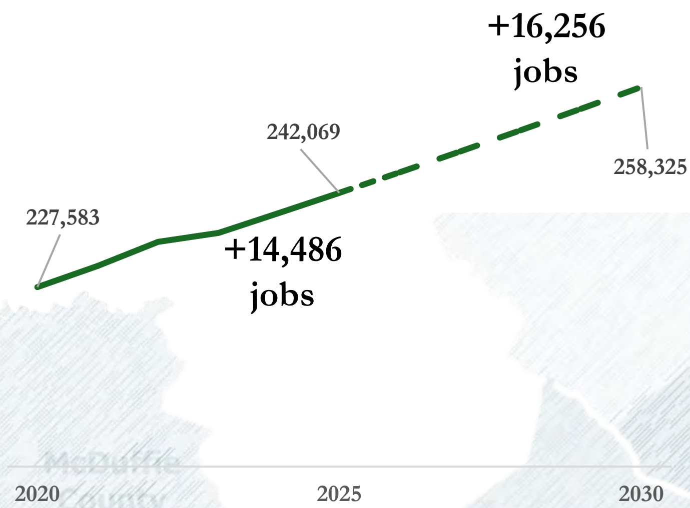

It is estimated that over the next five years, the Aiken-Augusta region will experience **demand for housing that exceeds 17,000 new units.** This level of demand would represent a roughly **43% increase in the region's housing production** were it to adequately address this demand forecast. At the heart of this increase in housing demand is a powering up of the region's economic engine. Significant growth in regional employment has already occurred at Fort Gordon, the Savannah River Site and across the region with the expansion and relocation of numerous industrial facilities and is expected to continue to grow over the next five years and across the next decade. More job opportunities in the region equate to more in-migration to the region, more households and the need for more housing units across the full spectrum of housing types and price points.

**The region's projected shortfall of more than 5,000 new housing units over the next five years is not a problem that will resolve itself. It is also a problem that cannot reasonably be expected to be addressed adequately without regional cooperation between all eight counties.** Housing underproduction, and the resulting state of housing shortage not only makes housing less accessible and more expensive for legacy households and regional in-migrants but also threatens the region's ability to retain its workforce, reduces its overall economic competitiveness and is deleterious to the fiscal health of the region's counties and cities.

It is not sufficient for only one county, or only a few of the region's counties to take action towards solving community specific housing issues, as the Aiken-Augusta region functions as one economic and demographic organism. **When counties in the region defer their housing-related responsibilities, even counties doing all they can to address the housing needs of their community will face externalities engendered by adjacent communities shirking theirs. This can compound existing housing issues and create new problems for those committed to addressing housing-related issues.** All of the counties within the region must accept that they have a role to play today in addressing the housing issues of the region as a whole for years to come. If every county in the region does not pull its weight, then even communities that allow growth may see rising housing costs and even displacement, while less developed counties may miss out on opportunities to retain or attract residents for another generation.

# Executive Summary

### Historic and Projected Regional Employment, 2020 - 2030



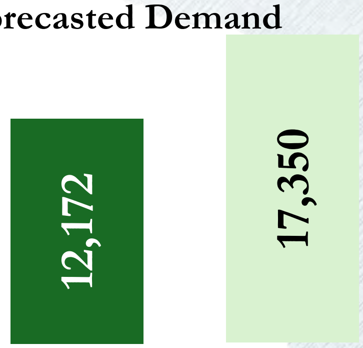

### Regional Employment Growth

Since 2020, the Aiken-Augusta Region has added more than 14,000 jobs, propelled by strong economic development wins in addition to macro-level trends during the pandemic and now post-pandemic period in which the southeastern United States has been a favored region for growth in jobs and households.

Over the next five years, the region is expected to add even more jobs than it has over the last five, with much of this growth connected to projected growth at the Savannah River Site and Fort Gordon in addition to new industrial investments in the region.

**The region can enhance growth opportunities by focusing not just on adding more housing, but on supporting all eight counties in delivering the right types of homes to meet the untapped demand in their local markets.**

### Forecasted Demand




Meeting forecasted demand would equate to increasing production by **43% annually**.

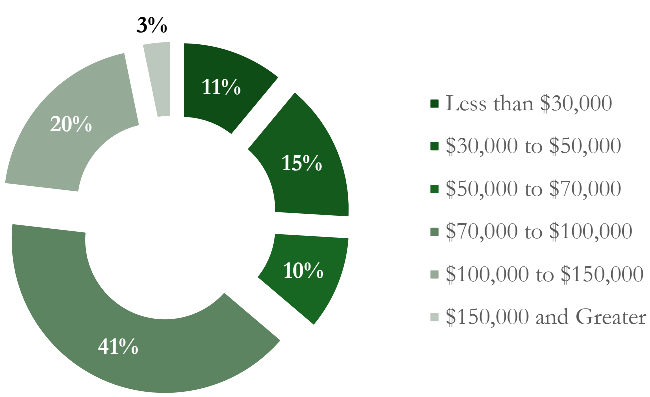
### Fiscal Impacts of Housing

**$48.4 Million**

Total 5-Year Fiscal Benefit of meeting forecasted demand

Over the next five years the region's counties stand to gain nearly $50 million in property tax revenues from delivering enough housing units to satisfy market demand, **which would not be realized if the region's counties continue to deliver at historic rates.**

### Distribution of Forecasted Housing Demand by Household Income, 2025-2030




### Demand Segmentation – Housing for Whom?

**In the next five years, the Aiken-Augusta Region needs 17,000 new homes that are located in the right place at the right price.**

The region's workers are a diverse group, with a variety of preferences and income constraints, meaning that new housing and the strategies used to achieve delivery goals must aim to expand housing opportunities not just at the upper ends of the housing market but across all segments, with particular attention on middle-income earners.

# Executive Summary

## Goals & Strategies

The **goal of delivering nearly 3,500 new housing units within the region annually over the next five years**, which will mean **increasing annual production by 43%,** will be a challenge. In order to achieve this goal, the region's counties and the communities within them will need to implement a variety of strategies to deliver the housing units required to absorb the region's projected employment growth without experiencing market dysfunction. These strategies, broadly stated, include:

- **Increase Development Density**
- **Prioritize Downtown Development**
- **Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure**
- **Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure**
- **Recentering Regional Employment Spatial Distribution**

## What We Found

This is a region in transition. Some places are absorbing growth; others are missing out. But all counties face the same **challenge: how to provide housing that meets market demand, without compromising character or long-term fiscal health.**

**Meeting the challenge represents a careful balancing act** that will allow the region to absorb growth and allow for a sustainable future while also maintaining the aspects that are core to each community's conception of identity.

## What Balance Looks Like

**Regional success will require counties to:**

- Grow without losing what makes them unique
- Build where infrastructure already exists
- Diversify housing types and price points
- Support infill and rehabilitation in historic cores
- Align public action with private development

## The Opportunity Ahead

- **Columbia** must leverage historic successes to strategize for tomorrow.
- **Richmond** must turn jobs into residents.
- **McDuffie, Burke, & Edgefield** must prepare to absorb growth through the improvement of local infrastructure and services.
- **Allendale & Barnwell** can stabilize by prioritizing infrastructure improvements and smart infill.
- **Aiken** must build on momentum with more diversity of housing types.

**The region needs smarter, more balanced growth.**

**Every county, city, and town has a role to play. Every place can grow with balance.**

# Regional Overview

# Regional Overview


**Much of the region's economic activity is concentrated in three core counties – Aiken, Columbia, and Richmond. The other five counties that comprise the region are all roughly equal in terms of the current household and job count.**

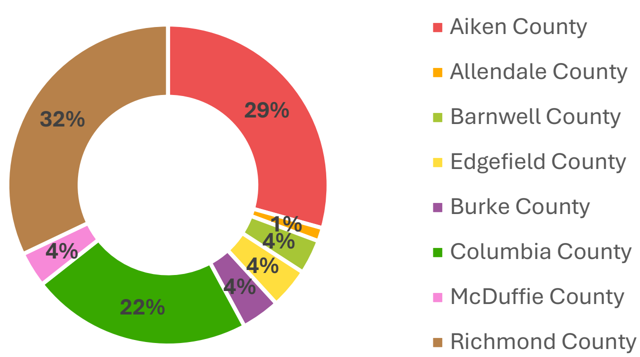
This analysis identified five broader groupings defined by each county's location, economic assets, and capacity and willingness to accept future growth. These five groupings are: Urban Core, Suburban Core, Exurban, Emerging Rural, Peripheral Rural.

This Regional Housing Study highlights:

- The complex links between the Aiken-Augusta region's housing markets and its economic development efforts
- The region's struggle to keep pace with accelerating housing demand
- A county-driven set of strategies that can be implemented to achieve regional goals

Economic development success throughout the region and planned growth at some of the region's most significant employers – including the Savannah River Site, Plant Vogtle, and Fort Gordon – continue to bring new jobs, investment and ultimately new families into the region. The ability of a county to welcome new households varies dramatically based on its infrastructure, housing quality and availability, policy constraints, and public perception.

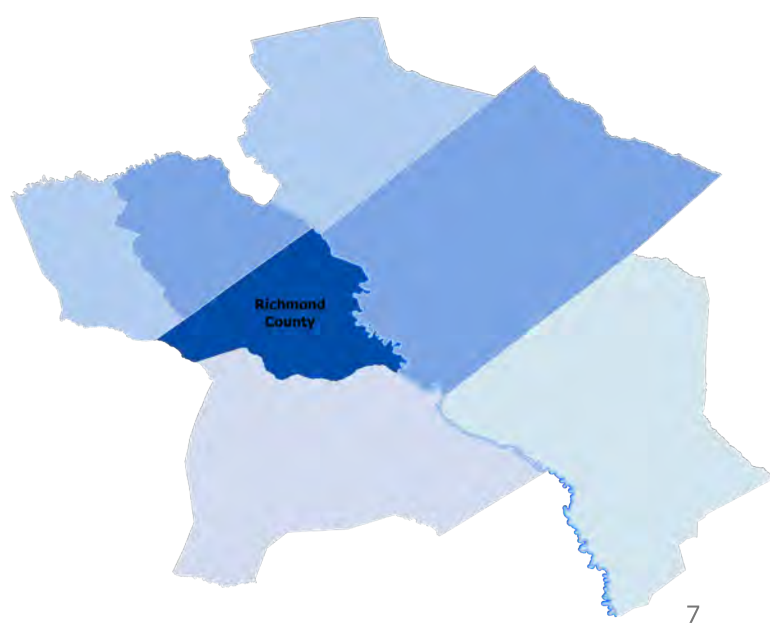
Distribution of Regional Households by County, 2023




## Urban Core

At the region's core is Augusta-Richmond County, which represents the historic urban core of the region and remains day the economic powerhouse of the region.

Augusta serves as the region's center of employment, healthcare services, and cultural amenities. However, despite this status, Richmond County faces challenges housing its workforce within the county, with many middle to upper income workers with families opting to live in suburban counties such as Columbia County and Aiken County. This preference among higher-earning households and households with families stems from perceptions about the county's schools and an aging housing stock that often cannot compete with newer products elsewhere.



# Regional Overview

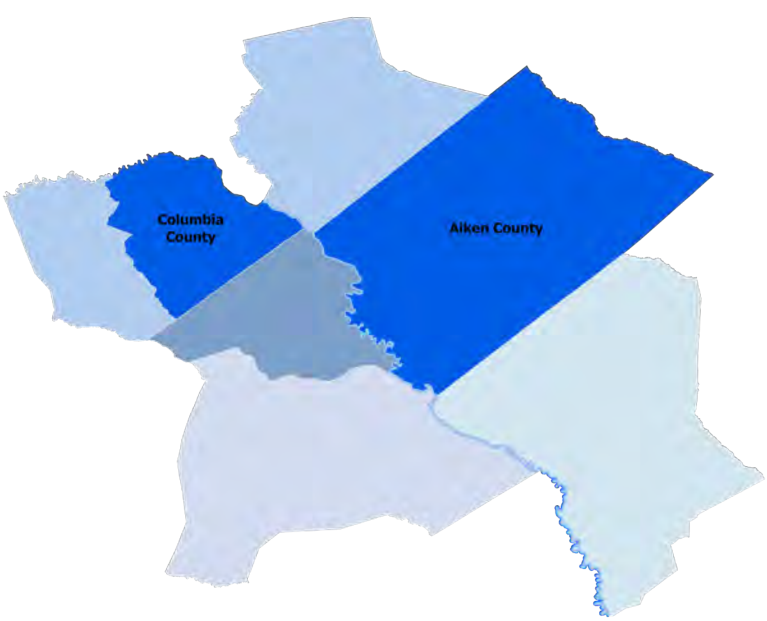
## Suburban Core

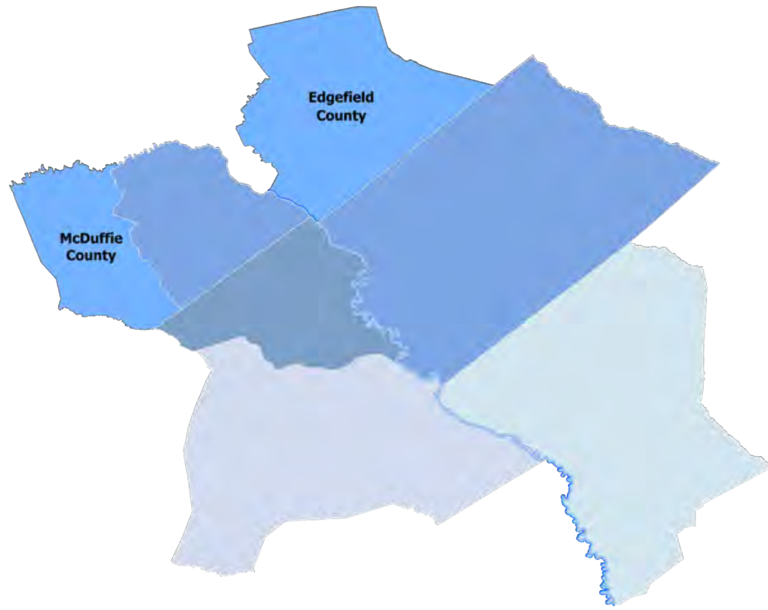
Columbia County has historically represented the most aspirational community in the region, with a reputation built on high-quality schools, extensive retail options, public amenities, and controlled residential growth that has largely been characterized by single-family detached housing products.

Columbia County's regulatory control over its local housing market has become more active in recent years, which has resulted in a decline in deliveries across the housing spectrum. As a result, constricted supply has translated into higher housing prices, which have become unattainable to a large swath of prospective residents. This has led to many in the regional workforce being redirected to Aiken County in recent years.

The increase in development activity in Aiken County, while heavily influenced by market constriction in Columbia County, has also occurred because of the lifestyle alternatives that Aiken County presents to the region's residents. The county recently attracted Augusta's minor league baseball team, the Augusta GreenJackets to a new park constructed on the banks of the Savannah River in North Augusta, and the adjacent Hammond's Ferry development represents a unique set of housing within the region, permitting a high degree of walkability, access to public space, retail and entertainment.

**Key Finding:** Throughout Aiken County, numerous opportunities exist to build off historic settlement patterns to create vibrant, walkable lifestyle centers like Hammond's Ferry throughout the county, allowing Aiken County to offer suburban amenities and services while also meeting emerging market trends, which favor more lifestyle oriented residential options.




## Exurban

McDuffie and Edgefield represent the counties most likely to experience new residential growth pressures in the immediate future. Both of these counties are located along I-20, extending to these communities all of the locational advantages that make economic development efforts more straightforward than in the counties without this critical access infrastructure. Additionally, their access to I-20 places them within only a very short drive from the region's major employment and activity centers, allowing them to welcome residential growth passively as Richmond, Columbia and Aiken continue to grow.

For both counties, there is still a lack of widespread support for allowing substantial residential growth, and water and sewer infrastructure present physical capacity limitations. While there are barriers to residential growth in both counties, both are likely to attract significantly more residential demand as a result of shifts in the region's local housing markets and growth of employment. Should they decide that they want to grow, both McDuffie County and Edgefield County could experience an increasing share of the region's growth.

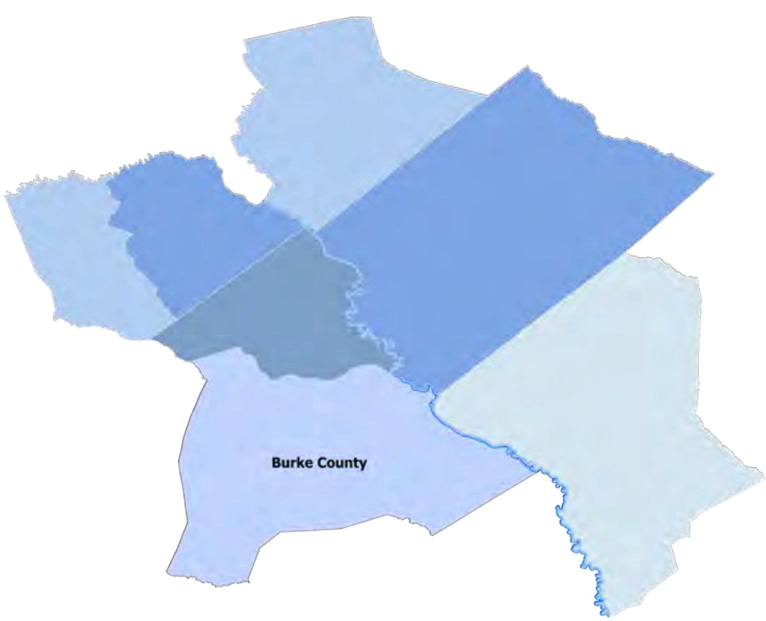
# Regional Overview

## Emerging Rural

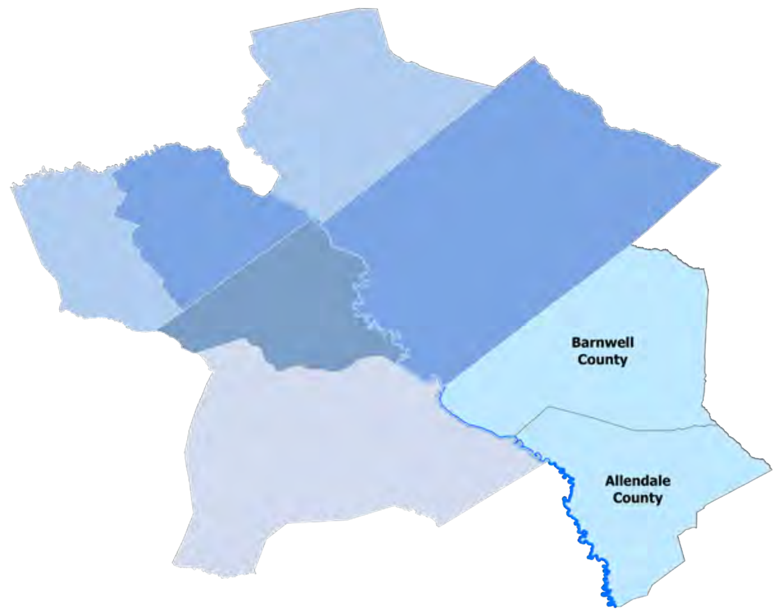
Burke County serves a unique role within the context of the region. Unlike Barnwell and Allendale on the opposite side of the Savannah River, Burke has a major economic driver of regional significance, Plant Vogtle, which represents excellent property tax benefits for the county and high-quality employment opportunities. While the county does not have great access to regional transportation networks, local highways permit high-quality access to the heart of the region, allowing for Burke County's employees to commute in from Richmond, Columbia, and Aiken.

While Burke's economic assets and connectivity to the rest of the region set Burke apart from Barnwell and Allendale, in most other ways, the county is comparable to these communities in the sense that there have been relatively few market-driven residential deliveries over the past five years. Despite economic growth in the county, there are still few community amenities and retail options, school quality perceptions relative to other counties in the region, and water and sewer infrastructure all present barriers to the county retaining its highly-skilled workforce within the county as residents.

**Key Finding:** Barriers limit the county's growth potential over the next few years, and while some new development is likely to occur as a result of regional growth and local economic development victories.




However, demand is not estimated to match McDuffie or Edgefield.




## Peripheral Rural

The two most rural counties in the region, Barnwell and Allendale, face the most significant barriers, including infrastructure limitations, a lack of recent residential investment, and aging or deteriorating housing stock. The lack of connectivity to the economic and cultural centers of the region and limited access to interstate highways means these areas struggle to compete for new housing investment, with economic stagnation and population decline compounding their challenges.

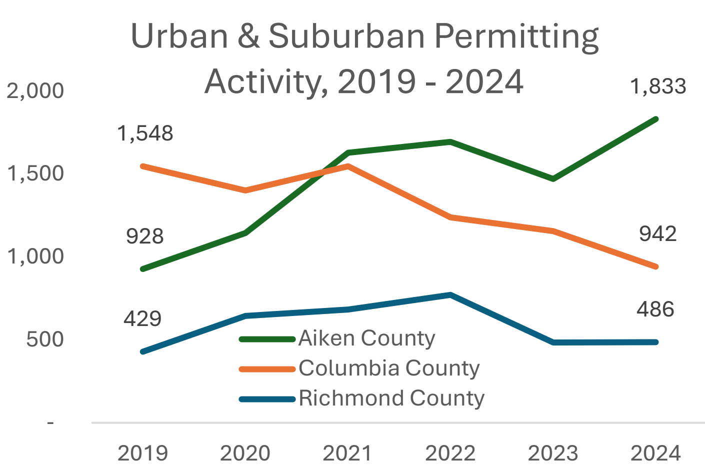
**Key Finding:** While Barnwell and Allendale both face similar barriers, Barnwell is better positioned to receive new residential growth in the near future. Increased activity and employment at the Savannah River Site, which consumes much of the land in the southwestern portion of the county, as well as household growth in adjacent Aiken County both represent positive economic and demographic headwinds. Barnwell can leverage these assets to support new residential development across its communities.

# Regional Themes

## The Urban-Suburban Housing Balance

Within the more highly developed core of the Aiken-Augusta region where the majority of new housing growth has occurred, the housing market is defined by a persistent pattern in which middle- and upper-income residents, particularly those in professional and managerial roles, increasingly choose to live in Columbia and Aiken Counties rather than in Augusta-Richmond.

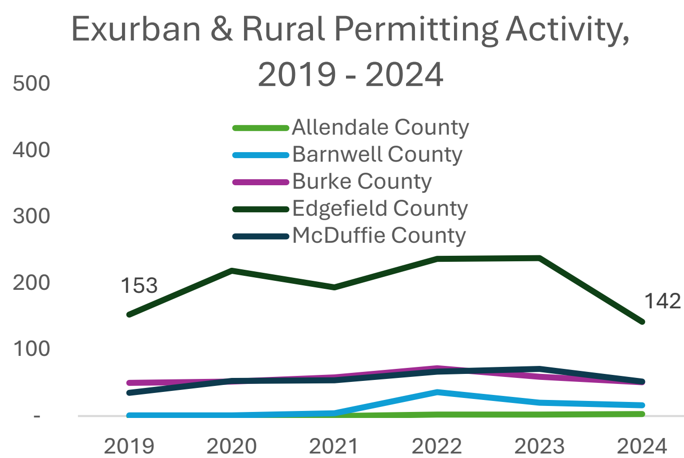
While this shift has reinforced Columbia, and more recently, Aiken as the region's most desirable residential destinations, it has also contributed to rising home prices and limited housing options for middle-income buyers in these counties. At the same time, Augusta-Richmond, despite being the region's dominant employment core, struggles to retain its workforce residentially due to an aging housing stock, which leads to an underdeveloped market for mid-to-upper-tier housing.




*Source: HUD SOCDS, 2019 – 2024, KB Advisory Group*

## The Infrastructure & Growth Divide

While counties like Columbia and Richmond have capitalized on their infrastructure advantages, many other counties, particularly rural ones, lack the water, sewer, and road access necessary to attract new development. Without targeted investment, these counties will struggle to participate in the region's economic growth. Additionally, even one of the county's largest and fastest growing counties, Aiken County, faces certain challenges around addressing water and sewer infrastructure concerns. Infrastructure represents one of the most significant barriers to development throughout the Aiken-Augusta region, and the elimination of these barriers will be central to addressing housing needs throughout the region moving forward.




*Source: HUD SOCDS, 2019 – 2024, KB Advisory Group*

## Policy & Development Constraints

The strongest housing markets in the region are those where local policies encourage diverse housing development. Columbia County is the most aspirational housing market in the region to the point where at times it feels like if everyone had complete freedom to choose where they could live, that they would choose to live in Columbia County. The high amount of growth that has occurred in Columbia County has resulted in a recent shift in zoning and land use policies, which has resulted in artificial housing scarcity in the county, limiting housing production, particularly non-single-family detached housing.

Rising housing costs in Columbia County are excluding many would-be residents from purchasing homes or renting within the county. The implications of Columbia County's supply restrictions are compounded by the elevated demand to live in the county. Restrictions have resulted in a shift in new housing development towards Aiken County most significantly, but also a growing interest in more rural but well-located communities in McDuffie County and Edgefield County.

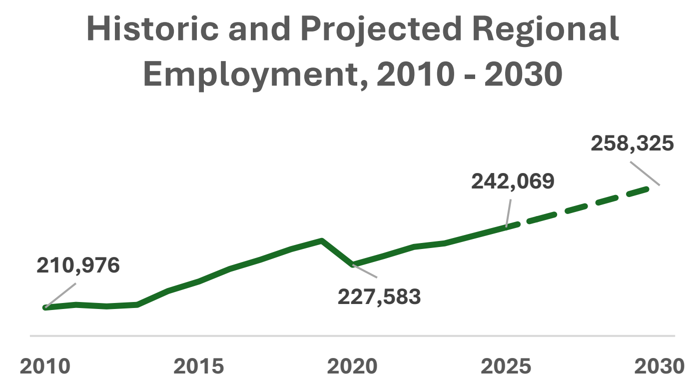
# Economic Drivers

## Employment by Industry

Employment opportunities in the Aiken-Augusta Region are numerous and growing, with a relatively diverse local economy. The top five industries by proportion of the local job market are Health care and social assistance, Retail trade, Manufacturing, Accommodation and food services, and Administrative and waste services.

The chart below describes the region's industries according to three different dimensions, the number of employees employed in each sector, the average wage of employees in the sector and the annual rate of growth that each industry experienced between 2018 and 2023. The region's top five industries experienced at least modest employment growth between 2018 and 2023 except for the Administrative and waste services sector, which experienced a slight decline.

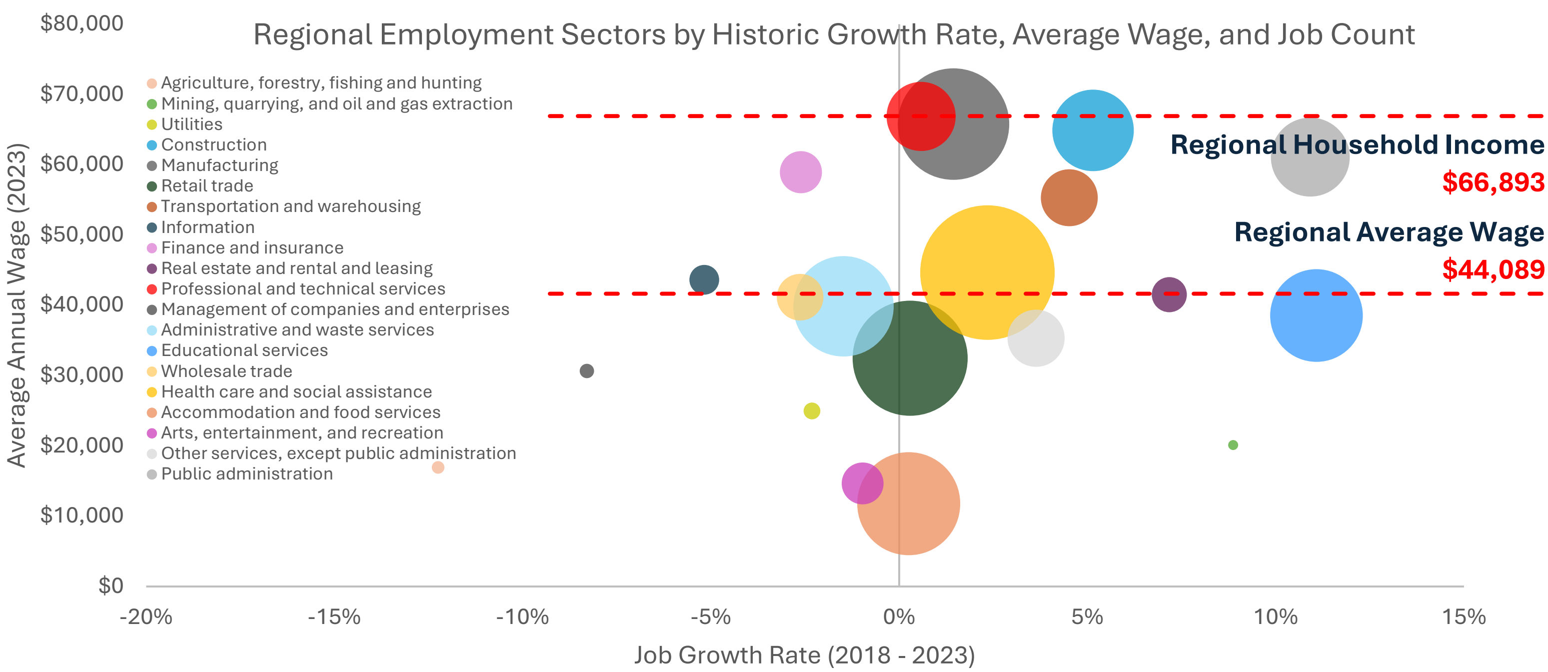
Health care and Manufacturing sectors in particular saw 12% and 7% increases in total employment over the five-year period, reflecting a growing need for services for the region's growing population. An active group of economic developers have expanded the region's industrial base in recent years by attracting companies like Aurubis, Shaw Industries and Generac to the region.




*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall Regional Employment

Regional employment has increased significantly over the last 15 years, with nearly 17,000 jobs added between 2010 and 2020; an increase which would have been closer to 26,000 if not for pandemic-related job losses. The last five years have seen the addition nearly 15,000 jobs, with another 16,000 estimated to be added over the next five years. Many of these new jobs are expected to be created in the Manufacturing, Health care, Professional services, and Information sectors as institutional entities including Fort Gordon and the Savannah River Site add jobs to the region. Simultaneously, economic development efforts aim to add to the region's industrial base and expand healthcare facilities to accommodate the region's population growth.




*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Commuting Patterns

## A Mile a Minute

Within the Aiken-Augusta Region, it is generally accepted that while there may be increasing traffic, commutes are generally short (generally less than 20 minutes) and the length in miles between home and work serve as an adequate proxy for measuring the number of minutes it takes to get there.

The first map to the right shows a map of the region in terms of its major roads, including I-20 and I-520 in orange, with all other local arterials symbolized according to the number of lanes they have. The quality of road infrastructure and the capacity that each route in the region has significant impacts on counties abilities to attract new industry and jobs and also new residents.

The second map to the right shows where employment centers are located within the region. Most of the region's jobs are concentrated in Richmond County, Columbia County, and Aiken County. Downtown Augusta's healthcare and institutional presence, as well as Fort Gordon and the industrial parks located to the south of the county, represent the core of the county's employment base.

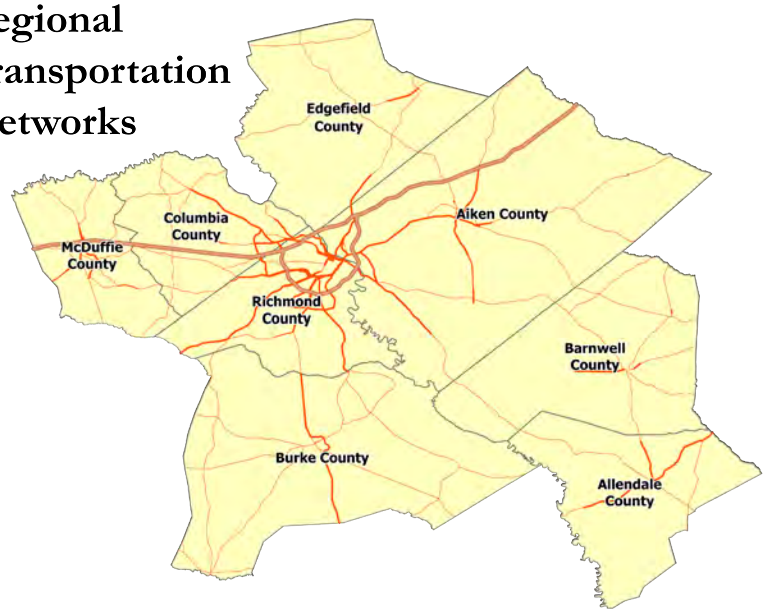
In Columbia County, the majority of the jobs are in the healthcare and retail services sector, providing a great number of jobs, which do not typically offer the highest paying wages.

Further employment opportunities exist in Aiken County, which contains many of the administrative functions of the Savannah River Site in addition to the site itself. Another notable job center that isn't a county seat or incorporated community can be observed in Burke County at the site of Plant Vogtle.

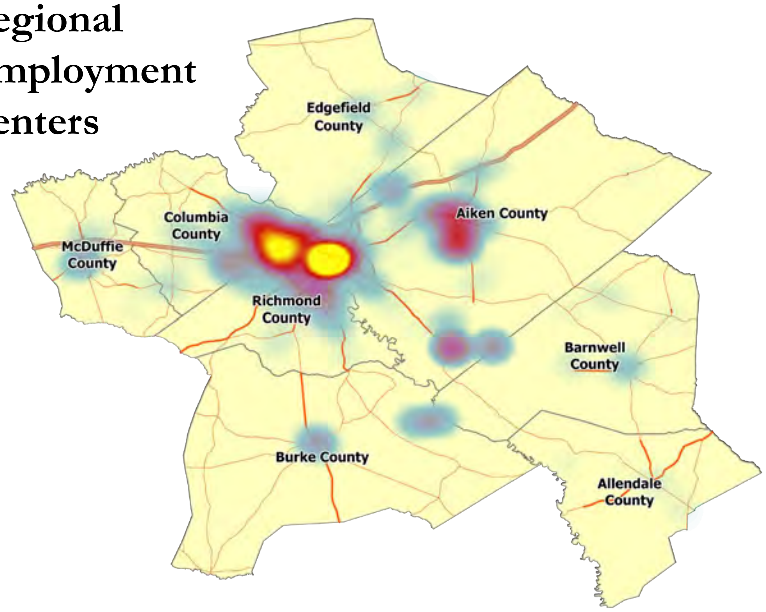
The third map to the right shows where the region's residents are concentrated, with most of the region's residents living relatively close to major job centers in Richmond County, Columbia County and Aiken County.

While there are meaningful concentrations of households located in the established communities of the outlying counties of the region, most of the region's population remains concentrated relatively close to employment centers.

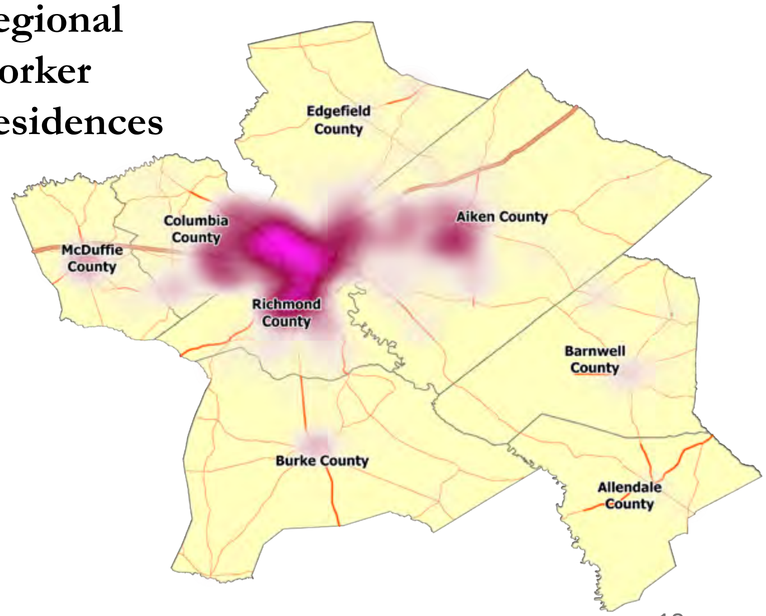
### Regional Transportation Networks




### Regional Employment Centers




### Regional Worker Residences




*Source: American Community Survey, 2022, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers

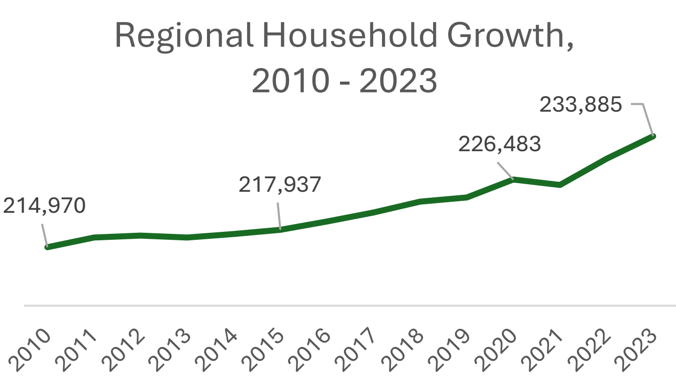
## Household Growth

Overall, the Augusta region has experienced steady household growth since 2013, though this growth has been uneven across counties. While some areas continue to expand rapidly, others face stagnation or decline.

Columbia and Aiken counties saw the largest household increases, while Richmond County, despite being the most populous, experienced slower relative growth. Some counties saw declines in the number of households.

Columbia County led the region in household growth, adding 8,108 households over the decade, followed by Aiken County, which added 5,218. Richmond County's growth was relatively modest compared to its size, with an increase of 2,742 households. Despite this slower growth rate, Richmond still ranked third in absolute household gains.

Not all counties experienced growth. Allendale County and Barnwell County saw declines, losing 261 and 309 households, respectively. Other counties, including Burke, Edgefield, and McDuffie, experienced moderate household growth.

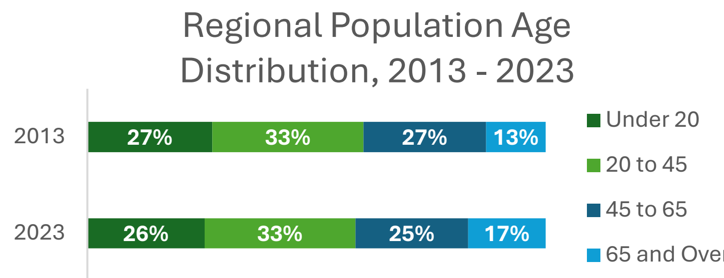


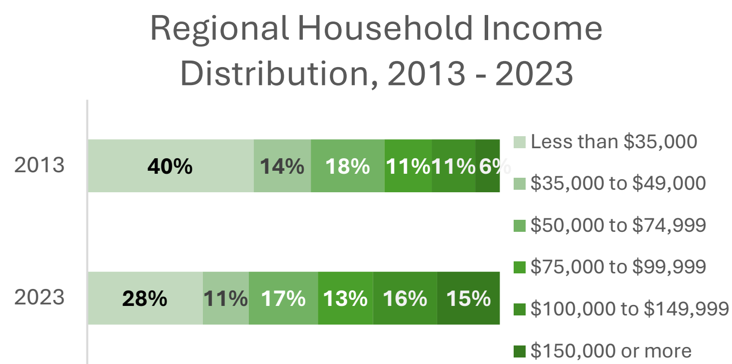

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Age

The region's age profile remained relatively steady during the decade between 2013 and 2023, however small shifts may serve as indicators of larger trends to come. Every county in the region experienced both an increase in population over 65 years old, as well as proportionate decreases in its population that is below the age of 20, with the primary working age population between the ages of 20 and 65 holding relatively steady during this time.

If this trend continues to play out in the years to come, there may be heightened demand for eldercare services and facilities and falling enrollment in schools within the region. A lack of young residents in the region can also have negative effects on the region's workforce in the long-term, with decreasing rates of replacement of workers as they age out of the workforce.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2010, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

The region saw significant shifts in household income between 2013 and 2023, and while all counties in the region saw decreases in the number of households earning less than $35,000 annually, not all counties saw growth in the highest income groups.

The counties that did see significant growth in the most affluent of households were Columbia County, Aiken County, and Edgefield County, where much of the region's growth in households and employment was concentrated across the decade. Burke County, Richmond County, and McDuffie County also saw growth in high-income households, though this growth was not as substantial.

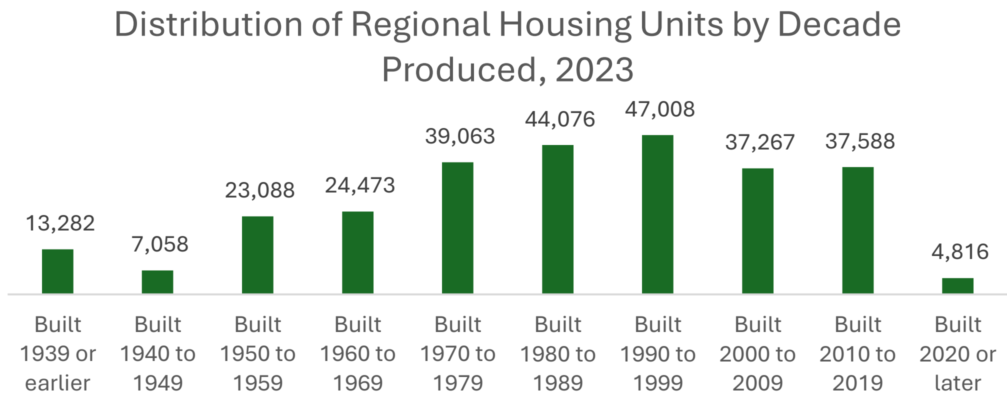
Overall, the period between 2013 and 2023 saw decreases in households earning less than $75,000 annually and an increase in households earning more than $75,000.

# Housing Supply

## Housing Inventory Age

Approximately 40% of the region's housing inventory was built prior to 1980, suggesting that a significant amount of the region's housing inventory may be in need of renovation or replacement where necessary. The decade that represented the most significant growth in housing units within the region was the 1990s, when nearly 50,000 new housing units were added to the region.

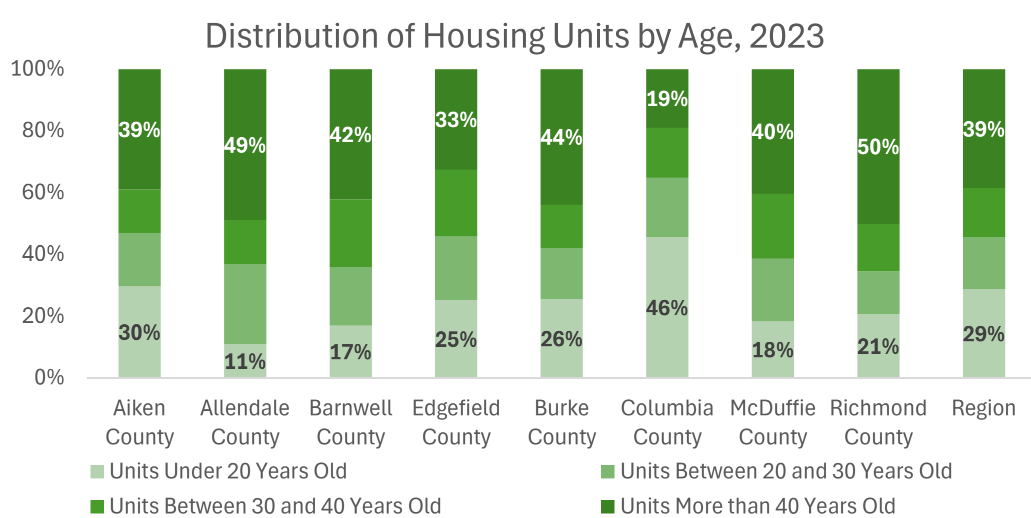
The distribution of housing units by age is not uniform across all of the counties within the region. Columbia and Aiken both have significant shares of units that are less than 20 years old, indicating active housing markets that are regularly adding new units to county inventory.




*Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2023, KB Advisory Group*

Richmond County has a very high proportion of units that are more than 40 years old, however since Augusta represents a historic urban core within the context of the region, many of these older units are likely historical and well maintained, though there may also be significant need for renovation.

Barnwell and Allendale counties, which experienced the least amount of growth in households and housing units between 2012 and 2022 have some of the highest proportions of housing units that are more than 40 years old after Richmond County. These counties also have low levels of units that are less than 20 years old, suggesting that a significant proportion of these counties' housing stock may require renovation or replacement




*Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Tenure

| Tenure Type | 2013 | 2023 |
|---|---|---|
| Owner-occupied | 67.9% | 68.2% |
| Renter-occupied | 32.1% | 31.8% |

The region's tenure split remained stable between 2013 and 2023, consistently at 68% owner-occupied and 32% renter-occupied.

The more interesting take away that comes from examining the region's tenure is the comparison between CoStar's multifamily unit totals and the total number of renter-occupied units in the region. There are far more renter-occupied units than multifamily units, nearly three times as many, which indicated that other types of housing units, including single-family detached units, are rented units.

This trend suggests that unit type does not dictate tenure within the region, and that factors like the purchasing of single-family products by investors and by military personnel, who often retain ownership of properties even after they have left the region, contribute significantly to the region's rental market.

# Housing Supply

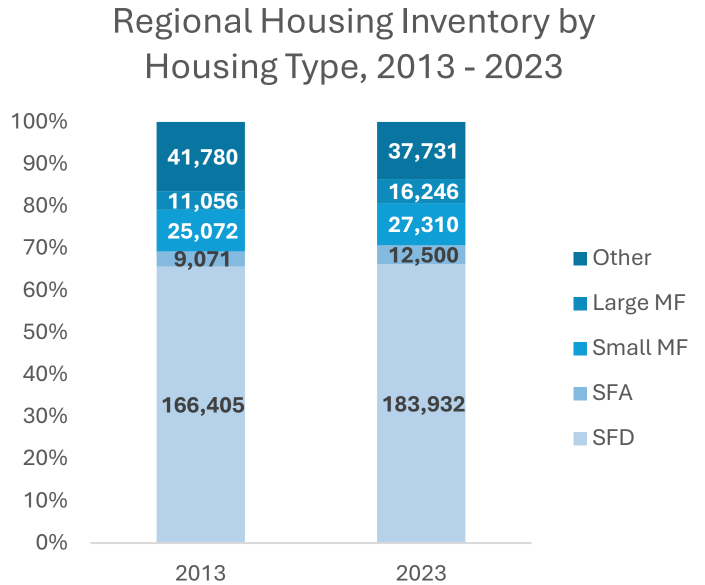
## Growth of Inventory

The region as a whole saw steady growth in housing units between 2013 and 2023, adding roughly 24,000 units at the regional level. Nearly 23,000 of these units were bult in only three counties, Columbia County, Richmond County and Aiken County, where 10,486, 6,245 and 6,138 units were built respectively.

Two counties, Barnwell County and Allendale County, experienced a loss of housing units across the decade. These losses represented a 5% loss of county housing stock in Barnwell County and a 9% loss in Allendale County, although Barnwell lost more total units than Allendale.

McDuffie County and Edgefield County experienced fairly low, but significant levels of housing unit growth, adding roughly 192 and 791 across the decade respectively. For Edgefield County in particular, this growth was meaningful and can be attributed to housing unit growth north of Exit 5 on I-20.

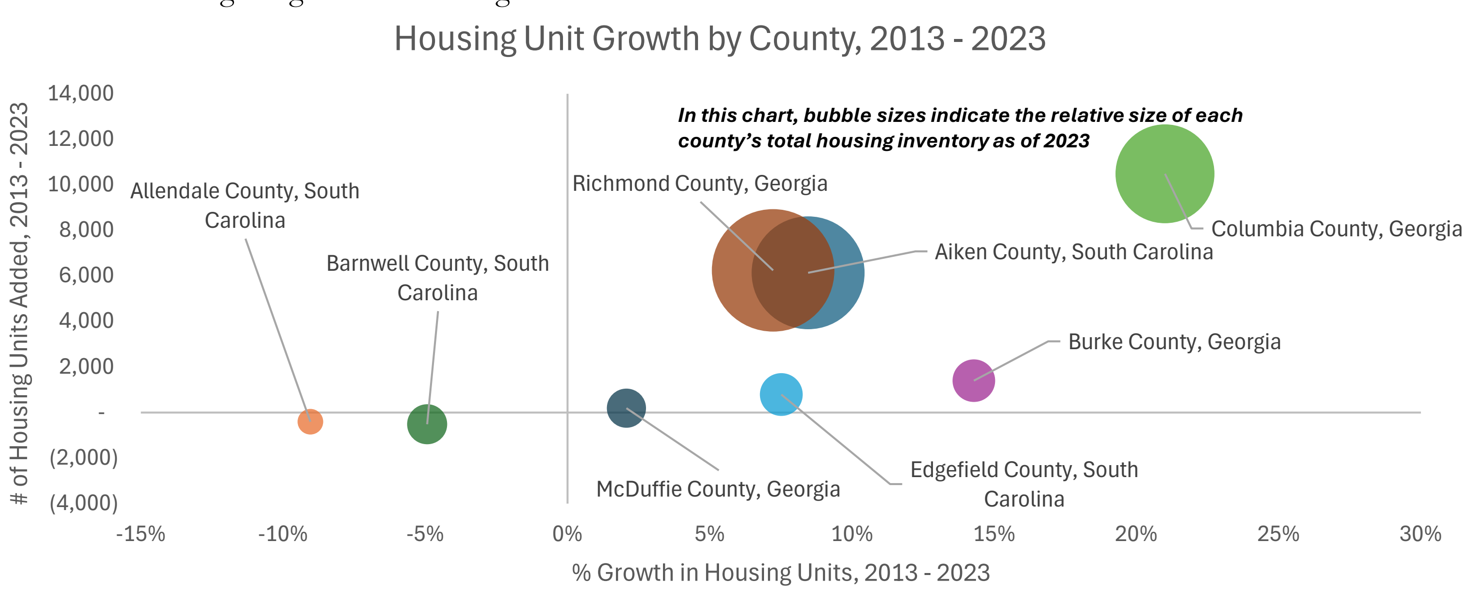
Burke County experienced substantial growth in housing units across the decade, representing a 14% increase in total housing inventory and roughly 1,400 units added. While Burke County's growth was substantial when benchmarked against its own historical trends and against other more slow-growth counties, its growth has not been as aggressive as in the counties leading the growth of the region.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Housing by Type

Single-family detached units dominate the region, representing anywhere between 50% and 80% of individual county housing inventory and 66% of the entire region's inventory. In many urban areas, the decline of small multifamily housing has reduced "missing middle" affordability. In the Aiken-Augusta Region, this trend appears instead in the "Other" category; mobile homes, boats, and RVs. As housing units have increased in growth markets, mobile home availability has declined, reducing a key source of naturally affordable housing in the region.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

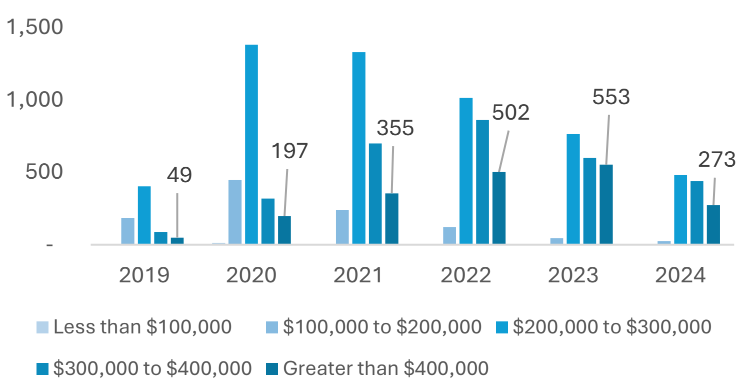
# Housing Supply

## Single-Family Overview

Every county within the region, with the exceptions of Barnwell and Allendale, have experienced growth in new construction closings over the last five years. Closings consider both single-family detached units and townhome units across the period.

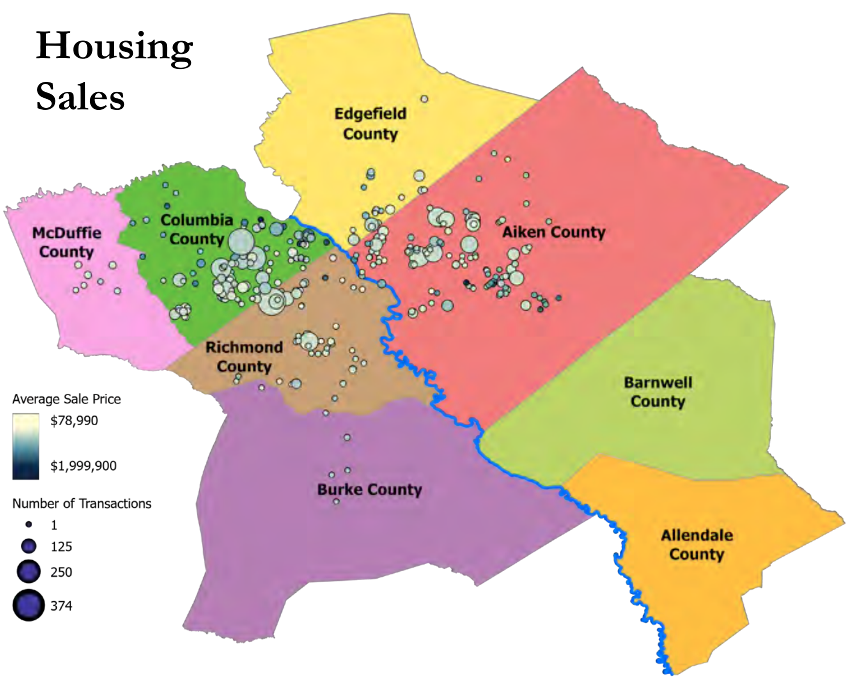
The chart to the below depicts the slight upward movement in pricing for the region's new for-sale products, with significant growth at the upper ends, reflecting the region's growth and increasing affluence in the area. The map below illustrates the sales volume of homes by county since 2019, revealing that Columbia and Aiken counties led the region in new construction closings, with Columbia County leading by a significant margin in terms of average price.

Regional New Construction Closings by Price and Volume, 2019 - 2024

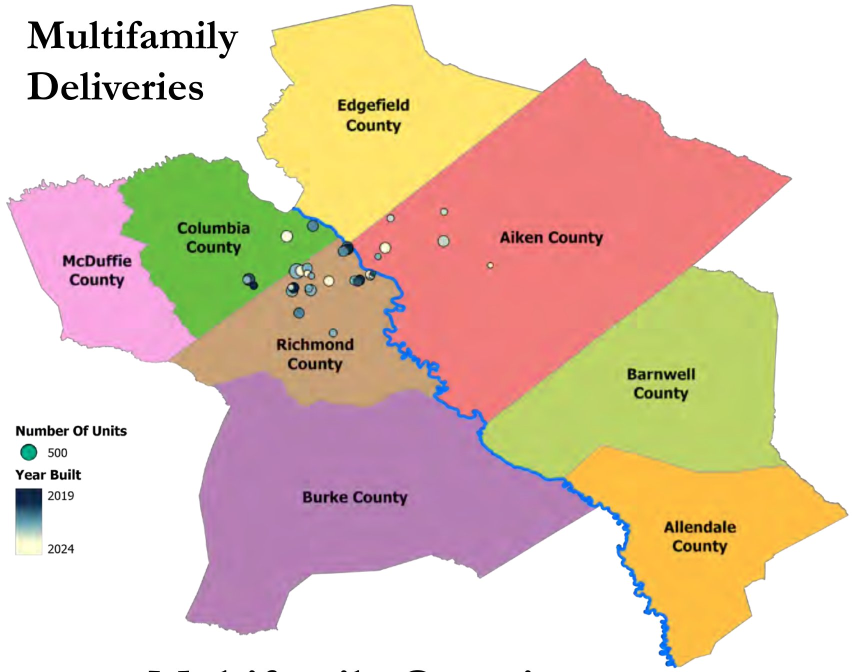



*Source: SmartRE, KB Advisory Group*

## Housing Sales




## Multifamily Deliveries

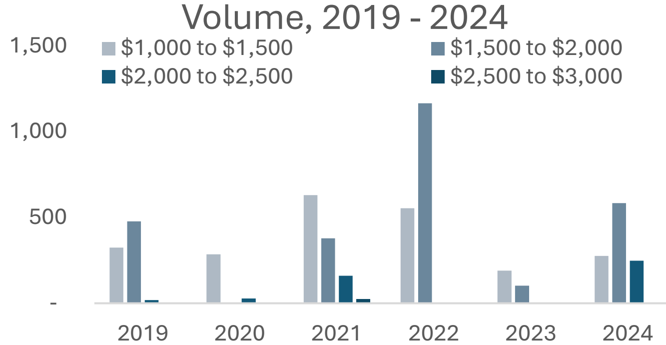



## Multifamily Overview

Every county in the region has some variety of multifamily units, with many of the multifamily developments in the more rural counties of the region categorized as "affordable" and have been built with funds obtained through the LIHTC program. Only three counties in the region have seen new multifamily units delivered since 2019: Aiken, Columbia and Richmond.

The majority of the new units that have been delivered hit price points between $1,500 and $2,000 per unit, with a growing segment renting for over $2,000. The lack of new units outside of the three core counties in the region suggests that these price points represent the minimum unit prices that the market will show up to build and that the outlying counties' markets still cannot support these prices.

Regional New Construction Multifamily by Rental Price and Volume, 2019 - 2024

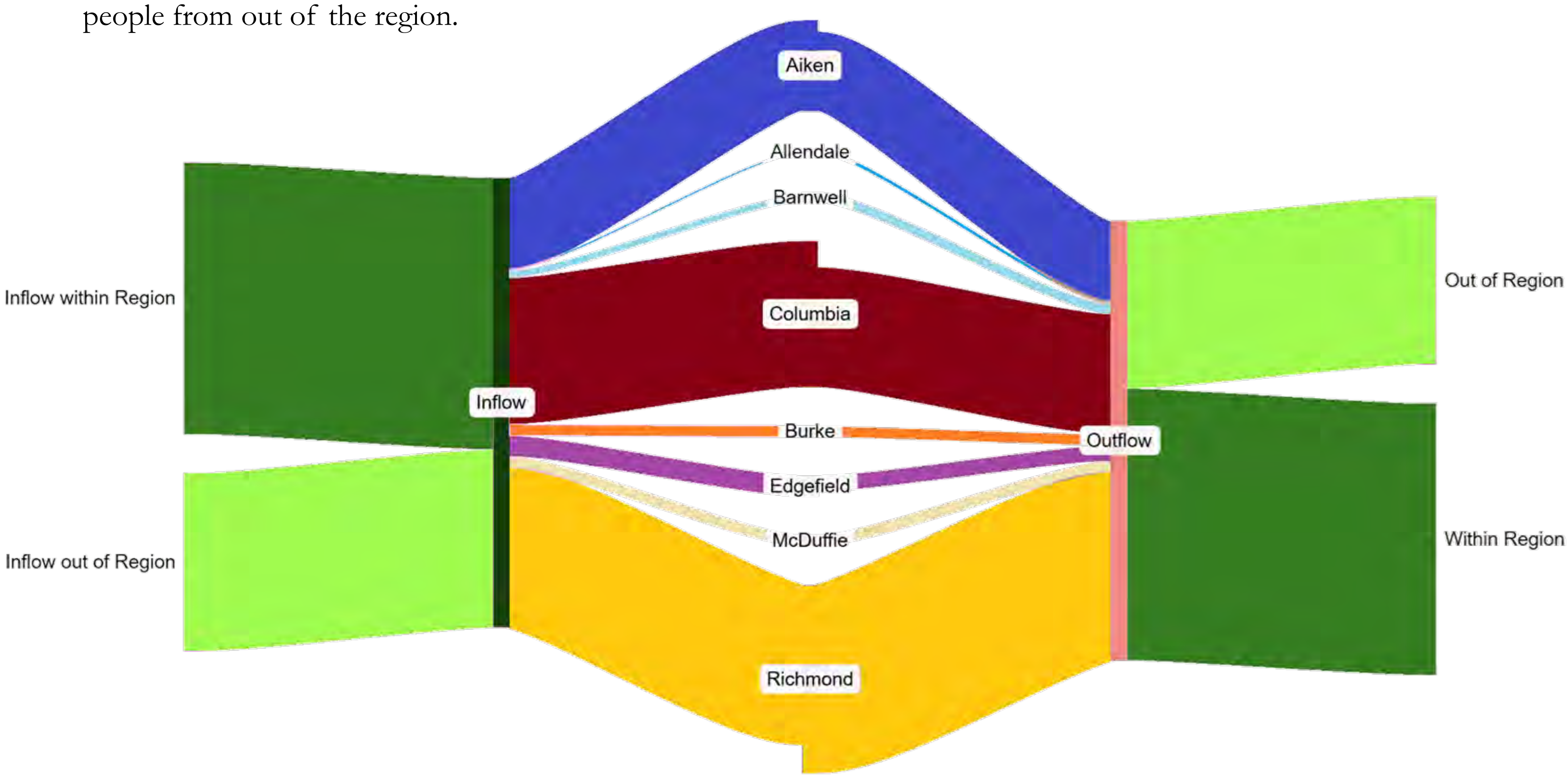



*Source: CoStar, KB Advisory Group*

# Regional Migration

## Tracking Flows

1) Most every county in the region has net out-migration to Aiken County with significant flows from Columbia and Richmond.
2) Richmond County has seen significant, steady flows of residents out of the county and into Columbia County.
3) Aiken, Columbia, and Richmond County are the only counties in the region that are receiving significant flows of people from out of the region.




| County | Within Region (Inflow) | Out of Region (Inflow) | Within Region (Outflow) | Out of Region (Outflow) | Net Inflow |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aiken County** | 6,786 | 4,875 | 5,714 | 4,516 | **1,431** |
| **Allendale County** | 127 | 139 | 201 | 264 | **(199)** |
| **Barnwell County** | 531 | 366 | 700 | 537 | **(340)** |
| **Burke County** | 1,329 | 86 | 1,336 | 45 | **34** |
| **Columbia County** | 11,511 | 7,213 | 9,469 | 5,909 | **3,346** |
| **Edgefield County** | 2,408 | 246 | 1,787 | 233 | **634** |
| **McDuffie County** | 1,146 | 278 | 1,147 | 270 | **7** |
| **Richmond County** | 10,927 | 9,564 | 14,411 | 9,650 | **(3,570)** |
| **Region** | **34,765** | **22,767** | **34,765** | **21,424** | **1,343** |

*Source: Internal Revenue Service, KB Advisory Group*

# Housing Accessibility

## The Value of Housing the Region's Workforce Locally

The analysis that follows rests on the idea that:
***every county in the region would benefit if it made ongoing attempts to house its entire workforce locally.***

The numerous and varied **benefits** for a county and its families **when jobs and homes are near each other** include:

## Advantages

### Economic Vitality and Competitiveness

**Local Spending and Economic Circulation**
When workers live near their jobs, they spend more of their income locally on goods, services, and recreation. This strengthens local businesses and fosters economic growth.

**Attracting Employers**
Employers are more likely to invest in areas where their workforce has access to affordable, convenient housing. Providing local housing options enhances each county in the region's competitiveness in attracting new industries and retaining existing ones.

### Reduced Infrastructure Strain

**Transportation and Commute Times**
Housing the workforce locally reduces long commutes, which helps alleviate traffic congestion, minimizes road maintenance costs, and reduces the demand for extensive transportation infrastructure investments.

### Enhanced Quality of Life

**Work-Life Balance**
Local housing attainable to the local workforce reduces commute times, allowing workers to spend more time with their families, pursue education, or engage in community activities.

**Community Engagement**
Workers who live in the community where they work are more likely to engage in local events, schools, and civic activities, creating a stronger sense of belonging and community cohesion.

### Resilience During Economic Shifts

**Economic Diversification**
Housing the workforce locally creates a more balanced and stable economic base. It reduces overreliance on commuters and ensures that the local economy remains dynamic and adaptive during downturns or sector-specific shifts.

**Labor Market Stability**
Local housing for workers minimizes employee turnover and absenteeism caused by transportation issues, benefiting both employers and the overall workforce.

### Equity and Inclusion

**Workforce Accessibility**
Ensuring affordable housing near employment centers promotes inclusivity, enabling workers from diverse income levels to access good housing and reducing socioeconomic segregation.

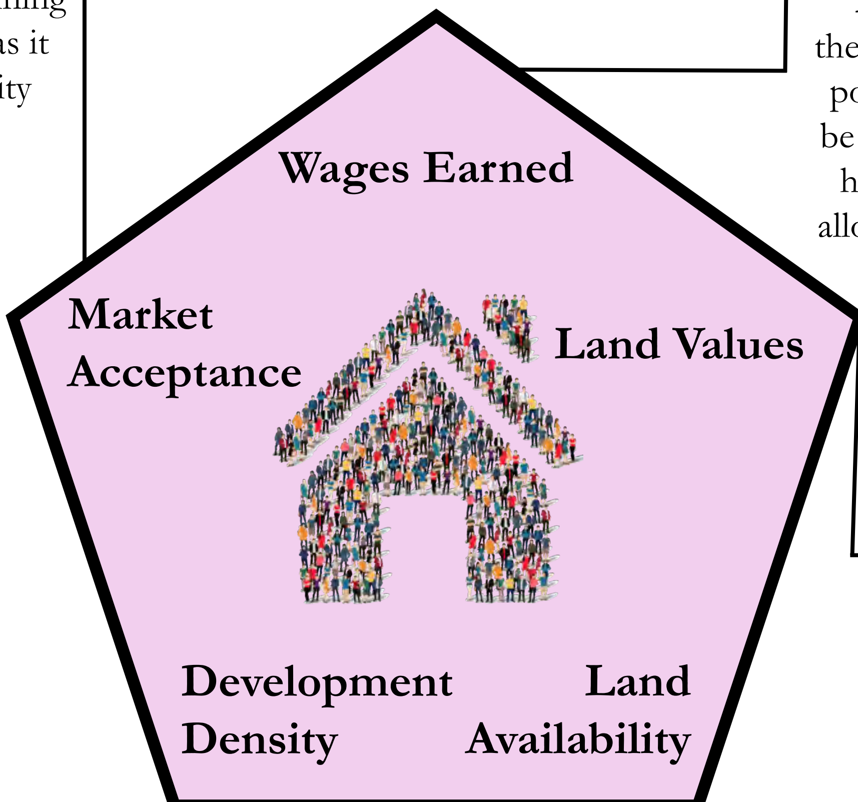
**Reduced Housing-Cost Burden**
Locally accessible housing helps workers avoid the financial strain of commuting, including high transportation costs, enabling them to allocate resources to other essentials.

# Dimensions of Housing Accessibility

**Wages earned** from employment are the primary way in which workers and households are able to enter the housing market as either renters or buyers of housing. Wages constitute the primary driver of demand for housing in most urban and suburban areas.

The local **market's acceptance** of prices and housing types plays a critical role in determining housing accessibility, as it influences the feasibility of delivering diverse housing options that align with workforce needs and affordability thresholds while also shaping the success of innovative housing formats in meeting demand.

**Land values** represent the first indicator of what potential unit values may be on a given parcel, with higher values unlikely to allow for more affordable developments. Land values can be increase due to the presence of transportation infrastructure and local amenities.




**Development density** plays a key role in determining an area's housing accessibility for local workers. Less dense development formats will tend to contribute to higher sale prices and monthly rental costs, as more land is being used to support fewer units. Conversely, more dense development formats will tend to result in lower sale prices and monthly rental costs. Ultimately, every community should aim to include developments of various development densities, as doing so will allow for the local market to absorb housing demand across numerous market segments, contributing to a well-balanced community.

**Land availability** can influence the local market's capacity to deliver at specific price points sustainably. While land may be highly valuable and units developed sell well to higher-income households, an area's development potential may be exhausted if developed in exclusively lower-density formats.

# Housing Accessibility

## Data Sources

Industry Average Wages from the Bureau of Labor Statistics
Housing Prices from SmartRE
Average Rental Costs from CoStar
Income & Property Tax Rates from the Georgia and South Carolina Departments of Revenue

## Affordability Assessment

1. Scenarios were created for both single-earner and dual-earner households, with dual-earner incomes assumed to be 83.6% higher than single-earner incomes.

- Single-Income Renter
- Dual-Income Renter
- Single-Income Owner
- Dual-Income Owner

2. Housing affordability was assessed under the assumption that households can spend up to 30% of their income on housing costs.

### Cost Burdened

A household is considered "cost burdened" if over 30% of their average monthly income is spent on housing costs, which includes rent, mortgage payments, insurance, and related expenses.

## Scoring Methodology

The following charts use a scoring system to assess workforce housing accessibility by industry and county.

- **"-1"** indicates that an industry's average wage is insufficient to afford the county's average rent or for-sale home price.
- **"1"** signifies that wages are high enough to afford housing in that county.
- **"0"** means there is no reported employment for that industry in the county.

**Lower overall scores indicate widespread mismatches in the ratio of wages to housing prices, while higher scores reflect more industry-specific gaps. The Score Ranges below indicate the possible high and low scores a county or industry could receive.**

## Score Ranges by County

| | |
|---|---|
| -1 to 1 | |
| -2 to 2 | |
| -3 to 3 | |
| -4 to 4 | |
| -5 to 5 | |
| -6 to 6 | |
| -7 to 7 | |
| **-8 to 8** | Allendale County |
| -9 o 9 | |
| -10 to 10 | |
| -11 to 11 | |
| -12 o 12 | |
| **-13 to 13** | Barnwell County, McDuffie County |
| **-14 to 14** | Burke County, Edgefield County |
| -15 to 15 | |
| -16 to 16 | |
| **-17 to 17** | Columbia County |
| -18 to 18 | |
| -19 to 19 | |
| **-20 to 20** | Aiken County, Richmond County |

## Score Ranges by Industry

| | |
|---|---|
| -1 to 1 | |
| **-2 to 2** | Mining, Quarrying & Utilities |
| **-3 to 3** | Agriculture, Management |
| **-4 to 4** | Arts, Entertainment & Recreation |
| **-5 to 5** | Wholesale Trade, Food Services |
| **-6 to 6** | Administrative Services, Professional Services |
| **-7 to 7** | Construction, Information, Real Estate, Education, Healhcare, Other Services |
| **-8 to 8** | Public Administration |

# Housing Accessibility

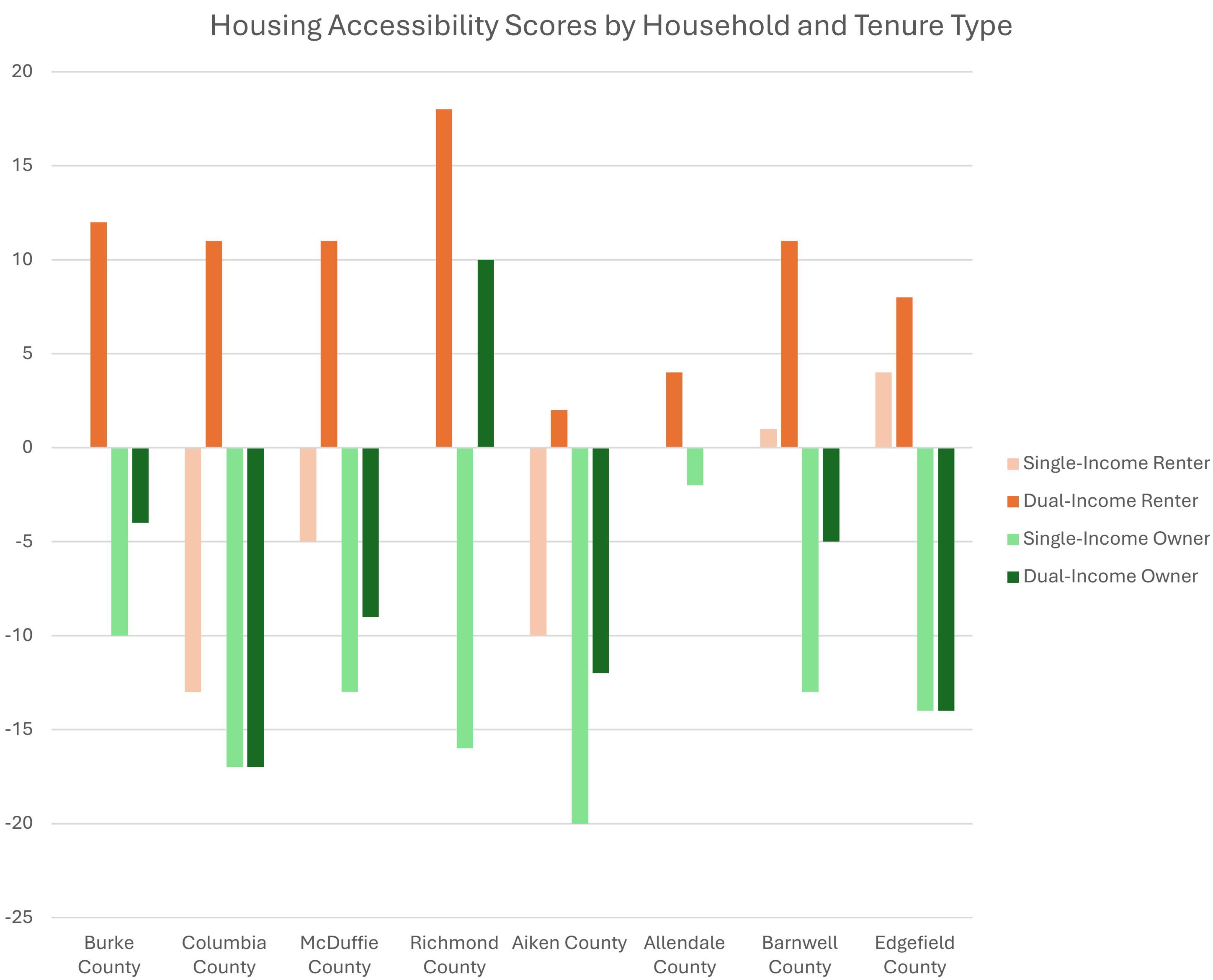
## County-Specific Housing Accessibility

Workforce housing gaps are consistent across all counties, with single-income households disproportionately affected, particularly those in retail, healthcare, and service sectors.

The strongest wages offered by employers in Richmond County, which fuel suburban development pressures in Columbia County and Aiken County

Counties with higher rents and for-sale prices, such as Columbia and Aiken, push lower-wage workers toward substandard housing or extended commutes.

Across all counties, single-income households encounter substantial barriers to homeownership. Down payment requirements and high monthly costs put homeownership out of reach for most workers, particularly in Columbia and Aiken Counties, meaning that dual-income households increasingly dominate the for-sale market, highlighting a widening affordability gap for single-income workers.



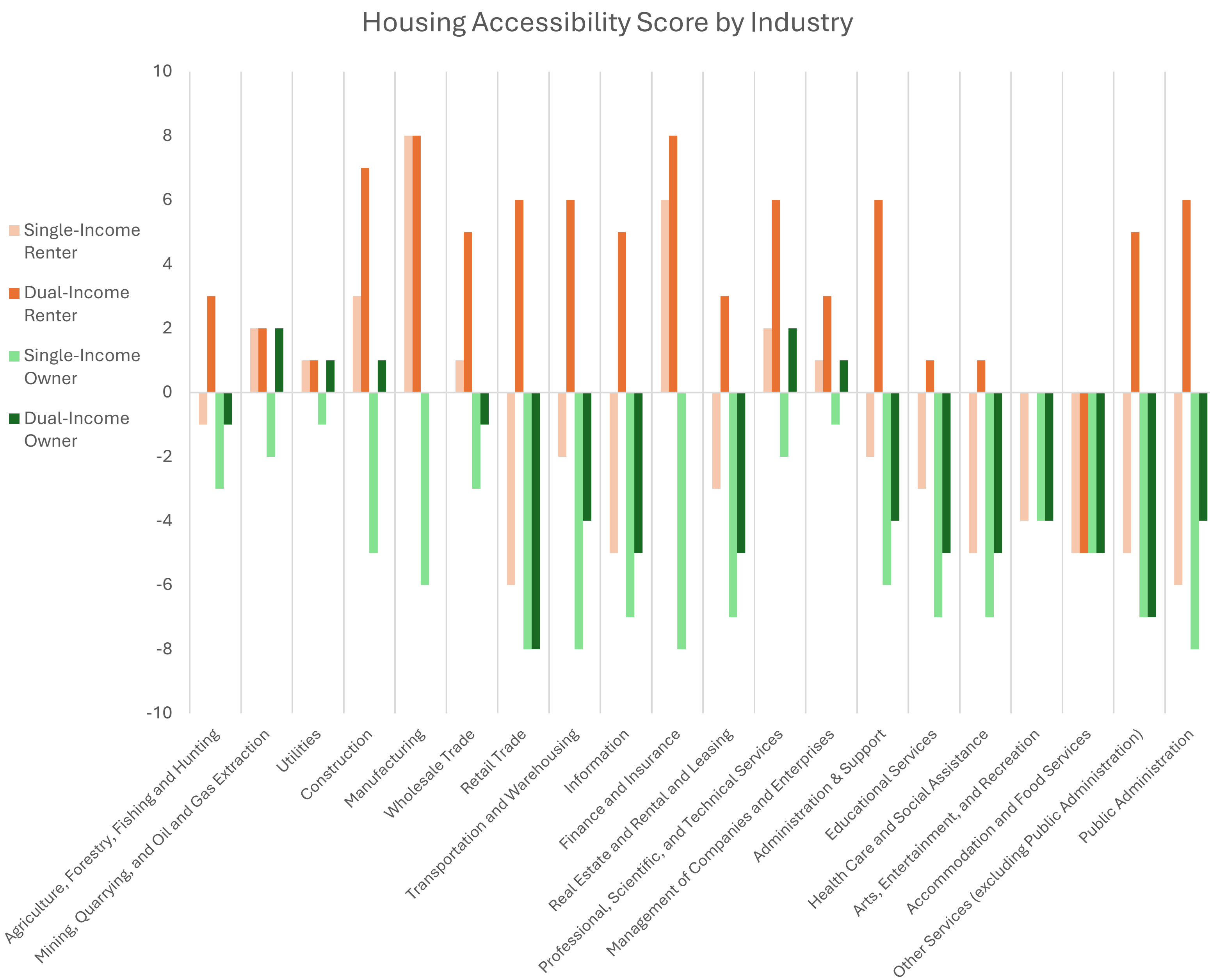
# Housing Accessibility

## Industry-Specific Housing Accessibility

Dual-income households generally fare better, often accessing rentals comfortably, though challenges remain in sectors with persistently low wages, such as Accommodation and Food Services.

Workers in lower-wage industries require savings periods exceeding five years to meet down payment requirements, underscoring the need for strategic interventions.

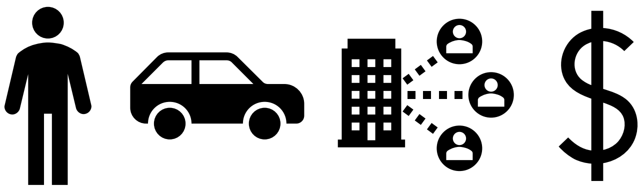
Higher-wage dual-income households in industries such as Manufacturing and Professional Services can access for-sale opportunities in most counties, though Columbia County remains a significant outlier with its elevated home prices.



# Housing Accessibility

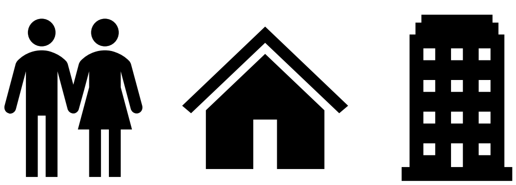
## Key Takeaways

1. ***For five of the eight counties in the region, no employment sector provides sufficient wages to allow a single-income worker to afford the average for-sale house within the county where they work.***
Burke County, Richmond County, and Allendale County all are the exceptions to this general trend, which is attributable to higher wages for specific sectors in Burke and Richmond and lower for-sale housing costs in Allendale.



2. ***Area wages are low across the board relative to the cost of local rental opportunities.*** Columbia County, Aiken County, and McDuffie County have the most challenging workforce housing accessibility for single-income renters.

3. ***Dual-income renters in the workforce in every county experience the greatest level of housing accessibility.***
Dual-income households have far higher accessible rental prices available to them, with incomes often exceeding the attainable cost of the average rental unit in each county.



4. ***The region's single-income renters, who make up a significant portion of the workforce, face significant and persistent challenges to accessing rental housing within the counties in which they are employed.***
These challenges are likely overcome by opting to live with roommates, or by choosing to live in a nearby county that offers greater housing affordability at the expense of longer commute times to work.

5. ***Across the region, there are a handful of industries that consistently offer wages that permit single-income households to afford rental options within the county in which they are employed.***
Manufacturing, Finance and Insurance, and Construction sectors most reliably offer wages that permit employees to easily access rental opportunities in the communities in which they work.

6. ***Sectors such as Management of Companies and Enterprises; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Wholesale Trade; Manufacturing; Construction; and Utilities create for-sale housing opportunities within the county in which they are located.***

7. ***Most industries do not offer wages high enough for single-earner households to afford for-sale housing within the same county where they work.***
Purchasing a home under these conditions would result in a significant monthly cost burden.

8. ***Employees in sectors such as Services, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, and Retail Trade face persistent challenges to accessing rental and for-sale housing options regardless of whether they are single-income or dual-income households and regardless of the county in which they are employed.***

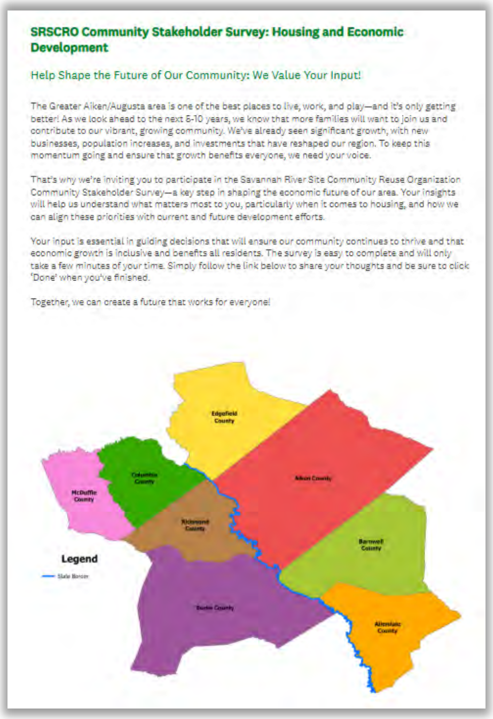
9. ***Richmond County has the highest number of employment sectors that permit county workers to buy homes within the county in which they work.***
However, this analysis supports the generally acknowledged trend that many of the region's residents work in Richmond County but live in suburban communities, particularly in Columbia County and Aiken County.

# Housing Survey

Understanding the experiences and preferences of SRS area residents is a critical element of understanding the area's needs.

To that end, SRSCRO partnered with KB Advisory Group to conduct an online survey from January to February 2025 of the study area's workers and residents.

Respondents were asked to anonymously provide demographic data, employment information, the type of housing in which they currently live, and the types of housing that they prefer to see in their communities.



**SRSCRO Community Stakeholder Survey: Housing and Economic Development**

Help Shape the Future of Our Community: We Value Your Input!

The Greater Aiken/Augusta area is one of the best places to live, work, and play—and it's only getting better! As we look ahead to the next 5-10 years, we know that more families will want to join us and contribute to our vibrant, growing community. We've already seen significant growth, with new businesses, population increases, and investments that have reshaped our region. To keep this momentum going and ensure that growth benefits everyone, we need your voice.

That's why we're inviting you to participate in the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization Community Stakeholder Survey—a key step in shaping the economic future of our area. Your insights will help us understand what matters most to you, particularly when it comes to housing, and how we can align these priorities with current and future development efforts.

Your input is essential in guiding decisions that will ensure our community continues to thrive and that economic growth is inclusive and benefits all residents. The survey is easy to complete and will only take a few minutes of your time. Simply follow the link below to share your thoughts and be sure to click 'Done' when you've finished.

Together, we can create a future that works for everyone!



## Respondent Demographics

### The survey received 1,448 responses.

Each of the eight counties in the greater Aiken-Augusta area was well represented, with a majority of the responses (56%) from Aiken County. Respondents skewed male (57% male to 41% female) and higher-income (72% of respondents indicated that their household income was above $100,000). The majority of respondents were of working age (87% of respondents were between 25 and 64 years old). Accordingly, most respondents (97%) were employed at the time they took the survey.

92% of respondents both lived and worked in the study area, while the rest either commuted in, commuted out, or were employers. Lastly, 58% of respondents had lived in the study area for either over 20 years or their entire lives.

## Initial Takeaways

**Housing Affordability-**
Respondents noted that steep housing costs impacted their decision making on where to live.

**Community Amenities**
There were repeated mentions of the importance of investment in better community amenities and infrastructure, including parks, recreational facilities, and fitness centers.

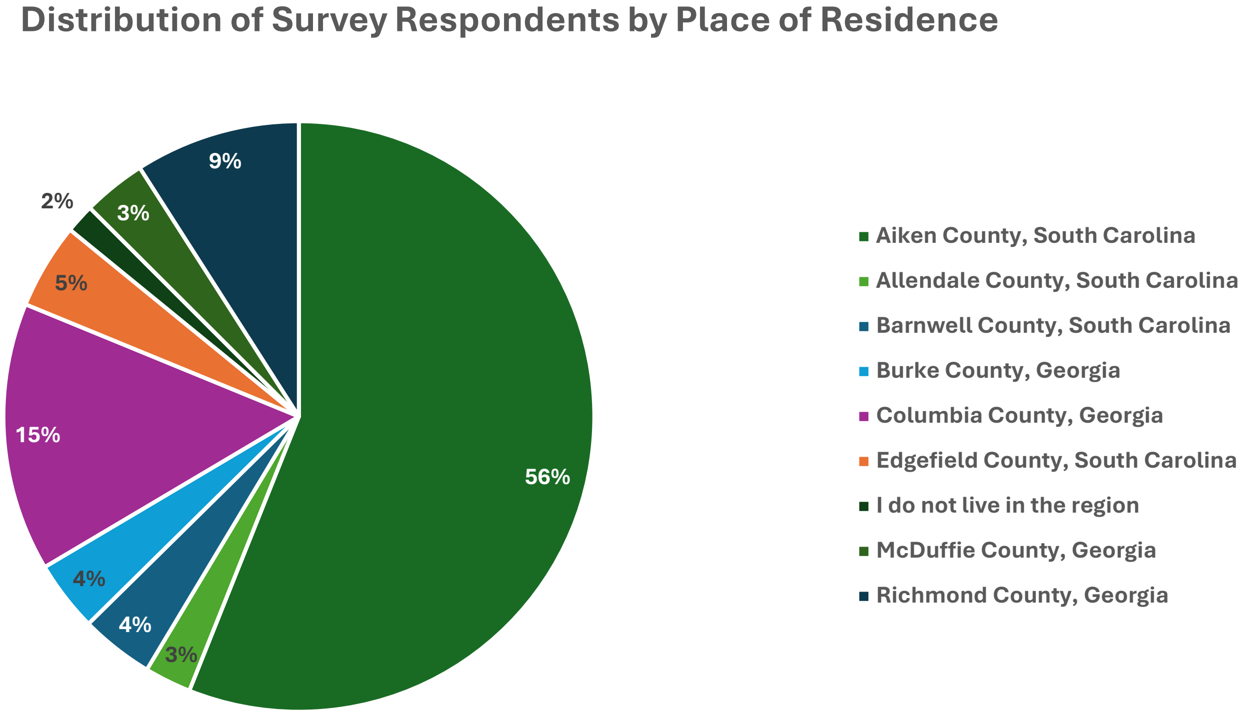
**Impact of Hurricane Helene**
Half of respondents were affected in some way by Hurricane Helene, highlighting the need for disaster preparedness.

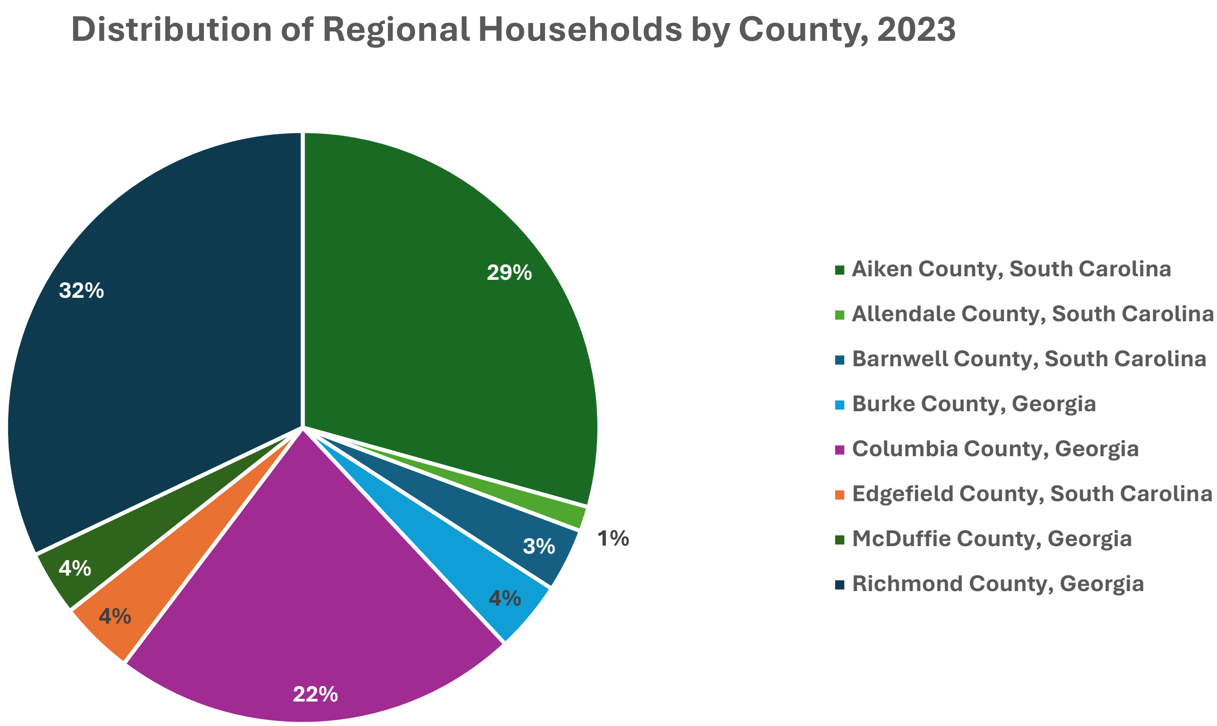
## Survey Response Categories

Some response categories were simplified to support easier data visualization. On the following pages, defined terms include:

- "Large Lot Single-family detached" refers to detached homes with one or more acres.
- "Small Lot Single-family detached" refers to detached homes with less than one acre.
- "Extra Small Lot Single-family detached" refers to detached homes with less than 0.3 acres/ cottage or cluster homes.
- "Large Multifamily" refers to buildings with 50+ units.
- "Public services" refers to fire, police, water/sewer, transportation, and libraries.
- "Lack of amenities" refers to a perceived lack of retail, restaurants, nightlife, or other desired amenities.
- "Family ties elsewhere" refers to respondents that need to live near family or their employment.
- "Recreational opportunities" refers to biking trails, sports fields, etc.

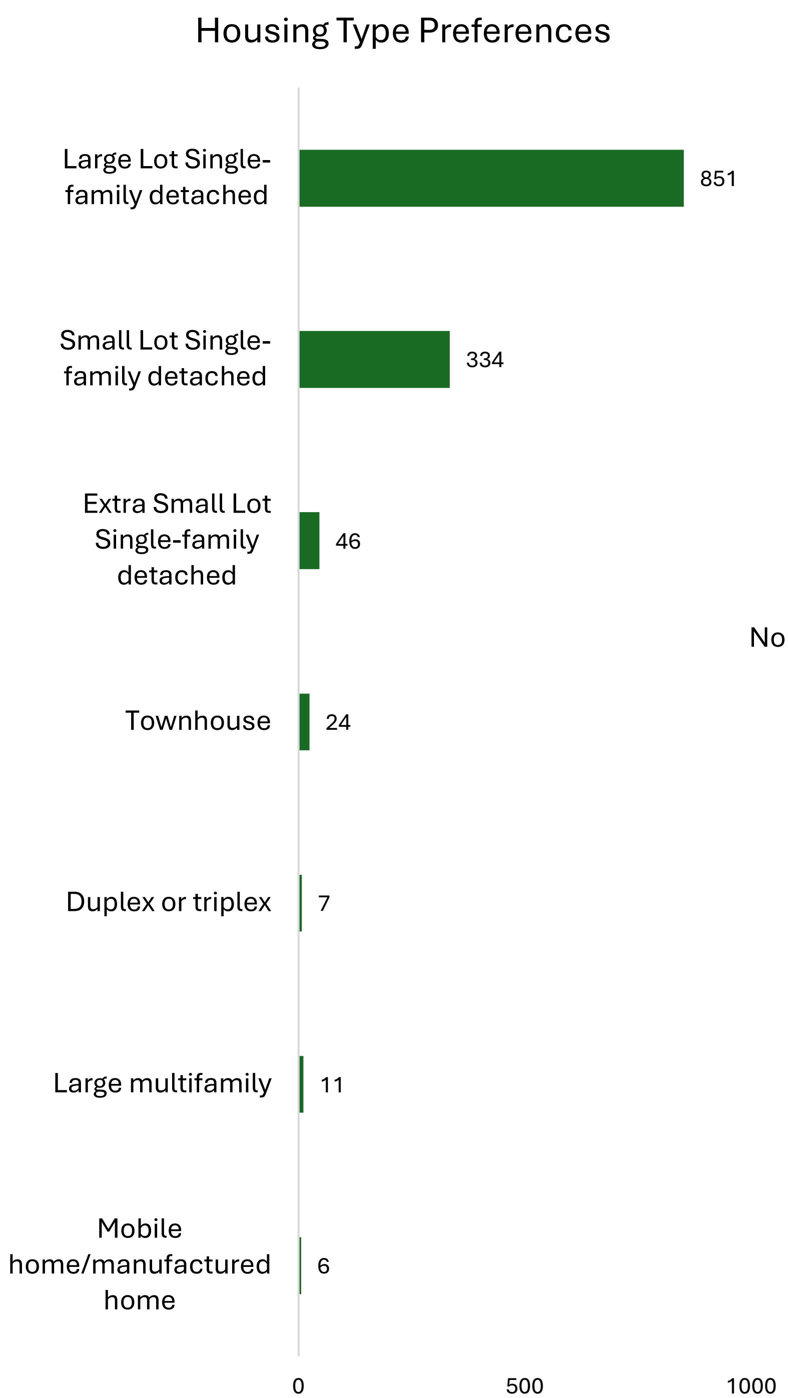
# Survey Findings

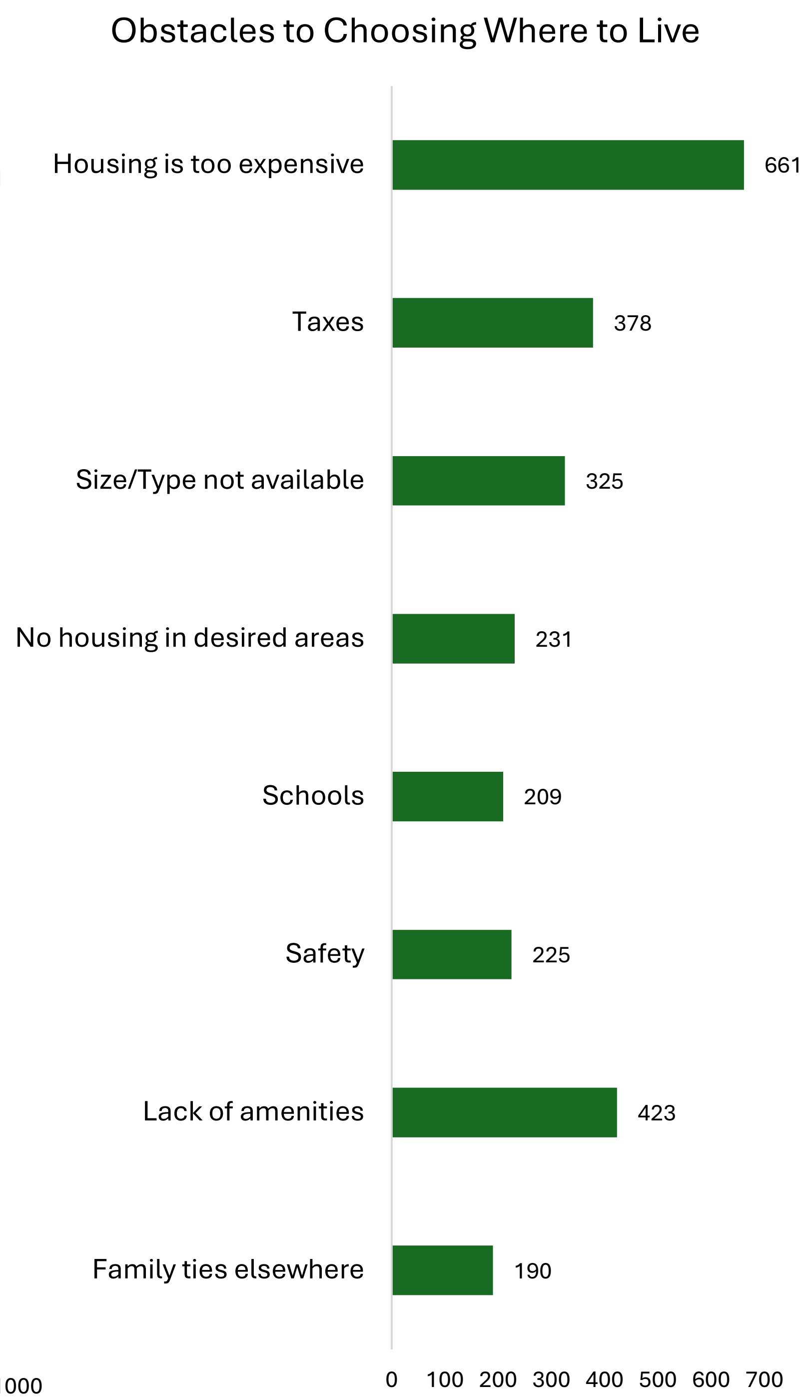



The distribution of survey respondents by home county somewhat differs from the actual spatial distribution of the region's households, with far more survey respondents residing within Aiken County.

# Survey Findings



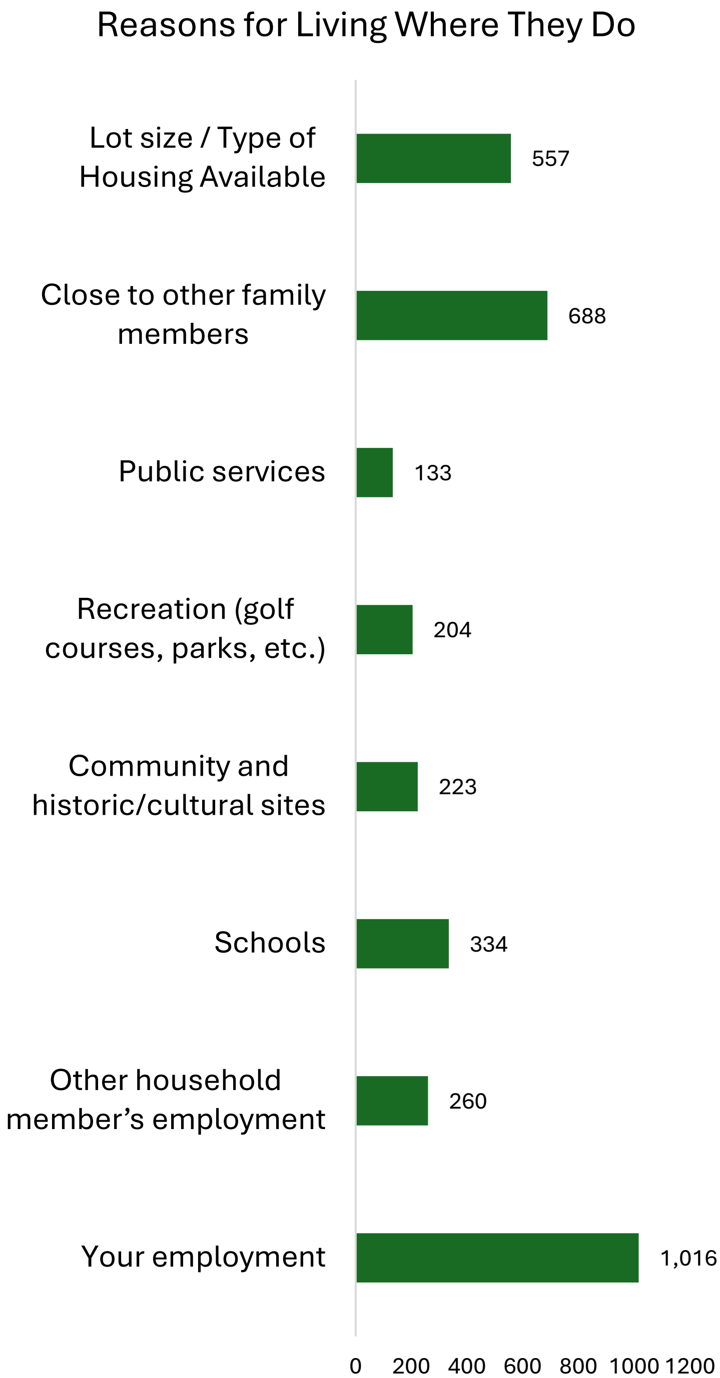

Across the Aiken-Augusta Region, large-lot single family detached housing units were the most preferred housing unit type of survey respondents, followed by small-lot single-family detached units.

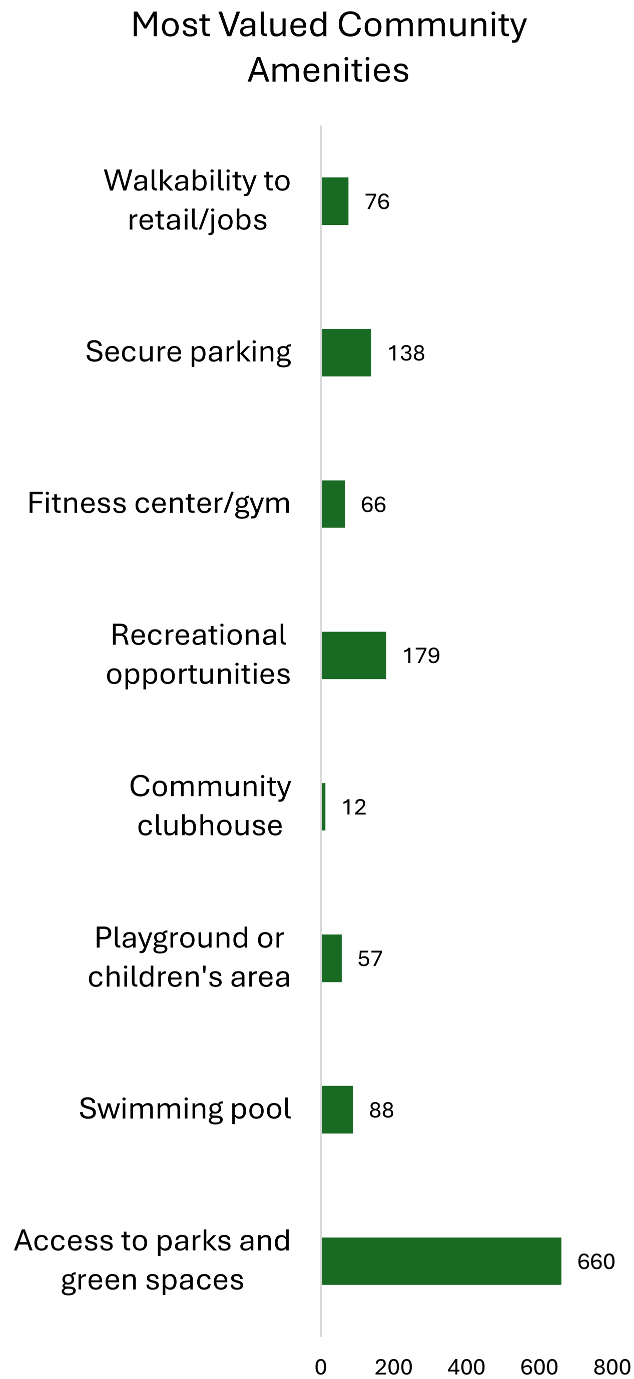
87% of survey respondents indicated that they lived in a single family detached home, which means that survey respondents largely indicated that they preferred the housing type in which they currently live.

While many of the survey respondents belonged to higher-income households, housing costs were identified as a leading barrier to living in the community or location that they would most prefer to live.

Interestingly, a lack of amenities was the second most frequent response to this question, possibly reflecting a desire to live closer to work or family, but the lack of community amenities makes the proposition undesirable.

# Survey Findings




Work continues to be the primary driver behind people's choice to live in the greater Aiken-Augusta area.

The most frequent reason that survey respondents provided for why they lived where they lived was their employment, followed by family ties and the type of housing available.

The most valued set of community amenities for survey respondents was access to parks and green spaces, followed by recreational opportunities.

These responses reiterate the importance of natural places in improving quality of life for people of all ages.

# Demand & Gap

# Demand Forecast Assumptions

The primary way that households access housing is through wages earned through employment. Growth in employment is therefore the leading driver of demographic growth and housing demand.

New jobs are not the only driver of demand for housing, with promotions or inter-regional job hopping resulting in economic advancement for the region's existing workers and residents, driving demand for upper-market demand.

Another significant driver of housing demand includes retirees, who possess wealth and resources that are not necessarily derived from monthly earnings.

It is more beneficial to counties and their composite communities for their local workforce to be housed within the county in which they work. It is implicit that the inability to meet market demand and house the county workforce locally will result in "spillover" into neighboring counties.


## Demand Forecast Process

Historical employment trends and average wages by industry were identified. Employment growth was then projected over the next five years, incorporating industry wages and assumptions about worker promotions within the region, which in the context of this model represents demand from turnover.

Purchasing power for each industry's workforce was calculated by applying Georgia and South Carolina's income tax brackets to each industry's wage in each county, while attainable housing prices were determined using the following assumptions:

- For-sale housing is affordable at a value three times a household's annual take-home pay.
- Rental housing is affordable at 30% of a household's monthly take-home pay.

Segmentation of this data was enabled through ACS estimates on tenure by income level and workers per household.
Non-worker demand, particularly as it pertains to retirees, was also considered by analyzing historical growth trends among older age groups in each county in the region.

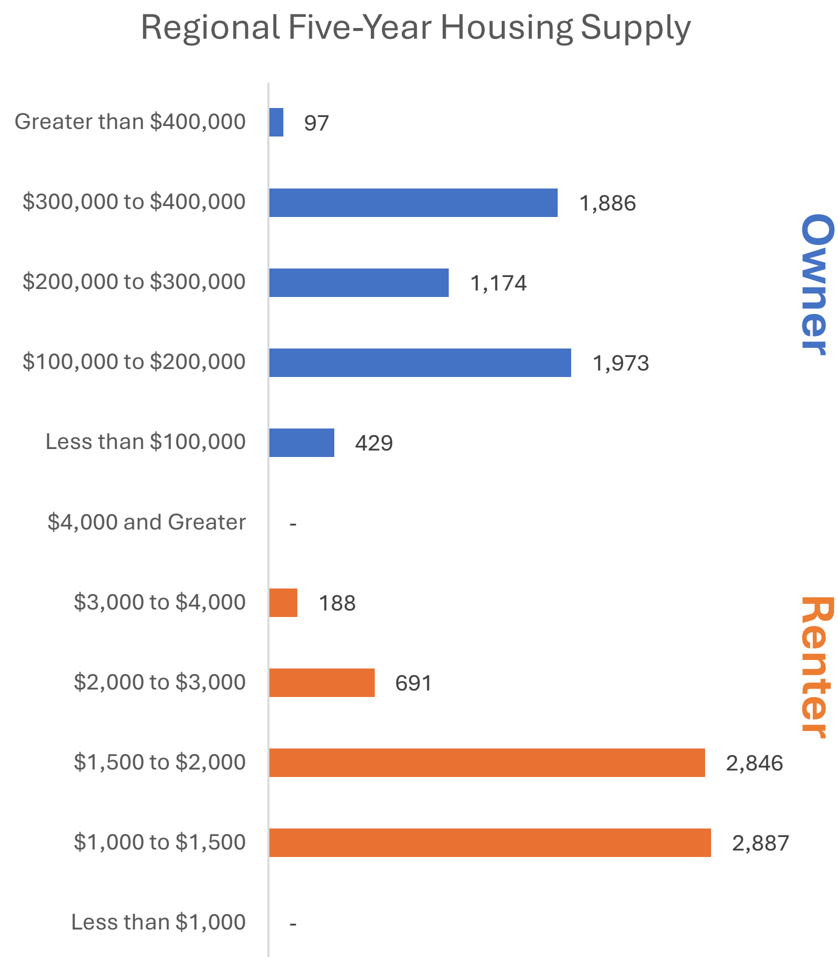
Historic supply trends were measured against forecasted demand to produce a gap by segment for each county in the region.
The resulting gap provides insights about whether continuing to deliver housing in a "business as usual" manner over the next five years will be sufficient to satisfy projected demand.

# Historic Deliveries

**Housing unit deliveries over the past five years in the Aiken-Augusta region have followed distinct geographic patterns, largely driven by local market demand, policy constraints, and infrastructure capacity.**

The majority of for-sale housing development has occurred in Columbia and Aiken Counties, which have absorbed much of the region's middle-income growth due to their strong school systems, suburban appeal, and historic land availability. New homes in these counties have primarily fallen within the $200,000 to $400,000 range, reflecting demand from middle- and upper-middle-income buyers and a lack of differentiation. In contrast, Richmond County, has seen more multifamily and rental development, contributing to the significant share of units in the $1,000 to $2,000 rental price range.

Counties with lower demand, such as Burke, Barnwell, and Allendale, have seen limited new construction, with much of their housing supply continuing to rely on older stock and mobile homes rather than new builds.




## For Rent and For Sale Housing Deliveries, 2019-2024

| County | Less than $1,000 | $1,000 to $1,500 | $1,500 to $2,000 | $2,000 to $3,000 | $3,000 to $4,000 | $4,000 and Greater | Less than $100,000 | $100,000 to $200,000 | $200,000 to $300,000 | $300,000 to $400,000 | $400,000 and Greater | County Total | Annual |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aiken County** | - | 612 | 625 | 93 | - | - | 124 | 570 | 339 | 545 | 28 | **2,936** | 587 |
| **Allendale County** | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 13 | 8 | 12 | 1 | **36** | 7 |
| **Barnwell County** | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 32 | 19 | 31 | 2 | **91** | 18 |
| **Burke County** | - | - | - | - | - | - | 36 | 165 | 98 | 158 | 8 | **466** | 93 |
| **Columbia County** | - | 366 | 732 | 293 | 73 | - | 97 | 446 | 265 | 427 | 22 | **2,722** | 544 |
| **Edgefield County** | - | - | - | - | - | - | 12 | 54 | 32 | 52 | 3 | **153** | 31 |
| **McDuffie County** | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8 | 36 | 22 | 35 | 2 | **102** | 20 |
| **Richmond County** | - | 1,909 | 1,489 | 305 | 115 | - | 143 | 656 | 390 | 627 | 32 | **5,666** | 1,133 |
| **All Counties** | **-** | **2,887** | **2,846** | **691** | **188** | **-** | **429** | **1,973** | **1,174** | **1,886** | **97** | **12,172** | **2,434** |

# Housing Demand Forecast

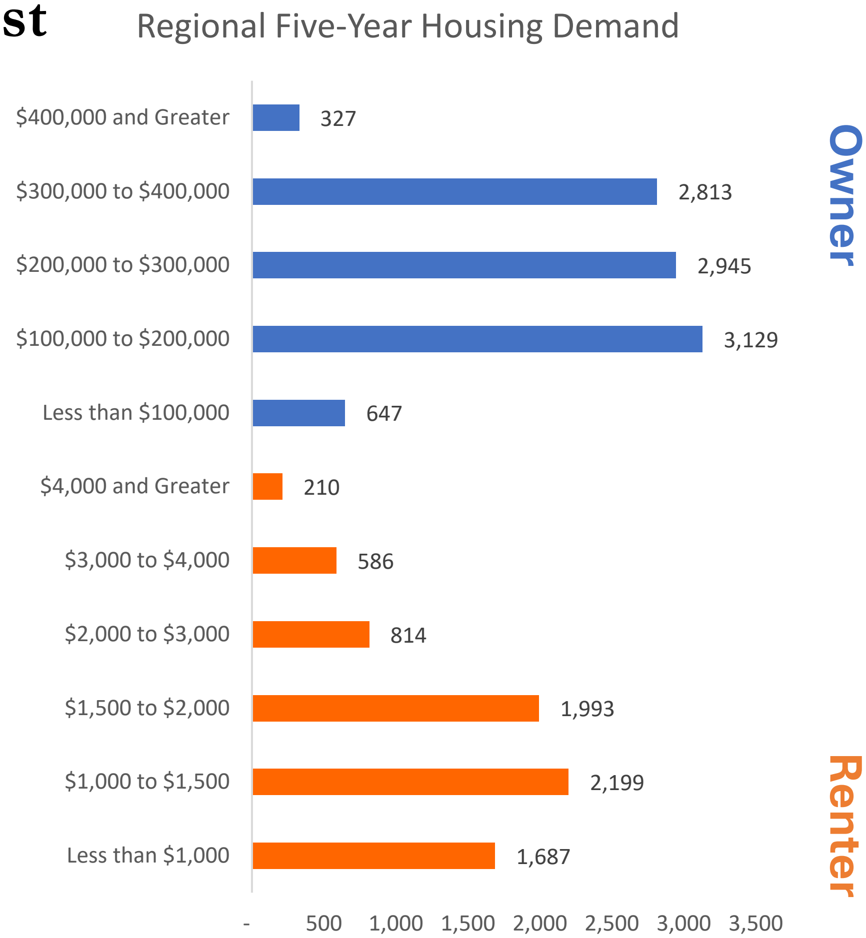
**The bifurcation of demand reflects the growing gap in wages across the region.**

In many cases, demand for new housing units in the region resembles historic deliveries, however the **demand for some segments, such as renters between $1,000 and $2,000 and owners between $100,000 and $400,000, is projected to be far greater than the supply that has been added in these segments over the last five years.**

Demand projections in the chart to the right and the table below are employment and wage driven projections.

As shown, demand is concentrated towards the lower and middle segments of the rental market and in the middle segments of the for-sale market.

Unique among the regional counties, Columbia County has seen consistent absorption of units priced higher than $400,000.




## For Rent and For Sale Housing Demand Forecast, 2025-2030

| County | Less than $1,000 | $1,000 to $1,500 | $1,500 to $2,000 | $2,000 to $3,000 | $3,000 to $4,000 | $4,000 and Greater | Less than $100,000 | $100,000 to $200,000 | $200,000 to $300,000 | $300,000 to $400,000 | $400,000 and Greater | County Total | Annual |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aiken County** | 590 | 363 | 371 | 140 | 60 | 31 | 170 | 896 | 815 | 726 | 115 | **4,276** | 855 |
| **Allendale County** | 71 | 6 | - | 1 | 3 | - | 42 | 7 | 7 | 21 | 2 | **160** | 32 |
| **Barnwell County** | 84 | 20 | 4 | 8 | - | - | 25 | 58 | 61 | 10 | 5 | **276** | 55 |
| **Burke County** | 101 | 82 | 35 | 32 | 31 | 15 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 38 | 22 | **368** | 74 |
| **Columbia County** | 323 | 300 | 238 | 131 | 73 | 23 | 233 | 1,285 | 1,269 | 1,288 | 98 | **5,261** | 1,052 |
| **Edgefield County** | 323 | 25 | 15 | 7 | 0 | - | 148 | 95 | 133 | 20 | 10 | **775** | 155 |
| **McDuffie County** | 61 | 31 | 11 | 17 | 0 | 2 | 20 | 129 | 166 | 15 | 7 | **459** | 92 |
| **Richmond County** | 135 | 1,373 | 1,320 | 477 | 418 | 139 | 6 | 658 | 486 | 695 | 69 | **5,775** | 1,155 |
| **All Counties** | **1,663** | **2,146** | **1,967** | **786** | **578** | **348** | **647** | **3,129** | **2,945** | **2,813** | **327** | **17,350** | **3,470** |

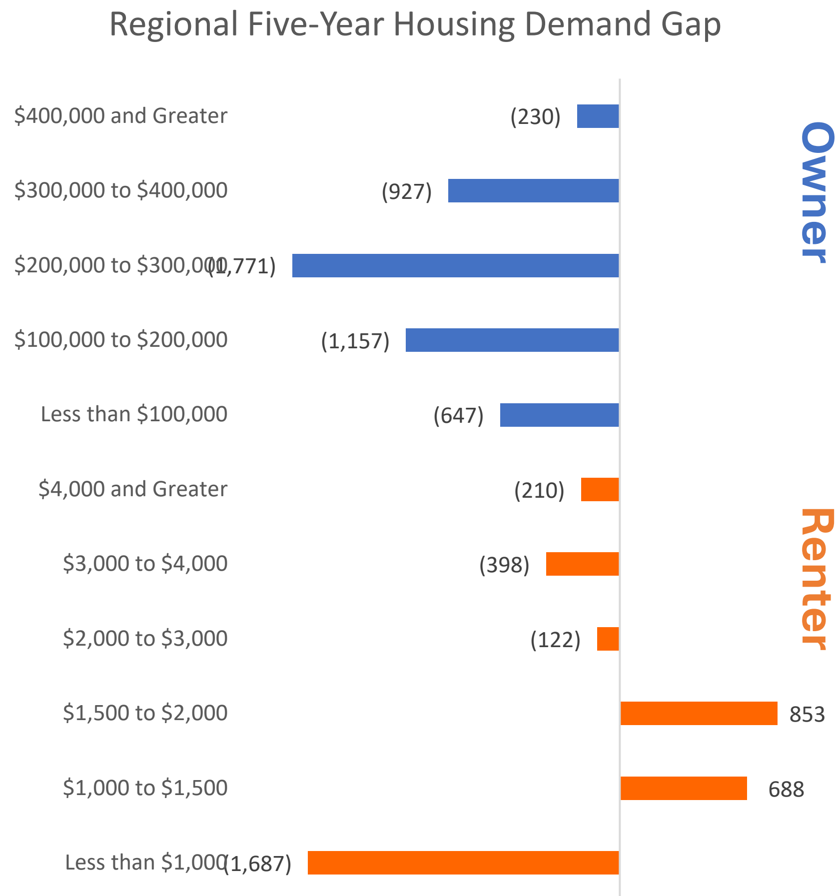
# Housing Gap Analysis

While there have been a significant number of new deliveries over the last five years within the rental segment between $1,000 to $2,000, these deliveries have not addressed demand at the lowest end of the rental spectrum, resulting in a deep gap in new units available at price points under $1,000.

The "surplus" of units in the $1,000 to $2,000 range both reflects market price concentration and obscures the spatial concentration of these units, most of which are expected to be delivered in Richmond County

Additionally, households that may have previously considered buying homes are forced to rent for longer and are looking for more premium options, represented by the gap at the higher end of the rental market. These products include highly-amenitized multifamily, purpose-built senior facilities, or build-to-rent single-family products.

Within the for-sale market, while historic deliveries have been in the $100,000 to $400,000 range, the demand for these products far outstrips market supply, resulting in deep gaps across all for-sale segments. These gaps are most pronounced in Columbia County.




**Total Five-Year Gap: 5,178 Units**

**For Rent and For Sale Housing Gap Forecast, 2025-2030**

| County | Less than $1,000 | $1,000 to $1,500 | $1,500 to $2,000 | $2,000 to $3,000 | $3,000 to $4,000 | $4,000 and Greater | Less than $100,000 | $100,000 to $200,000 | $200,000 to $300,000 | $300,000 to $400,000 | $400,000 and Greater | County Total | Annual |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aiken County | (590) | 249 | 254 | (47) | (60) | (31) | (170) | (326) | (475) | (181) | (86) | (1,340) | (268) |
| Allendale County | (71) | (6) | - | (1) | (3) | - | (42) | 5 | 0 | (9) | (1) | (124) | (25) |
| Barnwell County | (84) | (20) | (4) | (8) | - | - | (25) | (26) | (41) | 21 | (4) | (185) | (37) |
| Burke County | (101) | (82) | (35) | (32) | (31) | (15) | (2) | 164 | 89 | 120 | (14) | 97 | 19 |
| Columbia County | (323) | 66 | 494 | 162 | 0 | (23) | (233) | (839) | (1,003) | (861) | (76) | (2,539) | (508) |
| Edgefield County | (323) | (25) | (15) | (7) | (0) | - | (148) | (41) | (101) | 32 | (7) | (623) | (125) |
| McDuffie County | (61) | (31) | (11) | (17) | (0) | (2) | (20) | (92) | (144) | 19 | (5) | (356) | (71) |
| Richmond County | (135) | 537 | 169 | (172) | (303) | (139) | (6) | (2) | (96) | (68) | (36) | (109) | (22) |
| **All Counties** | **(1,687)** | **688** | **853** | **(122)** | **(398)** | **(210)** | **(647)** | **(1,157)** | **(1,771)** | **(927)** | **(230)** | **(5,178)** | **(1,036)** |

# Illustrating Demand & Gap

The preceding analysis quantified the magnitude of future demand for housing within each of the counties in the region.

The visual below plots the counties that comprise the region according to the degree of demand for new housing that they are forecasted to receive along with the degree to which each county's local market is constrained by policy or infrastructure.

There are no counties within the quadrant that would represent "low demand and constrained by policy" as policy controls over local markets are typically imposed as a reaction to residential growth, or out of a desire to preserve communities and neighborhoods.

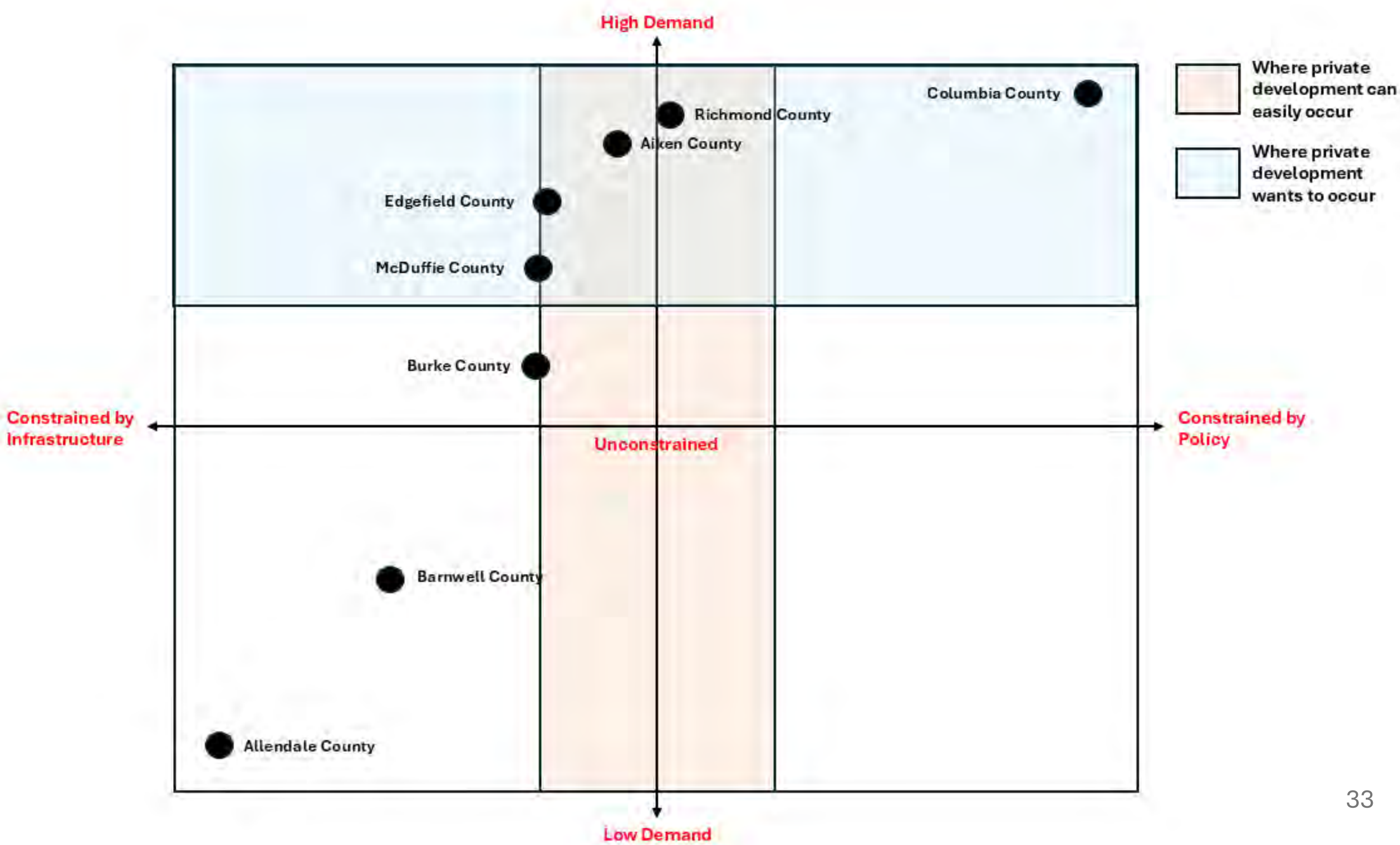
The chart above to the right describes the degree to which each county is projected to fulfill its demand for new housing units over the next five years.

Burke County's 126% projection reflects steady deliveries of for-sale products which cater to higher-income households measured against generally low demand, which is more concentrated within the county's rental market.

| Percentage of Demand Projected to Be Satisfied | |
|---|---|
| Aiken County | 68.7% |
| Allendale County | 22.6% |
| Barnwell County | 33.1% |
| Burke County | 126.4% |
| Columbia County | 51.7% |
| Edgefield County | 19.7% |
| McDuffie County | 22.3% |
| Richmond County | 98.1% |

Richmond County, which has the second highest total demand in the region, is projected to hit nearly all of its projected unit demand over the next five years, however, this obscures the fact that most of the units delivered within Richmond County have historically been rental units in the $1,000 to $2,000 range, leaving significant gaps at the lower end of the rental market and the for-sale market in general.

Aiken County is projected to achieve nearly 70% of its demand, based on historic delivery patterns and projected demand for new housing, with a gaps relatively evenly distributed across all segments. Columbia County is expected to hit 50% of its projected demand based on historic deliveries, which would not be so significant were Columbia County's demand for new housing the greatest in the region.



# Strategies & Recommendations

# Strategic Outlook

**In order to increase housing production by over 40% annually and deliver 3,500 new homes over the next five years, the region's counties and the communities within them will need to implement a variety of strategies to deliver the housing required to absorb the region's projected growth without experiencing market dysfunction.**

These strategies include:

**Increase Development Density**

The region's counties and the incorporated communities within them have power over local land use and zoning. While planning departments must be staffed, allowing higher development densities represent a "free" tool available across the region which can help to increase housing production, improve housing affordability and diversify housing inventory, all of which are central to managing the region's growth pressures.

**Prioritize Downtown Development**

Throughout the region there is a shared desire for preservation of rural and natural lands, a need for careful planning in the location of housing relative to existing infrastructure and a desire for more diverse retail and cultural experiences. Prioritizing housing development downtown can advance all of these goals simultaneously, while also working to diversity the region's housing inventory through the integration of multifamily and townhome units in downtown areas.

**Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure**

Many of the counties within the region face significant infrastructure limitations that limit their capacity for new housing production. While roads and access to high-speed internet are two examples, the lack of water and sewer infrastructure represents the most significant limitation. Investing in the improvement of this infrastructure is a necessary prerequisite to tackling housing and economic development questions in many of the region's communities.

**Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure**

While other strategies focus on creating a hospitable environment for housing markets to function within, there are certain instances in which the market will need additional funds and resources to meet the region's housing demand, particularly on the lower end of the market. Creating the appropriate opportunities for direct public contributions towards housing production will be crucial if the region hopes to maintain a stable workforce.

**Recentering & Decentering of Regional High-Wage Employment**

Presently, the region's jobs are highly concentrated within Richmond County and to a lesser degree Aiken and Columbia. Economic development efforts that aim to create greater spatial diversity for high-wage jobs in the region will help the region's counties to retain residents and redistribute housing demand in the region, taking pressures off of more central communities.

This table outlines a range of strategies for housing, infrastructure, and economic development across the eight counties. While counties like Aiken and Richmond can pursue a broad mix of strategies, others like McDuffie and Edgefield show more targeted or limited engagement across the policy areas.

| | | Aiken County | Allendale County | Barnwell County | Burke County | Columbia County | Edgefield County | McDuffie County | Richmond County |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increase Development Density | Leverage Zoning for Higher Densities | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Promote Innovative Housing Types | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Density Bonuses & Incentives | X | | | | X | | | X |
| | Targeted Redevelopment | X | | | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Utilize Tax Allocation Districts/Tax Increment Financing (TAD/TIF) to Support Targeted Redevelopment | X | | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Prioritize Downtown Development | Encourage Mixed-Use Development | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Adaptive Reuse & Historic Preservation | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| | Streetscape & Public Realm Enhancements | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| | Expand Housing Opportunities Downtown | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| | Incentivize Public-Private Partnerships | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Review Historic District Policies and Procedures | X | | | | | | | X |
| Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure | Expand Water & Sewer Capacity for Growth Areas | X | X | X | X | | X | X | |
| | Enhance Regional Tansportation Connectivity | | X | X | X | | | | |
| | Invest in Broadband Expansion | | X | X | X | | X | X | |
| | Secure State & Federal Infrastructure Funding | | X | X | X | | X | | |
| Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure | Public-Private Parnerships | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Housing Trust Funds | X | | | | X | | | X |
| | Land Banking for Workforce Housing | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| | Employer-Assisted Housing | X | | | | X | | | X |
| | Infrastructure-Like Investments | X | | | | X | | | X |
| | Leverage Public Land | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Recentering & Decentering of Regional High-Wage Employment | Industry Attraction & Expansion | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Invest in Human Capital | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Living Wage Policies | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Economic Development Hubs | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Support Entrepreneurship | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

# Strategic Outlook

## Increase Development Density

The Aiken-Augusta region faces mounting housing affordability challenges, particularly in areas experiencing strong job growth and rising home prices. Many of the region's most desirable residential areas, such as Columbia and Aiken Counties, have land use policies that favor lower-density development, limiting opportunities to deliver housing at price points and volume that meet workforce needs. Meanwhile, in areas where affordability is less of a challenge, infrastructure constraints prevent higher-density housing from being a viable solution. Without strategic interventions, these barriers will continue to drive sprawl, exacerbating transportation challenges, increasing infrastructure costs, and limiting economic mobility for the region's workforce.

Increasing development density, particularly in employment hubs, near major transportation corridors, and in downtown areas, offers a cost-effective, market-driven solution to housing affordability. By allowing for a wider variety of housing types, including townhomes, small-scale multifamily, and mixed-use developments, local governments can expand housing choices without requiring significant public subsidy. Higher-density development also improves the efficiency of public infrastructure investments, making water, sewer, and transportation systems more financially sustainable while fostering walkable, vibrant communities.

Strategically expanding density in targeted areas can reduce pressure on rural communities to absorb future growth while strengthening the tax base in existing urban and suburban areas. However, achieving this requires local governments to modernize zoning regulations, encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties, and provide targeted incentives to ensure that density increases lead to affordable, high-quality housing options rather than simply higher-priced units.

## In Practice

TADs and TIFs can serve as a critical tool for redeveloping underperforming properties and parts of a community defined by obsolete development patterns.

TADs have been used extensively not just in the City of Atlanta where TADs have supported the success of both Atlantic Station and the BeltLine, but also in suburban and exurban communities throughout the greater metro, supporting the conversion of failing or underutilized properties within high-intensity development zones, like Downtown Gainesville, into vibrant mixed-use centers of the community.

**Leverage Zoning for Higher Densities:**
Encourage rezoning and the use of overlays to allow higher-density residential developments, such as multifamily buildings, townhomes, and mixed-use developments, particularly near employment hubs and downtown areas.

**Promote Innovative Housing Types:**
Support the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), micro-units, and other non-traditional housing options to cater to workforce needs.

**Density Bonuses & Incentives:**
Offer density bonuses to developers who include a percentage of units designated for workforce housing, thereby aligning market-rate development with affordability goals.

**Targeted Redevelopment:**
Focus redevelopment efforts on areas with underperforming commercial properties and downtown areas, transforming them into vibrant mixed-use districts. Prioritize projects that integrate residential, retail, and office spaces to create walkable, connected neighborhoods that support local economic growth.

**Utilize Tax Allocation Districts/Tax Increment Financing (TADs/TIFs) to Support Targeted Redevelopment:**
Leverage TADs/TIFs to finance the transformation of aging commercial properties into dynamic mixed-use developments. By reinvesting the increment in property tax revenues, these districts can fund the infrastructure and public amenities necessary to attract private development, catalyzing revitalization and creating appealing places for both residents and businesses.

# Strategic Outlook

## Implementation

**Allowing for more units to be built at price points that working families can afford shouldn't be contentious**, and yet the concept of increasing development density is often especially contentious, particularly in communities that have historically had a suburban or even rural character. While there are so many other inputs that influence production and price points, including the costs of building supplies and labor and interest rates and the lending environment, cities and counties cannot control any of those inputs, which is why they should focus on the thing that they can influence – the density at which units can be developed.

**Allowing a range of unit densities within a given community can help with three different housing related goals:**

1) **Increase the number of units produced.**
   - Allowing for more units to be produced on less land allows for higher housing production yields, providing buyers and renters with a greater number of options and reducing availability pressures in growing markets.
2) **Increase the number of units affordable to lower- and middle-income working households.**
   - When more housing units are able to be constructed on the same piece of land, the units are able to disperse land and other costs of construction in a way that makes each individual unit less expensive to the end user. Above a certain density, some of these benefits may be lost due to the new infrastructure requirements, such as parking decks.
3) **Increase the diversity of the local housing market.**
   - Providing a diversity of options to buyers and renters allows for legacy residents to remain in the community across the full spectrum of life stages and allows potential in-movers to find housing that suits their needs.

**Strategy Category:** Increase Development Density
**Implementable Strategy:** Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
**Objective:** To introduce a higher volume of smaller format affordable units that are consistent with community character.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Review current zoning ordinances to identify whether small format units like cottage courts, tiny homes and ADUs are allowed anywhere within the current code.
2. Revise zoning ordinances to allow the construction of these units by right within existing zones, create new zoning designations where necessary.

**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 Months - 1 Year)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

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**Strategy Category:** Increase Development Density
**Implementable Strategy:** Develop and Adopt a Residential Pre-Approval Catalog
**Objective:** Expedite the administrative and permitting process for private developers while maintaining alignment with community design considerations.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Develop a catalog of development plans (complete with architectural and engineering specifications) for both conventional unit types such as townhomes, single-family detached homes, plexes, and multifamily units as well as less conventional unit types, including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units.
2. Establish connectivity between this pre-approval catalog and existing zoning
3. Circulate the catalog and provide informational sessions to the local development community.

**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 Months - 1 Year)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

# Strategic Outlook

## Implementation

**Strategy Category:** Increase Development Density
**Implementable Strategy:** Rezone or create overlays to allow for higher-density residential development near job centers, along commercial corridors and where existing infrastructure is already sufficient to support higher densities.
**Objective:** To unlock targeted areas within the community to allow for more units to be produced at lower per-unit costs
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Identify strategic areas within the community that are "housing ready" in that the infrastructure there is already adequate enough to support new housing production at higher densities such as:
   a) Historic downtowns
   b) Commercial corridors
   c) Non-industrial job centers
2. Implement rezoning of these areas or adopt overlays that allow for increased residential density, engaging the public as necessary.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Increase Development Density
**Implementable Strategy:** Create incentive tools, such as Tax Allocation Districts/Tax Increment Financing districts to support commercial redevelopment and infill projects that create housing units.
**Objective:** Incentivize redevelopment projects and support infrastructure costs for projects that increase residential density and either increase unit diversity, incorporate affordable units, or both
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Pass any necessary enabling legislation via referendum.
2. Prepare and adopt redevelopment plan to set up the TAD or TIF
3. Create a set of straightforward polices and procedures for administering the TAD/TIF and an intuitive application with a transparent approval process
4. Focus on using TAD/TIF to incentivize specific developments rather than leveraging it to create area-wide infrastructure improvements.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Increase Development Density
**Implementable Strategy:** Reduce parking minimums while also increasing transportation alternatives
**Objective:** Reduce the infrastructure costs associated with parking for individual developments by making community investments in bike-ped and bus infrastructure
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Prepare a strategy for gradually reducing parking minimums within walkable nodes
2. Make plans for reducing these minimums along corridors where alternative transportation investments are planned.

**Priority Level:** Long-term (3 Years+)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Columbia, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Increase Development Density
**Implementable Strategy:** Create a program aimed at supporting small-scale developers.
**Objective:** Reduce the barrier to entry and expand the number of entities working to produce new housing units.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Determine the thresholds for determining whether a developer or project should be considered small-scale.
2. Create a program that offers technical support, grants and expedited rezoning and permitting for those who qualify as small-scale developers.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties, Cities, Regional entities

# Strategic Outlook

## Prioritize Downtown Development

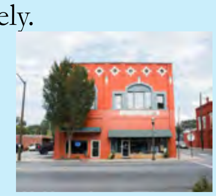
Downtowns in the Aiken-Augusta region serve as economic, cultural, and residential hubs, but many struggle to attract sustained investment. While Augusta and Aiken benefit from strong employment bases, historic charm, and walkable environments, smaller county seats like Thomson, Waynesboro, Edgefield, and Barnwell face challenges from aging infrastructure, vacancies, and shifting retail trends that limit their vitality.

Investing in downtowns offers high returns for local governments, as existing infrastructure can support higher-density housing and commercial growth. Encouraging infill development, adaptive reuse, and placemaking can attract residents, businesses, and visitors while expanding the tax base. Revitalization also helps meet workforce housing needs, reducing long commutes by creating housing near jobs.

To unlock downtown potential, local governments must remove redevelopment barriers, offer financial incentives, and engage the private sector. Strengthening these areas will boost economic competitiveness, enhance quality of life, and create vibrant, walkable communities that attract new residents and businesses.

## In Practice

Creating successes downtown can provide a given community with a lifestyle advantage over other communities. Cities like Cedartown, Georgia, which recently revamped its façade program to help enhance the attractiveness of its downtown, Brunswick, which has seen consistent and growing turn out for First Friday programming and Moultrie, which has invested in creating parks and other public infrastructure downtown are all leading examples of cities that are leveraging downtown assets effectively.



**Encourage Mixed-Use Development:**
Downtown areas should support residential, retail, and office spaces within walkable environments to create vibrant, 18-hour districts. Local policies should streamline approvals for mixed-use projects and support incentives for developers willing to invest in these areas.

**Adaptive Reuse & Historic Preservation:**
Many of the region's downtowns feature historic commercial buildings and warehouses that could be repurposed for loft-style apartments, co-working spaces, and boutique retail. Expanding state and federal historic tax credit utilization can help finance these conversions.

**Streetscape & Public Realm Enhancements:**
Investments in sidewalks, lighting, green spaces, and outdoor gathering areas can enhance the appeal of downtowns and attract foot traffic. Streetscape improvements in Augusta and Aiken have already demonstrated their ability to spur new private investment.

**Expand Housing Opportunities Downtown:**
Downtowns currently lack moderate-income housing options. Encouraging small-scale multifamily housing (townhomes, stacked flats, and smaller apartment buildings) will diversify housing stock and make downtown living accessible to a wider range of residents.

**Incentivize Public-Private Partnerships:**
Public investments in infrastructure, parking, and public amenities can de-risk private development and attract new investment into downtown cores. Establishing a Downtown Redevelopment Incentive Fund could help fill financial gaps for catalytic projects.

**Review Historic District Policies & Procedures:**
Many of the Aiken-Augusta region's downtowns contain historic districts that offer unique architectural character and cultural value, making them prime locations for revitalization and reinvestment. However, overly restrictive historic preservation policies can sometimes create barriers to adaptive reuse and new development.

# Strategic Outlook

## Implementation

| | |
|---|---|
| **Strategy Category:** Prioritize Downtown Development<br>**Implementable Strategy:** Form a Downtown Development Authority (DDA)<br>**Objective:** Establish a dedicated entity to facilitate revitalization, investment and coordination within the downtown area<br>**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**<br>1. Pass the necessary ordinance or resolution required by the jurisdiction.<br>2. Structure the DDA Board to include city, county, property owners, and community members.<br>3. Set a geographic scope and tax millage rate for the authority.<br>4. Consider joining the Georgia or South Carolina Main Street Program for technical support.<br>**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 months – 1 Year)<br>**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond<br>**Action Taken By:** Cities | **Strategy Category:** Prioritize Downtown Development<br>**Implementable Strategy:** Promote safety and attractiveness in downtown through events programming<br>**Objective:** Increase downtown activity, desirability and housing market conditions through consistent, community-driven events.<br>**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**<br>1. Design programming around local strengths and interests (e.g. First Fridays, farmers markets).<br>2. Partner with local businesses, artists, and organizations.<br>3. Incorporate pedestrian-friendly interventions (e.g. street closures).<br>4. Promote events across various media channels to maximize attendance.<br>**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 months – 1 Year)<br>**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond<br>**Action Taken By:** Cities and DDAs |
| **Strategy Category:** Prioritize Downtown Development<br>**Implementable Strategy:** Create a façade grant program<br>**Objective:** Improve the appearance and perception of downtown to support business activity and property value growth, encourage downtown housing development<br>**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**<br>1. Allocate funding via the general fund or DDA budget.<br>2. Identify the most suitable entity to administer the program.<br>3. Design an accessible application and transparent review process.<br>4. Publicize the program widely among downtown property owners.<br>**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)<br>**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond<br>**Action Taken By:** Cities and DDAs | **Strategy Category:** Prioritize Downtown Development<br>**Implementable Strategy:** Leverage Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) or Tax Increment Financing (TIF)<br>**Objective:** Use value capture financing tools to support redevelopment of underperforming downtown areas to include more housing.<br>**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**<br>1. Adopt redevelopment powers via enabling referendum (if necessary).<br>2. Draft and adopt a TAD/TIF redevelopment plan.<br>3. Formally adopt the plan through the sponsoring local government.<br>4. Establish clear TAD/TIF administrative policies and procedures.<br>**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)<br>**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond<br>**Action Taken By:** Cities and DDAs |

# Strategic Outlook

## Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure

The ability to accommodate new housing and economic growth in the Aiken-Augusta region is directly tied to the capacity and quality of its infrastructure systems. While Richmond and Columbia Counties have relatively well-developed water, sewer, and transportation networks, rural and transitioning counties like Aiken, Barnwell, Allendale, and Burke face significant infrastructure limitations that restrict their ability to attract housing investment and economic development. Without targeted infrastructure improvements, the region will struggle to balance growth between urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Water and sewer capacity are among the most pressing concerns. Many rural and suburban areas lack the necessary infrastructure to support high-density housing development, which in the context of the region can mean anything from two units to an acre to twelve, leading to increased reliance on septic systems and costly infrastructure extensions that deter private investment. Similarly, transportation infrastructure gaps, including inadequate road connectivity and limited transit options, make it more difficult for workers to access job centers, increasing commute burdens and limiting regional workforce mobility.

To sustain long-term growth, local governments must prioritize infrastructure investments in areas with strong development potential, seek state and federal funding opportunities, and explore public-private partnerships to ensure that infrastructure expansion aligns with economic and housing development goals. Improving infrastructure in emerging growth areas like Edgefield, McDuffie, Burke and Barnwell Counties will help ensure that the region's economic expansion does not come at the cost of worsening affordability and uneven development patterns.

### In Practice

The outward movement of residential growth patterns away from central cities and into more rural parts of the state of Georgia have resulted in increased housing pressures and increase infrastructure concerns for many rural and exurban counties across the state.

Metro Atlanta's Highway 400 Corridor in particular has seen tremendous growth pressures over the last fifteen years, which spurred the cities of Dawsonville and Dahlonega to expand their water and sewer capacity to accommodate future growth. Years later, these infrastructure investments have allowed both cities to grow their residential and commercial inventory.

**Expand Water & Sewer Capacity for Growth Areas:** Counties like Edgefield, McDuffie, and Burke have development-ready land but lack the water and sewer infrastructure needed to support higher-density housing and commercial growth. Targeted investments in utility expansion projects will unlock new development opportunities.

**Enhance Regional Transportation Connectivity:** Many workers in the region commute long distances due to the mismatch between jobs and housing affordability. Strengthening regional road networks and exploring commuter transit options could improve accessibility to job centers while reducing congestion.

**Invest in Broadband Expansion:** In rural counties, lack of reliable broadband access is a major barrier to both residential and economic growth. Expanding broadband infrastructure will support remote work opportunities, educational access, and small business development.

**Secure Local, State & Federal Funding:** Counties with major infrastructure deficits should aggressively pursue funding from state and federal sources, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Program, and the Georgia and South Carolina Departments of Transportation.

# Strategic Outlook

## Implementation

**Strategy Category:** Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure
**Implementable Strategy:** Leverage available state and federal funding for water and sewer expansion
**Objective:** Support new housing and economic development through expanded utility infrastructure.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Identify catalytic infrastructure projects and estimate costs.
2. Apply for funds via GEFA, SCRIA, USDA, and HUD.
    - Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) & Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
    - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development, Water and Environmental Programs
    - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
3. Engage grant writers or consultants for complex applications.
4. Implement tracking systems to monitor application status and impact on housing development if/when funds are obtained.

**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 months – 1 Year)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Edgefield, McDuffie
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure
**Implementable Strategy:** Create special tax districts to fund infrastructure improvements
**Objective:** Generate consistent local revenue to support investment in transportation, water, and sewer projects.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Identify key areas needing infrastructure investment.
2. Select the most appropriate district tool (SSD, CID, TAD/TIF).
    - Special Service Districts (SSD): Created by a city or county without voter approval, SSDs impose a new tax within a defined area to fund infrastructure improvements or repay bonds.
    - Community Improvement Districts (CID): Voluntarily formed by commercial property owners, CIDs levy an additional tax to fund infrastructure upgrades that benefit both members and the broader community.
    - Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) / Tax Increment Financing (TIF): These districts capture growth in property tax revenue within a defined area to fund redevelopment, without raising tax rates. They require enabling legislation and can be effective when focused on incentivizing private investment through infrastructure improvements.
3. Engage stakeholders and educate the public (as needed).
4. Use proceeds for catalytic infrastructure improvements.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

# Strategic Outlook

## Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure

Workforce housing is often overlooked as a key component of regional economic competitiveness, business retention, and community stability. Across the Aiken-Augusta region, rising home prices and rental costs in higher-demand areas are making it increasingly difficult for essential workers, such as teachers, healthcare workers, public safety personnel, and service industry employees, to afford housing near their places of employment. Meanwhile, in rural counties where housing remains more affordable, a lack of investment in modern, energy-efficient housing limits housing choice and quality.

Like roads, utilities, and public facilities, workforce housing is essential infrastructure that supports the region's long-term economic health. Without adequate workforce housing, local employers struggle to attract and retain employees, leading to labor shortages and potential economic stagnation. Incentivizing the development of workforce housing ensures that a range of housing options exist for workers at different income levels, strengthening regional workforce stability and reducing the economic costs associated with long commutes.

A proactive workforce housing strategy involves public-private partnerships, targeted incentives, and local policies that prioritize housing for middle-income and essential workers. Local governments must recognize that failing to address workforce housing shortages will have long-term consequences for business recruitment, job growth, and overall economic resilience. By investing in workforce housing, the Aiken-Augusta region can ensure that its economic growth is sustainable and inclusive.

### In Practice

The City of Atlanta has been a pioneer in the territory of effectively leveraging public lands to support the development of housing units, particularly affordable housing units, throughout the city. A key component of this program has been the city's efforts to undertake the groundwork of obtaining the necessary entitlements and rezoning for key parcels in their inventory that they would like to see developed. The tangible outcome of this has been the production of roughly 10,000 units on city-owned land over the last four years.

**Public-Private Partnerships:**
Collaborate with private developers to pool resources for workforce housing projects, providing publicly owned land or financial incentives to offset costs.

**Housing Trust Funds:**
Establish or expand a housing trust fund dedicated to creating and preserving affordable workforce housing. Use these funds for land acquisition, construction subsidies, or gap financing.

**Land Banking for Workforce Housing:**
Acquire underutilized or strategically located parcels for future workforce housing development, ensuring a long-term pipeline of affordable housing.

**Employer-Assisted Housing:**
Partner with large employers to develop housing programs that offer subsidies, down payment assistance, or rental support to their employees.

**Infrastructure-Like Investments:**
Treat workforce housing as essential infrastructure, similar to roads and utilities, with direct public investments to ensure it is built in critical areas where private markets struggle to meet demand.

**Leverage Public Land:**
Publicly owned land represents a significant opportunity to expand workforce housing options without the high land acquisition costs that often make affordable housing infeasible. Across the Aiken-Augusta region, underutilized government-owned parcels, surplus school district properties, and publicly controlled redevelopment sites could be strategically repurposed for housing that serves teachers, healthcare workers, first responders, and other essential workforce groups.

# Strategic Outlook

## Implementation

**Strategy Category:** Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure
**Implementable Strategy:** Leverage public land for affordable housing development
**Objective:** Unlock the potential of publicly owned land to address local housing needs.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Audit and inventory underutilized publicly owned land.
2. Identify housing-suitable sites and issue RFPs.
3. Offer land at low/no cost, remove barriers (e.g. rezone prior to issuing RFP).
4. Negotiate terms and support development through entitlements.
5. **Priority Level:** Urgent (6 Months - 1 Year)

**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure
**Implementable Strategy:** Establish a Land Bank or Leverage Existing Land Bank
**Objective:** Convert abandoned and tax-delinquent properties into housing and community assets.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Establish the land bank through intergovernmental agreement.
2. Set acquisition and disposition policies.
3. Begin strategic acquisition of key properties.
4. Market land to qualified developers and households to support redevelopment, renovation and affordable homeownership.

**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 Months - 1 Year)
**Applicable Communities:** Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure
**Implementable Strategy:** Establish a Housing Trust Fund
**Objective:** Support the production of affordable housing through flexible, locally controlled funding.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Identify a sustainable revenue stream (e.g. impact fees).
2. Form the fund through ordinance or resolution.
3. Create clear policies, application, and award procedures.
4. Award funds to projects that meet affordability goals.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Columbia, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties or Regional Entity

**Strategy Category:** Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure
**Implementable Strategy:** Create inclusionary zoning overlay districts
**Objective:** Ensure that a share of new housing in high-demand areas is affordable to local workers.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**

1. Identify high-demand growth areas suitable for overlays, avoid installing overly broad IZ overlays.
2. Define affordability thresholds and minimum affordable unit requirements.
3. Establish fee-in-lieu options tied to the housing trust fund (Optional).
4. Monitor production and adjust overlay policy as needed.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

# Strategic Outlook

## Recentering Regional Employment Spatial Distribution

The Aiken-Augusta region's high-wage employment remains concentrated in specific industries and geographic areas, creating economic disparities between urban, suburban, and rural communities. High-paying jobs at Fort Gordon, the Savannah River Site, and in the healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and energy sectors (e.g., Plant Vogtle) broadly are critical drivers of the regional economy, yet their locations do not always align with areas where workforce housing is most accessible. This misalignment forces many workers to commute long distances or relocate to more affordable but economically weaker areas that offer less to potential residents in terms of retail and community amenities and services.

The decentralization of high-wage employment presents an opportunity to create more balanced regional job growth. By expanding professional and technical employment centers beyond Augusta's urban core, the region can reduce commute burdens, stimulate local economies, and distribute economic opportunities more equitably. Supporting smaller job hubs in suburban and rural areas would allow more residents to find high-quality employment closer to home, reducing congestion and improving work-life balance.

At the same time, recentering high-wage employment means ensuring that existing economic hubs remain competitive. Strengthening downtown Augusta's business climate, modernizing office space in suburban communities, and investing in high-quality commercial developments will help retain employers and attract new industries. By strategically balancing job growth across the region, investing in workforce development, and modernizing employment centers, the Aiken-Augusta region can maximize its economic potential while ensuring that housing and workforce accessibility remain aligned.

### In Practice

The onset of the pandemic accelerated long-gestating trends pertaining to remote work and office utilization. As companies and employees realized that they could work from anywhere, older, less amenitized office "died" while new, amenity-rich office integrated into impressionable places saw great success, even, and perhaps especially, in the suburbs.

Around the Atlanta metro, coworking brands like Thrive are succeeding as far away from the central city as Cumming and Gainesville offering small, flexible office space offerings integrated into mixed-use districts that offer live-work-play lifestyles.

**Industry Attraction & Expansion:**
Focus economic development efforts on attracting industries that offer high-wage jobs, particularly in technology, healthcare, professional services, and advanced manufacturing.

**Invest in Human Capital:**
Invest in skills training and educational programs that enable workers to transition into higher-paying roles within emerging and in-demand industries.

**Living Wage Policies:**
Encourage or incentivize employers to provide wages that align with the cost of living in the Aiken-Augusta Region, ensuring workers can afford to live in the communities they serve.

**Economic Development Hubs:**
Create mixed-use employment centers within the region to support the growth of high-wage jobs. By creating vibrant mixed-use centers, the region has the chance to renew its attractiveness to office employers seeking the highest-quality office spaces to attract quality talent back into in-office work settings.

**Support Entrepreneurship:**
Continue to foster small business growth and entrepreneurship by providing grants, low-interest loans, and resources to create high-value local jobs.

# Strategic Outlook

## Implementation

**Strategy Category:** Recentering Regional Employment
**Implementable Strategy:** Revise zoning ordinances to support housing near employment centers
**Objective:** Encourage housing near major employers to reduce commute burdens, diversify housing options and support economic mobility
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**
1. Map employment centers and assess compatibility with residential uses.
2. Identify areas where residential zoning changes are viable
3. Modify zoning to support housing units that vary in typology and price point near compatible employment centers.
4. Work with local stakeholders to ensure alignment with community goals.

**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities

**Strategy Category:** Recentering Regional Employment
**Implementable Strategy:** Partner with employers to improve worker transportation access.
**Objective:** Expand access to jobs for low-income residents by improving transportation to key job hubs.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**
1. Survey employers to understand worker commute challenges.
2. Design or modify routes to match shift schedules and origins.
3. Identify and secure funding from local government and industry sponsors to provide public and quasi-public transportation services.
4. Pilot new routes and adapt service based on usage and feedback.

**Priority Level:** Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Columbia, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties and Cities in partnership with regional employers

**Strategy Category:** Recentering Regional Employment
**Implementable Strategy:** Align industry recruitment efforts with job training programs
**Objective:** Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**
1. Identify the target industries of regional economic development teams.
2. Create an official channel of communication between economic development directors, industry and local job training programs.
3. Identify potential sponsors and public sources of revenue that can support the operation of cutting-edge training programs and the development of new job training facilities as necessary.

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, Columbia, Edgefield, McDuffie, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties, Cities and Regional Entities in partnership with regional employers

**Strategy Category:** Recentering Regional Employment
**Implementable Strategy:** Employer-sponsored housing
**Objective:** Establish an incentive framework that encourages local employers to become invested stakeholders and partners in public efforts to address workforce housing needs.
**Recommended Guide to Implementation:**
1. Create local tax benefit incentives for local employers that either:
    a) Assume financier roles in the development of workforce housing units OR
    b) Which subsidize employee rental costs within the jurisdiction AND/OR
    c) Provide employees with down payment assistance

**Priority Level:** Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)
**Applicable Communities:** Aiken, Columbia, Richmond
**Action Taken By:** Counties, Cities and Regional Entities in partnership with regional employers

# Strategic Outlook

## Addressing Barriers to Implementation

While the strategies and recommendations outlined in this study offer pathways to address the Aiken-Augusta region's housing challenges, their implementation may be hindered by several key barriers. These include limitations in organizational and administrative capacity, resource scarcity, a lack of regional coordination, and resistance to development. What these barriers look like and how they are overcome will look different for each community, but if a consistent throughline were to be drawn, it would point towards a need for clearer communication, greater cooperation and creative approaches to increasing the availability of resources, both financial and technical.

### Organizational & Administrative Capacity

Building networks locally that bring together the right individuals and entities to have conversations regularly can have an unquantifiable and powerful impact on solving local housing issues.

Developing these networks can create better lines of communication between the development community, employers, local government officials, politicians and lay citizens and can reduce the friction that often slows the implementation of needed housing market interventions.

**1** For communities with few resources to increase capacity, consider forming a voluntary "Housing Cabinet" that meets regularly to discuss housing related topics and issues. Under-resourced communities should consider applying to grants to help with capacity building that fund permanent positions.

**2** For communities that have the resources, hiring or designating a permanent staff member or team that is tasked with waking up every day and thinking about local housing issues can be the first step towards building the necessary capacity to address local issues.

### Resource Scarcity

For many communities within the region, it is not a matter of not being aware of local housing issues or not wanting to address them, but a lack of resources that prevent communities from:

1. Planning – Taking an inventory of existing community assets and assessing the technical and financial scale of required improvements to stabilize or stimulate the local housing and job markets.
2. Implementing – Deploying the necessary staff and financing to turn planning efforts into real world interventions

**1** If resources were abundant and easy to obtain, there would be no need for a conversation about overcoming this barrier. Resources available at the state and federal level, especially as they relate to housing related issues are often scarce and highly competitive. In order to secure new resources to support local efforts, communities should focus on increasing their competitive edge by increasing the technical capacity of grant-writing staff and by participating in regional and state programs that position counties and cities as more attractive grant applicants.

**2** For communities with limited resources, or those hesitant to allocate existing funds toward housing, establishing new local revenue streams can be highly beneficial. Tools such as Special Service Districts, Community Improvement Districts, and Tax Allocation Districts/Tax Increment Financing can provide locally controlled funding to support housing initiatives.

# Strategic Outlook

## Addressing Barriers to Implementation

### Regional Coordination

While every city and county has a unique set of housing issues, communities across all eight counties face challenges that are common across not just the region but also each state and broader Southeast. Engaging in ongoing regional and statewide housing conversations can help local governments and stakeholders better contextualize these issues and identify effective solutions.

Additionally, there are many issues that are occurring at the regional level which cannot be solved if counties and cities continue to operate in silos. Coordinated efforts will be necessary to create stable and efficient housing markets that address the full spectrum of housing needs across the region.

1. There are three regional planning commissions, The Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission, The Upper Savannah Council of Governments and the Lower Savannah Council of Governments which provide pre-existing organizational and administrative infrastructure for coordinating around housing and economic development issues. Getting involved with these planning entities and other non-profit organizations that service the region can be excellent venues for cities and county leaders to convene, seek technical support and secure grants and other resources.

2. Currently there are very few bi-state governmental organizations tasked with coordinating regionally. The primary entity that does so is Augusta Regional Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (the ARTS MPO), which as the name suggests, coordinates on transportation related matters. Similar efforts to coordinate housing should be explored, either by evolving this MPO infrastructure to consider housing issues as well or to create a new organization or set of organizations that work to coordinate housing and economic development efforts, offering funding opportunities and technical support.

### Resistance to Development

Growth and history often collide, especially in regions like Aiken-Augusta, where recent and projected investment, such as expansions at Fort Gordon, the Savannah River Site, and new industrial employers, continues to drive economic momentum.

While these investments strengthen wages, tax bases, and quality of life, they also place pressure on housing markets, requiring new development in historically low-growth areas and higher-density housing in traditionally low-density, suburban communities.

For legacy residents of the region and the governments that represent them, resistance to community growth pressures and transition can come from fears that said changes will negatively impact property values and more intangible factors such as way of life. This organized resistance can be hard to navigate and can stand in the way of allowing markets to function as they need to, causing housing prices to increase or the availability of homes to decrease.

1. For some communities, reframing growth as a natural process and rejecting growth opportunities as a set of lost opportunities for the community quantified as fewer services and lower capacity to deliver new community amenities like parks may be effective. Additionally, communities can aim to plan in the positive by providing real and approachable examples of growth that can help to alleviate community fears around growth and development.

2. For some communities, no amount of reframing growth as a positive will be effective. For such communities where the growth pressures are real but resistance to growth is insurmountable, an interim goal may be to negotiate "sacrifice zones", or areas where there is buy-in around some level of growth occurring, either among staff or with input from the community.

# Fiscal Impacts of Housing

# Methodology

### Goal of Assessing Fiscal Impacts of Housing

**To determine the annual tax benefit derived from delivering housing units at a rate that meets market demand to each county in the region relative to the benefits of delivering at status quo or historic rates.**

## Housing Segmentation & Market Valuation

To evaluate fiscal contributions, housing units were categorized into 12 market segments based on rental price and home value. These segments were established using historical five-year housing deliveries

Median values for each segment were established to serve as representative averages for fiscal modeling. Market values of rental housing were estimated by aggregating the rental income of units within each segment and applying county-specific capitalization rates.

## Estimating Taxable Property

Property values were adjusted to reflect assessment practices and homestead exemptions in the following ways:

1. The total market values of rental and for-sale units were assumed to be appraised at 80% of their market value based on prior assessment trends.
2. Senior homestead exemptions were estimated using the proportion of county residents aged 65 and older.
3. Taxable values were determined in accordance with state-specific assessment practices:
   - Georgia Counties: Appraised value multiplied by 40%
   - South Carolina Counties: Appraised value multiplied by 4%

## Annual Tax Revenue Calculation

Each county's taxable value was then multiplied by the applicable millage rates for county and school district property taxes to determine total tax revenues generated from housing development**. Fiscal benefit was quantified as the difference between the revenues generated by each dataset:**

1. Historical Housing Deliveries (Past Five Years) – To establish a baseline of tax revenues from recently developed housing.
2. Forecasted Housing Demand (Next Five Years) – To estimate future tax revenues if housing demand projections are met.

# Opportunity Costs of Not Meeting Housing Demand

Local governments and schools stand to significantly strengthen their financial stability by meeting market demand for housing. Conversely, counties without adequate housing production risk forfeiting millions in potential tax revenues for education, infrastructure, and community services. Proactive planning and policies can facilitate residential development in a manner that balances growth with fiscal sustainability. Increased housing supply contributes directly to local government revenues, supporting services such as education, infrastructure, and public safety.

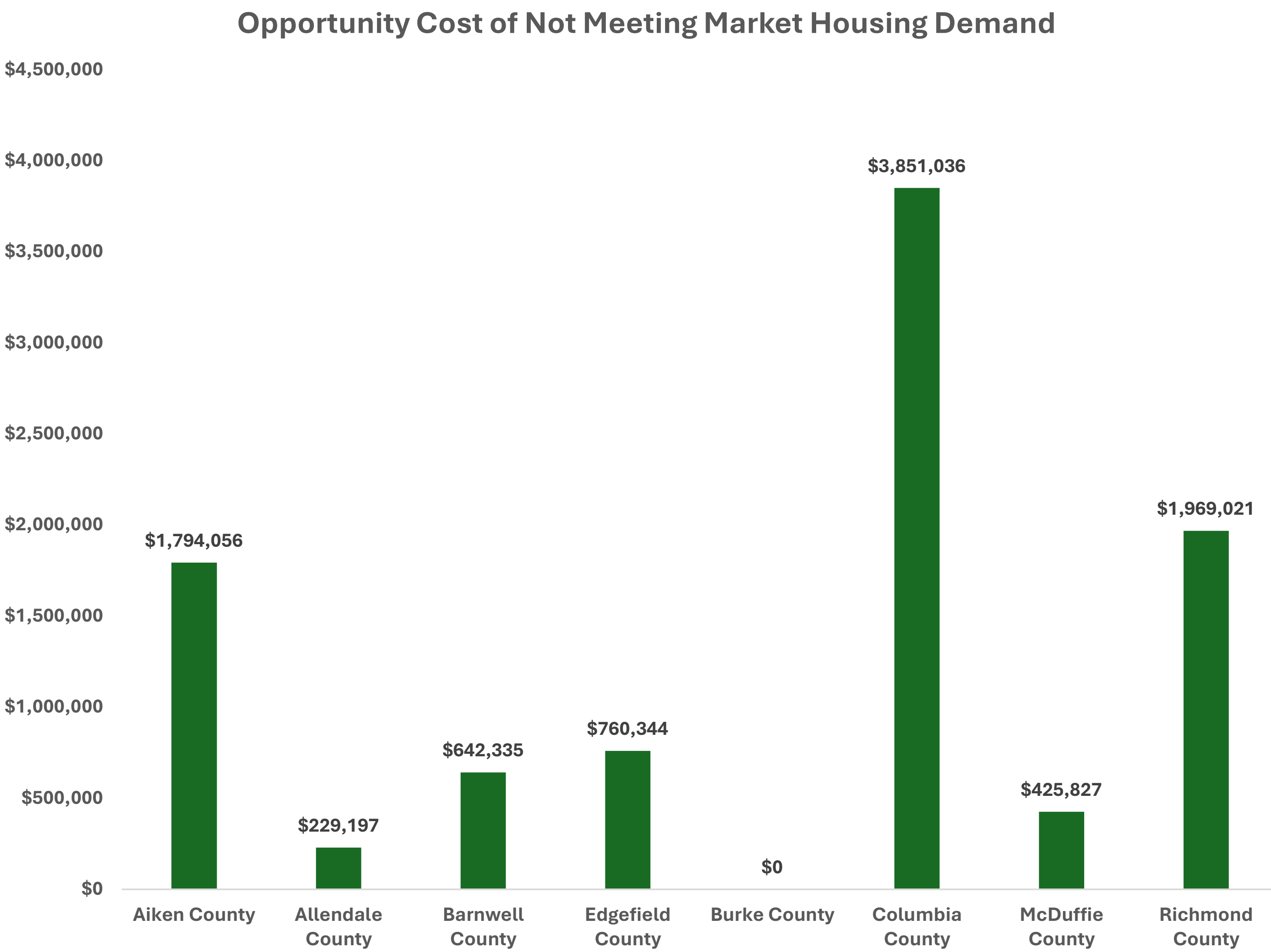
The fiscal impact analysis of regional housing development demonstrates the significant role that housing production plays in generating tax revenues for counties and school systems. First, tax revenue is estimated in a status quo scenario where housing units are produced at the same rate that they have been for the last five years. Second, tax revenue is estimated in a scenario where a county builds enough new housing units to meet projected demand. The difference between these two scenarios is the fiscal benefit that a county or school district could realize from housing production.
Every county and school district analyzed stands to gain significant new revenue, reinforcing the importance of continued housing development as a mechanism for funding public services.

| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aiken County | County | $1,269,673 | $1,807,721 | $538,048 | **$1,794,056** |
| | School | $2,963,894 | $4,219,901 | $1,256,007 | |
| Allendale County | County | $50,890 | $152,410 | $101,521 | **$229,197** |
| | School | $64,001 | $191,678 | $127,677 | |
| Barnwell County | County | $123,231 | $265,606 | $142,375 | **$642,335** |
| | School | $432,732 | $932,691 | $499,959 | |
| Edgefield County | County | $103,287 | $330,651 | $227,363 | **$760,344** |
| | School | $242,124 | $775,105 | $532,981 | |
| Burke County | County | $211,071 | $183,629 | N/A | **N/A** |
| | School | $376,913 | $327,910 | N/A | |
| Columbia County | County | $1,526,787 | $2,715,853 | $1,189,065 | **$3,851,036** |
| | School | $3,418,033 | $6,080,003 | $2,661,971 | |
| McDuffie County | County | $50,359 | $188,194 | $137,836 | **$425,827** |
| | School | $105,218 | $393,210 | $287,991 | |
| Richmond County | County | $5,379,143 | $6,299,262 | $920,119 | **$1,969,021** |
| | School | $6,132,030 | $7,180,932 | $1,048,902 | |
| **Total** | | $22,449,386 | $32,321,054 | $9,871,669 | **$9,671,815** |

# Opportunity Costs of Not Meeting Housing Demand

Counties with larger populations and stronger housing markets, such as Columbia County and Richmond County, are poised to receive the largest fiscal benefits from new development. If the counties create enough housing to meet forecasted demand they are projected to collect over $5 million more than if they continued building at the status quo rate. Columbia County in particular has a large opportunity because of the pent up housing demand that would go unmet under the status quo. Aiken County could also see notable fiscal benefits, with a projected increase of over $1.26 million in school tax revenue alone.

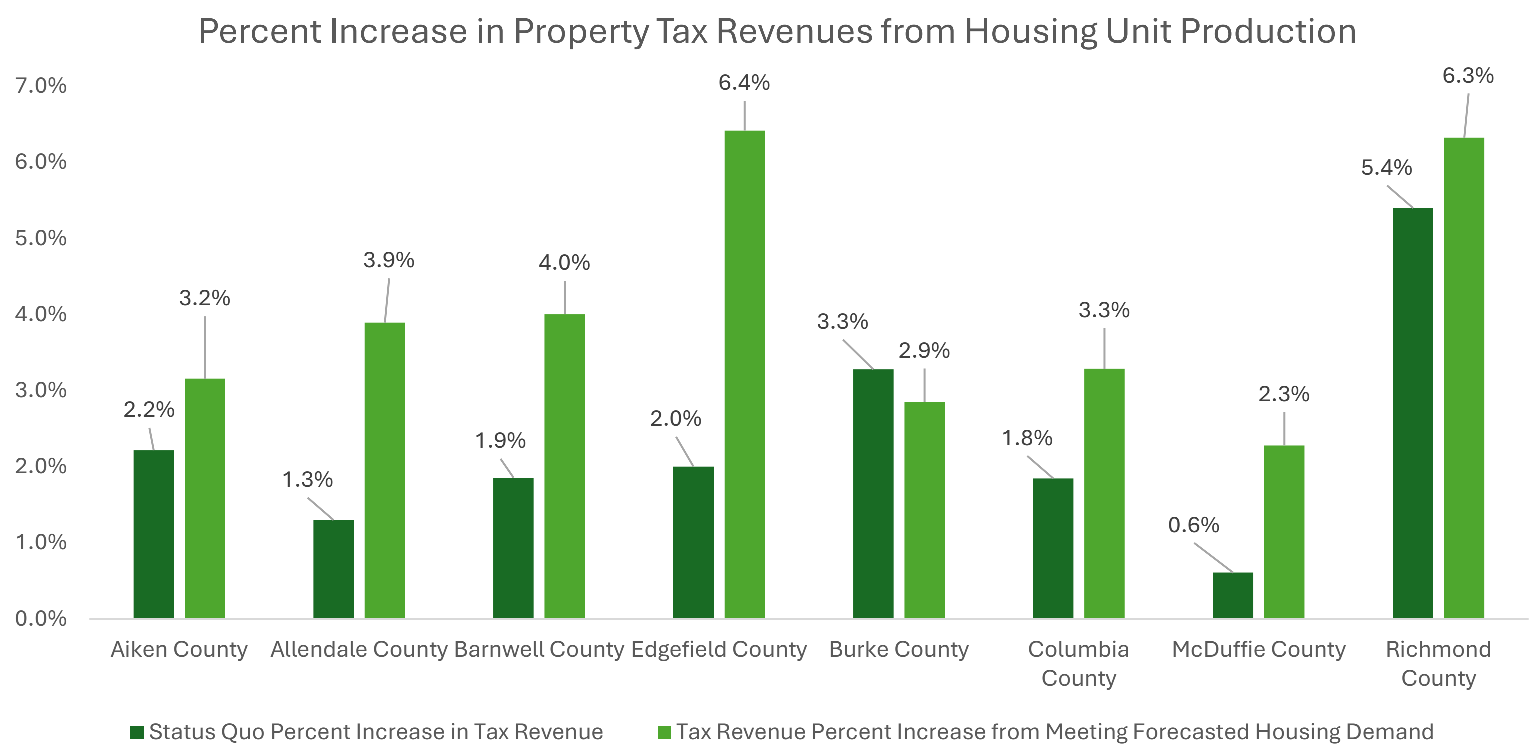
In smaller counties such as Allendale and McDuffie, the projected fiscal gains are relatively modest but still meaningful within their local economic contexts. These figures are important to consider as rural counties, particularly those facing significant challenges, such as Barnwell and Allendale, seek to incentivize housing production within their jurisdictions. While up-front investments in infrastructure might represent a steep barrier to cross, creating new, tax producing units within these counties can help to bolster the long-term fiscal sustainability of these communities. Notably, Burke County's historic deliveries surpass forecasted demand for the county following the completion of construction at Plant Vogtle, for this reason, delivering at historic levels would actually be of greater fiscal benefit to the county than meeting demand over the next five years.



# Opportunity Costs of Not Meeting Housing Demand

The graph below standardizes the comparison of fiscal benefits of housing unit production yielded in each scenario for each county in the region by reporting them as an estimate of percent increase in property tax revenues. The percentage increases depicted in the graph below should be understood in two ways:

1. The height of the status quo percent increase reflects the volume and value of housing units delivered over the past five years. In Richmond County, for instance, while the county's tax revenues are significant, the county added a significant number of multifamily units over the last five years, which often have significant positive tax benefits because of the high total value of such projects.
2. The height of the tax revenue from meeting forecasted housing demand and the difference between this percent increase and the status quo delivery pace reflects the depth of housing unit production gaps in the context of county specific housing demand. The fiscal benefit of delivering at demand versus at status quo production rates is most significant for Allendale, Barnwell, Edgefield, and McDuffie counties where production has remained quite low in the context of county-specific demand pressures.




The three most populous counties – Aiken, Columbia and Richmond – face the highest absolute levels of housing demand. Fully meeting that demand in these counties could add roughly 1% to the increase in property tax revenues expected under the status quo. Meanwhile, Edgefield County faces so much housing demand relative to its existing housing units that it could triple its rate of increase by fully meeting that demand.

Burke County's tax receipts are a regional outlier due to the presence of Plant Vogtle, which accounts for 91% of the county's tax digest and provides significant tax revenue for the county to leverage regardless of how much new housing is delivered. However, this analysis considers only the percent increase of non-utilities property tax revenue, so taxes from Plant Vogtle were removed from the calculation. Additionally, the construction period for the Plant Vogtle expansion project resulted in anomalous housing production to occur over the last five years, meaning that delivering 100% of forecasted demand over the five years to come will result in a smaller percent increase in taxable digest than if the county were to deliver at the historic pace observed over the last five years.

# Aiken County

# Aiken County

## Market Profile

- Adapting water, sewer and road infrastructure
- Strong economic and population growth
- A mix of historic and new housing stock
- Diverse set of community characteristics

## Housing Needs

**Total Five-Year Gap: 1,340 Units**

**In the chart to the right:**

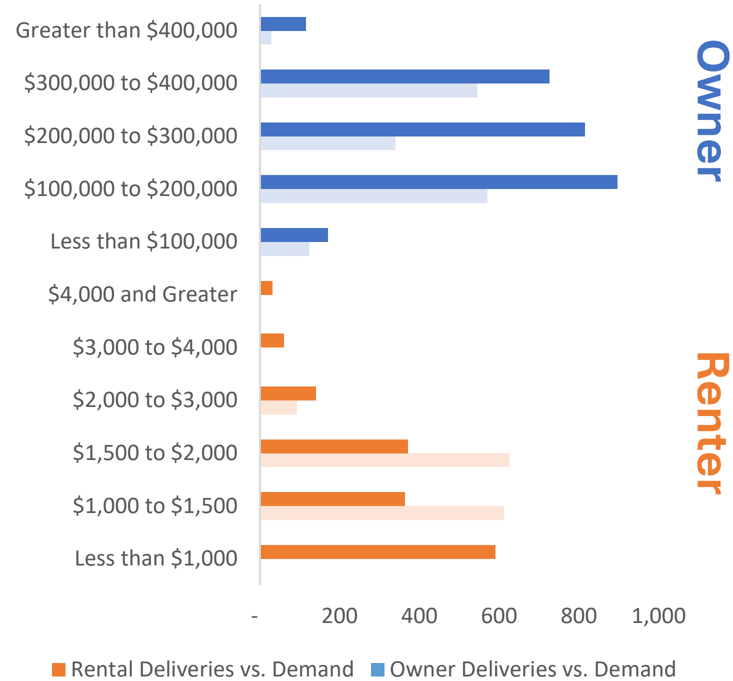
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Entry level for-sale options AND Greater product diversity at the upper end of the spectrum**

**Affordable workforce rentals AND Luxury rental options in amenity-rich locations**

## Total Five-Year Demand: 4,276 Units

Aiken County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




## Implementable Strategies

**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
2. Unlock the potential of publicly owned land to address local housing needs by determining which parcels might be contributed towards private-led housing projects with affordable components.
3. Encourage housing near major employers to reduce commute burdens, diversify housing options and support economic mobility by revising zoning ordinances to allow for a mix of uses.
4. Develop and adopt a residential "Pre-Approval Catalog"

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

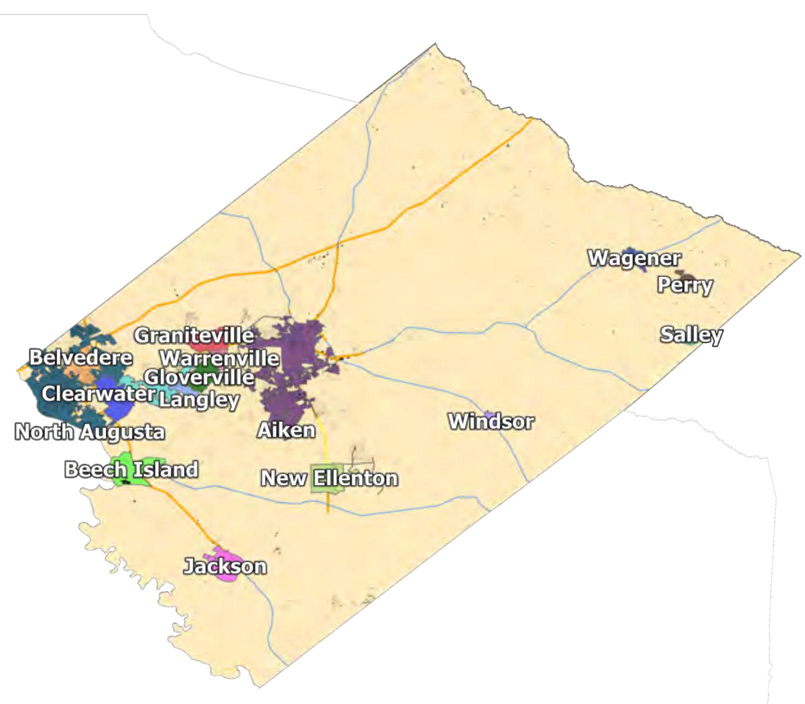
1. Create incentive tools, such as Tax Allocation Districts/Tax Increment Financing districts to support commercial redevelopment and infill projects that create housing units.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Establish an incentive framework that encourages local employers to become invested stakeholders and partners in public efforts to address workforce housing needs through employer-sponsored housing programs.
4. Ensure that a share of new housing in high-demand areas is affordable to local workers by adopting inclusionary zoning overlay districts.

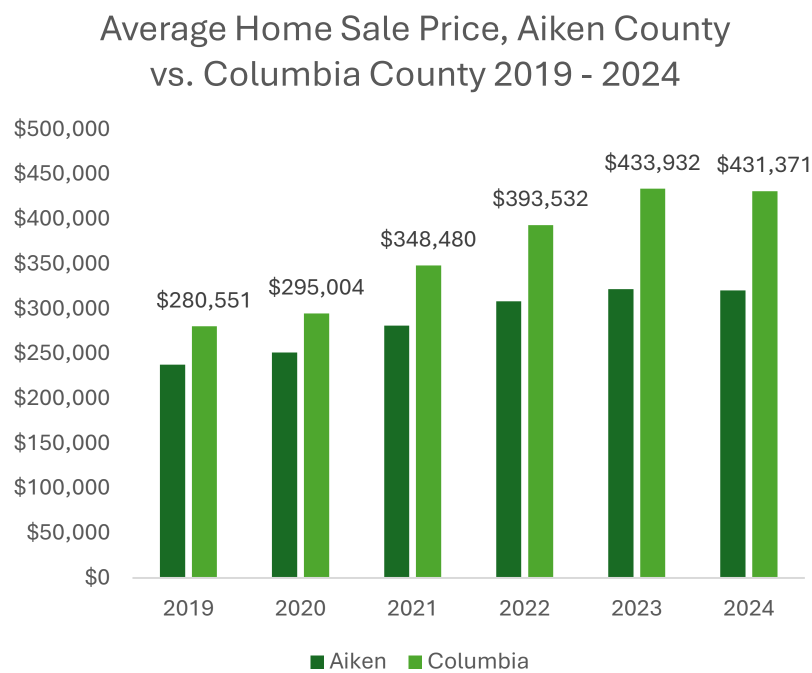
# Aiken County

## Overview

Aiken County, South Carolina is located directly east of Richmond County across the Savannah River. Historically, the county has been defined by its large land area, with local officials and residents often joking that the county is as large as Rhode Island (the county is about 500 square miles smaller than the state), which has made Aiken County a popular location for equestrian farms in addition to productive farms. The county's vastness means that there are many different communities and character areas within the county, including North Augusta, Aiken, Jackson, New Ellenton, Wagener, Belvedere, Vaucluse, Graniteville and Warrenville to name only a few.

North Augusta and Aiken both have seen significant growth over the last few years, with North Augusta receiving more of this growth than Aiken, partly due to its excellent proximity to Augusta and partly as a result of the catalytic mixed-use entertainment district known as Hammond's Ferry, which was constructed adjacent to SRP Park, home of the Augusta GreenJackets. From the City of Aiken west to the Savannah River is considered the developed part of the county, with the areas north and east of Aiken remaining largely rural in character still.




Source: KB Advisory, SmartRE

## Aiken County Housing Today

Aiken County's housing market is undergoing significant shifts, not due to major changes within the county, but due to changes in the region's residential development patterns. Columbia County's recent rejection of new residential development of most varieties has resulted in an observable shift in residential development towards Aiken County, especially over the last five years.

Between 2012 and 2022, Aiken County experienced a 7% increase in its housing inventory, adding an estimated 5,329 housing units over that interval. While the county has seen an increase in multifamily unit deliveries, the majority of the units produced in the 10 years leading up to 2022 were single-family detached units. The age of the county's housing inventory matches the region's average for proportion of units produced since 2000 at 27%.

Aiken County's new construction for-sale products have steadily increased in price since 2019, however the upward shift has been nowhere near as dramatic as in Columbia County. The average price of a home in Aiken County in 2019 was roughly $240,000, where in Columbia County this same average was $280,000. As of late 2024, these figures have grown to $320,000 and

# Aiken County Overview

$430,000 respectively. This increase means that prices in Aiken County have grown by roughly 33% while prices in Columbia County have grown by nearly 55%, resulting in the gap in average home prices to grow from only $40,000 in 2019 to nearly $110,000 as of late 2024. These dynamics reflect both Columbia County's decision to restrict residential development within the county and the growing popularity of the Aiken County housing market as an alternative to Columbia County.

## Barriers & Challenges

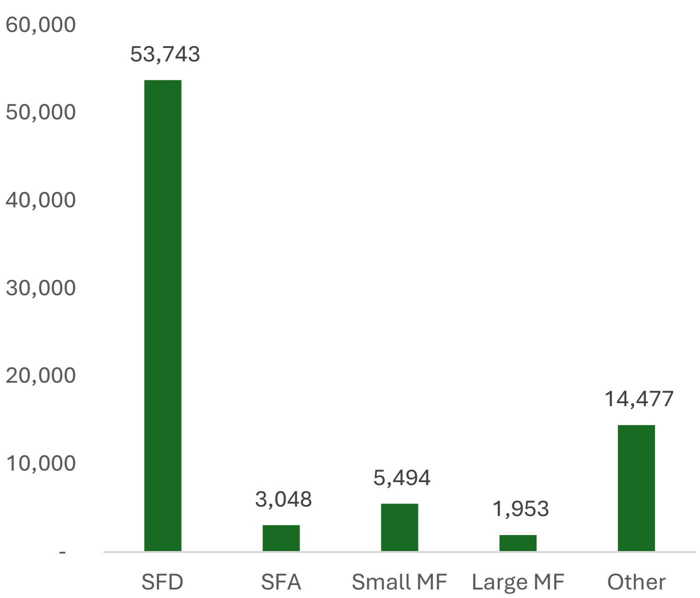
Aiken County faces several barriers to housing market growth and diversity, including infrastructure limitations, historic preservation constraints, market imbalances, and regulatory challenges.
Water and sewer capacity remains a significant concern. While plans are in place to add six million gallons of capacity in the near term, this expansion is only a temporary fix. As Aiken County continues to grow, more substantial upgrades will be necessary to prevent the county from reaching its capacity limits. Ensuring that infrastructure keeps pace with growth will be critical to supporting new housing development.

Both North Augusta and Aiken have historic districts, but their approaches to accommodating growth differ. North Augusta has managed to integrate new development throughout the city, including downtown, while Aiken faces greater restrictions due to its downtown historic overlay. Projects within the overlay are subject to review by a historic district board, which has blocked some recent developments, such as the conversion of an abandoned hotel into apartments.


While historic preservation is an important community priority, the application of these regulations should balance the need for preservation with the benefits of new development. When projects contribute to the vibrancy of downtown, care should be taken to ensure that historic district regulations do not systematically prevent beneficial investments. Both infrastructure constraints and historic preservation considerations highlight the need for intentional planning efforts to guide Aiken County's future growth.

Historically, Aiken County was marketed as a retirement destination, and many new residents moved to the area intending to spend the rest of their lives in the county. While the county's growth trajectory has shifted to include more younger households than ever before, it continues to attract retirees. Additionally, many longtime residents who spent their careers in the region choose to stay after retirement, contributing to low turnover in the existing for-sale housing market.

Aiken County Housing Inventory by Housing Type, 2023



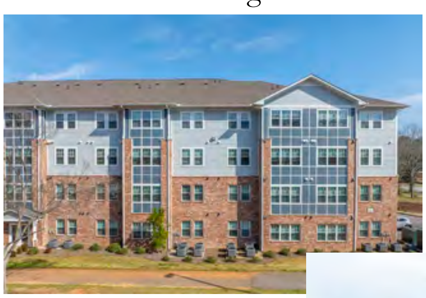

Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2023

# Aiken County Overview

The current interest rate environment has further reduced turnover in existing homes, exacerbating the already low level of resale activity. As a result, most for-sale housing transactions in the county are now concentrated in new construction rather than resales.

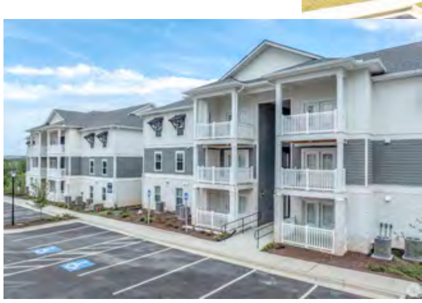
North Augusta has seen a significant increase in multifamily development in recent years. However, the city is preparing to enact a multifamily moratorium for the next two and a half years while it undergoes a formal planning process to determine where and how multifamily housing should be developed in the future. While projects already permitted, representing a substantial number of multifamily units, will continue as planned, the true impact of the moratorium will likely not be felt until three or four years from now, when the development pipeline runs dry. Given that North Augusta has been the primary location for recent multifamily growth in the county, this policy will likely push new multifamily development outside the city limits and into other parts of Aiken County during the moratorium period.

Aiken County's for-sale housing market is relatively uniform, with most new construction delivered at a similar price point. This lack of product differentiation results in a housing market that caters primarily to a narrow income range and life stage while limiting options for other segments of the population. Expanding housing diversity will require collaboration between the county and the development community, including adjusting zoning regulations to allow for housing types that are currently restricted and incentivizing residential development in areas with strong amenities such as parks, trails, and neighborhood-scale retail.



Havenwood Camelia (Built 2022)
Image Source: CoStar

Palisades at Langley Pond (Built 2023)
Image Source: CoStar



The Parker North Augusta (Built 2024)
Image Source: CoStar

Aiken County continues to experience a disconnect between the types of workers it must attract, particularly those employed at the Savannah River Site (SRS) and in local industries, and the housing options available in the area.

Many of these workers are highly educated professionals coming from larger metropolitan areas, yet the region lacks housing that aligns with their expectations. Hammond's Ferry is one of the only developments in the region that successfully bridges this gap, offering a distinct sense of place, connections to local trail networks, neighborhood-scale retail, and proximity to SRP Park. As it stands, Hammond's Ferry remains the only new development in the area that reflects the quality and design seen in some of the best new urban developments elsewhere.

Currently, many adaptive reuse projects require too many variances to be feasible.

# Aiken County Overview


This regulatory burden has made it difficult to repurpose historic buildings for new housing opportunities. However, the county will soon begin a comprehensive planning process, which presents an opportunity to revisit these requirements and create a framework that better supports adaptive reuse. Many of these potential projects are centered around the county's old mills, which, while no longer active, still serve as community anchors. Given the legacy of mill town development patterns, these sites offer some of the best opportunities for walkable, human-scale development, if regulatory adjustments can make adaptive reuse more viable.

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

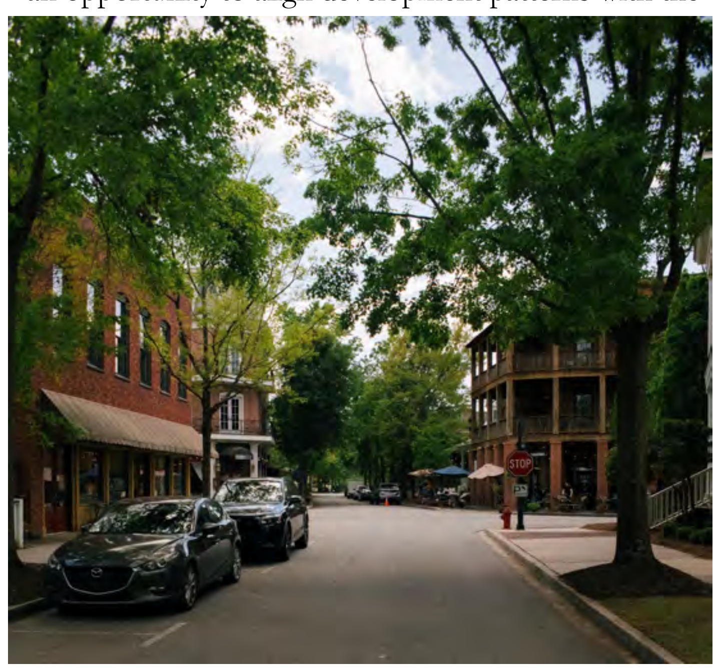
Aiken County is uniquely positioned to capture new residential growth and economic development within the Aiken-Augusta region. Several factors, including regional housing constraints, strategic infrastructure investments, and the county's existing development patterns, create opportunities to shape Aiken County's growth in a way that prioritizes efficiency, sustainability, and quality of life.

Columbia County has severely restricted new residential development, despite being the preferred location for most for-sale housing demand in the region.

With Richmond County's school districts making it a less desirable option for homebuyers and Edgefield County lacking the necessary infrastructure to absorb substantial new growth, Aiken County has become the new frontier for large-scale housing development in the Aiken-Augusta region. This shift presents an opportunity for Aiken County to thoughtfully guide new development rather than defaulting to traditional, auto-centric suburban expansion.

Aiken County is developing a new industrial park in the northern part of the county, an area that has historically felt excluded from the county's broader economic growth. Beyond job creation, this investment has the potential to spur residential development by catalyzing infrastructure expansion. Extending water and sewer service to the industrial park will open new corridors for future housing, providing an opportunity to shape growth patterns in a more sustainable and connected manner.

Both retirees and younger generations increasingly seek walkable, place-conscious communities, creating an opportunity to align development patterns with the



# Aiken County Overview

preferences of multiple demographics. Aiken County can capitalize on this by fostering developments that emphasize accessibility, connectivity, and a high quality of life; elements that appeal to both aging residents and young professionals.

Unlike Columbia County, which has already undergone significant development, Aiken County is in the early stages of growth, giving it a unique advantage. The housing products in highest demand today are not traditional, sprawling subdivisions but rather compact, amenity-rich communities that make efficient use of land. Aiken County has the opportunity to develop in a way that preserves agricultural land and large-tract hobby farms while also fostering more walkable, mixed-use environments.

Infrastructure has been identified as the key to Aiken County's future growth. To maximize existing infrastructure, the county should prioritize infill development within historically developed areas that predate automobile-oriented sprawl. These areas can be revitalized into vibrant nodes with retail, dining, and grocery options, reducing the need for long car trips and improving quality of life for residents.

One of the greatest opportunities for Aiken County

***Graniteville (left) and Warrenville (below) represent parts of Aiken County that have excellent existing street grids that could allow for new walkable mixed-use development in the near future.***

lies in diversifying its housing offerings within amenity-rich, lifestyle-oriented developments. By planning communities that incorporate a range of densities, the county can introduce greater differentiation into its housing market. Denser housing types, such as apartments, stacked flats, or townhomes, can provide rental and for-sale options at lower price points, expanding access to housing for a wider range of income levels. At the same time, detached single-family

***Porterdale Mill Lofts (above) and Eagle & Phenix Mills Lofts (left) represent successful mill to residential conversions that might be emulated in Aiken County where mill buildings have fallen into disuse.***

homes and higher-end townhome products within the same community can cater to households at higher price points. Creating mixed-density communities not only fosters inclusivity but also ensures that developments remain economically sustainable by serving a broad segment of the market.

Aiken County's industrial past left a legacy of tightly clustered, planned mill towns, many of which are now characterized by deteriorating housing stock and abandoned mills. While these areas present excellent opportunities for redevelopment into walkable, lifestyle-oriented communities, their revitalization will require targeted policy changes and financial incentives.

# Aiken County Overview

Currently, zoning regulations often limit the type and scale of redevelopment that could make these areas in Aiken vibrant once again.

To unlock their potential, the County will need to revise zoning policies to allow for mixed-use and higher-density residential development that aligns with modern housing demands.

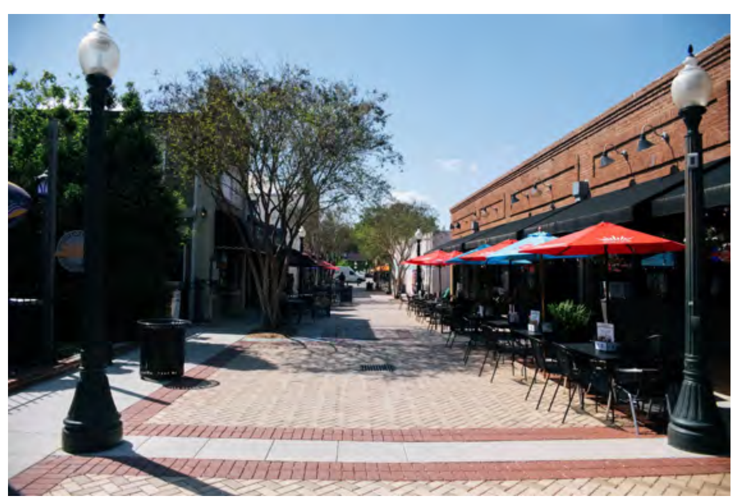
Additionally, given the high costs associated with rehabilitating historic mill structures and upgrading infrastructure, traditional market forces alone may not be sufficient to drive redevelopment.

To make these projects financially viable, Aiken County will likely need to explore tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts or other public-private partnerships. TIF districts can help fund infrastructure improvements, site remediation, and other critical investments by capturing the incremental tax revenue generated by redevelopment.

Strategic use of these tools can provide the necessary incentives to attract private investment while ensuring that redevelopment efforts create lasting economic and community benefits.

North Augusta has already demonstrated the benefits of infrastructure investment in historically disinvested areas, where improvements have led to an increase in home renovation activity. This precedent suggests that similar investments in other parts of Aiken County could encourage reinvestment and revitalization, further strengthening the county's housing market.

***Overall, Aiken County, and the communities that comprise it, are positioned extremely well to absorb new housing demand within the region and to do so in a way that is sustainable, inclusive, and that addresses key gaps in lifestyle options within the region.***



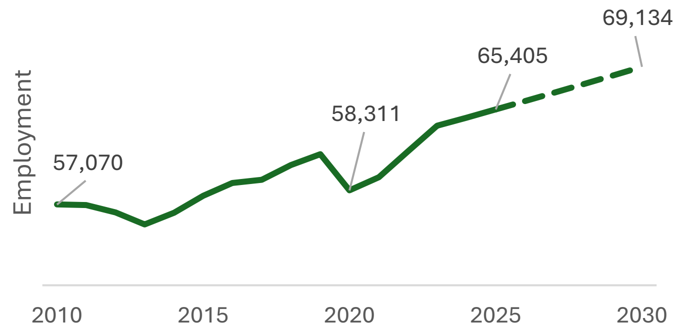
# Economic Drivers – Aiken County

## Employment by Industry

Aiken County is home to a diverse mix of employment sectors. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Aiken County's largest sectors include administrative and waste services, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and retail trade. The highest job growth rate belongs to the construction industry, which can be indicative of several factors, including a high demand for new construction, a healthy and expanding housing market, and anticipated future growth.

Wage and job growth trends across the highlighted industries provide insights into the health of Aiken County economically. Employment sectors such as professional and technical services, public administration, and educational services are above the Aiken County median wage and their job growth rates are steadily increasing. The average annual wage in sectors such as health care and social assistance and retail trade are consistently under the Aiken County median wage and are showing very little improvement in terms of job growth rate. These industries are significant contributors to the local economy but encounter challenges for financial stability among workers.

Historic and Projected Aiken County Employment, 2010 - 2030

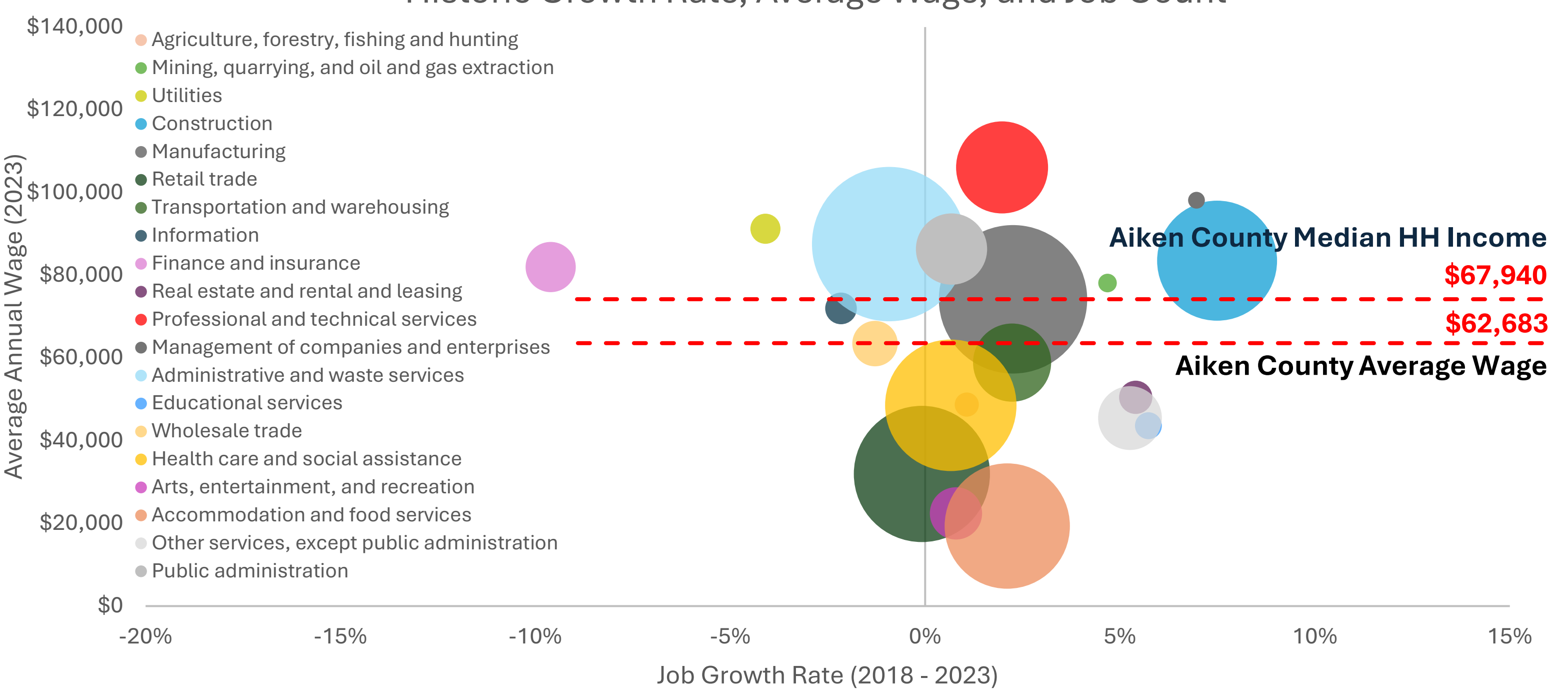



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall County Employment

In 2010, Aiken County's Employment was 57,070 and has grown steadily to approximately 65,405 jobs in 2025 with a projected 69,134 jobs by 2030. There was a noticeable dip in jobs around 2020, likely due to pandemic related disruptions. Aiken County has demonstrated strong economic resilience through a steady recovery from the dip. Projections indicate continued, steady employment growth through the end of the decade.

Aiken County Employment Sectors by Historic Growth Rate, Average Wage, and Job Count




*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

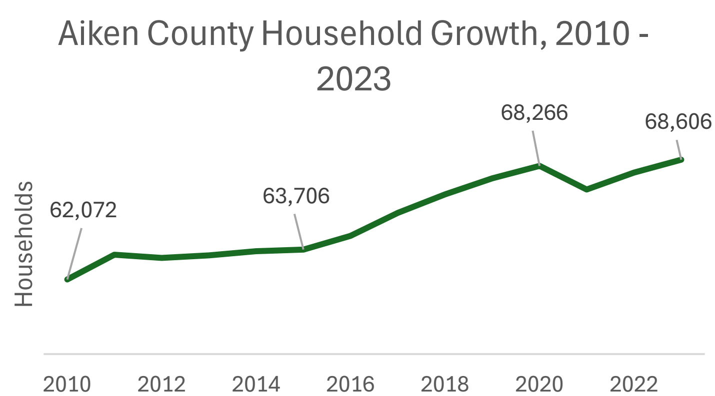
# Demographic Drivers – Aiken County

## Household Growth

Aiken County experienced significant household growth from 2010 to 2023. From 2010 to 2023, Aiken County underwent a 10.5% increase in total households, with 62,072 households in 2010 and 68,606 households in 2023.

Household growth stalled in 2011 and stayed around the same amount until 2015 when growth ramped back up considerably. Total households decreased from 2020 to 2021 and experienced a quick rebound starting in 2022, demonstrating the county's ability to recovery effectively from pandemic complications.

Future strategies should include managing this growth sustainably by ensuring that houses are affordable, and that the county proactively invests in infrastructure and amenities to complement this growth.

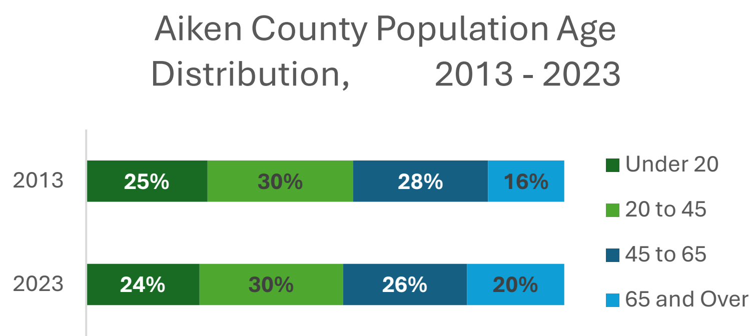


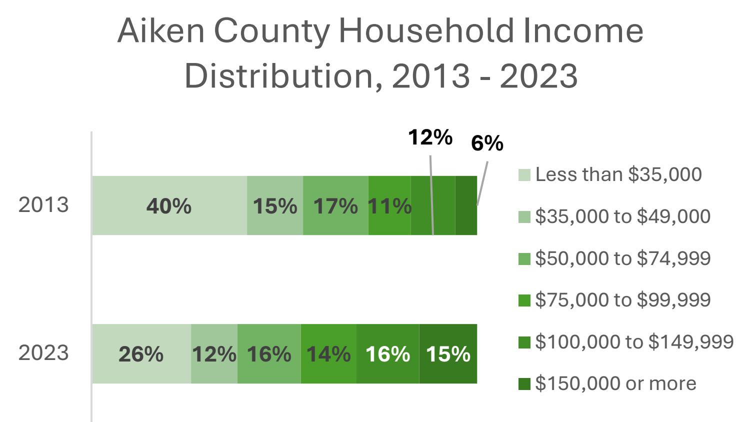

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Age

Between 2010 and 2023, Aiken County's population aged slightly, reflected primarily by a 4% increase in residents aged 65 from 16% in 2013 to 20% in 2023. To accommodate this shift, demand for elderly healthcare and housing services should be considered as a growing necessity for Aiken County residents.

The share of residents under 20 and the share of residents between 45 and 65 decreased marginally from 2013 to 2023. The age range of 20 to 45 remained stable, indicating a steady working age population.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

The household income landscape in Aiken County shifted drastically. The proportion of households with an income of less than $35,000 annually decreased by 14% from 40% in 2013 to 26% in 2023. The share of households earning $75,000 or more increased substantially, growing from 18% to 31%. Specifically, households earning $150,000 or more increased from 6% in 2013 to 15% in 2023.

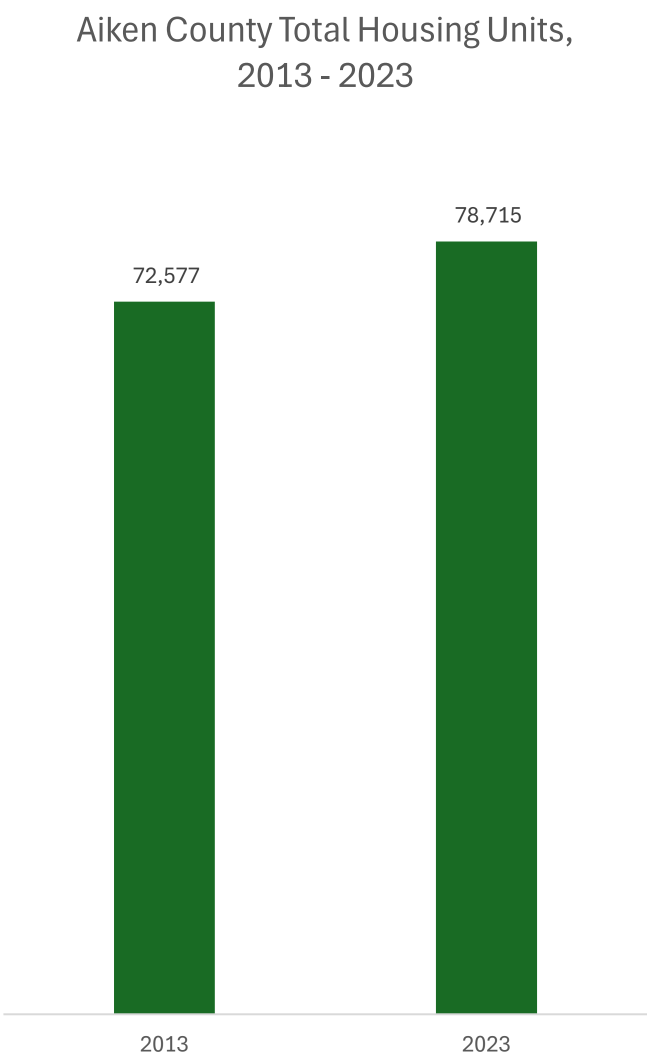
**Median household income grew from $44,509 to $67,940**. This distribution suggests that the segment of middle to upper income residents is growing, and the county's overall financial health and income distribution is improving. Local efforts should be made to continue this trend as higher wage jobs and income growth can increase local spending in the community.

# Housing Supply – Aiken County

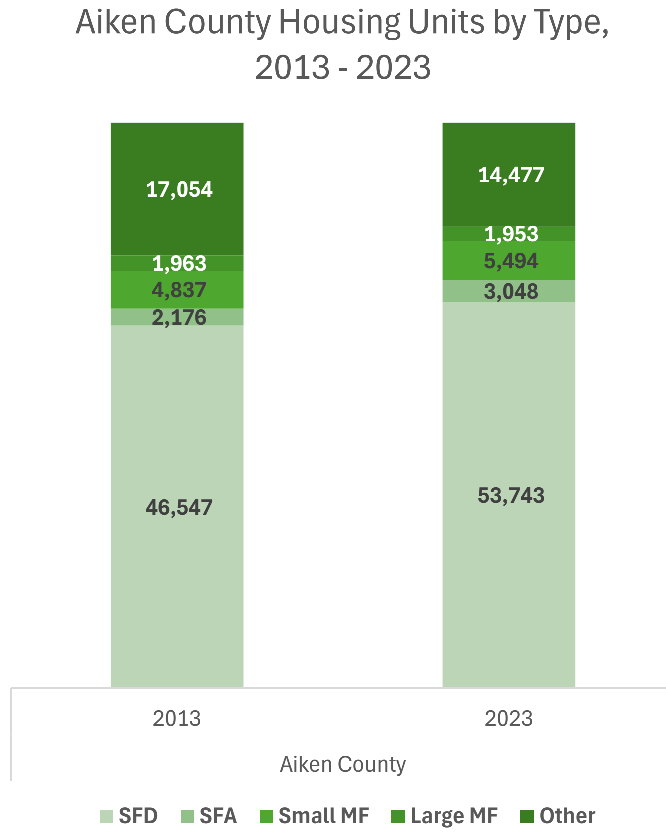
## Growing Inventory

Aiken County's total inventory steadily increased from 2013-2023, rising from 72,577 units in 2013 to 78,715 units in 2023. This represents an 8.5% increase over the 10 year period. This 10 year expansion reflects ongoing residential development and growth in housing availability.

The steady housing inventory growth observed in Aiken County aligns with broader regional trends, indicating stable expansion and economic stability in the area. Compared to faster growing counties closer to major metropolitan areas, Aiken County has experience moderate growth, revealing consistent residential investments rather than rapid urban sprawl. This incremental increase provides a foundation for community planning and suggests sustainable growth patterns.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

With an increase from 48,547 units in 2013 to 53,743 units in 2023, it is evident that Single Family Detached (SFD) homes dominate the market. This significant increase highlights a strong preference or demand for this housing type. Single Family Attached also saw growth, increasing from 2,176 units in 2013 to 3,048 units in 2023, indicating a growing interest towards attached but privately owned housing types. This could also indicate a shift in consumer preferences, possibly driven by affordability and community style living preferences.

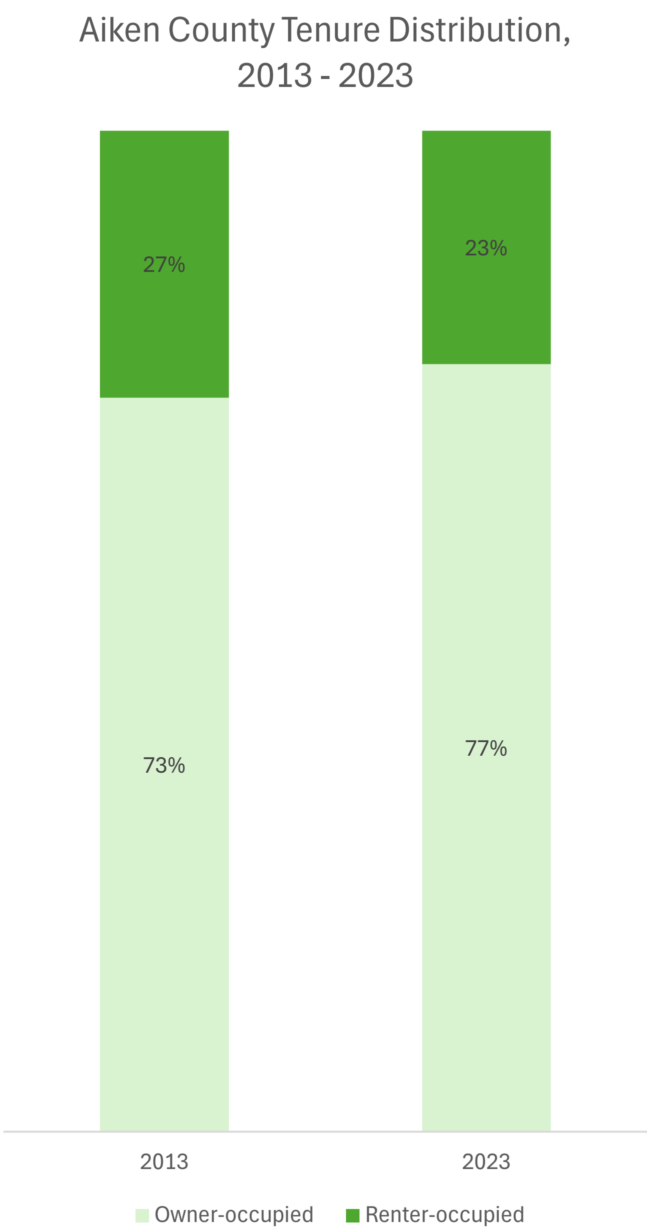
Conversely, Large Multifamily units experienced a slight decrease from 1,963 units to 1,953 units, while Small Multifamily units experienced a moderate increase from 4,837 units to 5,494 units. The Other category largely consists of mobile or manufactured homes, which decreased from 17,054 units in 2013 to 14,477 units in 2023. This decline could be attributed to factors such as redevelopment or a change in local preferences towards replacement with traditional housing units.

# Housing Supply – Aiken County

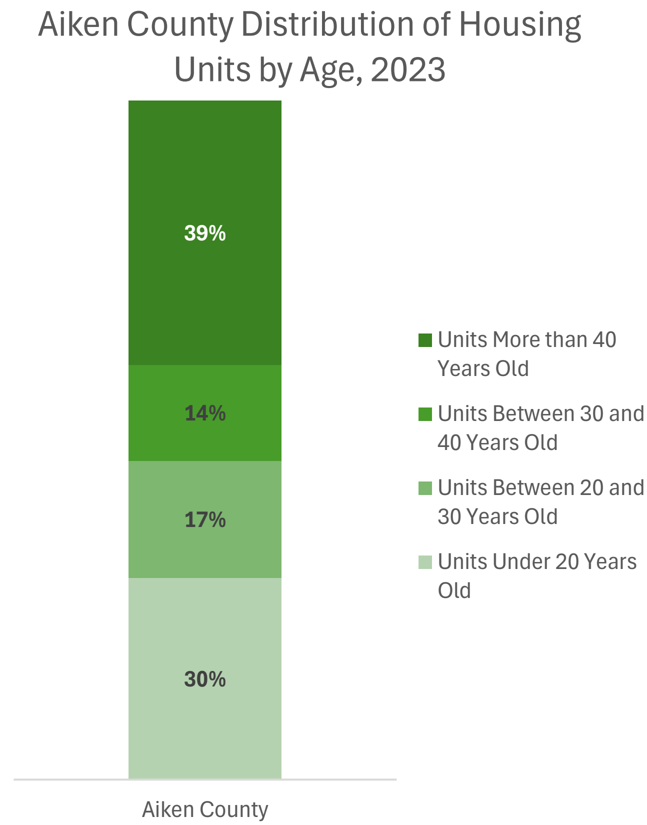
## Tenure

The distribution of tenure in Aiken County from 2013 to 2023 highlights a preference towards homeownership. Owner occupied units increased from 73% in 2013 to 77% in 2023 and renter occupied units decreased from 27% to 23%. This change signifies a strengthening preference for homeownership, potentially driven by economic factors or demographic changes within the housing market at large.

The reduction in renter occupied units may indicate consumer preferences, increasingly higher rental rates, or limited availability of rental properties.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

Aiken County's 2023 housing stock reveals a mixture of older and newer housing units. The largest group is units more than 40 years old, with a share of 39%. This indicates a considerable inventory of aging homes and growing needs for redevelopment.

On the other hand, 30% of housing units are units under 20 years old, indicating recent development and residential investment in Aiken County. Compared to broader trends, Aiken County is positioned to balance the preservation of it solder housing stock with strategic new development, addressing the needs of potential newcomers and existing residents.

Housing units between 20 and 30 years old account for 17% of the total housing stock, and units between 30 and 40 years old account for 14% of the total housing stock. These middle aged homes are important to the housing market, serving buyers that are searching for more affordable or flexible options compared to newer homes.

# Housing Accessibility – Aiken County

## Rental Market

Housing accessibility among renters underscores affordability challenges within the market. Single income renters are particularly cost burdened among many industries. Individuals in the real estate, educational services, health care and social assistance, arts entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services industries face major cost burdens with attainable rents drastically lower than the county average.

While combining incomes can mitigate housing accessibility issues dramatically, dual income renters still face cost burdened status, with the primary disparities in the same industries as single income renters, such as educational services and health care and social assistance.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | $1,011 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,618 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | $1,415 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,512 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Utilities | $637 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,156 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $1,512 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,685 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,345 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,387 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $1,153 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $2,045 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $669 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,214 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $1,218 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,898 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $751 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,200 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $1,484 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,636 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $532 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $962 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $1,099 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,711 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | $1,724 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened | $3,152 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $910 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,455 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $319 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $561 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $346 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $623 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $474 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $856 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $412 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $742 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $481 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $868 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $1,191 | $1,275 | Cost Burdened | $1,855 | $1,275 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – Aiken County

## For-Sale Market

Housing accessibility for owners within Aiken County shows critical affordability challenges, with a particularly significant gap for single income homebuyers across all industries. The feasibility of homeownership among individuals is extremely limited and major steps must be taken to alleviate the strain of cost burdens. Especially inadequate industries include educational services, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services, with attainable purchase prices well below the county average home price.

While dual income owners show significant improvement in terms of attainable purchase price, affordability challenges remain for many industries. Though dual income households show vast improvements in purchasing power, affordable ownership remains out of reach for most.

| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | $121,298 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $194,180 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | $169,818 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $301,487 | $280,500 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Utilities | $76,467 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $138,715 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $181,426 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $322,200 | $280,500 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $161,363 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $286,396 | $280,500 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $138,363 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $245,345 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $80,232 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $145,622 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $146,147 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $227,713 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Information | $90,122 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $143,954 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $178,117 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $316,294 | $280,500 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $63,806 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $115,467 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $131,854 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $205,343 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | $206,925 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $378,221 | $280,500 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $109,160 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $174,625 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $38,250 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $67,367 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $41,571 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $74,752 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $56,893 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $102,779 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $49,402 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $89,017 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $57,662 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $104,186 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $142,914 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened | $222,652 | $280,500 | Cost Burdened |

# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production

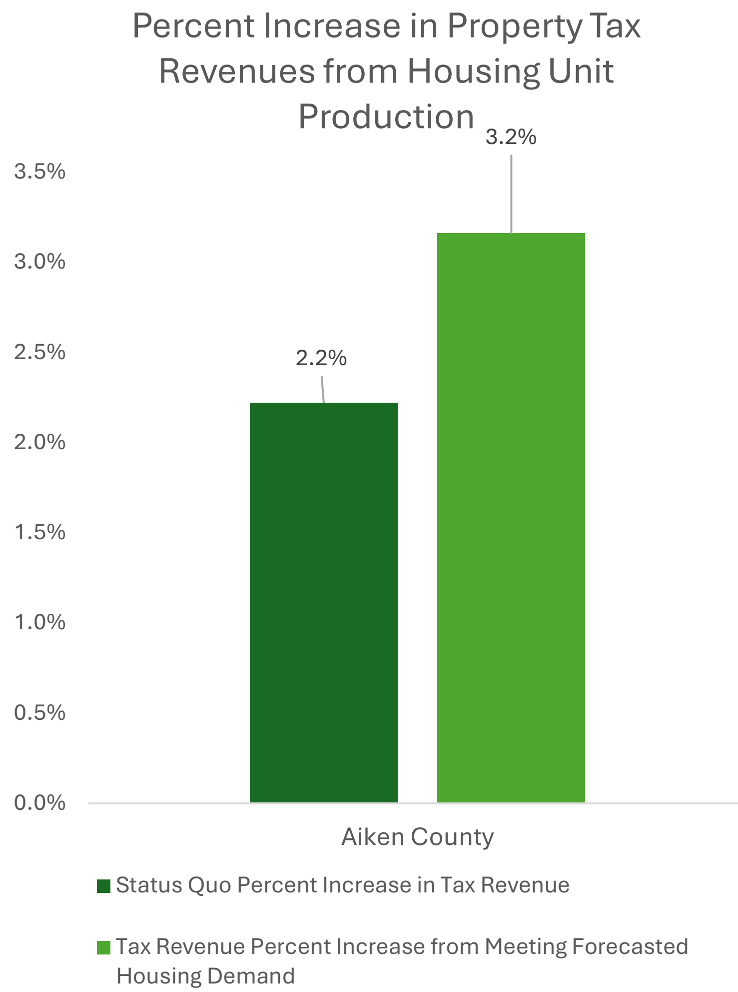
## Aiken County

Aiken County has experienced a significant increase in its housing inventory as a result of the last five years of development activity within the county. The county's embrace of growth and development suggests that were the county to repeat the last five years of growth over the next five years, that the fiscal benefits of the housing units added would be significant, amounting to a more than 2% increase in tax revenues for the county.

Particularly in counties that have the kinds of residential growth pressures that Aiken County has, increasing tax revenues is vital for maintaining and expanding critical infrastructure like water and sewer capacity and services, including education and community programming.

While the county has done a relatively good job of supporting the local market to meet demand, there are still key segments in which the county still fails to deliver at the volume necessary to meet market demand.

If the county were to become more aggressive and active in assuring that the local market was able to meet forecasted demand, the fiscal benefit to the county would amount to an additional 1% increase in tax revenues from housing units produced.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aiken County | County | $1,269,673 | $1,807,721 | $538,048 | **$1,794,056** |
| | School | $2,963,894 | $4,219,901 | $1,256,007 | |

The table above breaks down the fiscal benefits of housing production within Aiken County according to growth patterns observed over the last five years, as well as according to a scenario in which Aiken County is able to meet market demand for housing over the next five years. The fiscal benefit is broken out by tax recipient, with the county and the school district representing the two county-wide tax collecting entities. The total fiscal benefit of meeting demand over maintaining status quo production levels is estimated at $1.8 million in tax revenues to Aiken County, which amounts to an additional $538,048 for the county and $1.3 million for the county's school district.

# Demand & Gap – Aiken County

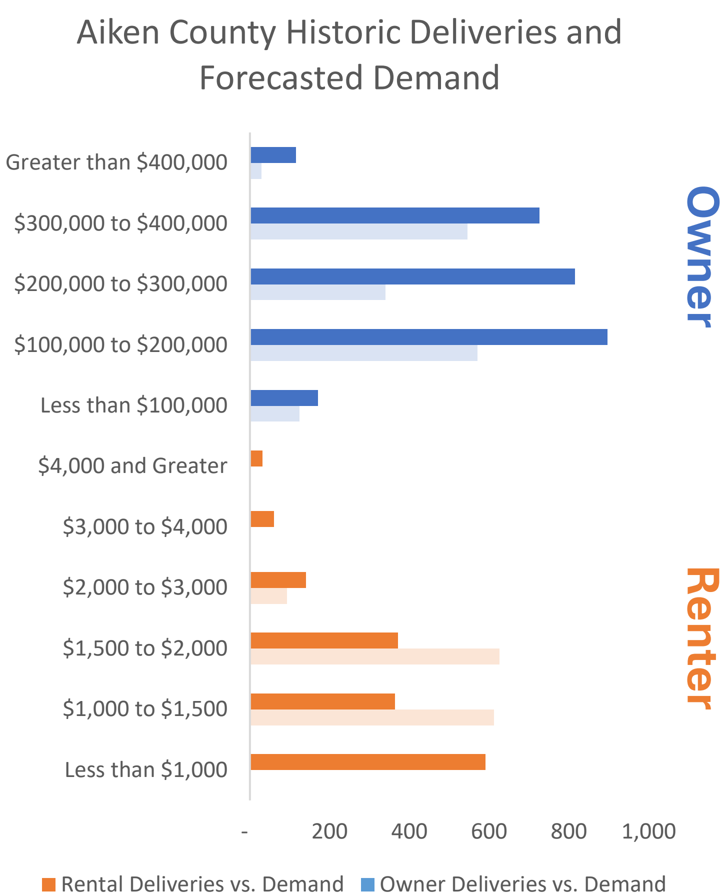
## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

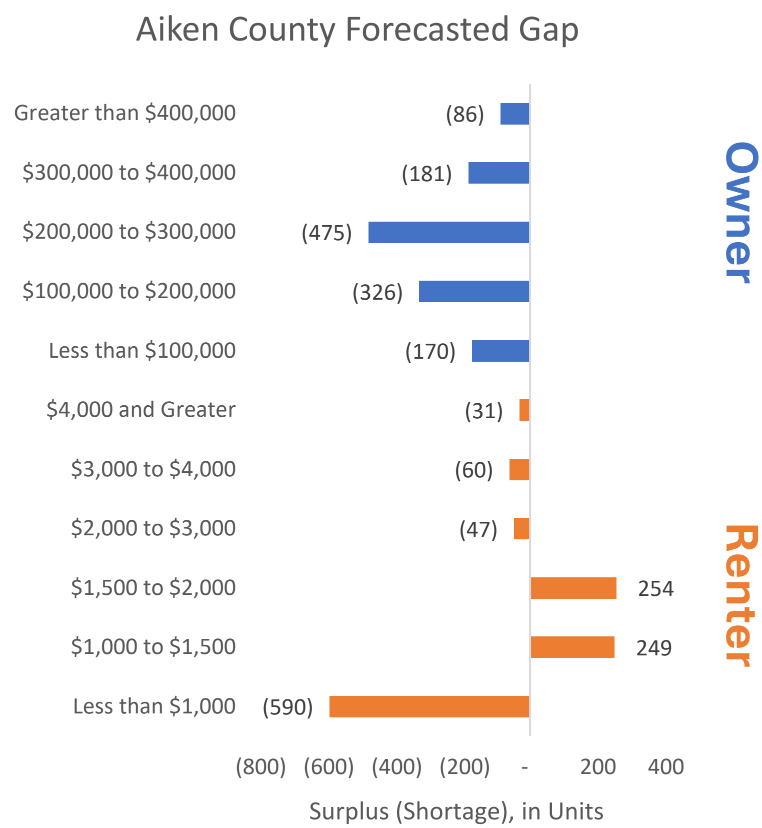
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

Over the past five years, Aiken County has delivered new housing units at high volumes relative to the region. While these deliveries have gone a long way to satisfy mid-market rental demand and mid-market for-sale demand, the county would fall short with respect to meeting rental market demand on the upper and lower ends if the next five years of deliveries mirrored the last five years.

Additionally, despite high for-sale production, the county would still fail to meet market demand for for-sale housing between $100,000 and $400,000 if deliveries over the next five years mirror the last five years of deliveries.




## Forecasted Gap

The chart above depicts the forecasted gap within the Aiken County housing market were production to resemble the last five years of production exactly. In this context, it is necessary to increase production, particularly in key segments of the market, namely the rental market for units priced at under $1,000 per month and for-sale product between $100,000 and $300,000.

While the county can likely support increased production on the for-sale side by ensuring that infrastructure and zoning are aligned with market demand pressures, delivering rental units for under $1,000 per month poses a significant challenge that may require some combination of subsidy, partnership with local industry, the legalization of missing middle housing types and the development of alternative modes of transportation throughout the county and region.

# Strategies & Recommendations – Aiken County

## Strategic Priorities

The strength of Aiken County's housing market positions it well to continue to absorb regional demand for housing. The county's land use, zoning policies and permitting processes are all supportive of continued expansion of the county's inventory.

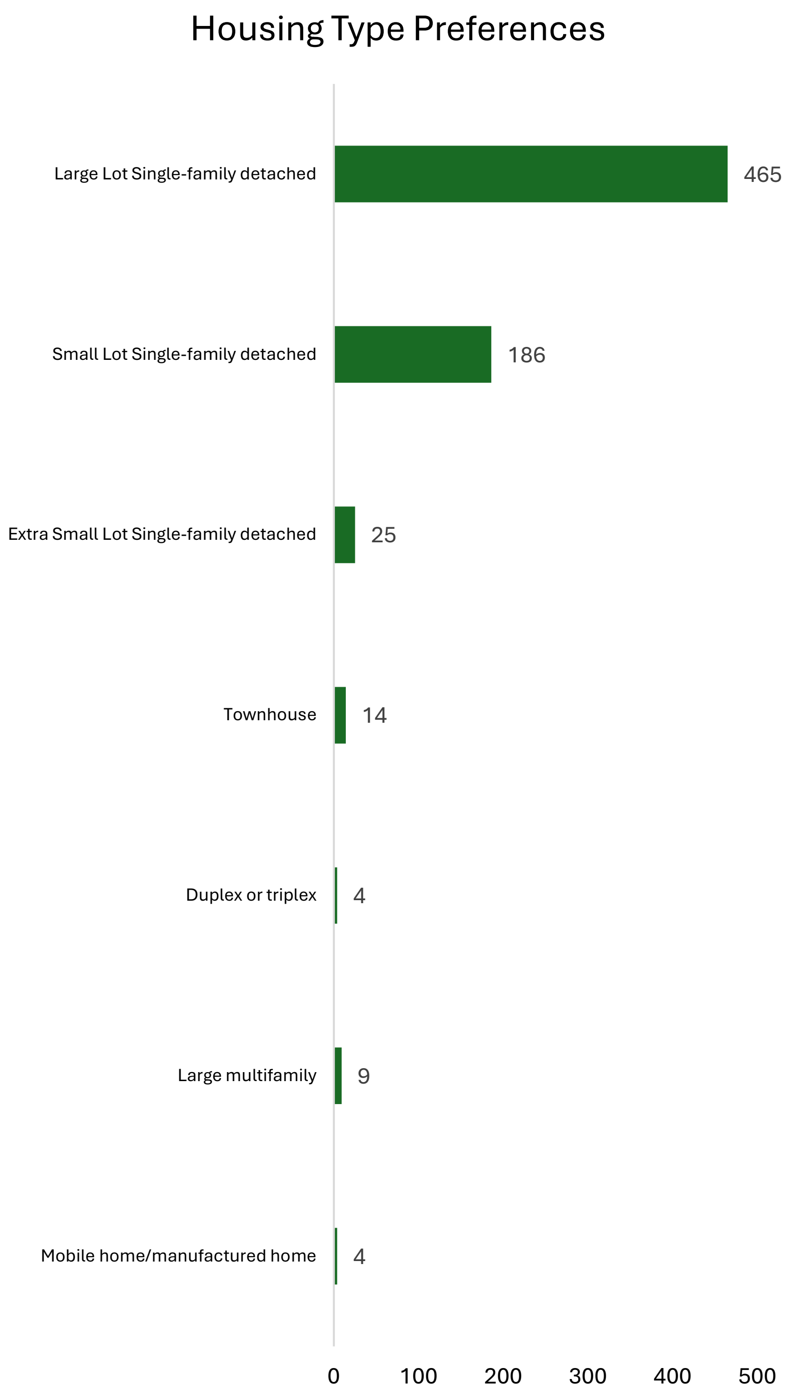
**Besides assuring that the county's growth can continue by improving and expanding water and sewer infrastructure across the county, the primary task for Aiken County is to encourage development that hits a variety of housing demand segments.** Product differentiation and place-conscious community development are key to ensuring that Aiken County's housing market remains competitive and accessible to a broad range of residents.

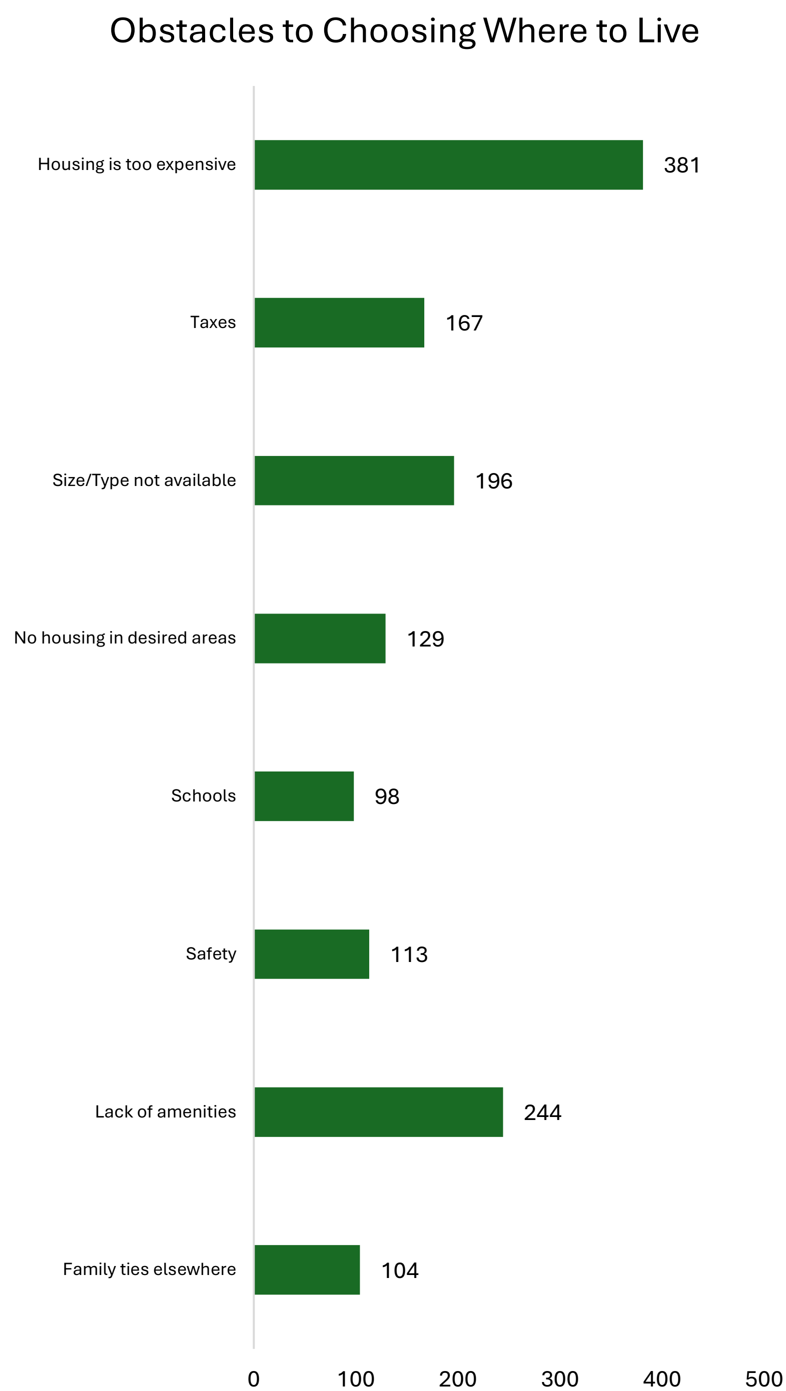
While the county has successfully absorbed regional growth, much of its recent housing development has been concentrated in conventional single-family subdivisions and mid-market rental properties. **To maintain long-term housing affordability and economic diversity, expanding housing typologies, including townhomes, small-scale multifamily, and mixed-use developments, will be essential.**

Additionally, **targeted reinvestment in Aiken's historic downtowns, milltowns and other key commercial corridors can strengthen the county's appeal as a walkable, amenity-rich community. Encouraging infill development, adaptive reuse of older buildings, and placemaking initiatives will help diversify the county's housing options while preserving its unique character.**

Finally, **Aiken County should consider strategic workforce housing initiatives to ensure that teachers, healthcare workers, and service industry employees continue to have access to affordable housing near job centers.** Public-private partnerships and zoning incentives for workforce-oriented developments can help balance the county's housing supply across different income levels.

# Survey Findings – Aiken County

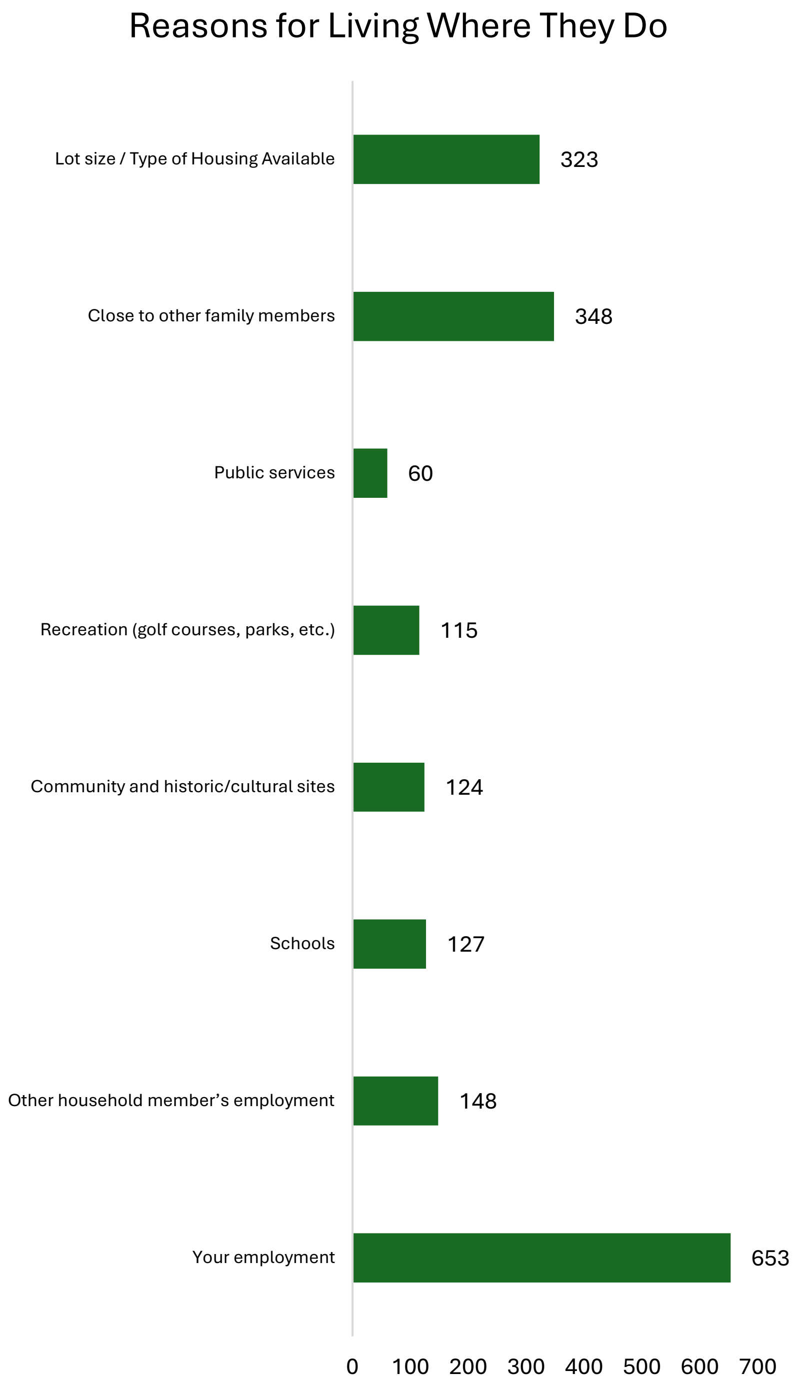


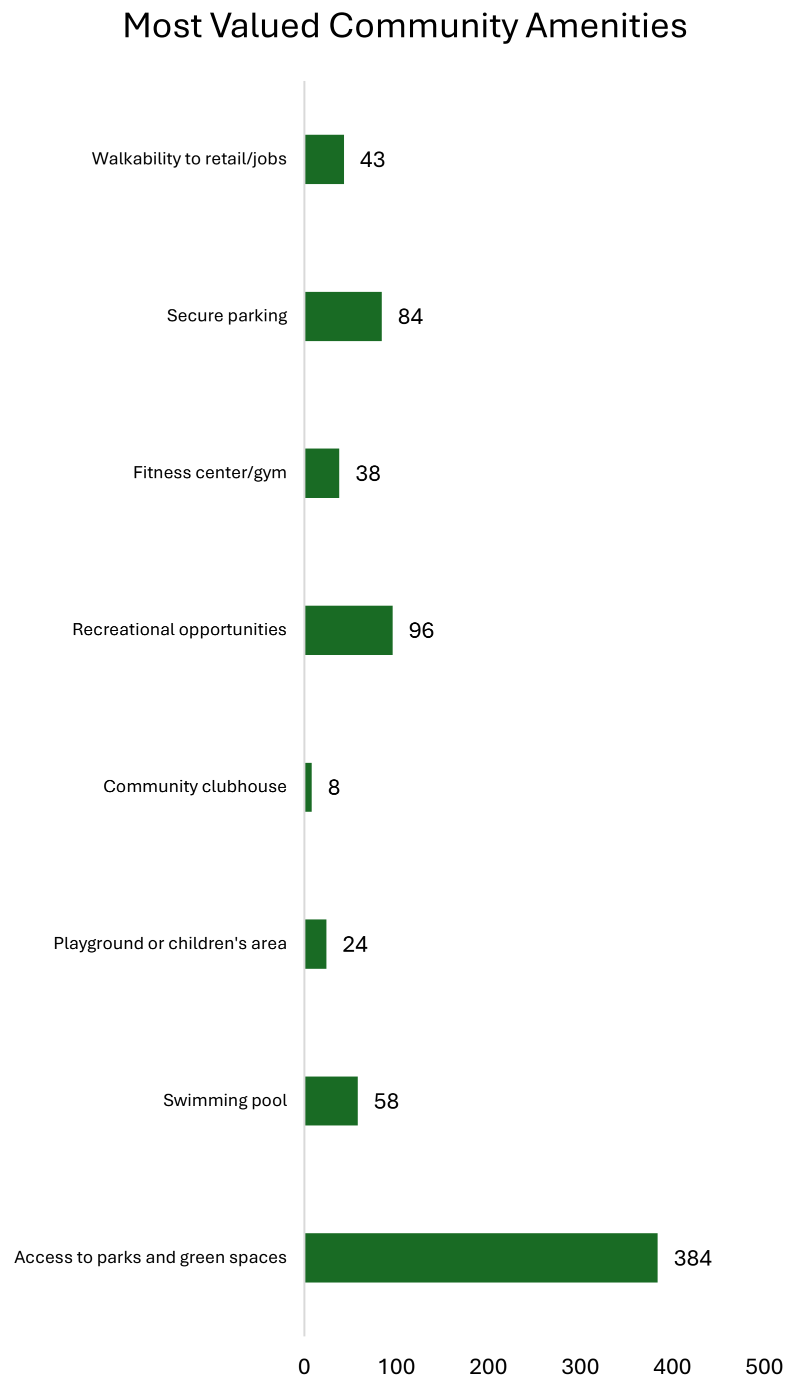




The large lot single-family detached housing type emerged as the leading preference among residents, with small lot single family detached as the second option. Together, these options make up 92% of the total housing type preferences throughout Aiken County.

The largest obstacle to choosing where to live in Aiken County was the lack of affordability. 381 survey participants claim that housing is too expensive, followed by 244 residents noting a lack of amenities.

# Survey Findings – Aiken County




According to Aiken County residents, employment is their biggest reason for living where they do.. This reasoning represents almost twice as many participants as the next most popular option, proximity to other family members. This suggests that many Aiken County residents choose where to live primarily based on their employment situation.

Over half of the survey respondents selected that their most valued community amenities were access to parks and green spaces, followed by recreational opportunities. This signifies that Aiken County families value opportunities to stay active and get outdoors. The next most popular option was secure parking, showing an increased appreciation of safety among residents.

# Allendale County

# Allendale County

## Market Profile

- Under-developed water, sewer and road infrastructure
- Historically declining population and economic base
- Aging housing stock and lack of community amenities
- Lack of recent investment due to perceived risks

## Housing Needs

### Total Five-Year Gap: 124 Units

**In the chart to the right:**

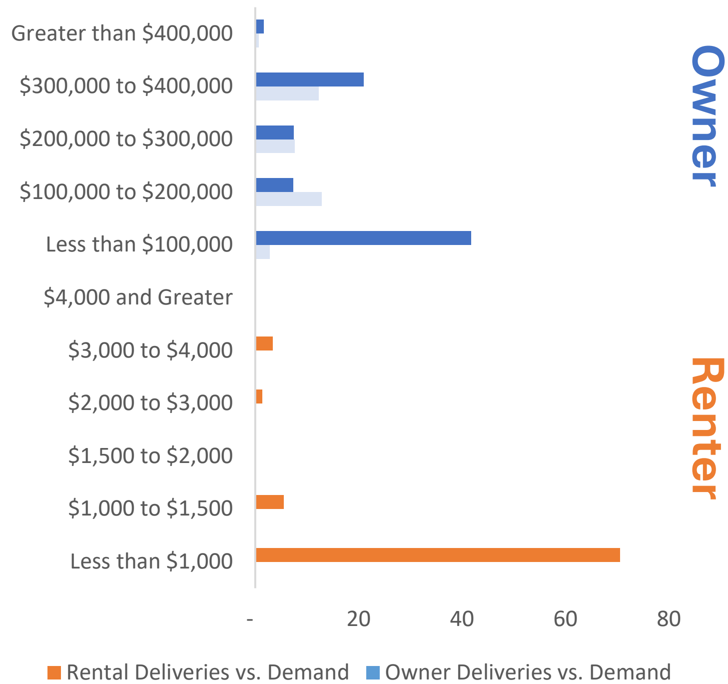
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Smaller format entry level for-sale homes AND Mid-market for-sale units suitable for higher-income families**

**Deeply affordable rental options AND Workforce rentals convenient to employment centers**

### Total Five-Year Demand: 160 Units

Allendale County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

## Implementable Strategies

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Apply for federal and state grants in order to leverage available state and federal funding for water and sewer expansion
2. Establish a land bank or leverage existing land bank to convert abandoned and tax-delinquent properties into housing and community assets.
3. Form a Downtown Development Authority OR empower existing DDA with greater resources and technical support.
4. Promote safety and attractiveness in downtown through events programming.

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Leverage Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support redevelopment of underperforming downtown areas to include more housing.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Create a façade grant program to improve the appearance and perception of downtown, to support business activity and property value growth and to encourage downtown housing development.

# Allendale County

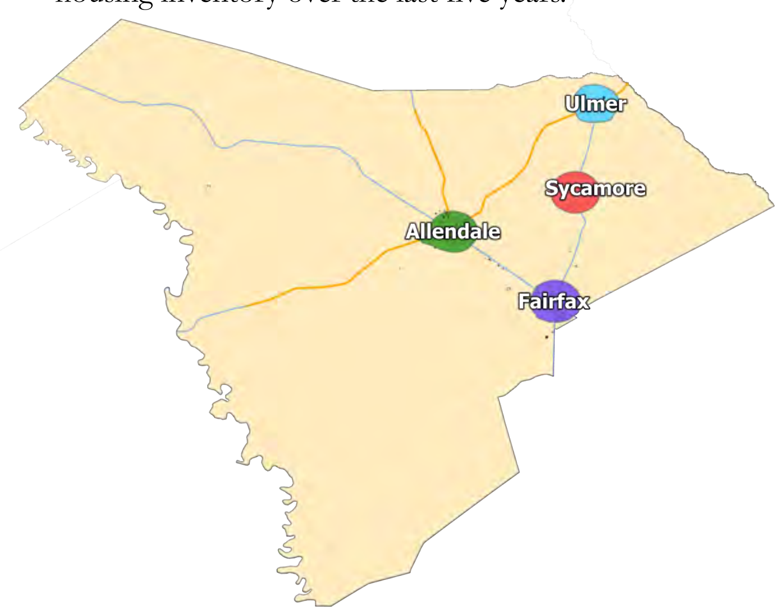
## Overview

Allendale County, South Carolina is located just south of Barnwell County, having once been the southern portion of Barnwell County.

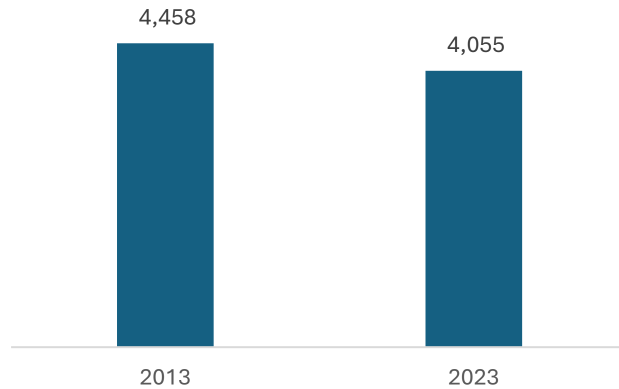
Allendale County is located east of the Savannah River and represents the most distant part of the Aiken-Augusta region from the region's center, not only in terms of time and distance, but also in terms of integration into the region's economy and housing markets.

The county is just outside of the direct orbit of two urban areas, the August-Aiken area and the Savannah-Hilton Head area. While a positive spin on this location would be that it is advantageous to both of these larger areas, the reality is slightly less rosy, with Allendale County more accurately described as severely locationally disadvantaged.

While there are economic development prospects for the county, currently there are few economic activities within the county that offer high-earning potential for workers. As the county attempts to attract some of these higher-earning jobs, the secondary challenge will be creating a local housing market that is capable of retaining those workers within the county. At present, the county is in the midst of a significant decline in population, which has been coupled with a deteriorating and diminishing housing inventory. No meaningful additions have been made to the county's housing inventory over the last five years.




Allendale County Total Housing Units, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Allendale County Housing Today

Allendale County has seen very little new housing added to the county's inventory in the last twenty years.

Units built since 2000 account for only about 14% of the county's housing units, compared with a regional average of 27%. Between 2013 and 2023, the number of housing units in the county declined by an estimated 403 units, a loss of units that likely occurred due to increasing vacancy and deterioration from age.

In the last five years, new unit deliveries have been so few, that the data suggests no new units have been produced within the county. While it is likely inaccurate to say that no new housing units have been created over the last five years, the units that have been delivered have been delivered by very small-scale developers, developing single lots at a time.

Infrastructure constraints, particularly as they relate to sewer and water capacity, are a major limiting factor in the county's ability to attract new industry and new residential development.

These barriers have significantly hindered Allendale County's ability to capture growth that is occurring within the region and have contributed to the self-reinforcing cycle by which no new housing development has occurred and where, as a result, the market appears unproven to outside developers, further reinforcing the trend by which no new housing development occurs.

# Allendale County Overview

## Barriers & Challenges

Water and sewer infrastructure presents both a barrier and an opportunity for development within Allendale County. Extending infrastructure to many parts of the unincorporated county is not feasible due to the high costs of installation and maintenance, coupled with the low return on investment resulting from the sparse distribution of potential clients in these areas. However, the incorporated communities within Allendale County, principally Allendale and Fairfax, have the capacity to accommodate growth through the pursuit of infill opportunities. Focusing growth within the county's existing communities achieves multiple goals simultaneously: preserving economically and culturally valuable agricultural lands, avoiding fiscally unsustainable water and sewer expansions, and adding new homes and households to existing areas, thereby fostering greater community complexity and enabling the development of more retail options and community amenities.

An additional infrastructure constraint for Allendale County presents in its lack of strong connections to major access infrastructure is a limiting factor to future growth for the county. Most significantly, Allendale County will likely never see growth comparable to even a county like Edgefield County, which on paper has many similarities and is also largely undeveloped but has one major asset that Allendale County does not, which is immediate access to an interstate highway, I-20. This lack of access to the nation's major arteries represents an unalterable challenge to economic development and to housing development.

Counties like Edgefield County or McDuffie County benefit from passive housing development that may occur simply because of the ease of access to other, more economically and culturally active locations within the region, which is a type of development that is more unlikely to occur in Allendale County due to the lack of access the county has to interstate highways, which limit Allendale residents and industries' access to the rest of the region.

Much of Allendale County's developable land remains undeveloped not because of agricultural activities, but because of the prevalence of large landowners in the county not interested in selling their property for any price.

Many of these landowners do not reside within Allendale County anymore, having inherited the properties from family.

# Allendale County Overview

While the lack of movement on large tracks is a meaningful barrier to allowing national builders to enter the market, on a smaller scale, this trend also contributes to a higher than desirable degree of absentee property owners who may leave single homes to deteriorate, creating an eyesore for the local community and decreasing confidence in potential returns on investment for industry and developers.

The state of Allendale County schools represents a major threat to any new housing unit development within the county. The district, which has been taken over by the state twice in 25 years, has frequently contained under-performing if not failing schools.

After two years under the second state takeover of the district, state management reported that none of the schools in the district were failing any longer. Despite this, the state assumed even greater control over the district in 2024, assuming control over the district's finances, suggesting that the district is still relatively unstable.

This represents a major barrier to attracting new residents, even those who are employed at new job opportunities in the county. The stigma of a failing school district is difficult to overcome when it comes to the marketing of housing products, with workers with young children likely preferring to live in Aiken County if they can or at least Barnwell County, where the school district is on a much more positive trend even if the schools there are not the most high-performing.

The general lack of retail options and community amenities within Allendale County poses a significant challenge to attracting new residents, especially in the context of the deficiencies of Allendale County's public school system and a regional context in which other counties have a relative advantage over Allendale County with respect to both retail and community amenities and school system quality. This lack of amenities and retail may contribute towards a lifestyle mismatch between the high-income, highly educated professionals attracted to the area by jobs in the energy and advanced manufacturing sectors. While retail options are unlikely to show up in Allendale County without growth in population, the county does have control over investments in public infrastructure like parks and trails, as well as over programming, such as live events and First Fridays throughout the downtown areas of Allendale County's communities.

# Allendale County Overview

One last barrier that the county faces is its ability to attract LIHTC developers that can supply much-needed low-income housing within the county. One of the biggest barriers that stands in the way of the county's would-be low-income housing developers from being able to produce this kind of housing is the state of South Carolina's LIHTC requirements, which disproportionately favor projects that are proposed in more populated areas of the state due to the way vicinity to employment opportunities factor into the state's scoring system. While the county can prioritize creating an ecosystem in which LIHTC developers can gain points in other scoring categories, the county should, in concert with other rural communities, advocate for revisions to the state's LIHTC scoring system to allow for projects in communities like Allendale County to secure much-needed funds more easily.

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

Due to a lack of endogenous, market-driven accelerants within Allendale County, in order to any opportunities to exist for the county and its municipalities to reverse the long-standing pattern of decline, the county must be proactive and intentional about investing in infrastructure, public services, and community amenities. Strategic improvements in these areas can help position Allendale County to stabilize and even potentially capture some of the growth that is occurring in the counties adjacent to Allendale County.

While water and sewer infrastructure represents the most obvious physical limitation to housing creation in the county, and investing in the improvement of these facilities will be crucial to any meaningful expansion of the county's housing stock, equally important and equally limiting is the reputation of the county's school system. Significant efforts will need to be undertaken to not only substantially improve the schools that comprise the district, but also to communicate a restoration of stability and an increase in performance to the public.

The physical limitations of water and sewer make revising local zoning regulations, particularly within the county's incorporated communities, important for creating pathways for denser residential development and increasing the economic feasibility of replacing outdated, deteriorating structures. Updating zoning to allow for a wider range of housing typologies, including townhomes and cottage-style developments,

# Allendale County Overview

may also help attract developers who might otherwise overlook the county due to limited market-rate demand for traditional single-family homes.

Beyond zoning reform, the County should take a more active role in addressing blight by enforcing stricter property maintenance codes and encouraging the rehabilitation or removal of vacant, aging structures. More robust code enforcement mechanisms, such as escalating fines for absentee landlords, could incentivize better property stewardship or prompt property transfers to more responsible owners. The establishment of a land bank at either the county or municipal level, particularly within Allendale and Fairfax, could serve as a key tool in revitalizing tax-delinquent properties, returning them to productive use and ultimately strengthening the county's tax base.

Allendale County faces some of the steepest barriers to fostering a new housing market in the Aiken-Augusta region, largely due to its limited leverageable assets compared to neighboring counties. Given these challenges, the county should take a pragmatic approach to housing and economic development, one focused on stabilization rather than rapid expansion. Small-scale wins, targeted investments, and incremental progress can lay the groundwork for a more resilient

***A small business owner applies a fresh coat of paint to a shop in downtown Eufaula, Alabama. The county and its cities can support revitalization efforts through public funding initiatives, like façade grants.***

local economy and community. Strengthening the county's schools, reinforcing its infrastructure, and enhancing the overall quality of life are essential first steps in reversing long-standing decline.

While significant population or economic growth may not be a realistic short-term goal, achieving stability is both necessary and attainable. The strategies outlined in this section provide a framework for fostering

***In downtown Moultrie, Georgia, the city has helped to transform abandoned storefronts into additive public space that add character to downtown and encourage visitors to spend more time in downtown.***

long-term community resilience, with the potential for gradual growth over time. The thousands of jobs expected to materialize in the county in the near future present a unique opportunity to bolster the local tax base. However, much like a parched landscape before a seasonal downpour, Allendale County is not yet positioned to fully absorb the benefits of incoming investment in the way that stronger markets might.

***To truly capitalize on this moment, the county must commit to steady, deliberate efforts aimed at reversing decline.***

The path to stability can begin in the downtown areas of Allendale and Fairfax, where existing infrastructure provides a foundation for revitalization. By focusing on these core areas, the county can build momentum toward a stronger, more sustainable future.

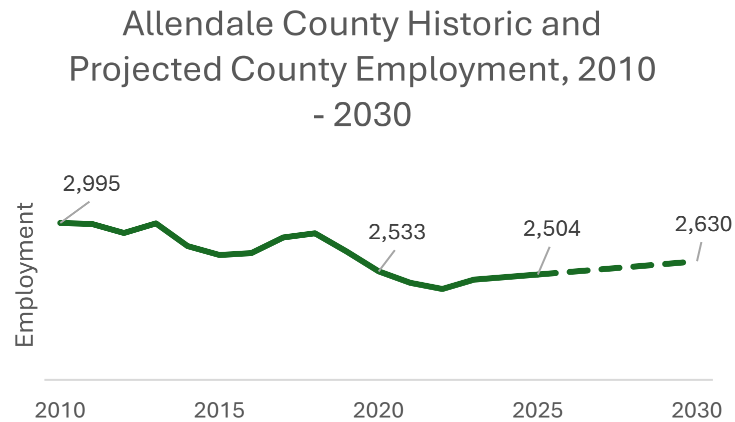
# Economic Drivers – Allendale County

## Employment by Industry

Employment opportunities in Allendale County are tightly concentrated in among a small number of industries. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, in 2023, Allendale County's three largest industries by number of employees (excluding agriculture and forestry) were manufacturing, public administration, and retail trade.

The chart below describes Allendale County's top seven industries along three different dimensions; the number of employees employed in each sector, the average wage of employees in each sector, and the average annual growth rate that each industry experienced from 2018 to 2023.

Each sector's employment has either remained flat or declined, leading to an overall net decrease of 441 jobs over the five year period, from 2,896 to 2,455 jobs. The net decrease stemmed most acutely from the manufacturing sector, which shed 234 jobs. However, losing better paying manufacturing jobs has had only a limited dampening effect on local wages. The average annual earnings has increased from approximately $42.1k in 2018 to $54.4k in 2023. This is down from a 2022 high average annual earnings of $55.6k.

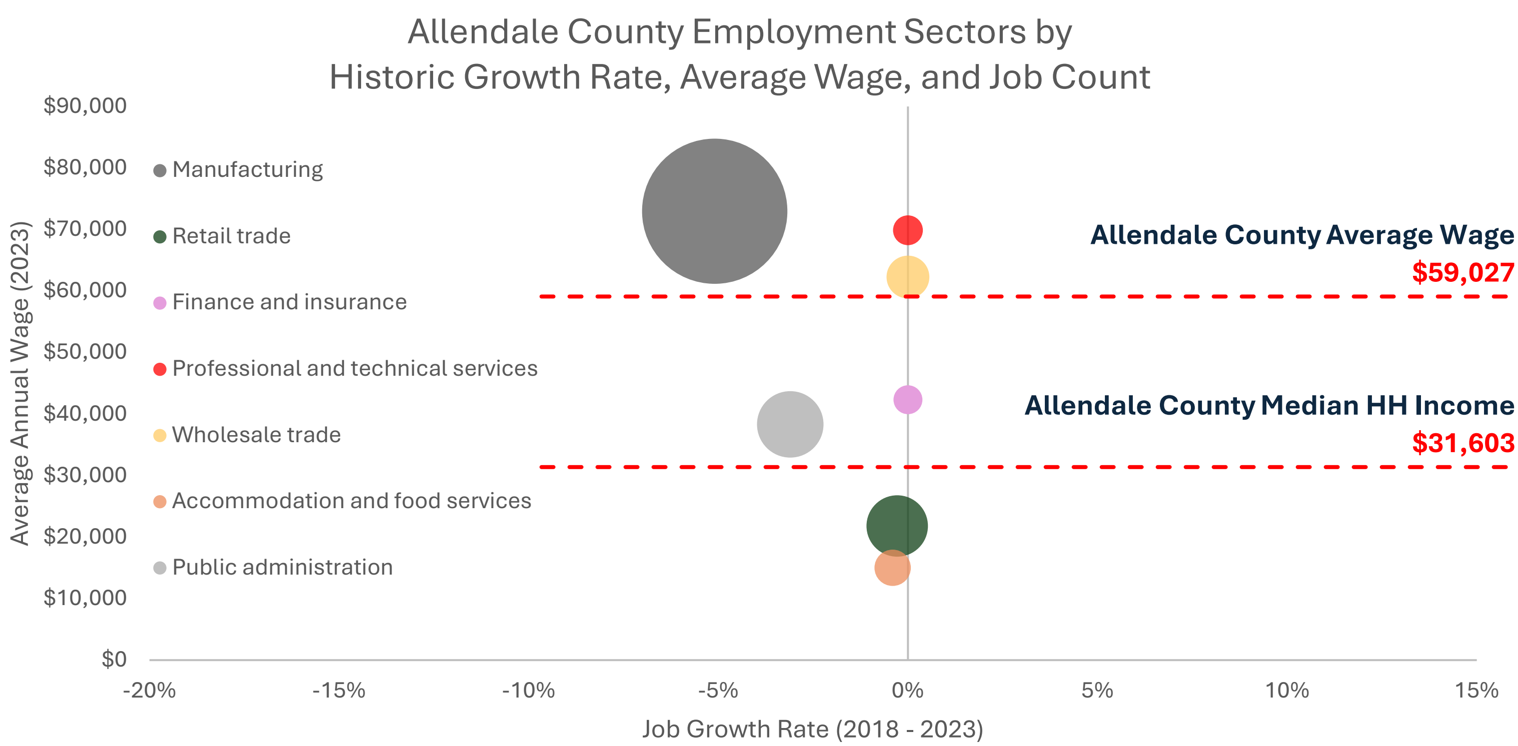



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall County Employment

From November 2023 to December 2024 the average unemployment rate in Allendale County was 6.9%, over double South Carolina's 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.0% and Georgia's comparable rate of 3.3%.

If the SRS region continues to add jobs at the 1% annual rate that it achieved from 2018 to 2023, and if Allendale County matches that growth rate, the County could expect to add 175 new jobs by 2030. Even this prediction would represent a 12.2% decrease in local employment from the 2010 baseline of 2,995 jobs.



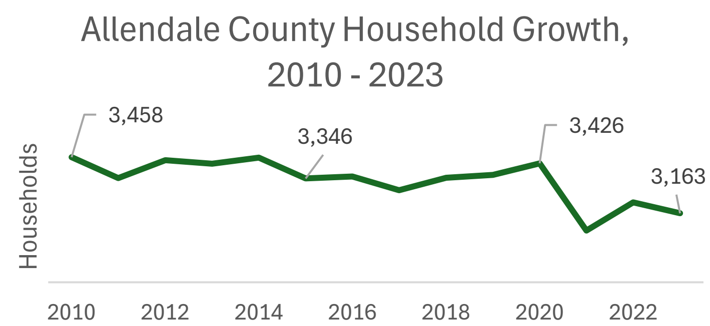

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – Allendale County

## Household Growth

Allendale County has not participated in the steady increase in the number of households that the broader region has experienced in recent years. While Columbia County, Aiken County, and Burke County added a significant number of households from 2010 to 2023, Allendale County posted a net 8.53% decrease in the number of households.

The American Community Survey reported that Allendale County had 3,458 households in 2010 and 3,163 in 2023, meaning that the county experienced a net decrease of 295 households over that period.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

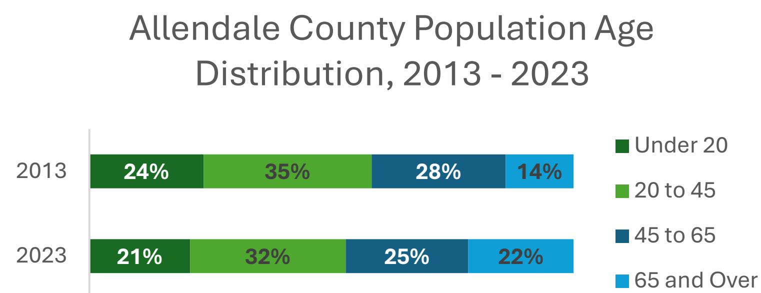
## Age

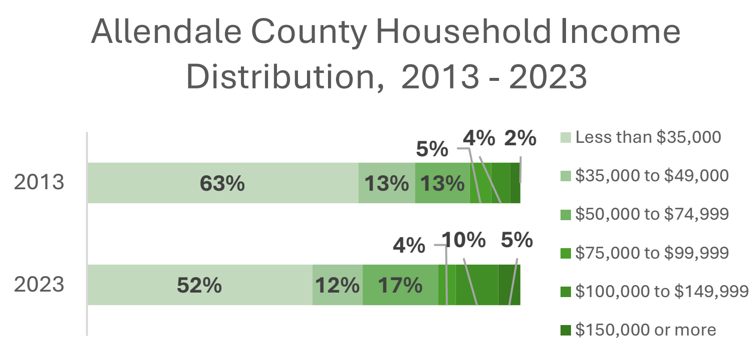
The age profile of Allendale County and the broader Aiken-Augusta region remained relatively steady over the last decade. However, small shifts may serve as indicators of larger trends to come.

Every county in the region experienced in increase in the proportion of the population over 65 years old and a commensurate decrease in the population under 20 years old. The primary working age population between the ages of 20 and 65 held relatively constant.

Allendale County was no exception from these regional trends. From 2013 to 2023, the proportion of residents aged 65 and older increased from 14% to 22% of the county's total. A larger share of Allendale County's residents are above the age of 65 than in any other county in the Aiken-Augusta region.

Allendale County is aging. Should this trend continue, the county can expect an increased need for eldercare services and a gradual decrease in student enrollment at county schools. A lack of young residents in the region can also have negative effects on the region's workforce in the long-term as employers seek to fill the shoes of retiring workers with the next generation.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

In 2023, 80% of Allendale County households earned less than $75,000, and over half of households earned less than $35,000. This challenging situation is still an improvement from 2013, when 89% of Allendale County earned less than $75,000 and almost two-thirds of households earned less than $35,000.

**Median household income grew from $25,252 to $31,603.** Allendale County's household income profile is more similar to neighboring Barnwell County's than any other county in the study region.

While not all counties in the study area experienced growth in the highest income group – those earning $150,000 or more – Allendale County did. 2% of households met that threshold in 2013 and 5% met it in 2023.

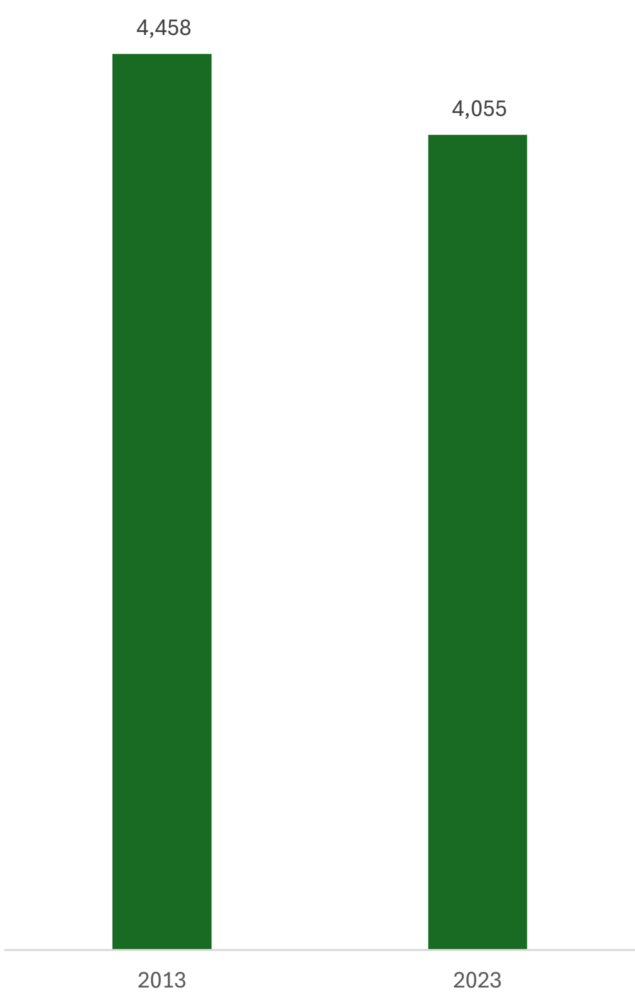
# Housing Supply – Allendale County

## Shrinking Inventory

Allendale County has not participated in the housing growth experienced by the larger counties in the region.

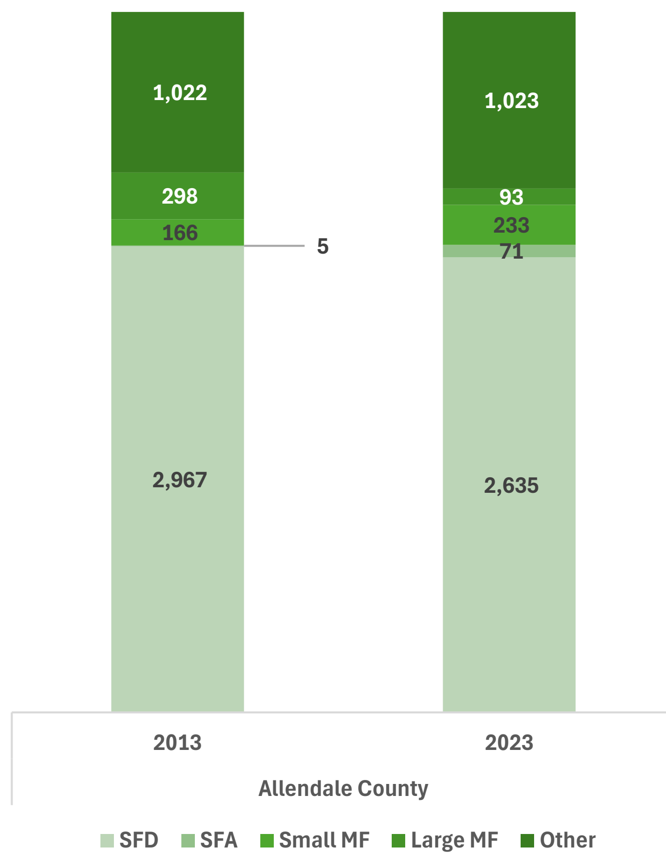
From 2013 to 2023, the total housing stock in Allendale County has changed from 4,458 to 4,055, a decrease of 403 units, or 9%. This decrease in housing supply closely tracks the 8.53% decrease in households that Allendale County experienced over the same period. A decrease in households may help mitigate the upwards pressure on home prices typically implied by a decrease in housing supply but is not a sustainable long-term trend.

Allendale County Total Housing Units, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

Allendale County Housing Units by Type, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

The 9% net decrease in housing units observed in Allendale County from 2013 to 2023 is shown through small changes in the mix of housing supply. A loss of 205 units in large multi-family complexes and 332 single family detached units was only partially offset by 66 new single family attached units and 67 new units in small multi-family complexes.

Allendale County's housing units are significantly older than the regional average. 89% of housing units in Allendale County are more than 20 years old while close to half, 49%, of housing units are more than 40 years old. In the study area, only Richmond County has a higher percentage of homes over 40 years old than Allendale County, which is due to the prevalence of historic housing stock in and around the city of Augusta.

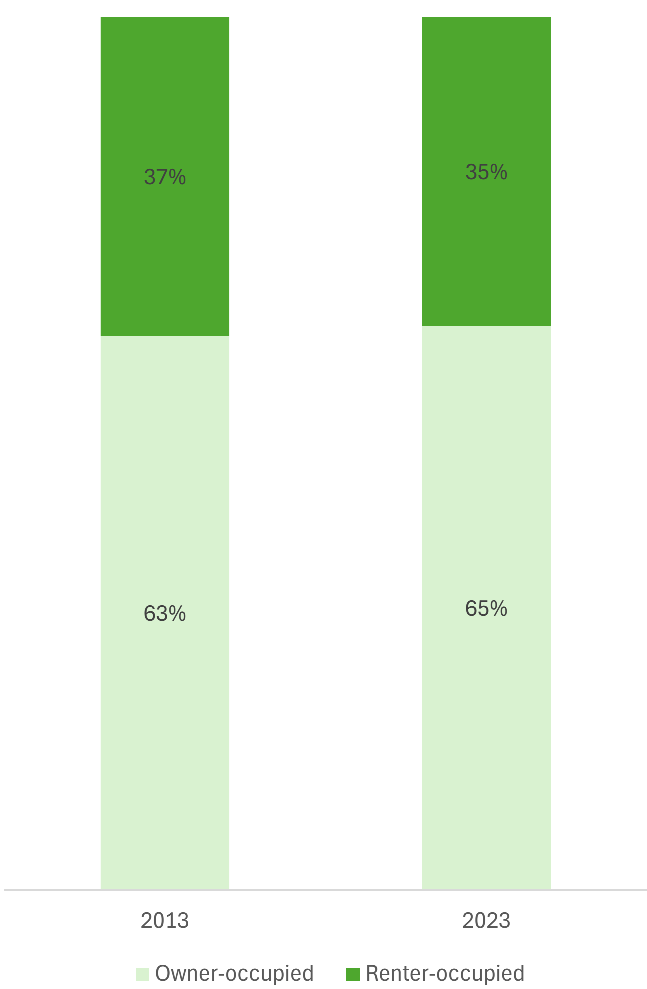
# Housing Supply – Allendale County

## Tenure

The mix of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing remained almost exactly consistent from 2013 to 2023, with about two-thirds of Allendale County households owning their home and the remaining third renting.

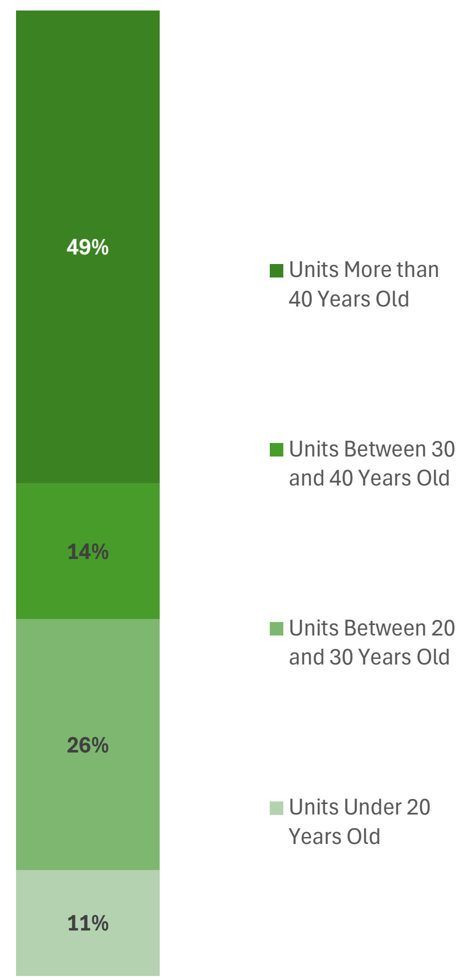
The stability in housing tenure suggests little recent shift in Allendale County's housing dynamics, with homeownership remaining the dominant form of tenure. This consistency reflects limited new housing development and relatively low in-migration, as the county's housing stock has largely served existing residents rather than attracting significant new demand.

Allendale County Tenure Distribution, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

Allendale County Distribution of Housing Units by Age, 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

Allendale County's housing units are significantly older than the regional average. 89% of housing units in Allendale County are more than 20 years old while close to half, 49%, of housing units are more than 40 years old.

While there are undoubtedly properties of historic significance worth preserving within the county, this distribution serves as a strong indicator that roughly half of the county's housing inventory may be in serious need of renovation or complete replacement. Additionally, the distribution reflects that very little new development activity has occurred within the county since the 1980s.

# Housing Accessibility for Owners and Renters
# Allendale County

In the study area, the CoStar estimated average home rent in Allendale County was $739. This was lower than every county in the study area besides Barnwell and Edgefield Counties. Meanwhile, Allendale County's adjusted median home price of $111,473 was the lowest among all counties in the study area. These prices do not translate to widespread affordability, however, because of the average wages reported for many industries in the area.

According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, potential owners and renters in several local industries earn salaries that would require them to spend over a third of their income on housing, which would make them cost burdened. For single income households, only those workers in the manufacturing, wholesale trade, and professional services industries earn average salaries that can support renting or buying homes at typical Allendale County prices. Dual-income households in a broader set of industries would have increased flexibility to buy or rent in Allendale County.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Industry** | **Single-Income Attainable Rent** | **County Average Rent** | **Single-Income Cost Burdened Status** | **Dual-Income Attainable Rent** | **County Average Rent** | **Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status** |
| Manufacturing | $1,323 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,348 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $1,132 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,006 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $462 | $739 | Cost Burdened | $834 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $502 | $739 | Cost Burdened | $907 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $880 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,408 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $1,268 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,249 | $739 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $329 | $739 | Cost Burdened | $579 | $739 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $280 | $739 | Cost Burdened | $495 | $739 | Cost Burdened |

| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Industry** | **Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price** | **County Average Home Price** | **Single-Income Cost Burdened Status** | **Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price** | **County Average Home Price** | **Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status** |
| Manufacturing | $158,762 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened | $281,753 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $135,790 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened | $240,752 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $55,396 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened | $100,029 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $60,209 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened | $108,855 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $105,644 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened | $168,959 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $152,120 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened | $269,896 | $111,473 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $39,483 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened | $69,489 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $33,644 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened | $59,431 | $111,473 | Cost Burdened |

* Bureau of Labor Statistics Data is not available for industries with no reported wages in Allendale County, including agriculture and forestry.

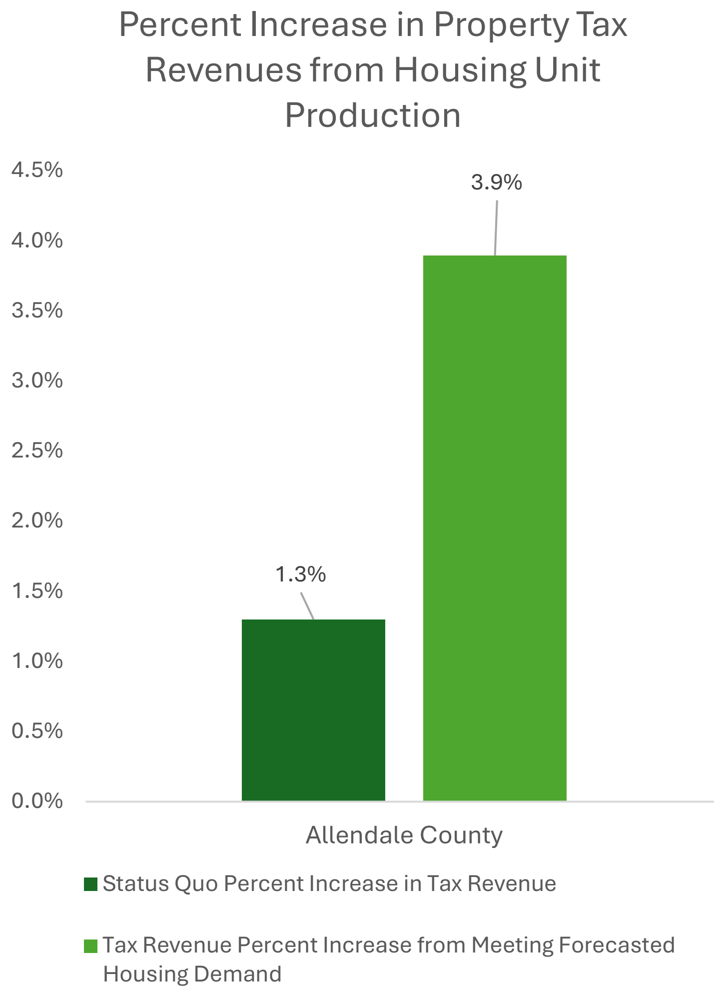
# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production
# Allendale County

The volume of new housing production in Allendale County over the past five years has been quite low. Similarly, the county's tax revenues are low and have experienced little annual appreciation in recent years. The county faces numerous challenges that can be traced back to broader economic and fiscal shortcomings.

Allendale County has experienced little new investment and job creation over the past decade or more, and while there are prospects of new industry locating within the county, housing and infrastructure severely limit the county's capacity to attract a steady trend of industry expansion.

Adding new housing units to the county's inventory represents a major challenge, as the market is unproven, suggesting that any new additions that can contribute meaningfully to bolstering the county's inventory will require public investment, either in the form of infrastructure expansions or improvements, or through the direct subsidy of workforce housing unit development.

The chart to the right, which describes the fiscal benefits of adding housing to the county show that adding new units will have strong positive fiscal benefits to the county and should be considered when the county is debating to make the necessary investment to expand its housing inventory. The costs may result in a net-zero increase in revenues; however, the intangible long-term benefit will be a much more active housing market and economic development outlook.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Allendale County | County | $50,890 | $152,410 | $101,521 | **$229,197** |
| | School | $64,001 | $191,678 | $127,677 | |

For Allendale County, the increase in revenue that would result from housing production both in status quo and meeting demand scenarios in terms of absolute revenue, would both be relatively low, with the total fiscal benefit of meeting market demand estimated at less than a quarter of a million dollars. This would represent a $101,521 increase in tax revenue for the county and a $127,677 increase in revenue for county schools should the county meet market demand instead of maintaining the status quo defined by the last five years of residential development.

# Demand & Gap – Allendale County

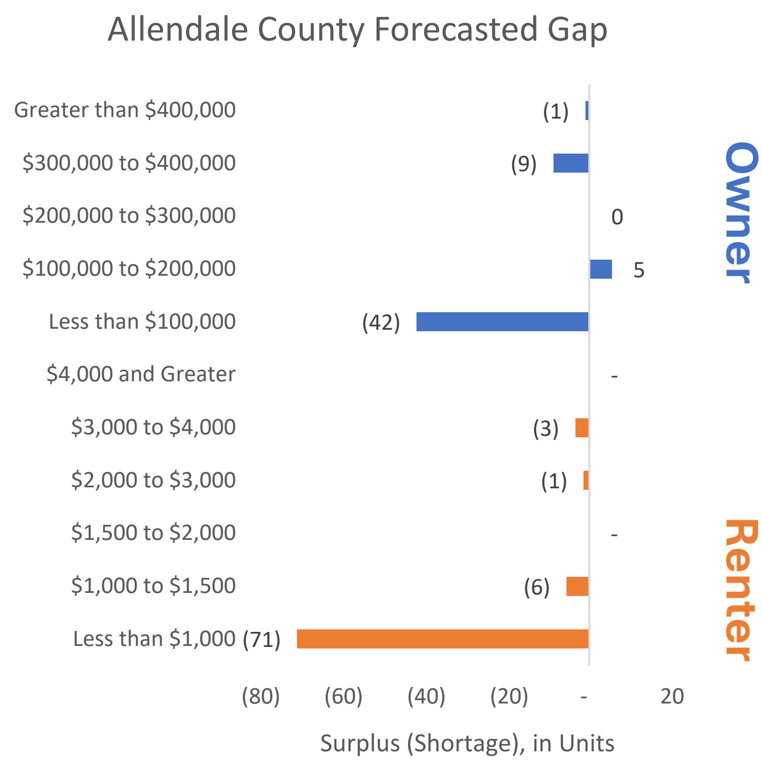
## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

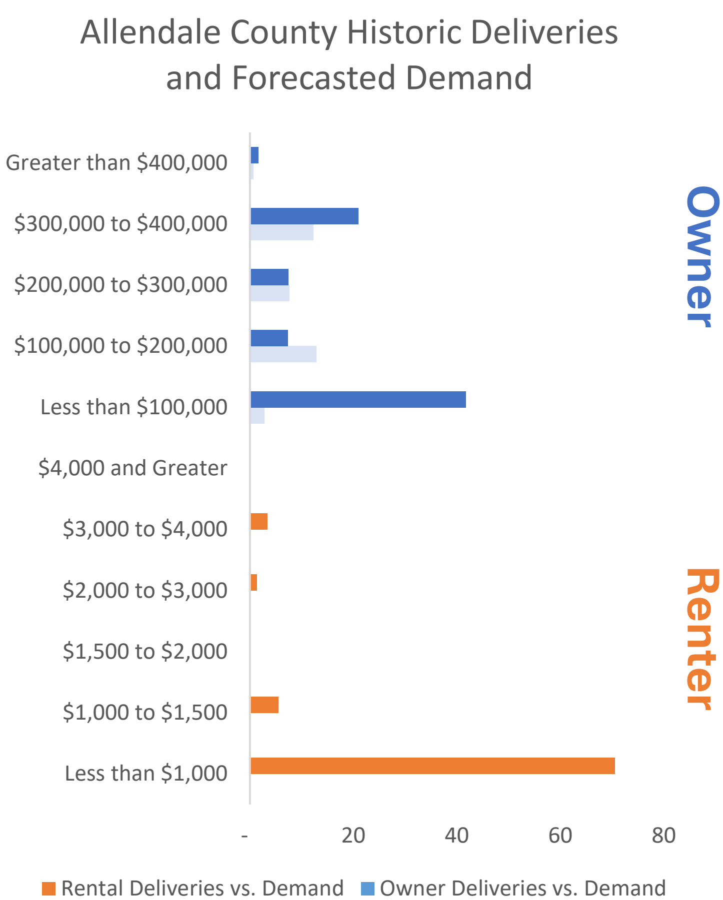
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

Both historic deliveries and forecasted demand for Allendale County are relatively low. Over the next five years, total demand for housing amounts to less than 200 units across all segments.

Demand for housing is relatively concentrated, with a high level of demand within the rental segment where monthly rents are less than $1,000, in addition to for-sale demand for units less than $100,000. The $100,000 to $200,000 segment is the only segment where the last five years of deliveries exceeds demand for the next five years.




## Forecasted Gap

Due to the low volume of deliveries of housing across all segments over the last five years, the forecasted gaps in Allendale County's housing market over the next five years would be significant if the county continues to produce housing at the same pace that it has. These gaps would be particularly pronounced in the lower for-sale and rental segments.

While the forecasted gaps are significant in the context of the low-activity Allendale County housing market, the absolute number of units that the county would be falling short by is relatively low, suggesting that federal and state subsidies could go a long way to helping the county satisfy housing demand within the county, as this demand is largely concentrated in the low rent and low purchase price segments.

# Strategies & Recommendations – Allendale County

## Strategic Priorities

Allendale County faces many challenges when it comes to addressing issues related to housing and economic development due to relative locational disadvantages, a lack of recent private investment within the county and infrastructure limitations.

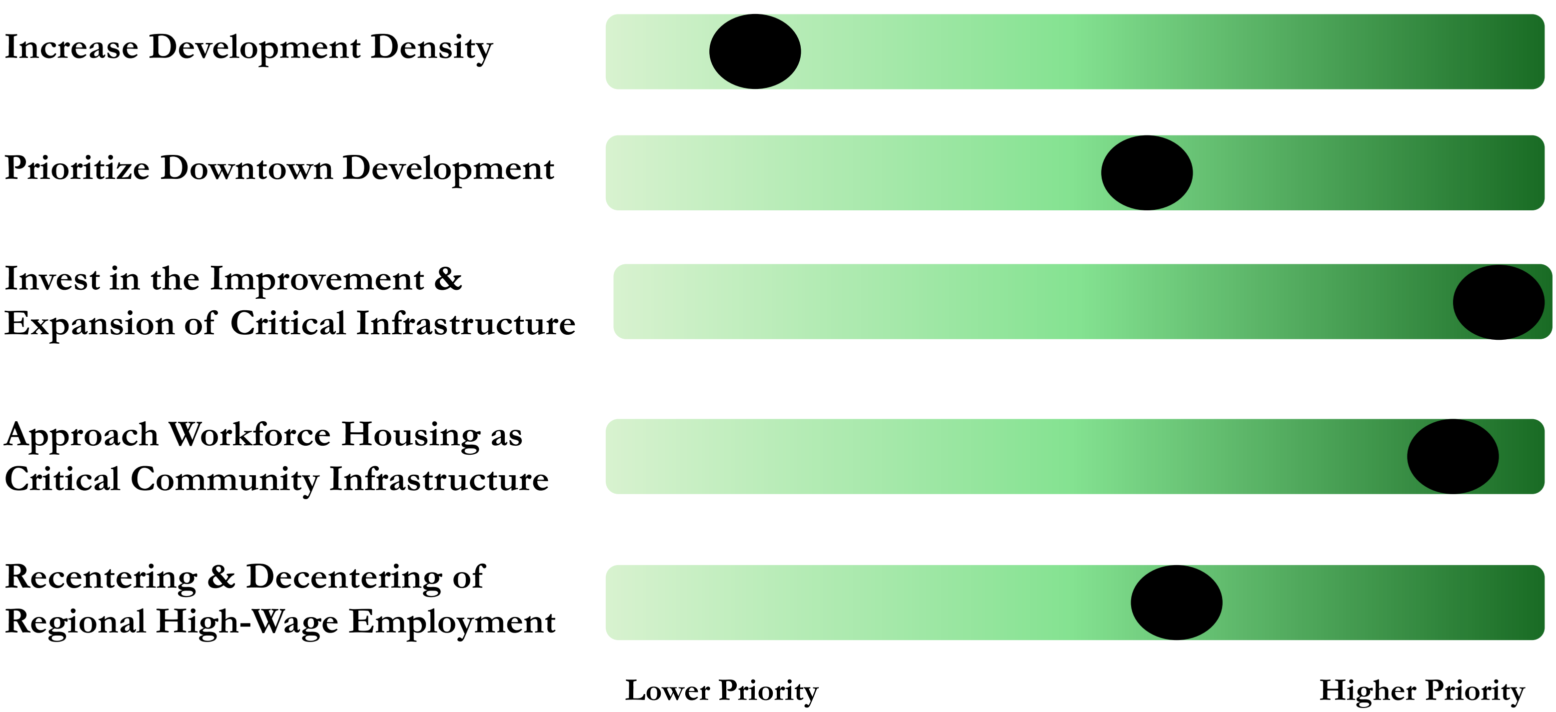
**Allendale's key priorities should all be aimed at attracting attention from the private development community and building confidence that Allendale County is a community worth investing in.**

**To achieve this, Allendale County must take a proactive approach to economic development, infrastructure improvements, and housing strategies that signal readiness for private investment.** Strengthening public-private partnerships, leveraging state and federal funding sources, and improving local capacity to support development will be essential steps in laying the groundwork for long-term growth.

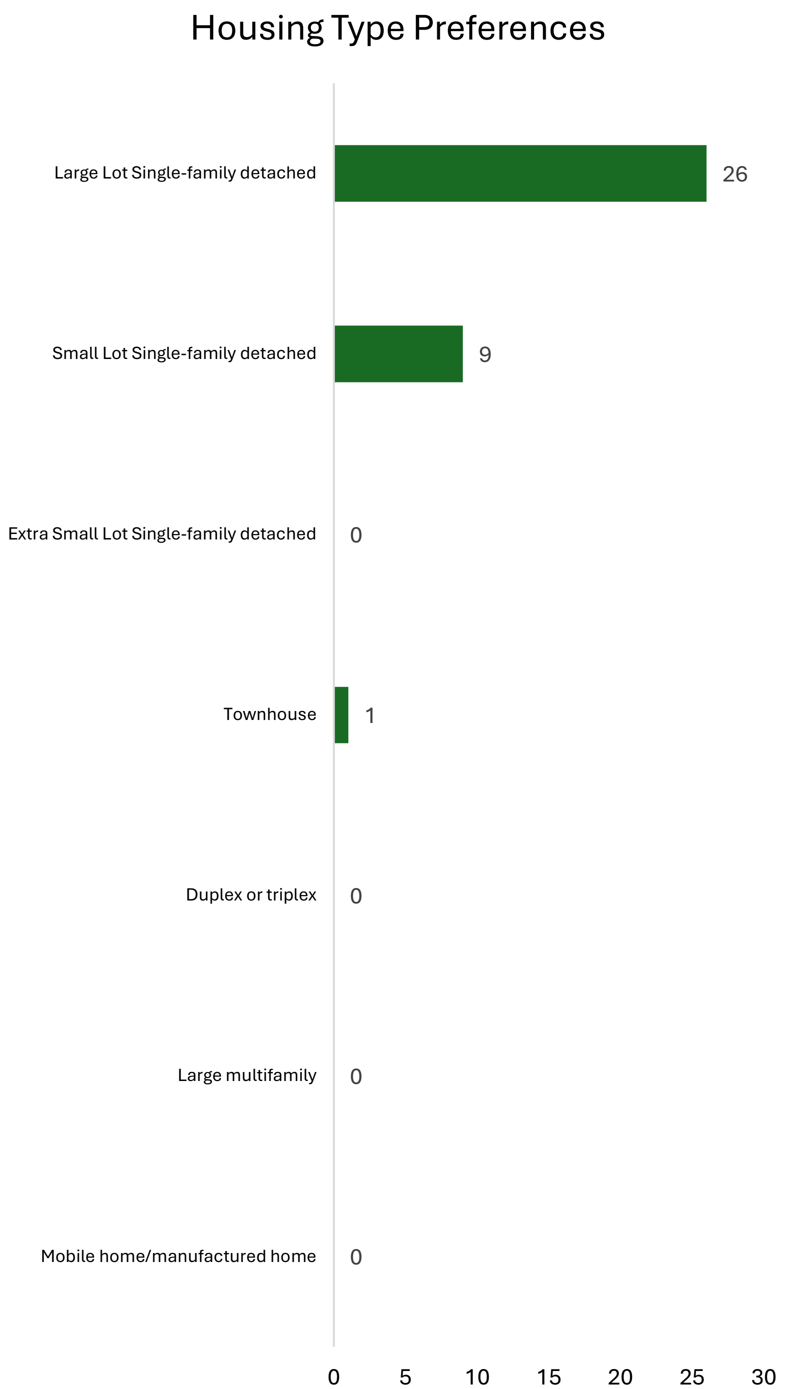
The county must also work to identify and market key sites that could be attractive for housing or mixed-use projects, ensuring that developers recognize the potential for investment.

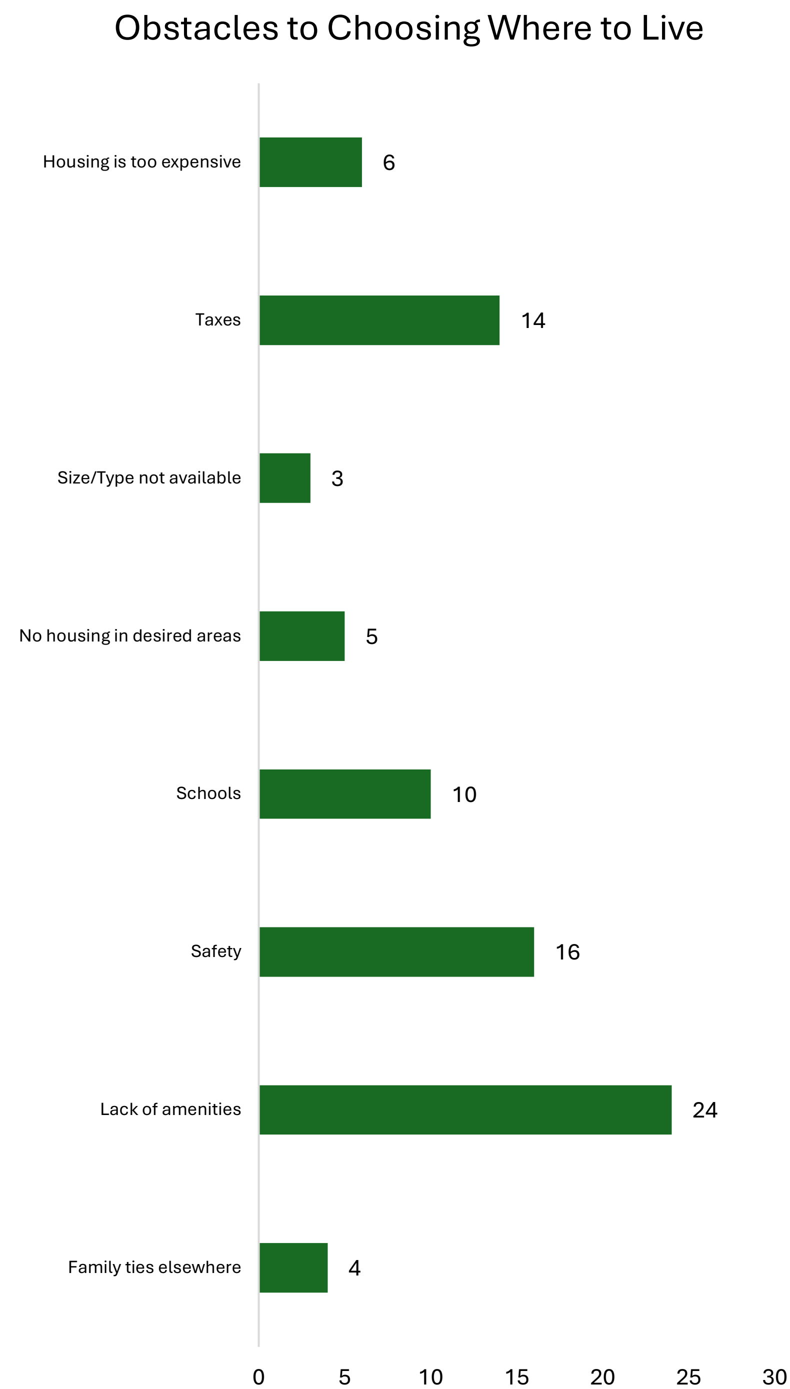
**Enhancing infrastructure capacity, particularly in water, sewer, and broadband, should be a top priority.** Targeted infrastructure expansion in strategic areas, particularly near existing employment centers, schools, and commercial nodes, can help position the county for new residential development. Seeking state and federal grants, and partnerships with regional utility providers can help offset the costs of these investments while signaling to the private sector that Allendale is committed to supporting new growth.

**Ultimately, building confidence in Allendale's future as a viable housing market will require a combination of infrastructure readiness, strategic investment marketing, and partnerships with both the public and private sectors.**



# Survey Findings – Allendale County

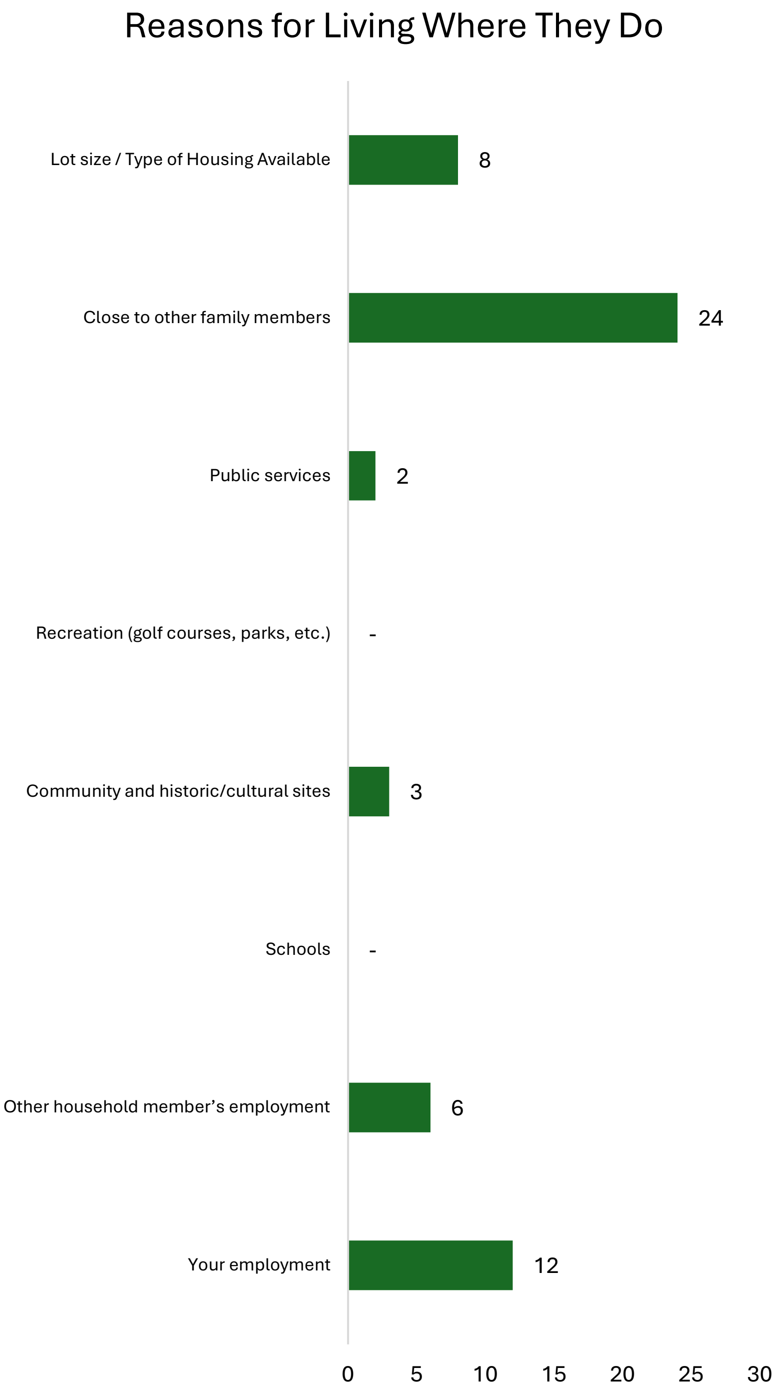


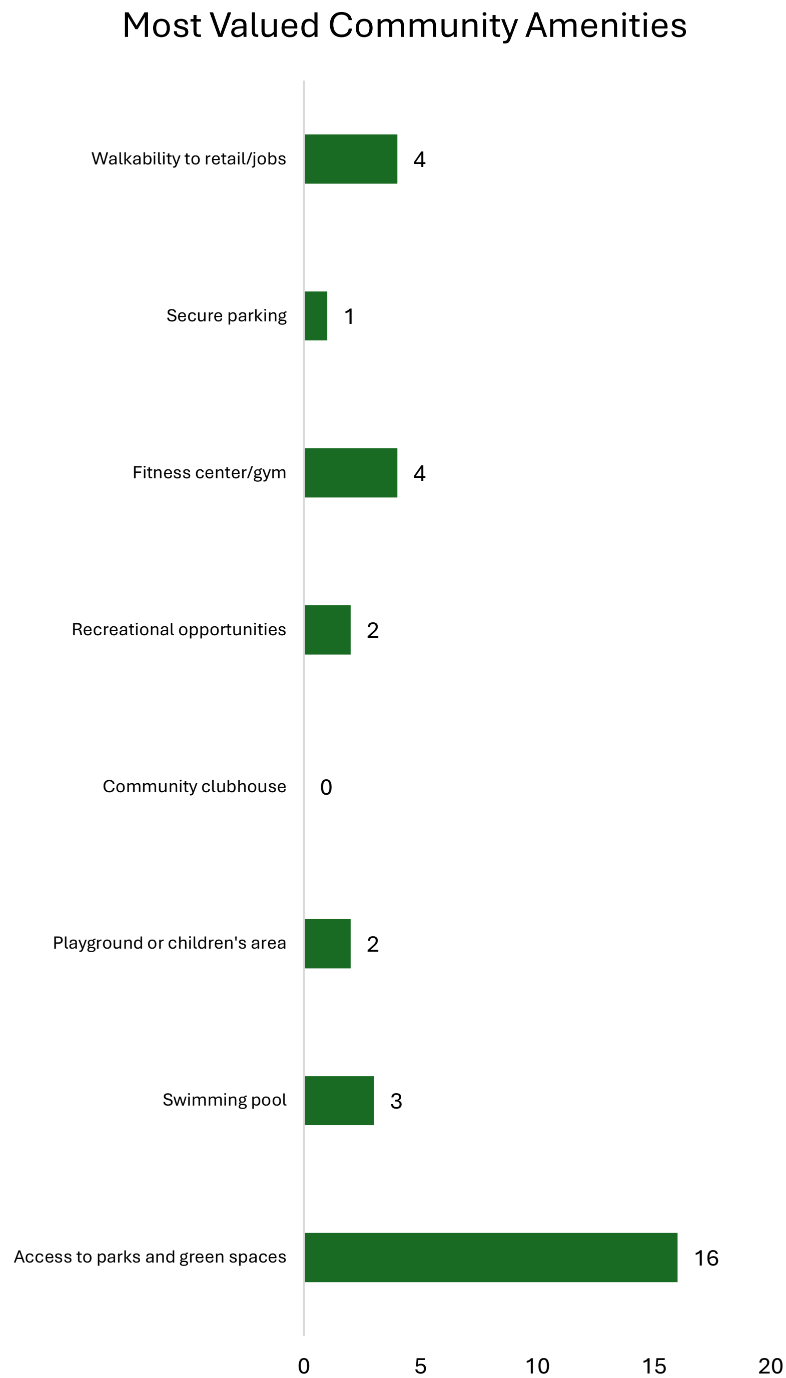




Survey respondents in Allendale county showed a clear preference for single-family detached housing, with the most popular option being large lot, followed by small lot single-family and then townhouse as the third option. Extra small lot single family detached, duplex/triplex, large multifamily, and mobile home/manufactured home didn't receive a single response from survey participants. Allendale county residents show a clear appreciation for the single-family detached housing type.

In terms of obstacles to choosing where to live, the biggest obstacle to residents was a lack of amenities. This was followed by safety concerns and then taxes. The identification of a lack of amenities as a major obstacle to choosing where to live within Allendale County suggests that there are few places in the county that offer the kinds of amenities that those with the means to choose where they live within the county are seeking.

# Survey Findings – Allendale County




The most popular reason for residents to live in Allendale County is so that they can be close to other family members. The second most popular reason was for their employment, and the third most popular option was the lot size/type of house available. Allendale County respondents' identification of family as the leading reason for living where they do differs from many other counties in the region where employment is typically the leading reason.

Access to parks and green spaces was at the forefront of community amenities that residents value most. The other options shared similar responses, with walkability to retail/jobs and fitness center/gym being the next most valued.

COMMUNITY REUSE ORGANIZATION

# Barnwell County

# Barnwell County

## Market Profile

- Under-developed water, sewer and road infrastructure
- Historically declining population and economic base
- Aging housing stock and lack of community amenities
- Well located to capture growth from Aiken County

## Housing Needs

**Total Five-Year Gap: 185 Units**

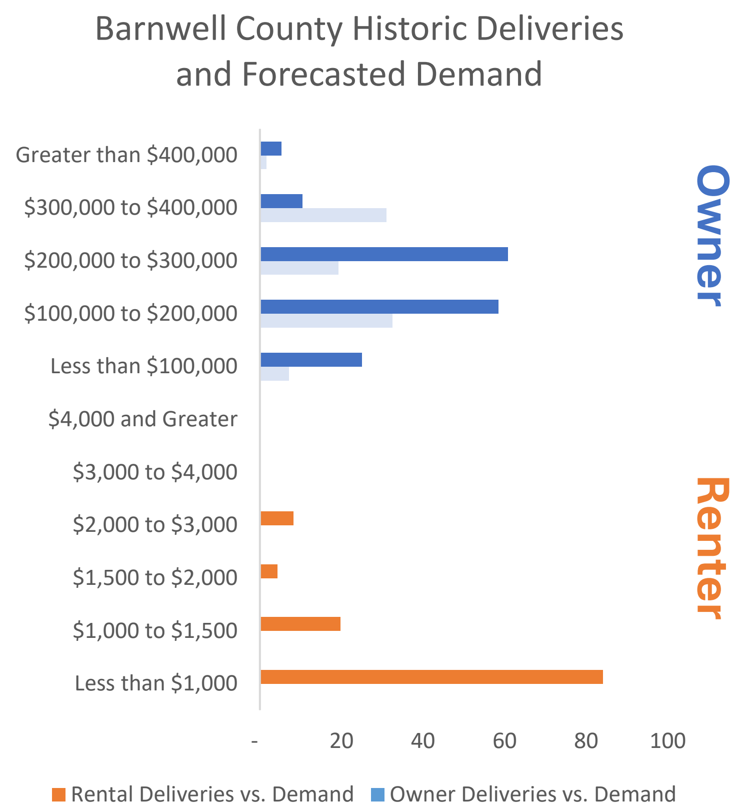
**In the chart to the right:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Smaller format entry level for-sale homes AND Mid-market for-sale units suitable for higher-income families**

**Deeply affordable rental options AND Workforce rentals convenient to employment centers**

**Total Five-Year Demand: 276 Units**




**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

## Implementable Strategies

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Apply for federal and state grants in order to leverage available state and federal funding for water and sewer expansion
2. Establish a land bank or leverage existing land bank to convert abandoned and tax-delinquent properties into housing and community assets.
3. Form a Downtown Development Authority OR empower existing DDA with greater resources and technical support.
4. Promote safety and attractiveness in downtown through events programming.

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Leverage Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support redevelopment of underperforming downtown areas to include more housing.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Create a façade grant program to improve the appearance and perception of downtown, to support business activity and property value growth and to encourage downtown housing development.

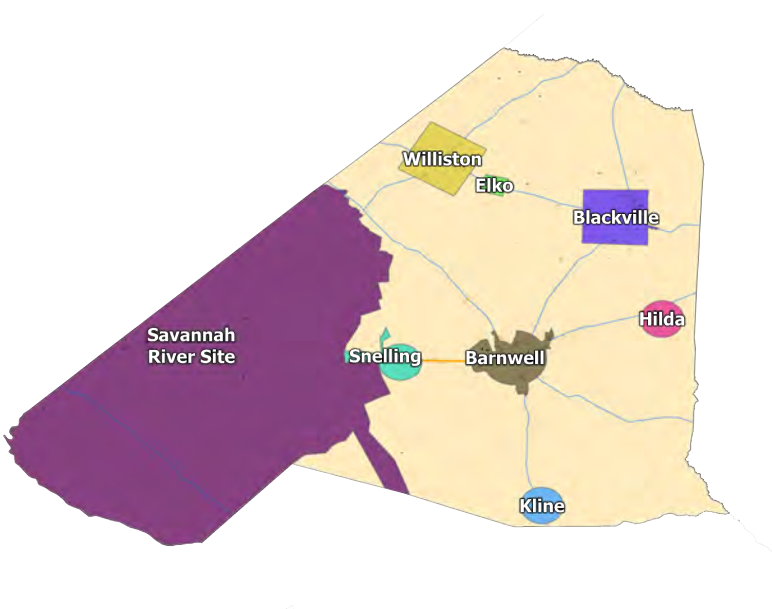
# Barnwell County

## Overview

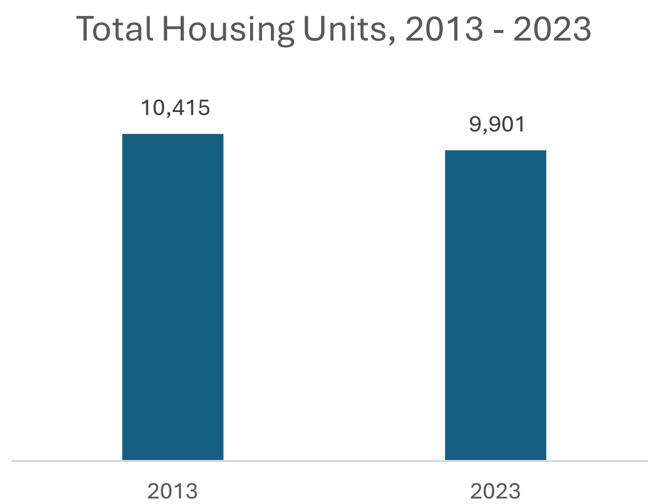
Barnwell County, South Carolina contains the largest physical portion of the Savannah River Site, however when the site was first designated, the community and government of the county rejected the proposal to receive the site's administrative headquarters, historically impacting economic development in Barnwell County, while becoming a major economic driver for the region, particularly Aiken County.

The site, which does not have an access point within Barnwell County despite taking up a great deal of the county's land area, can, from a certain perspective, serve as a barrier to connectivity between Barnwell County and the Aiken-Augusta region. Connections between Augusta and Aiken to Barnwell County are also very limited, with Highway 278 connecting Barnwell to Augusta and Highway 278 and Highway 78 connecting Barnwell to Aiken, both of which are two-lane roads.

The county's access infrastructure is not the sole limiting factor for growth in the county, with water and sewer infrastructure also constituting a major barrier in addition to an aging housing stock and a lack of recent deliveries resulting in a self-perpetuating cycle of disinvestment from industry and the development community.




Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On the Map




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Barnwell County Housing Today

Barnwell County has seen very little new housing added to the county's inventory in the last twenty years, with units built since 2000 accounting for only about 15% of the county's housing units, compared with a regional average of 27%. Between 2013 and 2023, the number of housing units in the county declined by an estimated 514 units, a loss of units that likely occurred due to increasing vacancy and deterioration from age.

In the last five years, new unit deliveries have been so few, that the data suggests no new units have been produced within the county. While it is likely inaccurate to say that no new housing units have been created over the last five years, the units that have been delivered have been delivered by very small-scale developers, developing single lots at a time. New delivery data also does not account for renovation activities within the county, which have not been widespread, but there are indications that renovation efforts are underway particularly within the communities of Barnwell and Blackville.

Infrastructure constraints, particularly as they relate to sewer and water capacity, are a major limiting factor in the county's ability to attract new industry and new residential development.

# Barnwell County Overview

These barriers have significantly hindered Barnwell County's ability to capture growth that is occurring just beyond its borders in Aiken County and have contributed to the self-reinforcing cycle by which no new housing development has occurred and where, as a result, the market appears unproven to outside developers, further reinforcing the trend by which no new housing development occurs.

## Barriers & Challenges

Water and sewer infrastructure presents both a barrier and an opportunity for development within Barnwell County. Extending infrastructure to many parts of the unincorporated county is not feasible due to the high costs of installation and maintenance, coupled with the low return on investment resulting from the sparse distribution of potential clients in these areas.

However, the incorporated communities within Barnwell County, principally Barnwell, Williston and Blackville, have the capacity to accommodate growth through the pursuit of infill opportunities.

Focusing growth within the county's existing communities achieves multiple goals simultaneously: preserving economically and culturally valuable agricultural lands, avoiding fiscally unsustainable water and sewer expansions, and adding new homes and households to existing areas, thereby fostering greater community complexity and enabling the development of more retail options and community amenities.

Also, Barnwell County's lack of strong connections to major transportation infrastructure is a limiting factor to future growth for the county.

Most significantly, Barnwell County will likely never see growth comparable to even a county like Edgefield County, which on paper has many similarities and is also largely undeveloped but has one major asset that Barnwell County does not, which is immediate access to an interstate highway, I-20.

This lack of access to the nation's major arteries represent an unalterable challenge to economic development and to housing development. Counties like Edgefield County or McDuffie County benefit from passive housing development that may occur simply because of the ease of access to other, more economically and culturally active locations within the region, which is a type of development that is more unlikely to occur in Barnwell County due to the lack of access the county has to interstate highways.

# Barnwell County Overview

While the lack of movement on large tracks is a meaningful barrier to allowing national builders to enter the market, on a smaller scale, this trend also contributes to a higher than desirable degree of absentee property owners who may leave single homes to deteriorate, creating an eyesore for the local community and decreasing confidence in potential returns on investment for industry and developers.

While Barnwell County schools are not nearly as distressed as the school district in adjacent Allendale County, they are not nearly as well regarded as adjacent Aiken County schools. The hope among Barnwell County's leadership is that the consolidation of the county's three school districts into a single school district will grant the district as a whole greater access to resources and allow for the improvement of both facilities and services locally. There are already plans underway for the construction of a new consolidated high school to follow the administrative consolidation of the district which has already occurred.

Currently, many of the higher-earning households that reside in the county choose to send their children to private schools either within the county or in adjacent Aiken County or even as far as Richmond County depending upon specific household means and preferences.

The general lack of retail options and community amenities within Barnwell County poses a significant challenge to attracting new residents, especially in the context of the deficiencies of Barnwell County's public school system and a regional context in which Columbia County and Aiken County have both a plethora of retail and community amenities and school systems with a regional reputation for excellence. This lack of amenities and retail may contribute towards a lifestyle mismatch between the high-income, highly educated professionals attracted to the area by jobs in the energy and advanced manufacturing sectors.

While retail options are unlikely to show up in Barnwell County without growth in population, the County does have control over investments in public infrastructure like parks and trails, as well as over programming, such as live events throughout Barnwell County's downtown areas.

# Barnwell County Overview

These efforts are already underway in Blackville and Barnwell, where both downtown areas have recently seen new investments and new restaurant and retail openings.

Building on these early successes at creating distinct senses of place within the county have the potential to provide potential residents with reasons beyond just proximity to the Savannah River Site to live in Barnwell County.

One last barrier that the county faces is its ability to attract LIHTC developers that can supply much-needed low-income housing within the county. One of the biggest barriers that stands in the way of the county's would-be low-income housing developers from being able to produce this kind of housing is the state of South Carolina's LIHTC requirements, which disproportionately favor projects that are proposed in more populated areas of the state due to the way vicinity to employment opportunities factor into the state's scoring system.

While the County can prioritize creating an ecosystem in which LIHTC developers can gain points in other scoring categories, the County should, in concert with other rural communities, advocate for revisions to the state's LIHTC scoring system to allow for projects in communities like Barnwell County to secure much-needed funds more easily.

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

While Barnwell County's existing market-driven accelerants remain limited, ***opportunities exist for the county and its municipalities to reverse the long-standing pattern of decline by proactively investing in infrastructure, public services, and community amenities.***

Strategic improvements in these areas can help position Barnwell County to capture a share of the broader regional growth.

Additionally, refining local zoning regulations, particularly within the county's incorporated communities, can create pathways for denser residential development, increasing the economic feasibility of replacing outdated, deteriorating structures.


Updating zoning to allow for a wider range of housing typologies, including townhomes and cottage-style developments, may also help attract developers who might otherwise overlook the county due to limited market-rate demand for traditional single-family homes.

Beyond zoning reform, the county should take a more active role in addressing blight by enforcing stricter property maintenance codes and encouraging the rehabilitation or removal of vacant, aging structures.

# Barnwell County Overview

More robust code enforcement mechanisms, such as escalating fines for absentee landlords, could incentivize better property stewardship or prompt property transfers to more responsible owners.

***The establishment of a land bank at either the county or municipal level, particularly within Barnwell, Williston, and Blackville, could serve as a key tool in revitalizing tax-delinquent properties, returning them to productive use and ultimately strengthening the county's tax base.***

Attracting residential developers must be a top priority for Barnwell County, and doing so will require a deliberate, resource-backed effort.

Given the prolonged stagnation of private development within the county, the onus is on local governments to demonstrate market viability. This means leveraging every available tool, whether through infrastructure investments, public-private partnerships, or financial incentives, to make development as feasible and attractive as possible. The planned expansion of activities at the Savannah River Site over the next five years presents a clear window of opportunity, as new jobs created at the facility will likely generate fresh housing demand in the region.

Anecdotally, the few homes that have been delivered in Barnwell County have sold quickly, and there are legacy Barnwell County residents who would like to move back to Barnwell County, but there is a lack of available housing that fits the needs of younger households.

Despite these anecdotal instances, Barnwell County's housing market remains largely untested, local leaders must take bold steps to catalyze the first wave of new development by expanding water and sewer infrastructure and strategically offering publicly held lands to private developers for free or at a significant discount. Success in even a single project could serve as a proof of concept, demonstrating to developers that a market for new housing in Barnwell County not only exists but can thrive with the right strategic investments.

***Revitalization efforts in downtown Cairo, Georgia have helped to transform disused depot and retail buildings into spaces for thriving restaurants and businesses.***

# Economic Drivers – Barnwell County

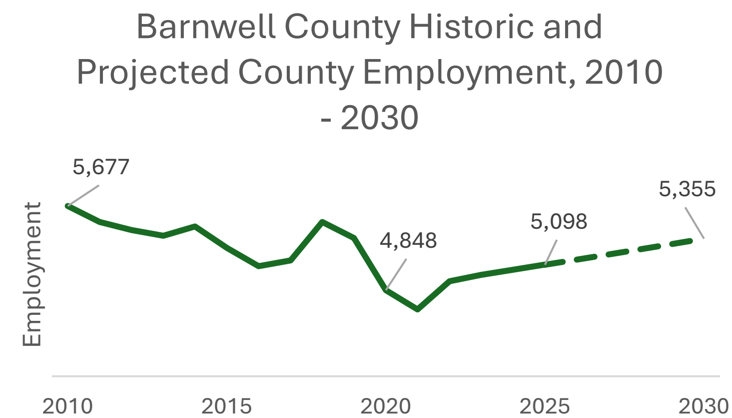
## Employment by Industry

Employment opportunities in Barnwell County are distributed across several industries. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, in 2023, Barnwell County's five largest industries by number of employees were manufacturing, retail trade, health care, educational services, and public administration..

The chart below describes Barnwell County's top seven industries along three different dimensions; the number of employees employed in each sector, the average wage of employees in each sector, and the average annual growth rate that each industry experienced from 2018 to 2023.

The employment mix has shifted over the last five years. Increases in transportation, warehousing and health care jobs has not been enough to offset the loss of approximately 600 manufacturing and construction jobs. This means that from 2018 to 2023 Barnwell County experienced a net decrease of 522 jobs.

Despite a changing mix of industries, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported a slow but steady increase in average wages, rising from $37.0k in 2018 to $42.8k in 2023. The average annual increase of approximately 3% over that time period failed to outpace inflation.

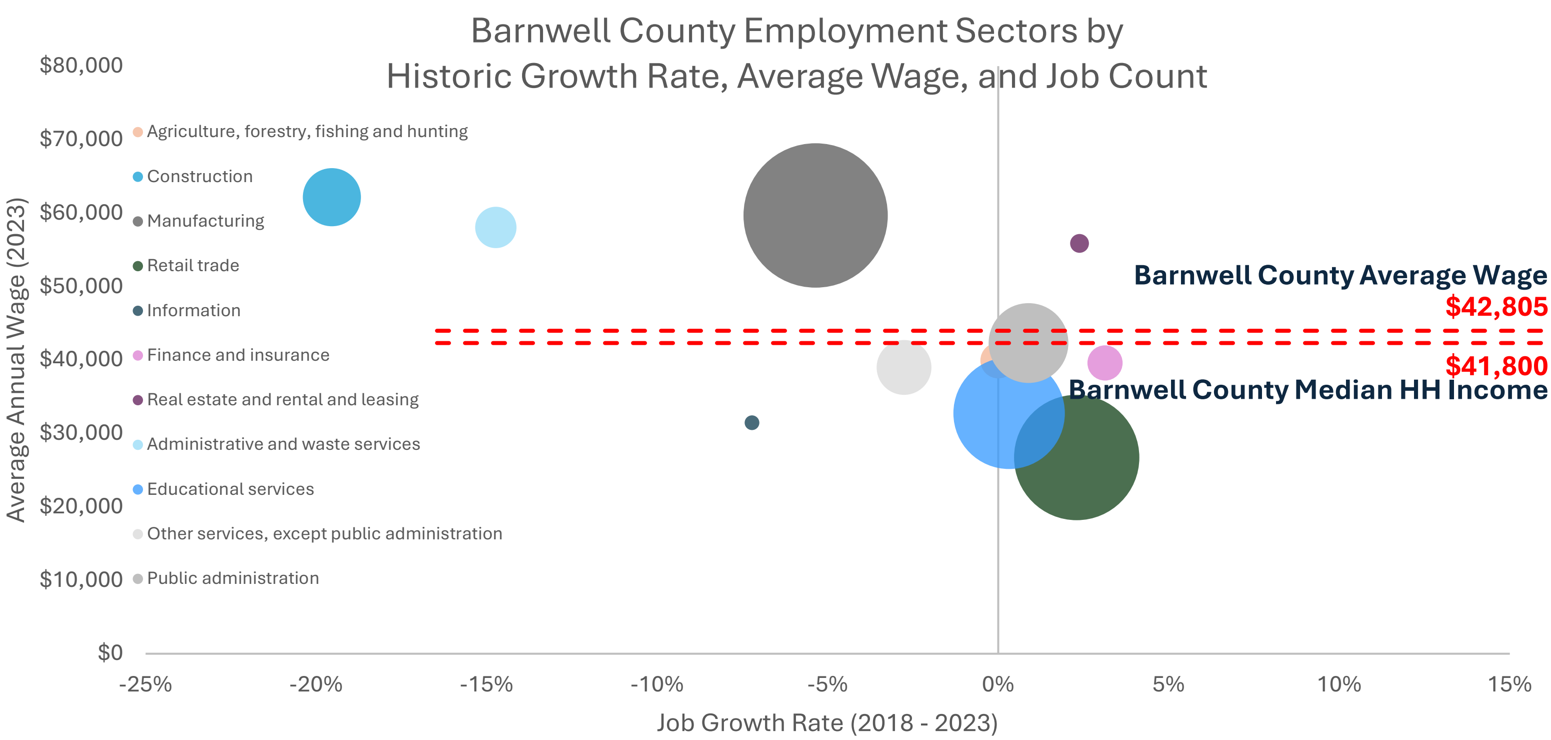



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall County Employment

From November 2023 to December 2024 the average unemployment rate in Barnwell County was 6.1%, over double South Carolina's 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.0% and approaching twice Georgia's comparable rate of 3.3%.

If the Aiken-Augusta region continues to add jobs at the 1% annual rate that it achieved from 2018 to 2023, and if Barnwell County matches that growth rate, the County could expect to add 356 new jobs by 2030. Even this prediction would represent a 5.7% decrease in local employment from the 2010 baseline of 5,677 jobs.



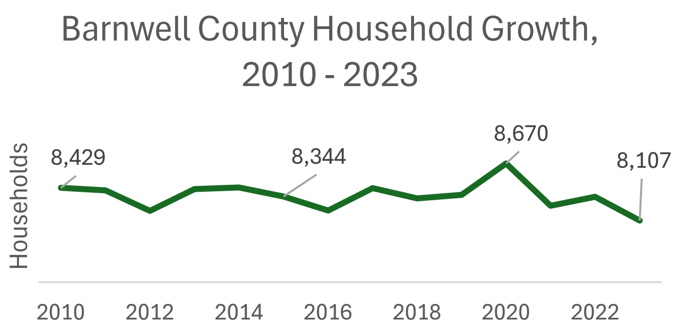

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – Barnwell County

## Household Growth

Barnwell County has experienced an oscillating population since 2010. The American Community Survey reported that in 2010 Barnwell County had 8,429 households. The county experienced a 2020 Covid era population boost to 8,670, followed by a sharp decline to 8,107 households in 2023. This Covid era increase and subsequent decrease was more pronounced in Barnwell County than in neighboring Allendale County, which was the only other Aiken-Augusta area county to experience a population decline. Inclusive of the Covid era pattern, Barnwell County has experienced a net decrease of 322 households.

This means that while Columbia, Aiken, and Burke Counties all added a significant number of households from 2010 to 2023, Barnwell County posted a net 3.8% decrease in the number of households.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

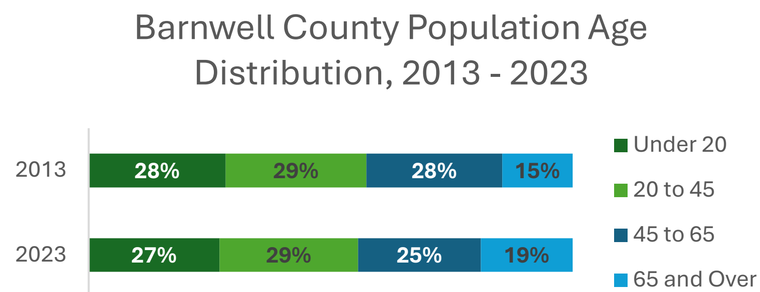
## Age

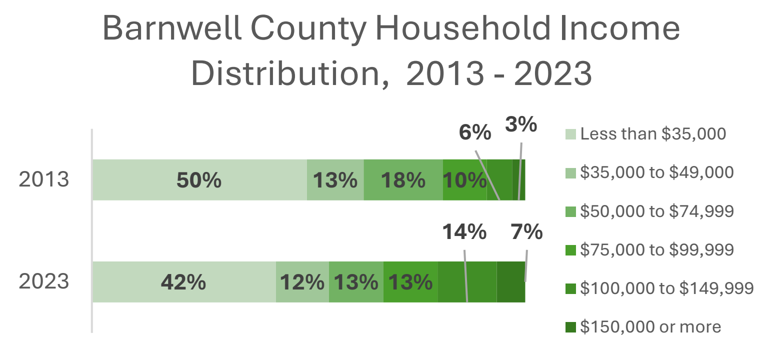
From 2013 to 2023, every county in the region experienced an increase in the proportion of the population over 65 years old, accounted for by evenly dispersed decreases in the proportion of younger age brackets. Barnwell County's population has aligned with this trend.

The age distribution of Barnwell County residents has remained steady over the last decade. The proportion of the population over 65 years old increased slightly from 15% to 19%, corresponding to a slight decrease in the population aged 45 to 65. Regionally, Barnwell County's age distribution is closest to Aiken County and Edgefield County.

If the gradual shift towards an older population extends into the future, Barnwell County would experience increased demand for eldercare services and falling enrollment at county schools.

A decrease in young residents in the region would also have negative effects on the regional workforce in the long-term as employers seek to fill the shoes of retiring workers with the next generation.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

In 2023, two-thirds of Barnwell County households earned less than $75,000 and 42% earned less than $35,000. This represents an increase in earnings from 2013, when 81% of Barnwell County households earned less than $75,000 and half earned less than $35,000.

**Median household income grew from $25,231 to $41,800.** Barnwell County's household income profile is generally similar to McDuffie and Burke Counties.

While not every county in the region attained higher numbers of high earners, the proportion of the population earning six-figures in Barnwell County more has more than doubled from 9% in 2013 to 21% in 2023.

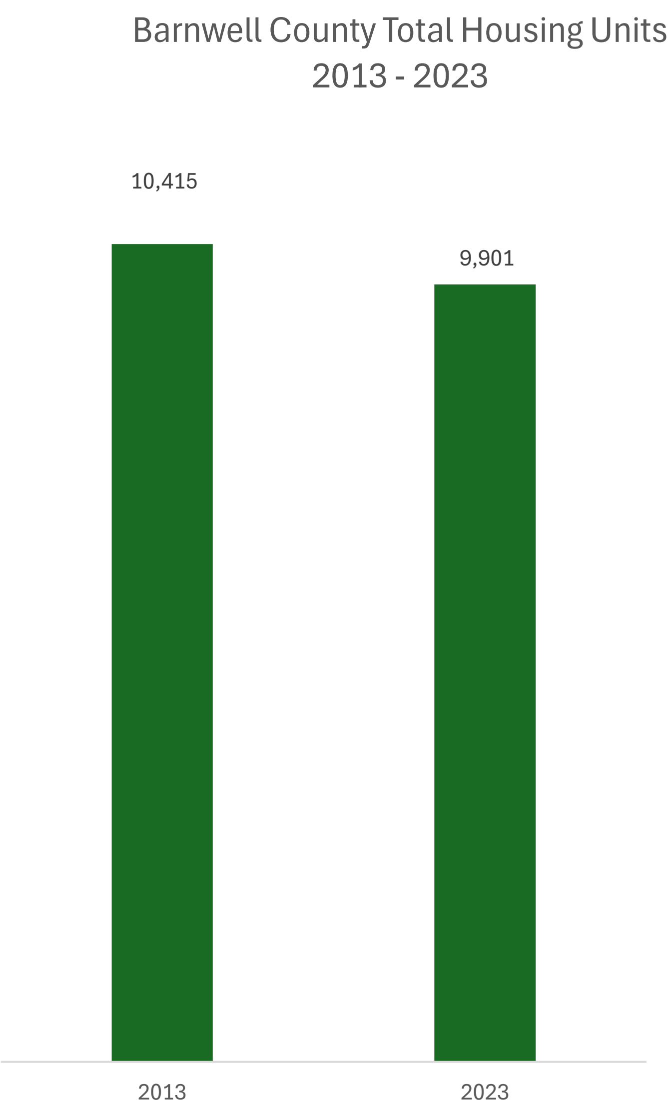
# Housing Supply – Barnwell County

## Shrinking Inventory

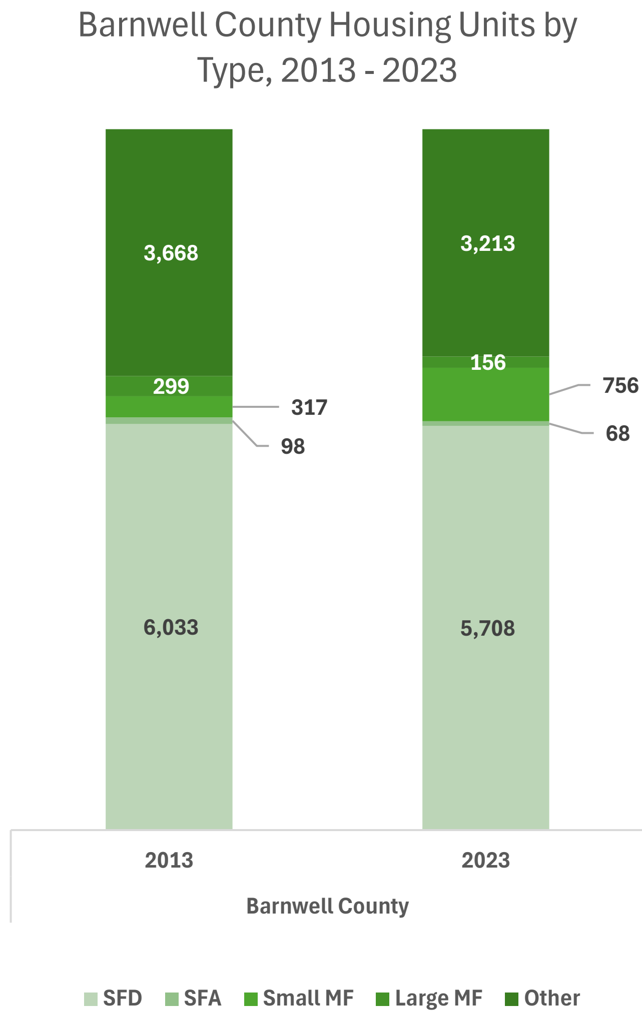
Barnwell County has not participated in the growth in housing supply experienced by Columbia and Aiken Counties. From 2013 to 2023, the total housing stock in Barnwell County has decreased from 10,415 to 9,901, a net decrease of 514 units, or 4.94%.

This decrease in housing supply loosely tracks the 3.67% decrease in households that Barnwell County experienced over the same period.

A decrease in households may help mitigate the upwards pressure on home prices typically implied by a decrease in housing supply but is not a sustainable long-term trend.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type and Age

Small changes in the mix of housing supply help to explain the 4.94% net decrease in Barnwell County's housing inventory from 2013 to 2023. About 400 new units in small multi-family developments were more than offset by hundreds of lost single family detached, large multi-family, and other units (a category which includes mobile homes).

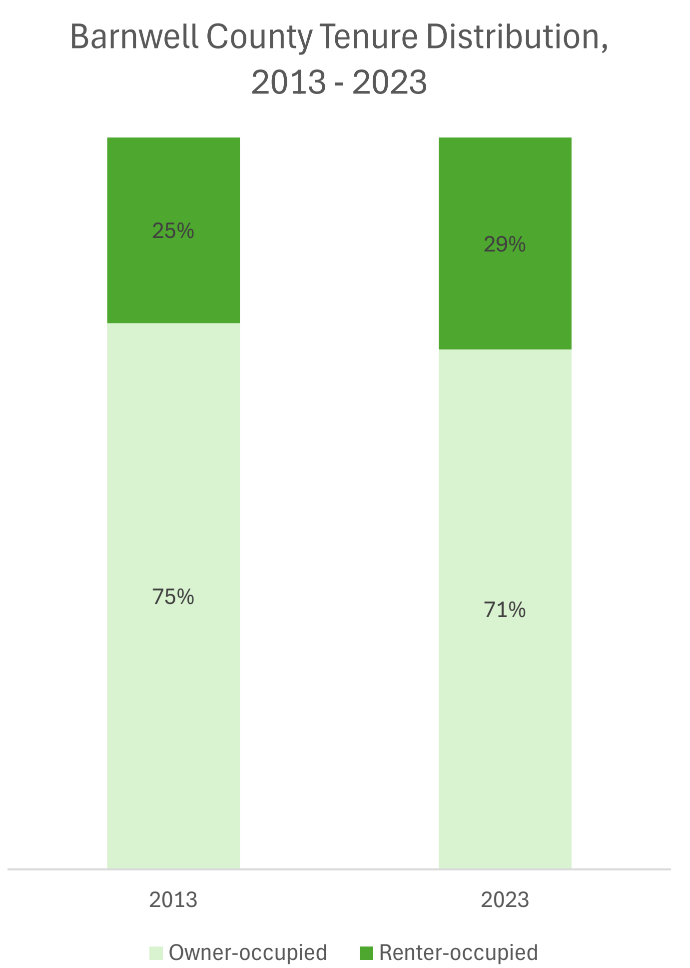
While increasing housing production and reversing decline should take priority over ensuring a diverse housing stock, encouraging a variety of housing types can play a key role in achieving this goal. Expanding housing options can attract new residents, support different income levels, and create a more resilient market, ultimately helping to stabilize and grow Barnwell County's overall inventory.

# Housing Supply – Barnwell County

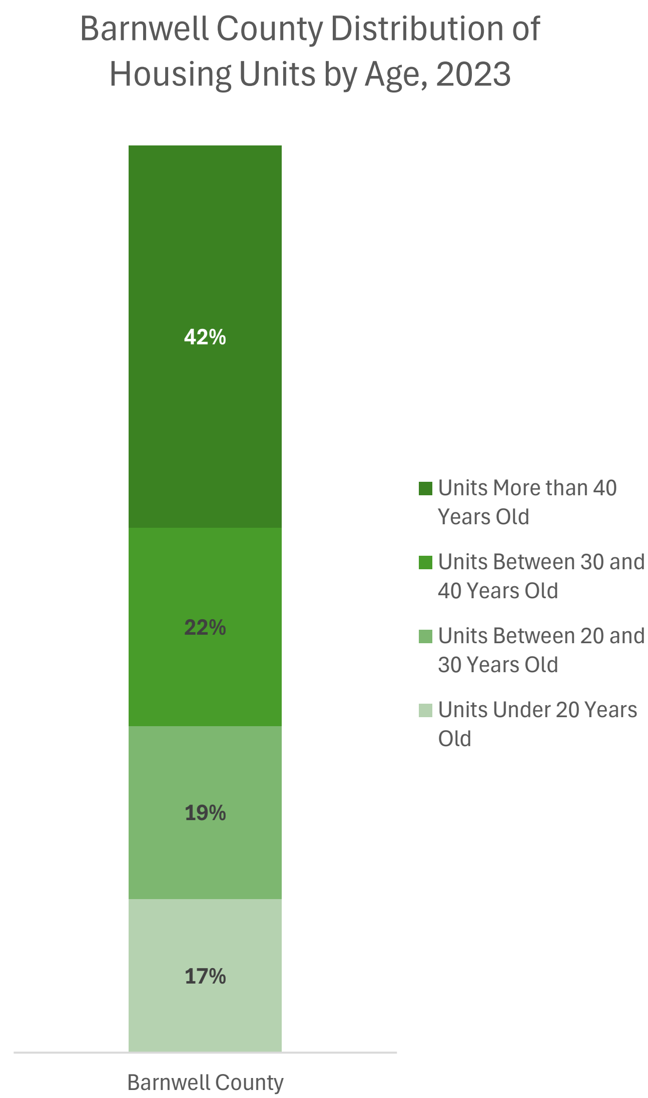
## Tenure

The mix of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing remained relatively consistent from 2013 to 2023, with about three-quarters of Barnwell County households owning their home and the remaining quarter renting. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of renters.

The gradual rise in rentership appears to be tied not only to limited new home construction but also to broader economic challenges and population decline within Barnwell County. As economic opportunities have diminished, some households may have shifted from homeownership to renting due to financial constraints, while others may have left the county altogether, contributing to housing turnover. This trend underscores the need for targeted economic development efforts alongside housing initiatives to help stabilize and revitalize the local market.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

Only 17% of housing units in Barnwell County are less than 20 years old, compared with 29% across the Aiken-Augusta region. Meanwhile, 42% of Barnwell County housing units are over 40 years old, which is quite close to the regional average of 39%.

While there are undoubtedly properties of historic significance worth preserving within the county, this distribution serves as a strong indicator that roughly 40% of the county's housing inventory may be in serious need of renovation or complete replacement. Additionally, the distribution reflects that very little new development activity has occurred within the county since the 1980s.

# Housing Accessibility – Barnwell County

## Rental Market

In the study area, the CoStar estimated average home rent in Allendale County was $665. This was the lowest estimated average rent among in the study area. According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, potential renters in dual-income households in any reported industry would be able to afford rent without spending more than a third of their earnings on rent, while single-oncome households in several industries could expect to afford the same.

However, over the long term the combination of low supply and the potential possibility of spillover demand from nearby counties may put upwards pressure on rents, changing the affordability picture for Barnwell County residents.

In addition, the relatively high costs of homebuying would encourage households to continue renting when they might otherwise be inclined to buy a home.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | $831 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,329 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $1,129 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,002 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,234 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,923 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $562 | $665 | Cost Burdened | $1,017 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $1,212 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,888 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $658 | $665 | Cost Burdened | $1,195 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $825 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,318 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $587 | $665 | Cost Burdened | $1,063 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $1,201 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,871 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $685 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,093 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $513 | $665 | Cost Burdened | $927 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $414 | $665 | Cost Burdened | $747 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $592 | $665 | Cost Burdened | $1,073 | $665 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – Barnwell County

## For-Sale Market

The adjusted median home price in Barnwell County is $181,352. This adjusted median home price was the second lowest price among every county in the study area, second to Allendale County. While these prices might appear affordable in comparison to reported prices Columbia or Edgefield County, they do not translate to widespread affordability for Barnwell County workers because of the average wages reported for many industries in the area.

***At reported Bureau of Labor Statistics average salary levels, only dual-income Barnwell County households working in the construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, or administration and support sectors could afford to purchase a home without being cost burdened, or spending over 30% of their income on housing costs.***

The average earning single-income household in any industry reported by BLS would not be able to buy a median Barnwell County home without being cost burdened. The combination of housing prices and average earnings present a challenging picture for potential homebuyers in Barnwell County. In a survey performed for this housing study, 22 of the 59 respondents from Barnwell County, 37%, identified housing costs as an obstacle for choosing where to live.

| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | $99,747 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $159,465 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $135,532 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $240,296 | $181,352 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $148,099 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $230,774 | $181,352 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $67,417 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $122,099 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $145,444 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $226,612 | $181,352 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $79,013 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $143,384 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $98,941 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $158,158 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $70,397 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $127,569 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $144,103 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $224,513 | $181,352 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $82,172 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $131,147 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $61,534 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $111,294 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $49,728 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $89,615 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $71,047 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened | $128,766 | $181,352 | Cost Burdened |

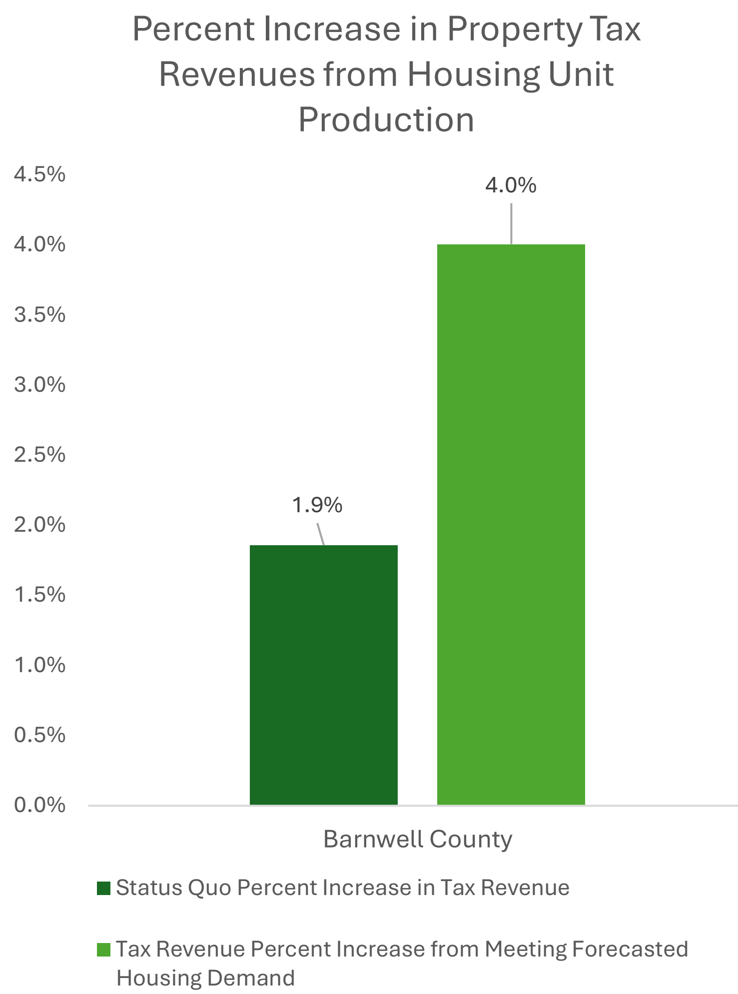
# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production Barnwell County

The volume of new housing production in Barnwell County over the past five years has been quite low. Similarly, the county's tax revenues are low and have experienced little annual appreciation in recent years. The county faces numerous challenges that can be traced back to broader economic and fiscal shortcomings.

Barnwell County has experienced little new investment and job creation over the past decade or more, and while there are prospects of new industry locating within the county, housing and infrastructure severely limit the county's capacity to attract a steady trend of industry expansion.

Adding new housing units to the county's inventory represents a major challenge, as the market is unproven, suggesting that any new additions that can contribute meaningfully to bolstering the county's inventory will require public investment, either in the form of infrastructure expansions or improvements, or through the direct subsidy of workforce housing unit development.

The chart to the right, which describes the fiscal benefits of adding housing to the county show that adding new units will have strong positive fiscal benefits to the county, and should be considered when the county is debating to make the necessary investment to expand its housing inventory. The costs may result in a net-zero increase in revenues, however the intangible long-term benefit will be a much more active housing market and economic development outlook.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barnwell County | County | $123,231 | $265,606 | $142,375 | **$642,335** |
| | School | $432,732 | $932,691 | $499,959 | |

For Barnwell County, the increase in revenue that would result from housing production both in status quo and meeting demand scenarios in terms of absolute revenue, would both be relatively low, with the total fiscal benefit of meeting market demand estimated at $642,335.
This would represent a $142,375 increase in tax revenue for the county and a somewhat more significant increase of $499,959 for county schools should the county meet market demand instead of maintaining the status quo defined by the last five years of residential development.

# Demand & Gap – Barnwell County

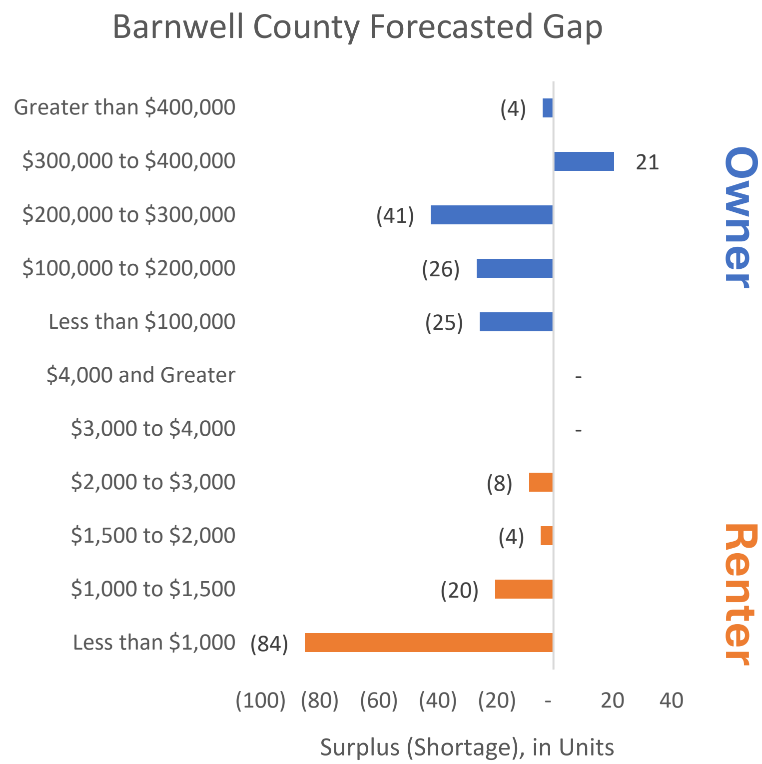
## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

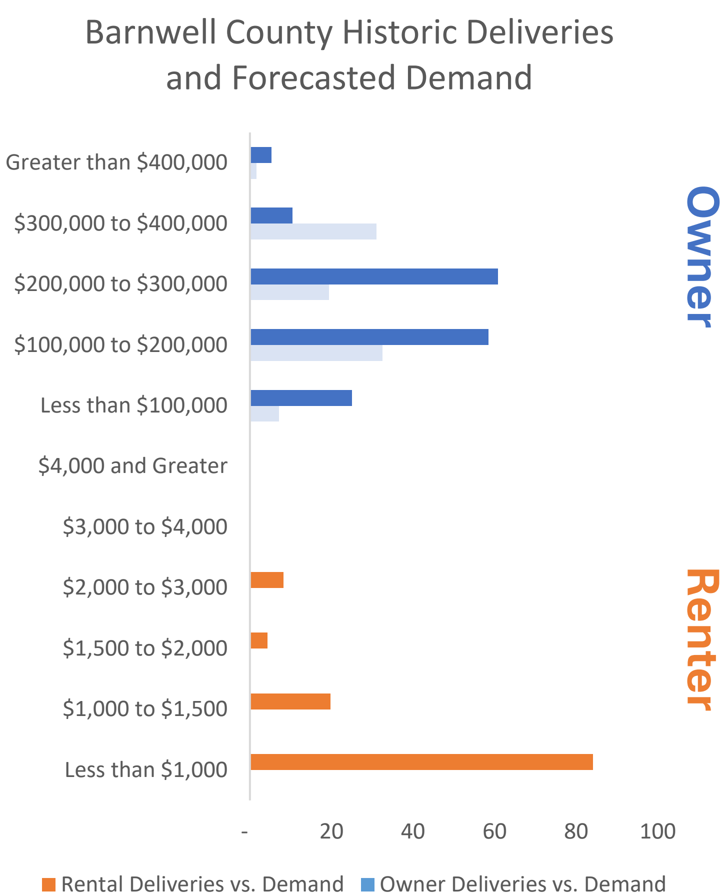
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

Both historic deliveries and forecasted demand for Barnwell County are relatively low. Over the next five years, total demand for housing amounts to less than 300 units across all segments.

Demand for housing is relatively bifurcated, with a high level of demand within the rental segment where monthly rents are less than $1,000, in addition to for-sale demand for units between $100,000 and $300,000. The $300,000 to $400,000 segment is the only segment where the last five years of deliveries exceeds demand for the next five years.




## Forecasted Gap

Due to the low volume of deliveries of housing across all segments over the last five years, the forecasted gaps in Barnwell County's housing market over the next five years would be significant if the county continues to produce housing at the same pace that it has. These gaps would be particularly pronounced in the lower rental and mid-market for-sale segments.

While the forecasted gaps are significant in the context of the low-activity Barnwell County housing market, the absolute number of units that the county would be falling short by is relatively low, suggesting that federal and state subsidies, as well as public-private partnerships between the county and the development community could go a long way to helping the county satisfy housing demand, particularly the county's demand for units at the lower end of the rental and for-sale markets.

# Strategies & Recommendations – Barnwell County

## Strategic Priorities

Barnwell County faces many challenges when it comes to addressing issues related to housing and economic development due to relative locational disadvantages, a lack of recent private investment within the county and infrastructure limitations.

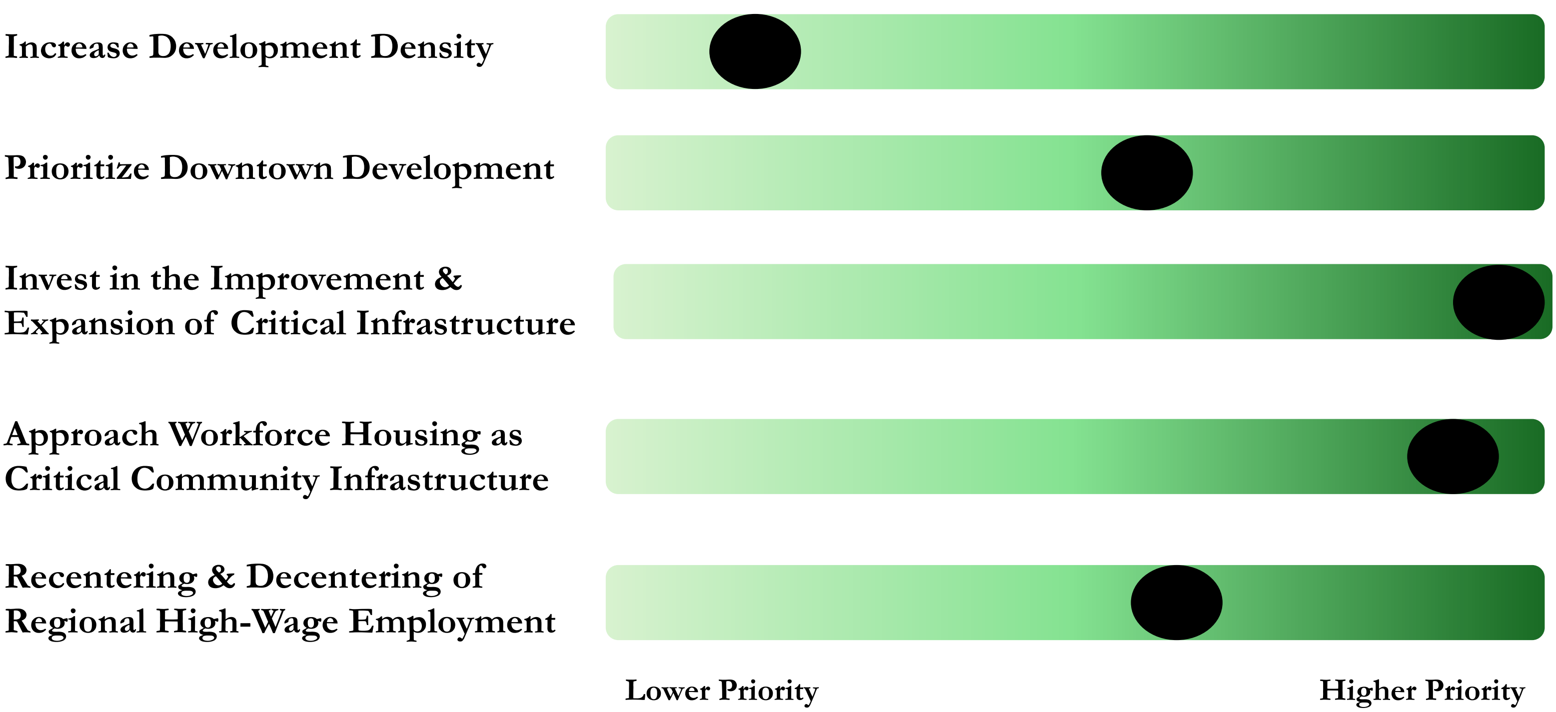
**Barnwell's key priorities should all be aimed at attracting attention from the private development community and building confidence that Barnwell County is a community worth investing in.** Development activity in adjacent Aiken County, which has been significant, and the expansion of employment opportunities both at the Savannah River Site and across the region all poise Barnwell County well to capture a modest amount of regional demand for new housing.

**The county's lack of recent private investment places the burden of proving that the market for new housing products within the county is a viable market to the development community.**

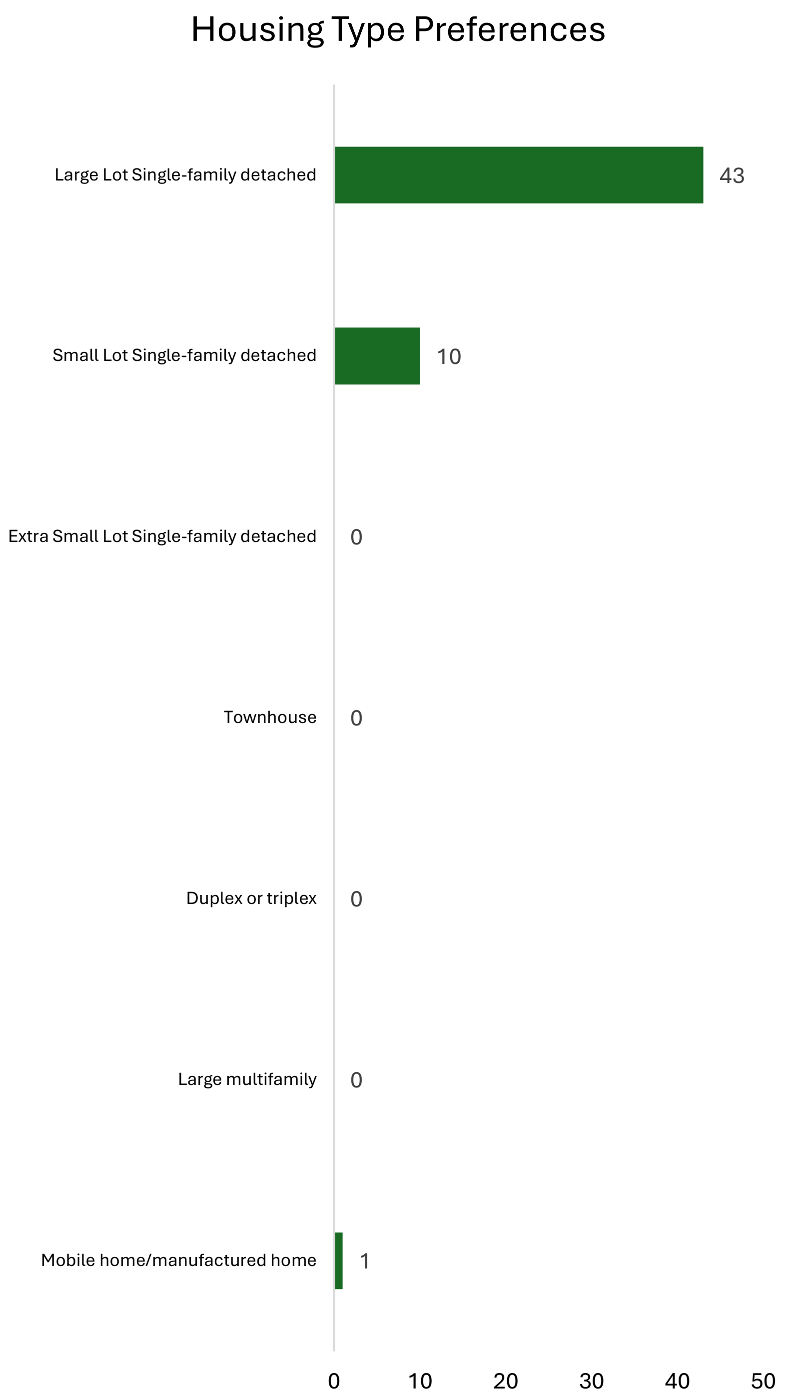
**Improving water and sewer infrastructure will be key to unlocking Barnwell County's growth potential.** Many areas remain underserved or lack the capacity to support higher-density residential development, making it difficult for new projects to gain traction.

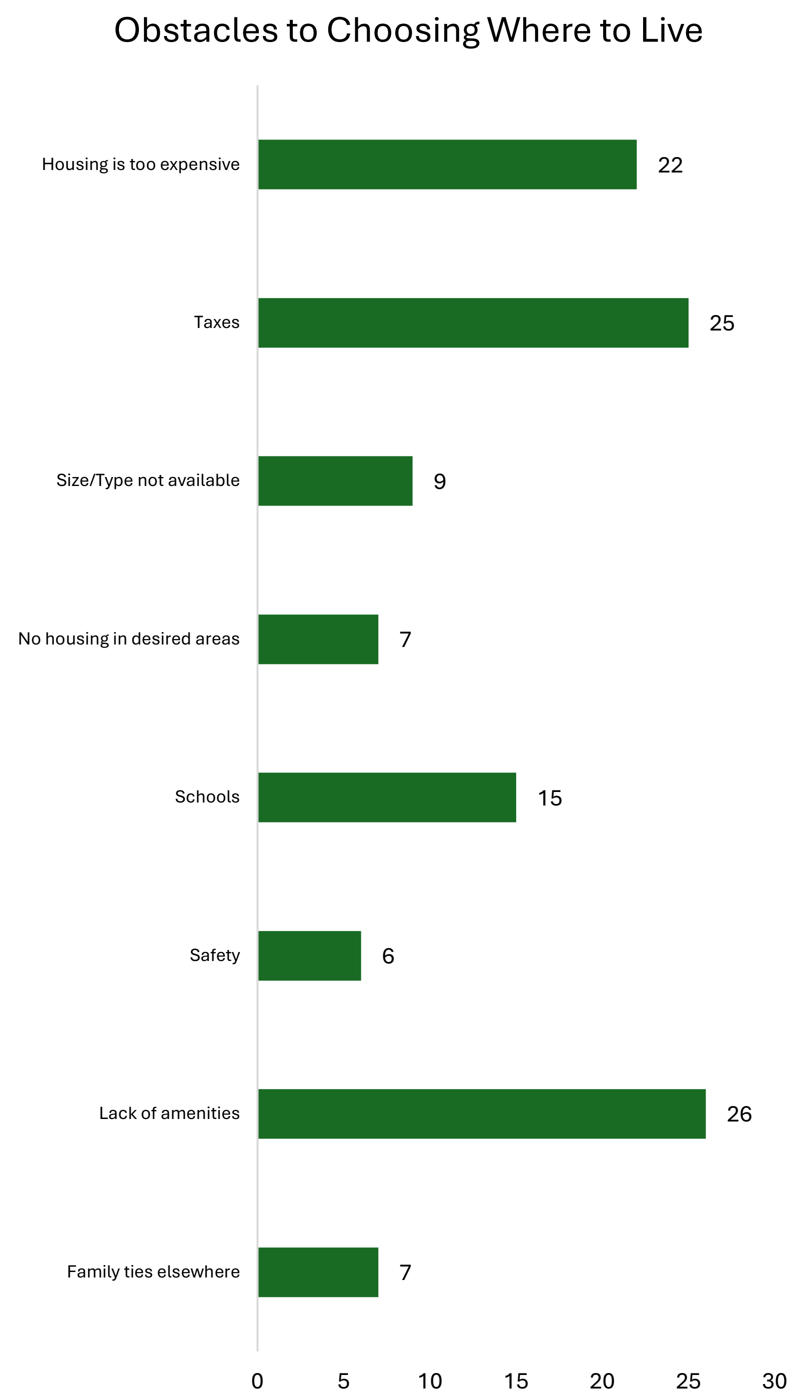
Pursuing state and federal infrastructure grants, as well as forming partnerships with regional utility providers, can help lower development costs and provide the necessary groundwork for housing expansion.

**Barnwell County should also focus on small-scale, incremental development strategies to build investor confidence. Encouraging infill development, adaptive reuse of vacant properties, and small-scale workforce housing projects, particularly throughout the county's established downtowns can demonstrate demand and set the stage for larger investments.**



# Survey Findings – Barnwell County



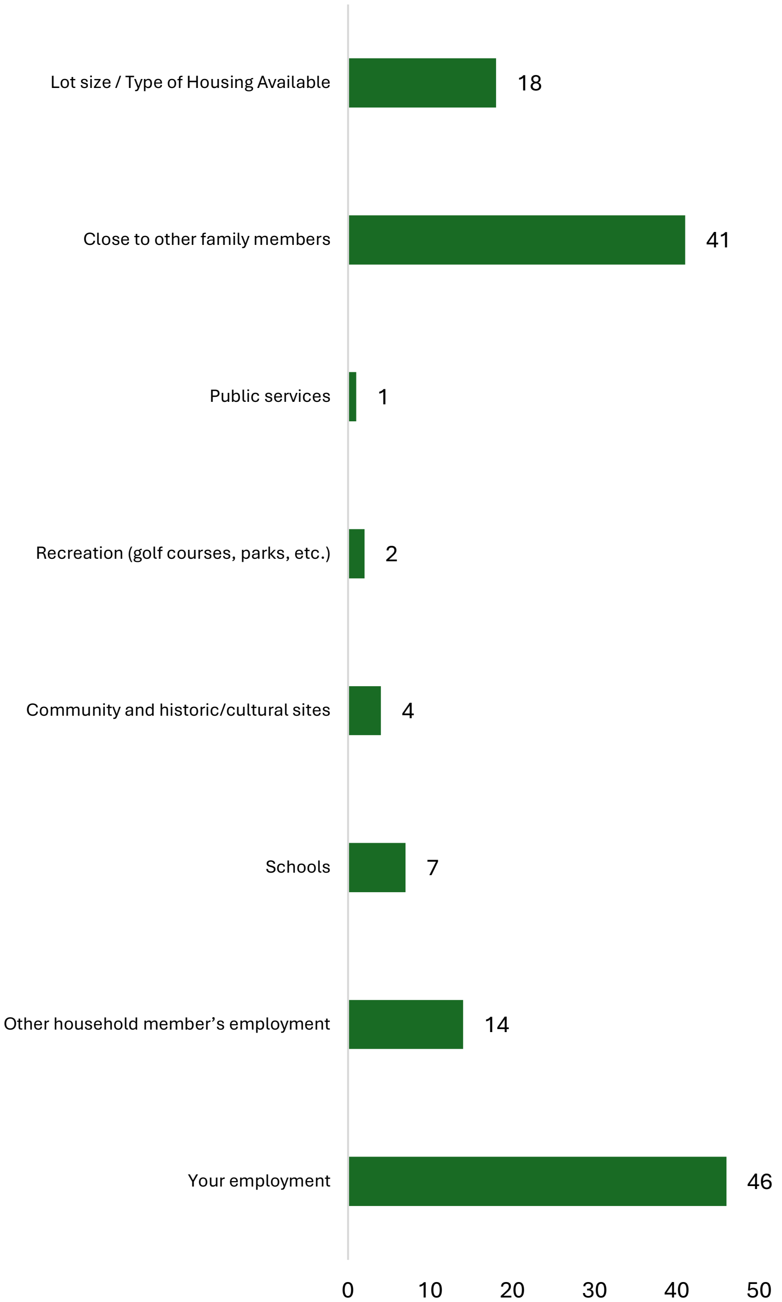




Large-lot and small-lot single-family units were by far the most popular housing preferences selected by Barnwell County respondents, with one respondent also choosing mobile or manufactured home as their top preference. These choices reflect the relatively rural nature of Barnwell County and the desire for space.

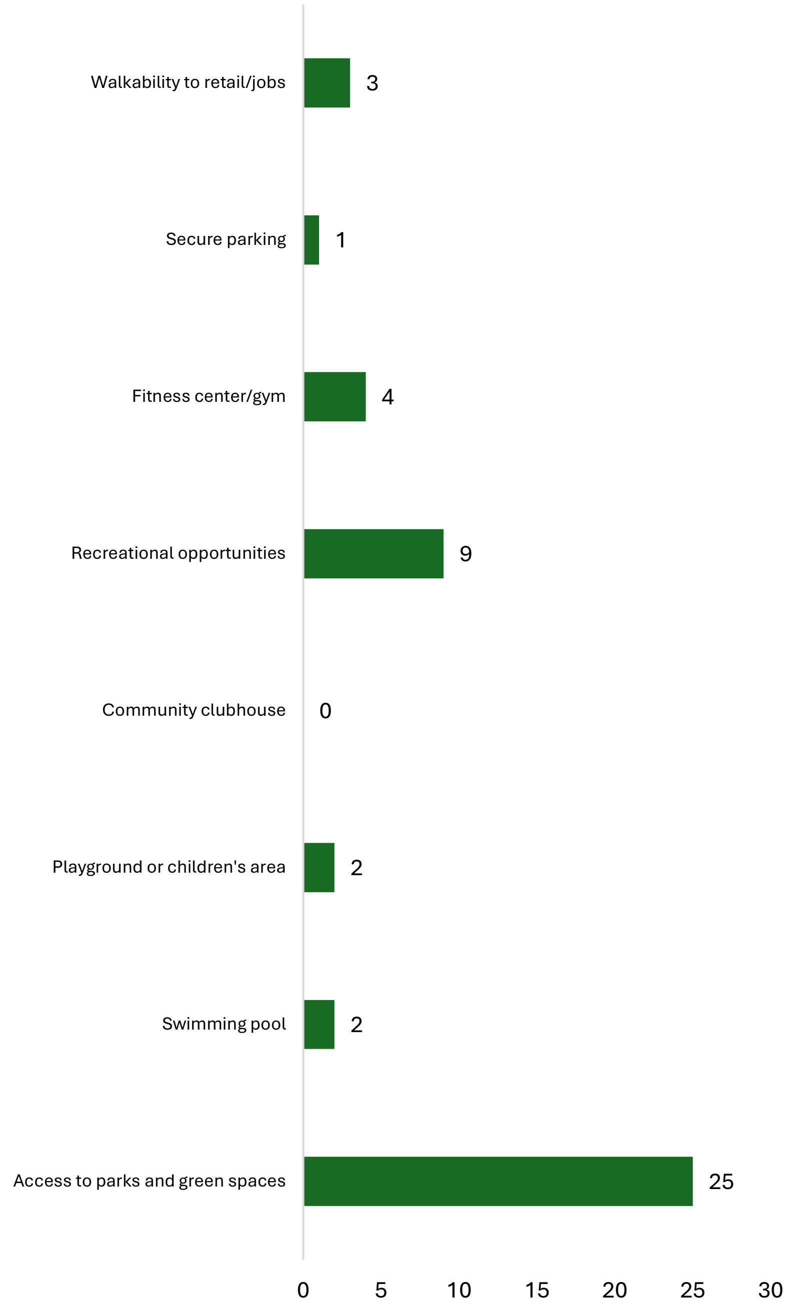
Barnwell County respondents identified a number of obstacles that they face when choosing where they live, with housing costs, taxes and a lack of amenities all chosen at near equal frequency. Thes responses interpreted together suggest that Barnwell County respondents are facing a number of cost pressures and that the county is struggling to offer the amenities that many residents of the county would like to see.

# Survey Findings – Barnwell County

## Reasons for Living Where They Do




## Most Valued Community Amenities




Consistent with many other counties in the region, Barnwell County respondents identified their employment and proximity to family as leading reasons for living where they live. Additionally, a number of respondents also listed lot size or type of housing as a reason for living in Barnwell County, suggesting that for some, the appeal of Barnwell County is the space that living in the county allows individual residents.

Barnwell County residents identified access to parks and green spaces as the community amenity that they valued the most, followed by recreational opportunities, suggesting that many Barnwell County residents have an affinity for outdoor recreation and the opportunities that Barnwell County allows for enjoying outdoor recreation.

# Burke County

# Burke County

## Market Profile

- Presently adequate water, sewer and road infrastructure
- Strong history of utility investments now tapering off
- Locational disadvantages and lack of community amenities

## Housing Needs

**Total Five-Year Gap: -97* Units**

**In the chart to the right:**

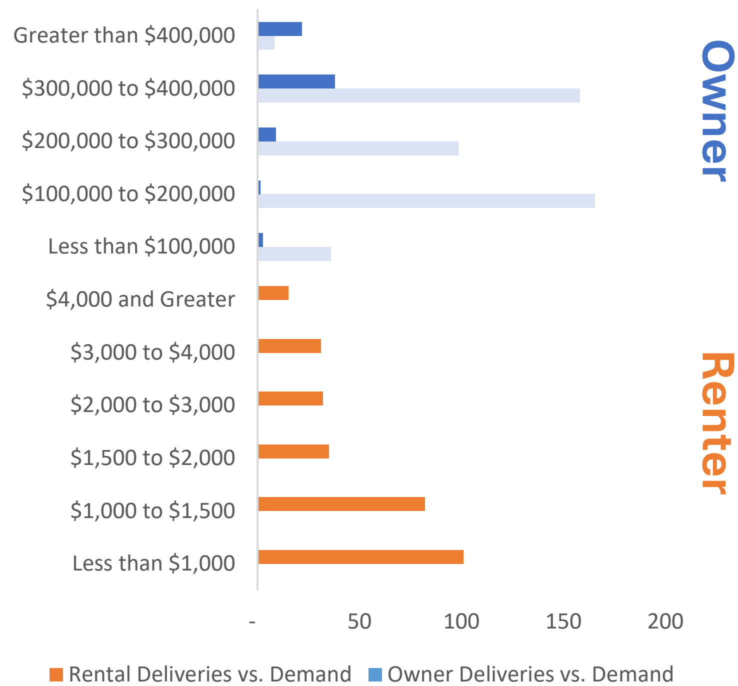
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Mid-market for-sale options in central locations AND**
**Upper-market custom builds**

**Affordable workforce rentals AND**
**Luxury rental options in amenity-rich locations**

**Total Five-Year Demand: 368 Units**

Burke County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

## Implementable Strategies

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
2. Apply for federal and state grants in order to leverage available state and federal funding for water and sewer expansion
3. Promote safety and attractiveness in downtown through events programming.
4. Develop and adopt a residential "Pre-Approval Catalog"
5. Establish a land bank or leverage existing land bank to convert abandoned and tax-delinquent properties into housing and community assets.

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Leverage Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support redevelopment of underperforming downtown areas to include more housing.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Rezone or create overlays to allow for higher-density residential development near job centers, along commercial corridors and where existing infrastructure is already sufficient to support higher densities.
4. Create a façade grant program to improve the appearance and perception of downtown, to support business activity and property value growth and to encourage downtown housing development.

*Burke County's historic deliveries during the construction period of the Plant Vogtle expansion measured against projected demand result in a surplus rather than a gap

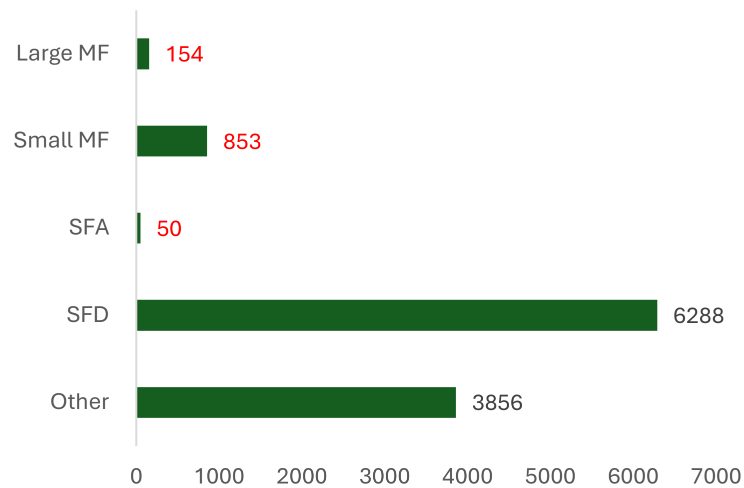
# Burke County

## Overview

Burke County, Georgia is located just south of Richmond County, west of the Savannah River. Historically, the county has been defined by its large land area and excellent soil resources, which have made it a major source of agricultural products in the region. More recently, the expansion of Plant Vogtle, a major energy capacity improvement project undertaken by Southern Company, has brought jobs and new interest in the county due to the expansion of this key asset and the unique skillset of the county's residents.

The county contains several communities, including Waynesboro, the county seat, as well as Sardis, Midville, Girard, Vidette and Gough, in addition to Keysville, which spans between Burke and Jefferson counties.

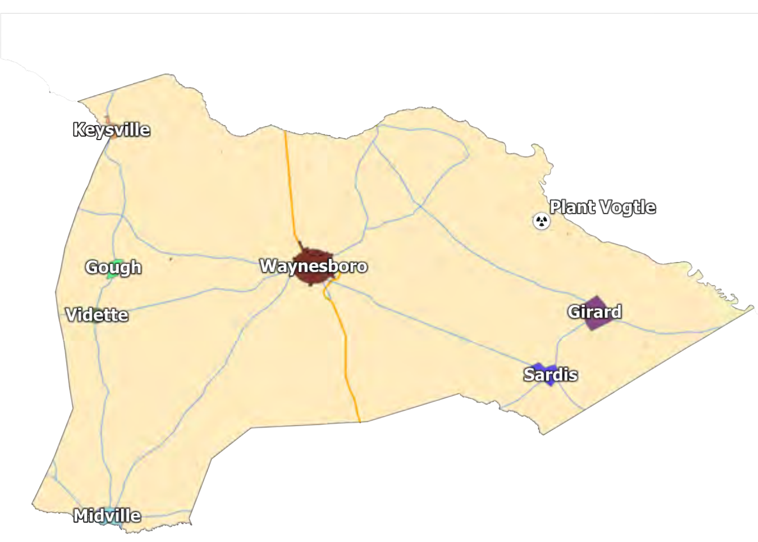
Burke County Housing Inventory by Housing Type, 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2023

## Burke County Housing Today

In recent years, Burke County has excelled at creating affordable housing units with subsidies from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program. The county has also experienced growth in the upper end of the housing market, attracting retirees and high-income or high-wealth households drawn by the availability of land, which enables them to fulfill their agrarian dreams of owning a hobby farm. A significant gap in the market exists between subsidized affordable units and the luxury estates that have been delivered in recent years.




To some extent, neither of these products are strictly market-driven market segments, as the affordable units have been built affordably due to subsidy and the luxury units are often highly customized, with a great deal of involvement and investment from the future owner. This is not to say that there is not an opportunity for mid-market products, which are in fact sorely needed due to the growth of employment opportunities within Burke County that offer regionally competitive wages combined with the absence of new products within this segment within the county.

The county's housing inventory currently lacks diversity, with the majority of existing units defined as single-family detached homes and another significant portion of the local inventory being defined as manufactured or mobile homes. The county's existing attached products, which account for only 9% of the county's housing units, are almost entirely comprised of LIHTC-subsidized multifamily developments, which account for 618 of the county's 1057 attached units, or roughly 58% of attached units. Downtown Waynesboro, which serves as a center for Burke County community and government, contains only one housing unit, which is a large loft unit above a currently vacant retail space.



Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On the Map

# Burke County Overview

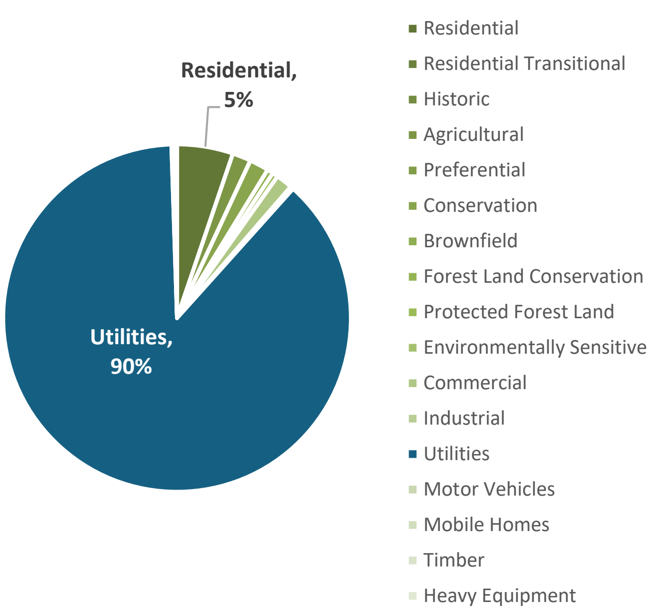
## Barriers & Challenges

There is a public education related dilemma that Burke County will need to work through in order to capture the full extent of possible growth, whereby new workers in the county receive advice from the existing workforce that Columbia County is the only county on the Georgia side of the Savannah River that offers quality public schools. Burke County will need to address this perception by investing in their public schools by improving existing facilities, attracting high-quality staff and assuring that Burke County's schools are integrated with the most up-to-date educational technology available. Burke County must generate confidence in its local school system to become more regionally competitive, which can translate into increased retention of the local workforce within the county.

Water and sewer infrastructure presents both a barrier and an opportunity for development within Burke County. Extending infrastructure to many parts of the unincorporated county is not feasible due to the high costs of installation and maintenance, coupled with the low return on investment resulting from the sparse distribution of potential clients in these areas.

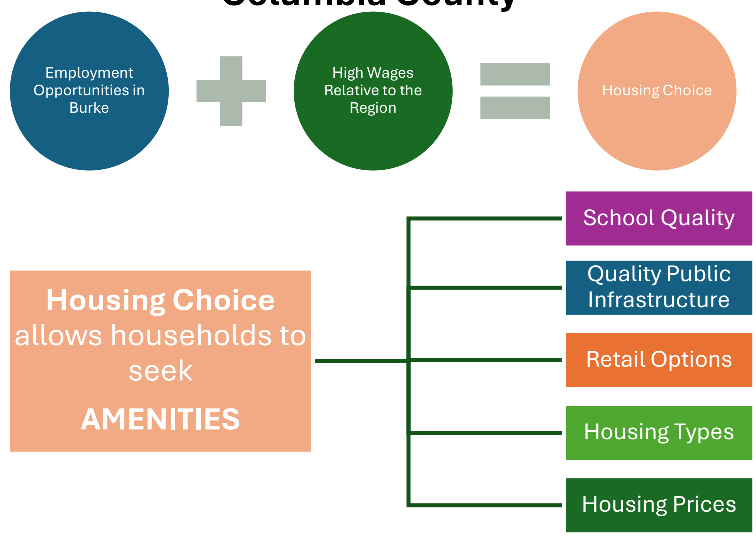
However, the incorporated communities within Burke County, Waynesboro first among them, have the capacity to accommodate growth.

Burke County Tax Digest, 2023




*Promoting growth within the county's existing communities achieves multiple goals simultaneously: preserving economically and culturally valuable agricultural lands, avoiding fiscally unsustainable water and sewer expansions, and adding new homes and households to existing areas, thereby fostering greater community complexity and enabling the development of more retail options and community amenities.*

**Why Burke Workers Choose to Live in Columbia County**




The general lack of retail options and community amenities within Burke County poses a significant challenge to attracting new residents, especially in the context of the deficiencies of Burke County's public school system and a regional context in which Columbia County has both a plethora of retail and community amenities and a school system with a regional reputation for excellence.

This lack of amenities and retail may contribute towards a lifestyle mismatch between the high-income, highly educated professionals attracted to the area by jobs in the energy and advanced manufacturing sectors. While retail options are unlikely to show up in Burke County without growth in population, the County does have control over investments in public infrastructure like parks and trails.

# Burke County Overview

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

The most important prerequisites for growth in population and housing in any area are the presence of high-quality access infrastructure, which permits residents, retailers and industry with the necessary connections to other places in order to operate successfully and sustainably, as well as the presence of employment opportunities, which bring workers and wages into a given area, opening the door to the potential for new residents to purchase residential products in that area. Community services and amenities are of near-equal importance but cannot exist without access infrastructure and economic opportunities.

*Image Courtesy of Georgia Power*


Two of the most significant accelerants to growth and change in Burke County over the past fifteen years have been the expansion of Plant Vogtle, which brought new jobs, new energy capacity for the region, and new economic development opportunities, as well as the expansion of Highway 25, which has provided a much more expedient connection between Burke County and Richmond County.

Considering these general prerequisites for growth, Burke County should continue to build on its existing assets, expanding access infrastructure by investing not only in road improvements where appropriate, but also in high-speed internet infrastructure and transit services which provide better connectivity within the county and between the county and the larger region. The expansion of Plant Vogtle represents a significant investment in the county, and one that has sent a signal to industry, particularly the energy sector and other industries that are major consumer of electricity.

There is significant potential for Burke County to reinvest this increase in tax revenue flowing from property taxes towards improving community services, like schools and water and sewer, as well as amenities and community programming.

By reinvesting in the community strategically, Burke County can steer residential growth towards focus areas, such as downtown Waynesboro, add housing units to the county that satisfy mid-market housing demand and prevent excessive infringement upon the county's valuable agricultural land.

# Economic Drivers – Burke County

## Employment by Industry

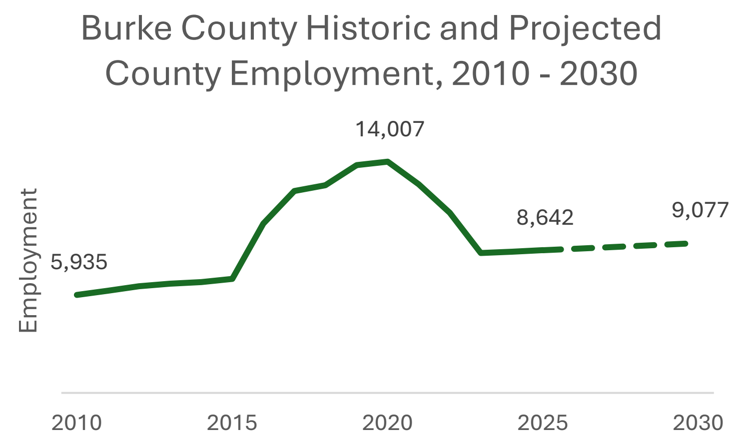
### *A mix of employment opportunities power Burke County's economy.*

In addition to the economic powerhouse at Plant Vogtle, several other industries provide significant jobs for local workers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the five industries that employed the most workers in Burke County were construction, educational services, retail trade, public administration, and wholesale trade.

The chart below describes the region's industries according to three different dimensions, the number of employees employed in each sector, the average wage of employees in the sector and the annual rate of growth that each industry experienced between 2018 and 2023.

While many other counties in the region experienced a 2020 Covid dip in employment, the story of the rise and fall of construction jobs is clearly shown in the employment history of Burke County.

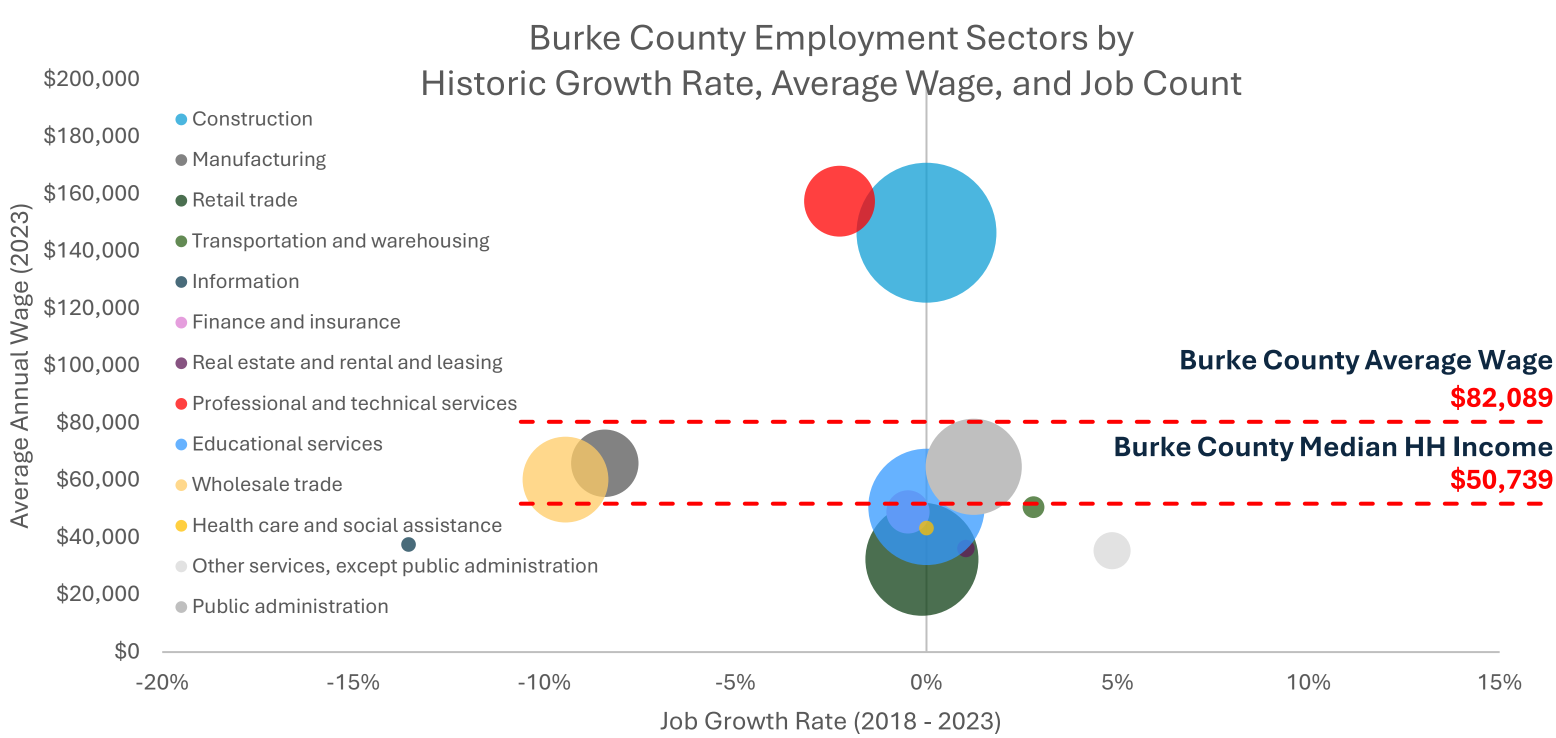



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall County Employment

From November 2023 to December 2024 the average unemployment rate in Barnwell County was 5.6%, well over South Carolina's 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.0% and Georgia's comparable rate of 3.3%.

If the Aiken-Augusta region continues to add jobs at the 1% annual rate that it achieved from 2018 to 2023, and if Burke County matches that growth rate, the County could expect to add 435 new jobs by 2030. This prediction would represent a very strong 52.9% increase in local employment from the 2010 baseline of 5,935 jobs.




*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – Burke County

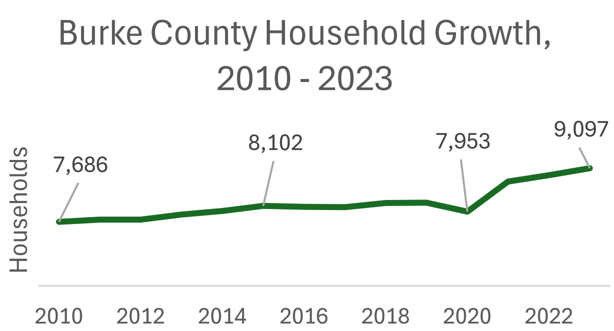
## Household Growth

The Aiken-Augusta has seen steady growth in households since 2010, and Burke County has led the way relative to its size, growing by 18.4%, an addition of 1,411 net new households.

While Columbia, Aiken, and Richmond Counties added more household overall, Burke County added the largest percentage of new households.

Despite not experiencing a dip in employment during the start of the Covid pandemic, Burke County did increase a slight decline in households, although the decline had fully reversed and returned to steady growth by 2023.

Still, it remains to be seen to what extent household growth was driven by temporary jobs related to the construction at Plant Vogtle.

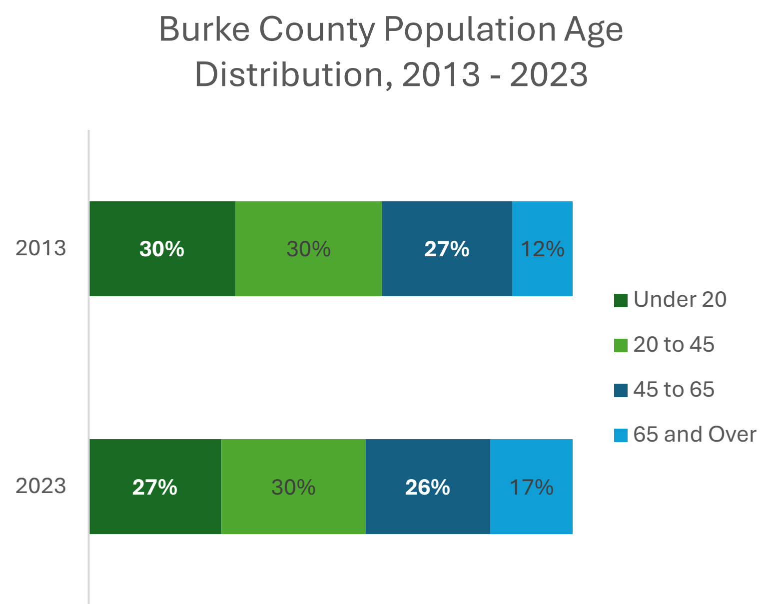


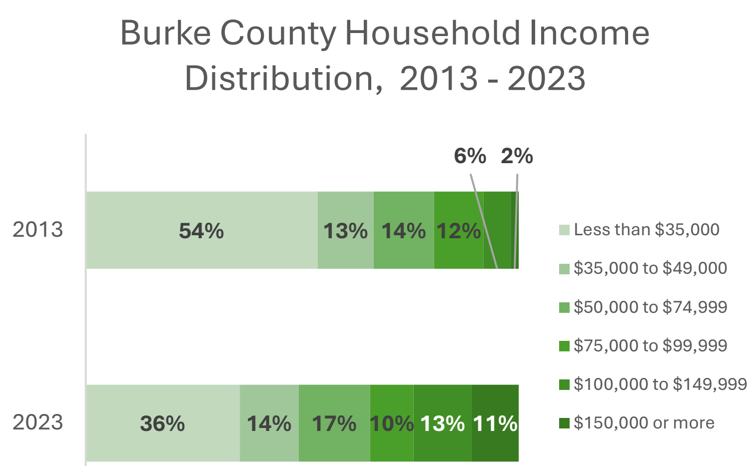

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Age

Burke County is slowly aging. Similar to the other counties in the region, the population age distribution has had only small shifts over the last decade. The percentage of the population over 65 has slightly increased, the percentage of the population under 20 has slightly decreased, while the percentage of the population aged 20-65 held constant.

A lack of young residents can also have negative effects on the county and region's workforce, with decreasing rates of worker replacement as current employees enter retirement.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

The income profile of Burke County is continuing a dramatic change that has been unique among the eight counties in the Aiken-Augusta region. In 2013, two-thirds of Burke County households earned less than $50,000 per year. Ten years later, over half of Burke County Households earned that amount or more, a complete reversal. **Median income grew from $31,494 to $50,739.**

A similar change occurred in the higher income groups as well. In 2013, less than 10% of households had six-figure incomes. By 2023, more than 20% had incomes at that level.

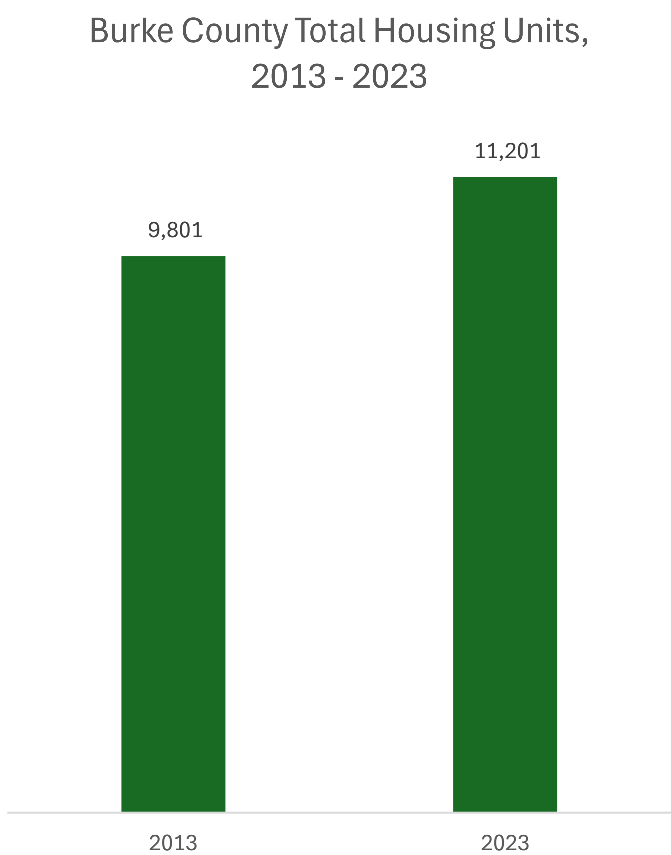
# Housing Supply – Burke County

## Growing Inventory

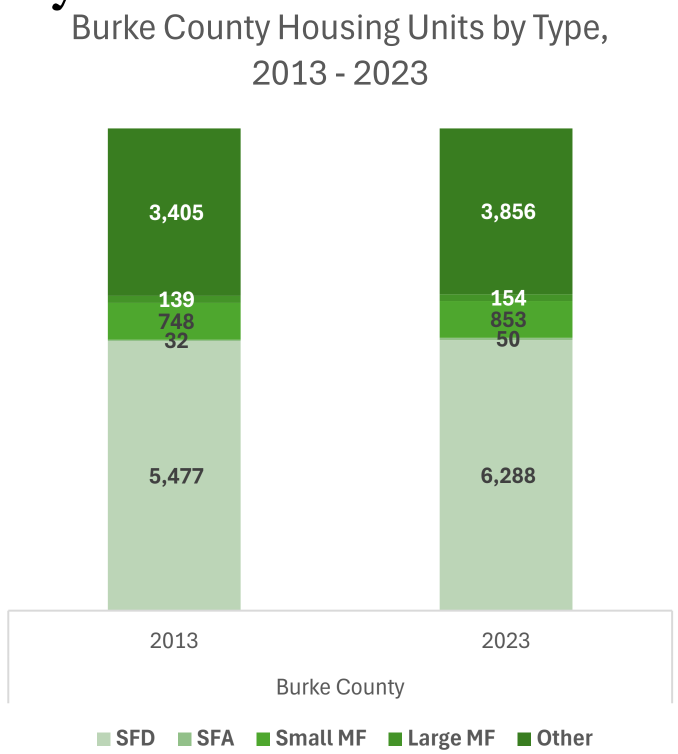
The total housing units in Burke County grew by 14.3% from 2013 to 2023, a net increase of 1,400 units. The ten-year trend obscures the concentration of deliveries that occurred between 2018 and 2023, which account for 1,197 of the 1,400 units added. On average, the housing supply increased by 140 units per year, however during that period the county averaged roughly 240 units per year.

This trend was likely the byproduct of the confluence of pandemic-driven housing trends, which resulted in growth in the retreating to the exurban and rural reaches of the country, and the construction period for the Plant Vogtle expansion.

In a survey conducted for this housing study, 64% of respondents in Burke County reported that their homes had been at least slightly damaged by Hurricane Helene. These responses highlight the link between natural disaster preparedness and housing supply.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

The increase in single-family detached (SFD) homes and "Other" housing units reflects Burke County's prevailing development patterns, which continue to favor low-density residential construction. From 2013 to 2023, the county added 811 new single-family detached homes, accounting for the majority of net new housing. The "Other" category, which includes mobile homes, also saw modest growth, reinforcing its role as an important source of naturally occurring affordable housing.

Meanwhile, growth in attached housing and multifamily units remained limited. Small multifamily developments (2-4 units) increased by just 105 units, while large multifamily developments (5+ units) saw only a net gain of 18 units. This suggests that higher-density housing types remain a small part of Burke County's overall housing stock, with new development continuing to cater primarily to homeowners and lower-density rental options.

As demand for workforce housing and housing near employment centers grows, expanding the variety of housing types could help diversify the market and improve affordability for a wider range of residents.

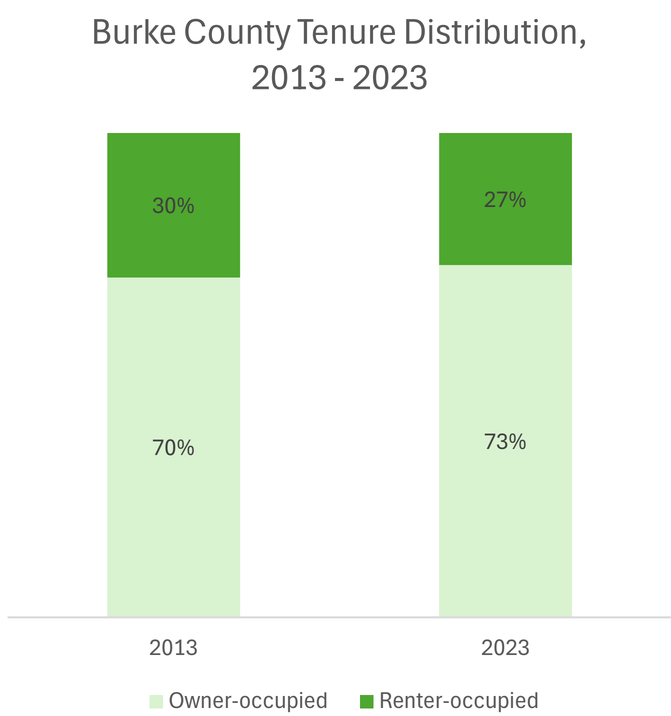
# Housing Supply – Burke County

## Tenure

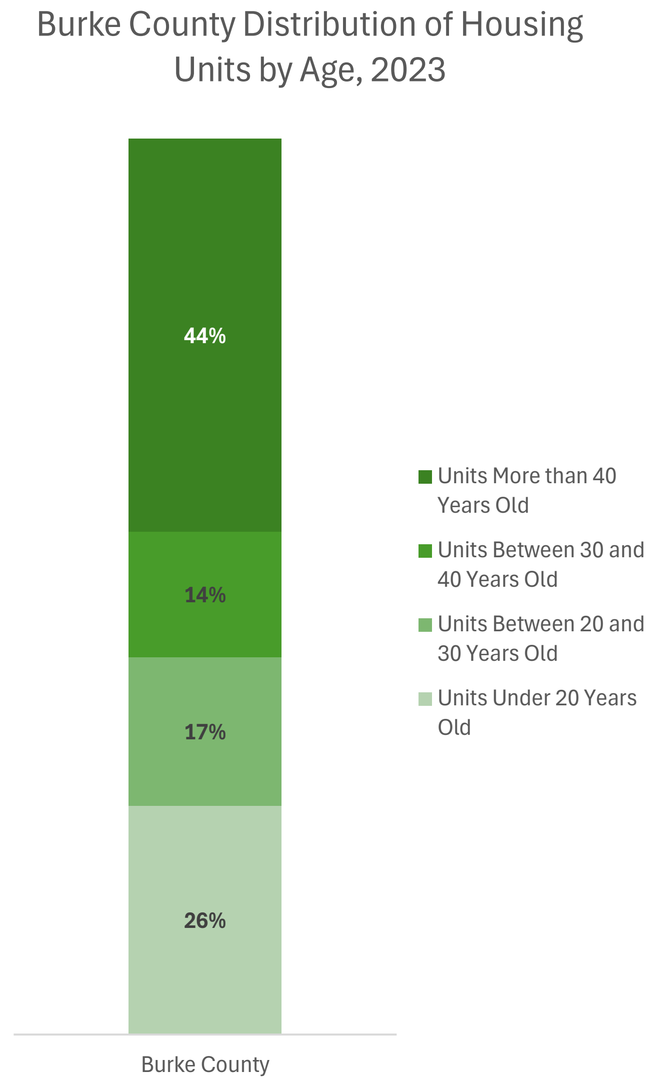
Homeownership rates in Burke County remained relatively unchanged 2013-2023 and continue to be approximately average for the region. Burke County has a higher rate of owner-occupied housing than Allendale or McDuffie County, but lower than Columbia or Aiken County.

The slight increase in homeownership from 70% in 2013 to 73% in 2023 suggests a strengthening preference for ownership in Burke County, potentially driven by the county's relative affordable and steady single-family development. This trend aligns with the county's housing growth, where most new units added were single-family detached homes, reinforcing its role as a predominantly homeowner-driven market.

The decline in renter-occupied housing could indicate a lack of new rental options, which may impact housing accessibility for lower-income households and workforce residents seeking flexible housing arrangements. Expanding diverse housing options, particularly rental units near employment centers like Plant Vogtle, could help address this gap while supporting economic growth in the county.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

About a quarter of housing units in Burke County are less than 20 years old, compared with 29% across the Aiken-Augusta region. Meanwhile, 44% of Burke County housing units are over 40 years old, which is slightly higher than the regional average of 39%.

While there are undoubtedly properties of historic significance worth preserving within the county, this distribution serves as a strong indicator that roughly 45% of the county's housing inventory may be in serious need of renovation or complete replacement. Additionally, the distribution reflects that very little new development activity has occurred within the county since the 1980s.

# Housing Accessibility – Burke County

## Rental Market

At the time of this writing, the estimated average home rent in Burke County was $895, according to CoStar. This was near average for the eight counties in the study area.

According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, dual-income households working in Burke County could afford to rent locally on salaries from almost any industry except health care and social assistance.

While Burke County's current rental market is less challenging from a cost perspective than other counties in the Aiken-Augusta region, single-income households in many industries would still be cost burdened, defined as spending over a third of monthly income on rent, if they chose to rent in Burke County.

Over the long term, the challenging homebuying market could encourage households to rent for longer, increasing the demand for rental units and increasing rents.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Industry** | **Single-Income Attainable Rent** | **County Average Rent** | **Single-Income Cost Burdened Status** | **Dual-Income Attainable Rent** | **County Average Rent** | **Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status** |
| Utilities | $1,778 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $3,264 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $2,783 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $5,109 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,286 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,361 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $1,175 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,157 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $713 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $1,310 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $742 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $1,363 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $827 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $1,518 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $955 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,978 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $796 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $1,461 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $2,992 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $5,493 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $744 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $1,365 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $476 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $875 | $895 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $779 | $895 | Cost Burdened | $1,430 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $1,262 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,317 | $895 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – Burke County

## For-Sale Market

Homeownership in Burke County is largely unattainable for single-income households, as workers across all industries are cost burdened.

Even dual-income households in many sectors, including utilities, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, and public administration, struggle to afford homeownership at the county's average home price.

With home prices outpacing wages, more households may turn to renting, increasing demand and potentially driving up rents. Addressing affordability challenges will require expanding workforce housing options, encouraging smaller, more attainable homeownership opportunities, and exploring financial assistance programs to help more residents enter the housing market.

| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Utilities | $213,329 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $391,673 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $333,933 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened | $613,102 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $154,314 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $283,320 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $140,959 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $258,801 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $85,591 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $157,146 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $89,069 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $163,531 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Information | $99,203 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $182,137 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $114,569 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $237,316 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $95,515 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $175,366 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $359,038 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened | $659,195 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $89,248 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $163,859 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $57,174 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $104,972 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $93,485 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $171,639 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $151,425 | $251,570 | Cost Burdened | $278,017 | $251,570 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production

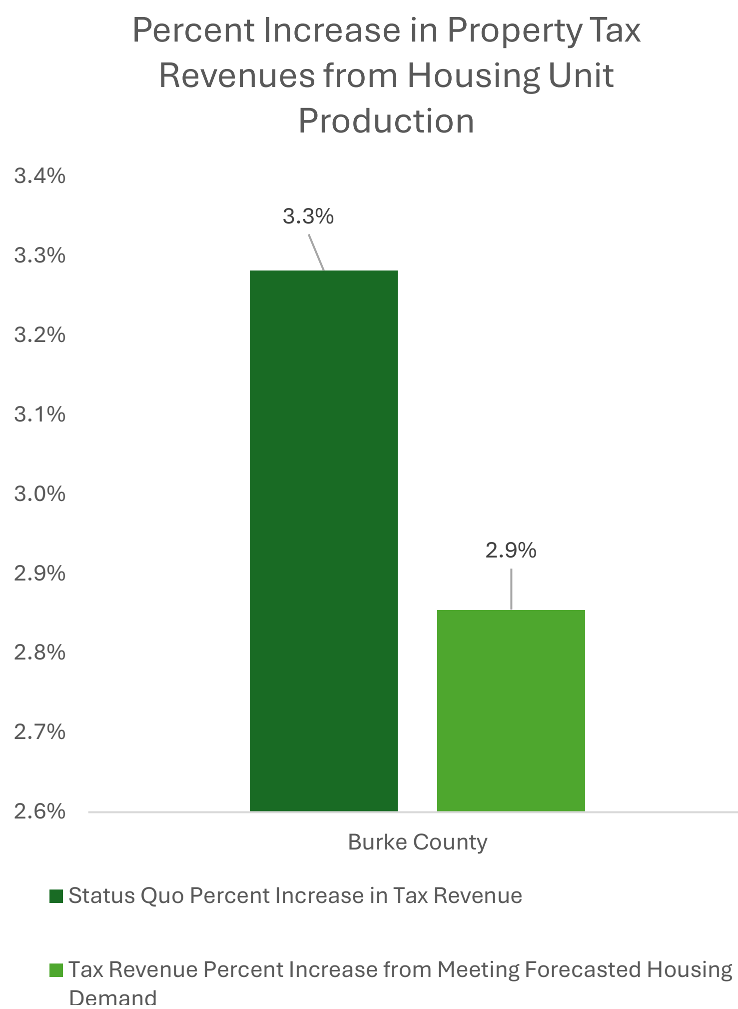
# Burke County

Burke County's tax digest is balanced in an unusual way due to the presence of Plant Vogtle, which yields the county tax revenues that a county of similar size and population would not otherwise receive.

For this reason, the fiscal analysis for Burke County was conducted in a slightly different way than it was conducted for the other counties in the region, considering only the tax revenues unrelated to Plant Vogtle for the base year comparison.

The past five years of housing deliveries in Burke County represent an unprecedented and likely anomalous volume of new housing unit deliveries, spurred by construction activity at Plant Vogtle. Now that construction at the plant has concluded, future housing unit growth will be dependent upon the county's capacity to leverage its expanded tax revenues and increased potential to attract new industries that require proximity to major sources of electricity, like transformer manufacturers and designers.

If the county were to add housing at the same rate that it did over the past five years, the Burke County would see a steady increase in tax revenues of 3.3% over the next five years. Due to the completion of construction at Plant Vogtle, demand over the next five years is projected to be lower than over the past five, resulting in a lower fiscal benefit of meeting demand than delivering at historic levels.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Burke County | County | $211,071 | $183,629 | N/A | N/A |
| | School | $376,913 | $327,910 | N/A | |

For Burke County, the fiscal benefits of delivering new housing units at both status quo levels and at levels that meet market demand return relatively small fiscal benefits to the county, especially considering that the majority of the county's tax revenue comes from Plant Vogtle. These benefits remain small largely because demand for new housing in the county is small relative to other counties in the region.

The revenues that flow from Plant Vogtle could be leveraged to improve the county's infrastructure and amenity base in order to attract private sector development. Creating a quality-of-life advantage in Burke County that focuses on active lifestyle centers, perhaps centered around the county's existing downtown areas, could help to make Burke County more regionally attractive to the private development community while also working to preserve culturally and economically valuable farmland in the outlying areas of the county.

# Demand & Gap – Burke County

## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

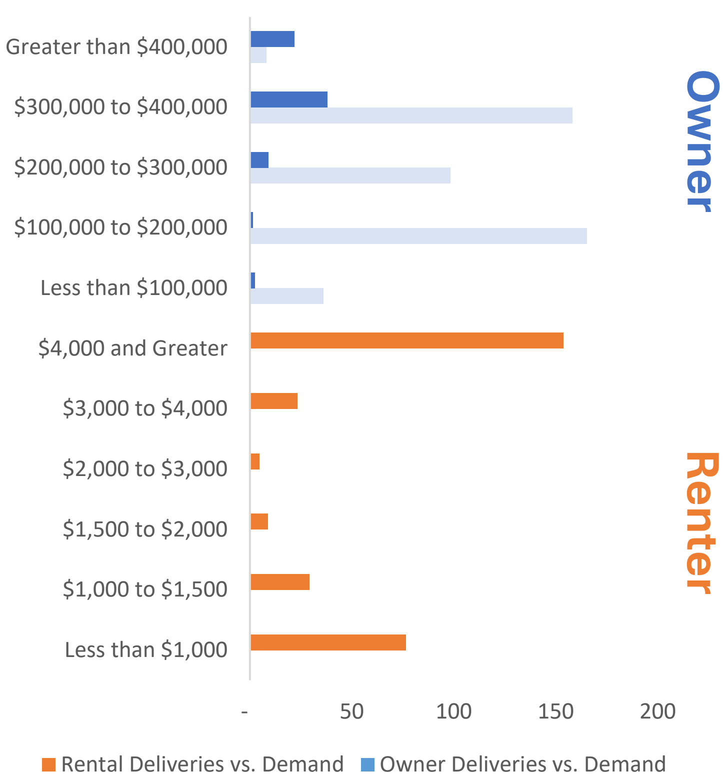
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

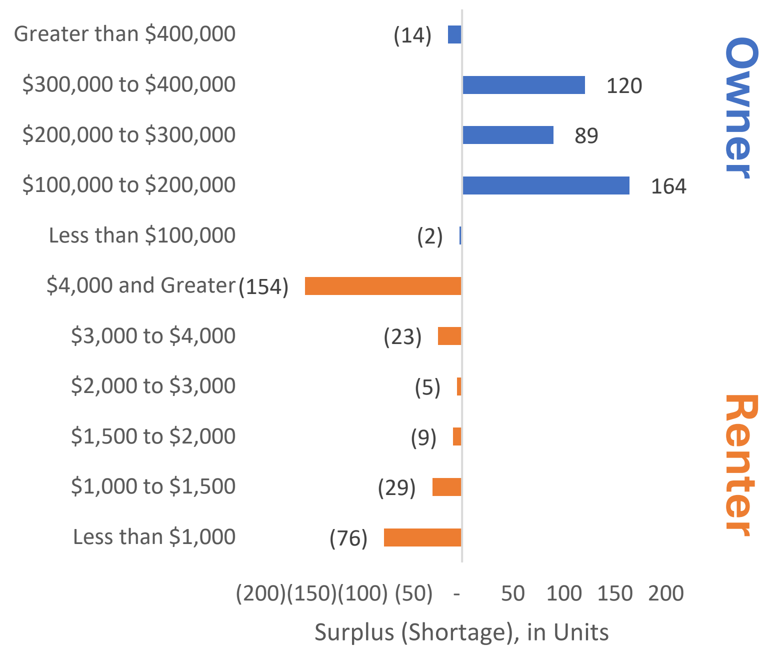
Burke County's housing unit production over the last five years represents an aberration in the overall trend, and is likely a reflection of pandemic-driven demand for more rural lifestyles and the catalytic investment that the expansion of Plant Vogtle represented. The majority of the units delivered were for-sale units between $100,000 and $400,000.

While the last five years in Burke County have outproduced forecasted demand for housing in the county, the deliveries have been in segments where employment and wage driven demand is lower, ignoring a great deal of demand for housing in the county, which is concentrated in rental segments.

Burke County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




Burke County Forecasted Gap




## Forecasted Gap

Burke County's forecasted housing gap is more nuanced than a simple lack of deliveries across all segments. The county's market has seen unprecedented growth in housing unit production over the last five years, which may be reflective of the catalytic investment that the Vogtle expansion represented, the growth in demand for a more rural lifestyle with more space in wake of the pandemic, or some combination of both. The housing that has been delivered over the past five years has been concentrated on the for-sale side of the market, however none of the units delivered address any segment of the rental market in the county.

There is a significant need for new rental housing in the county that caters to middle- and upper-income households who may be employed at Plant Vogtle, but who are looking for more amenitized lifestyles, seeking options in Columbia County and Aiken County instead. Burke County can seek to retain some of their highly skilled workforce by creating amenity rich, lifestyle centers throughout the county's downtown areas, encouraging the production of built-to-rent townhomes and other rental products that are compatible with downtown living.

# Strategies & Recommendations – Burke County

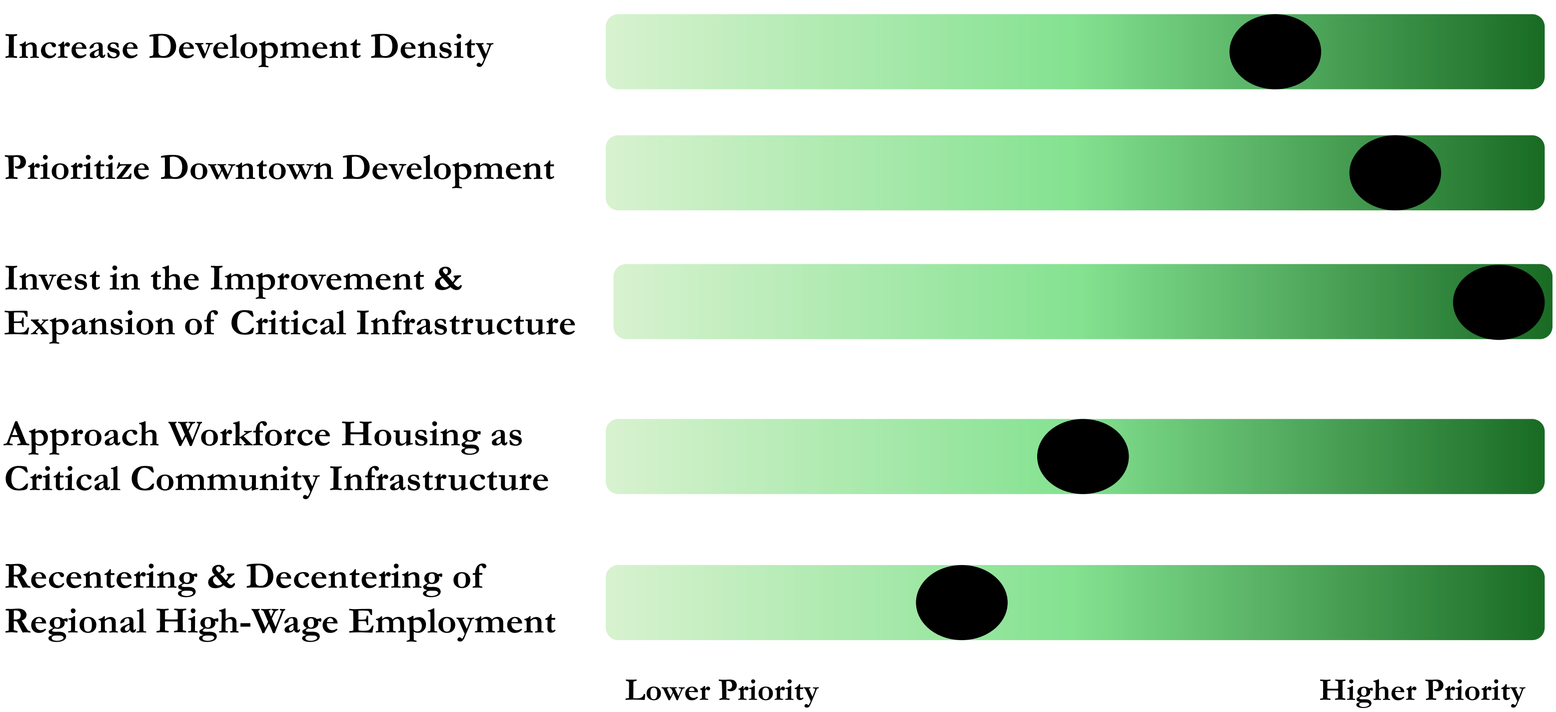
## Strategic Priorities

**To fully capitalize on the economic advantages provided by the county's most significant asset, Plant Vogtle, Burke County must take a proactive approach to infrastructure expansion, quality-of-life improvements, and strategic land use planning.**

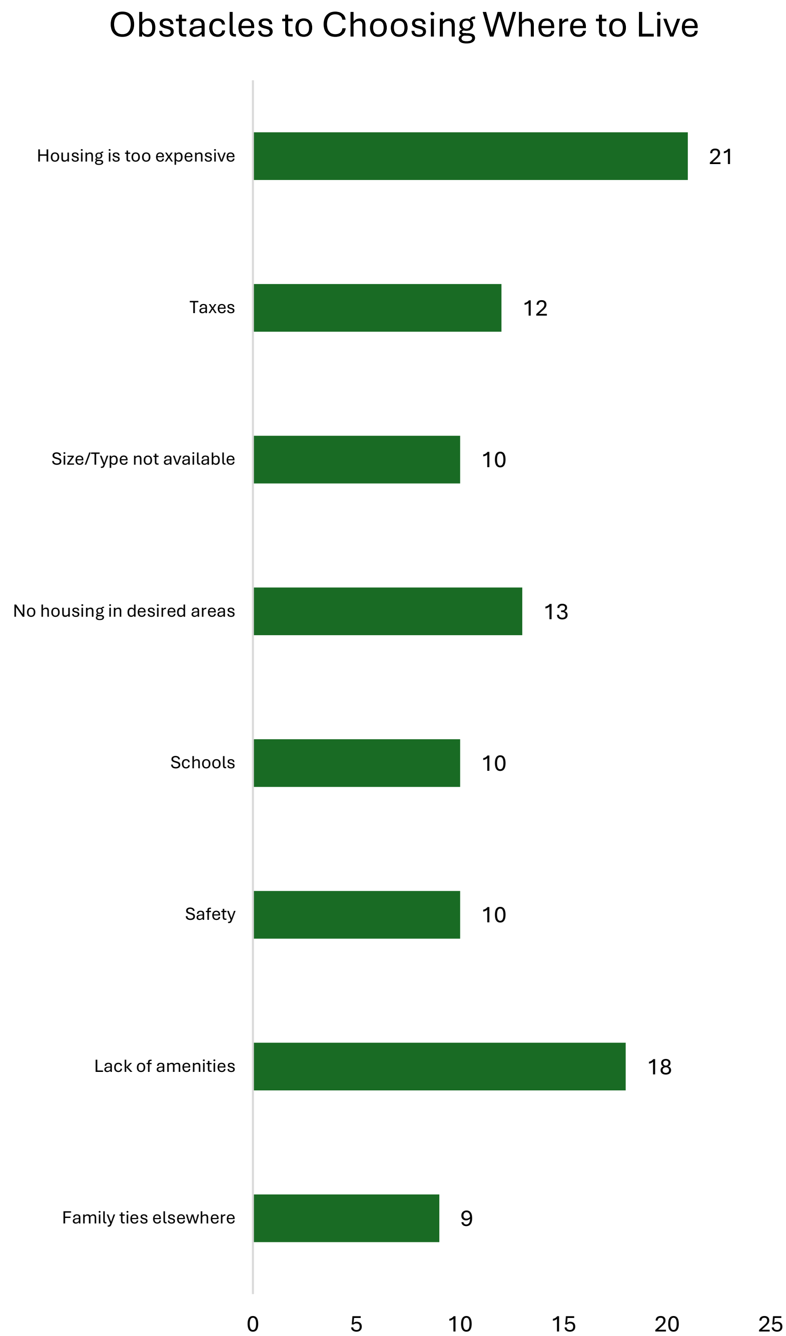
**With a stronger tax base than many counties of similar size, Burke County is uniquely positioned to make forward-thinking investments that enhance its long-term residential and economic appeal. Expanding water and sewer infrastructure will be critical in unlocking new housing opportunities, particularly in unincorporated areas that are adjacent to job centers in south Richmond County. Additionally, improving public amenities, parks, and community services will help make the county a more attractive destination for both new and existing residents.**

While Burke County lacks direct interstate access, its proximity to major regional job centers, coupled with increasing demand for housing affordability, creates a significant opportunity to position itself as a desirable residential community. Investments in education can further strengthen the county's ability to attract and retain skilled professionals in the energy, manufacturing, and logistics sectors.

**To fully realize its potential, Burke County should prioritize mixed-use, human-scaled development centered around its historic downtown areas, like downtown Waynesboro.** Encouraging walkable, small-town living with a mix of housing, retail, and entertainment options can set the county apart as a distinct alternative to suburban-style development. By investing in infrastructure, placemaking, and quality-of-life enhancements, Burke County can evolve into a regional lifestyle destination that supports its growing workforce while maintaining its unique character and affordability.



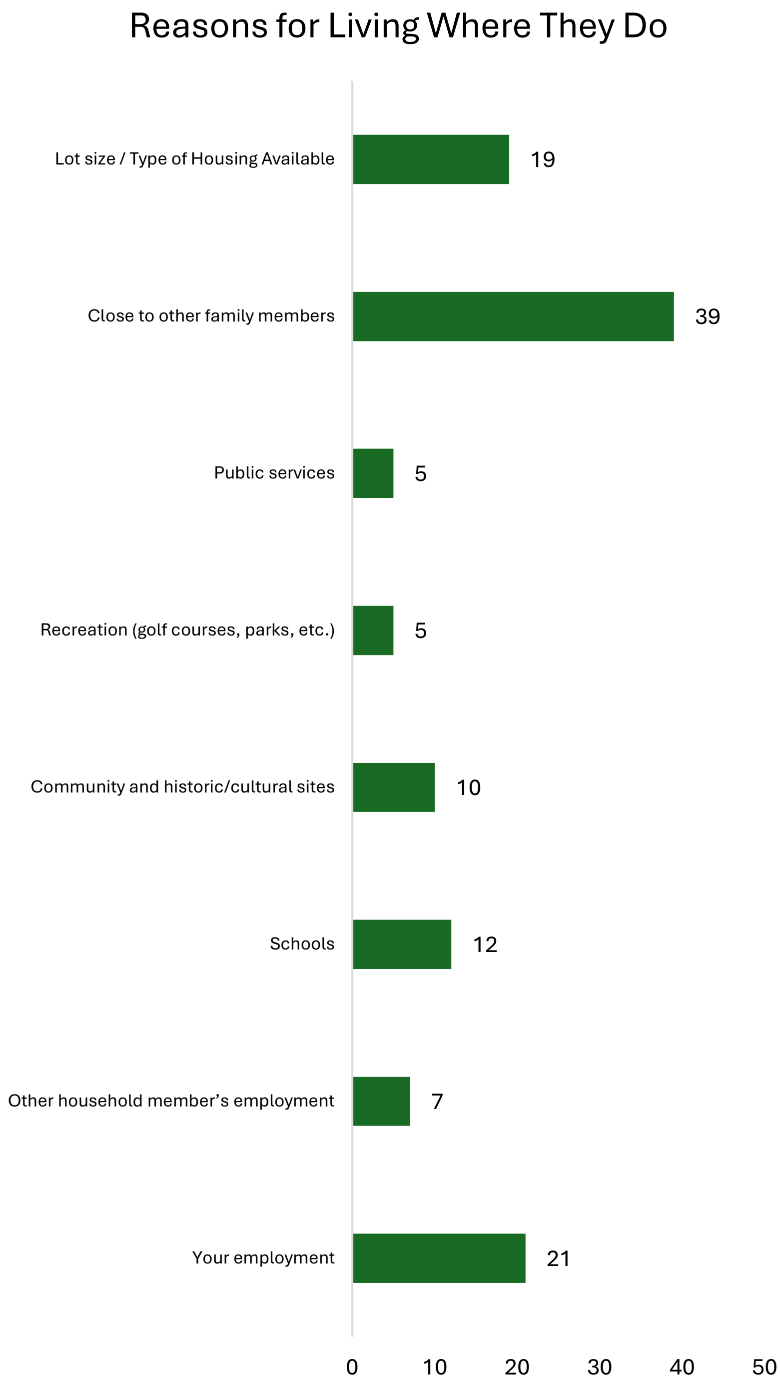
# Survey Findings – Burke County

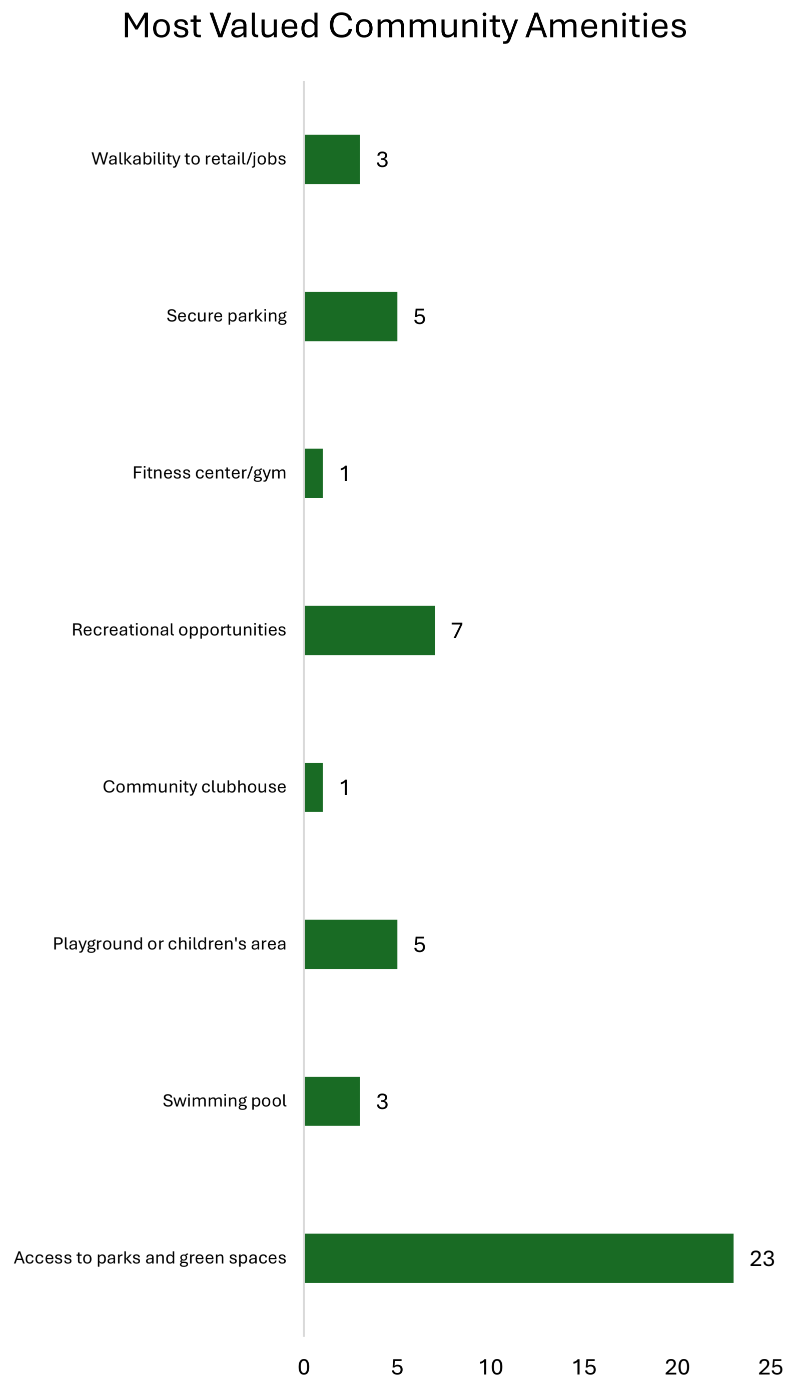




The vast majority of Burke County respondents identified large-lot single-family detached products as their housing unit of choice. A smaller portion of respondents identified small-lot single-family detached products, and a small but surprising set of respondents chose extra-small-lot single-family detached and duplex or triplex units. The county's rural character means that single-family detached homes are likely to satisfy most of the lifestyle preferences of county residents, however there may be a growing need for more diverse unit types concentrated in places like downtown Waynesboro.

The two obstacles that were most frequently identified by respondents were the costs of housing and the lack of amenities. These responses suggest that Burke County residents may have a preference for more amenity-rich communities in the region, and that the lack of amenities throughout Burke County restrict where those seeking to rent or buy a home may consider desirable to a more limited set of locations within Burke County.

# Survey Findings – Burke County




Burke County respondents identified proximity to family members as the primary reason for living where they do, consistent with responses from residents of other outlying counties within the region. The importance of living near family within Burke County suggests that existing residents form a highly stable community of households and workers who are willing to commute throughout the region to access employment opportunities.

Burke County respondents consistently identified access to parks and green space as their most valued community amenity. Other popular responses were recreational opportunities, secure parking and playgrounds or children's areas. All of these responses point to an affinity by county residents for outdoor recreation and the opportunities provided to engage in outdoor recreation within Burke County.

# Columbia County

# Columbia County

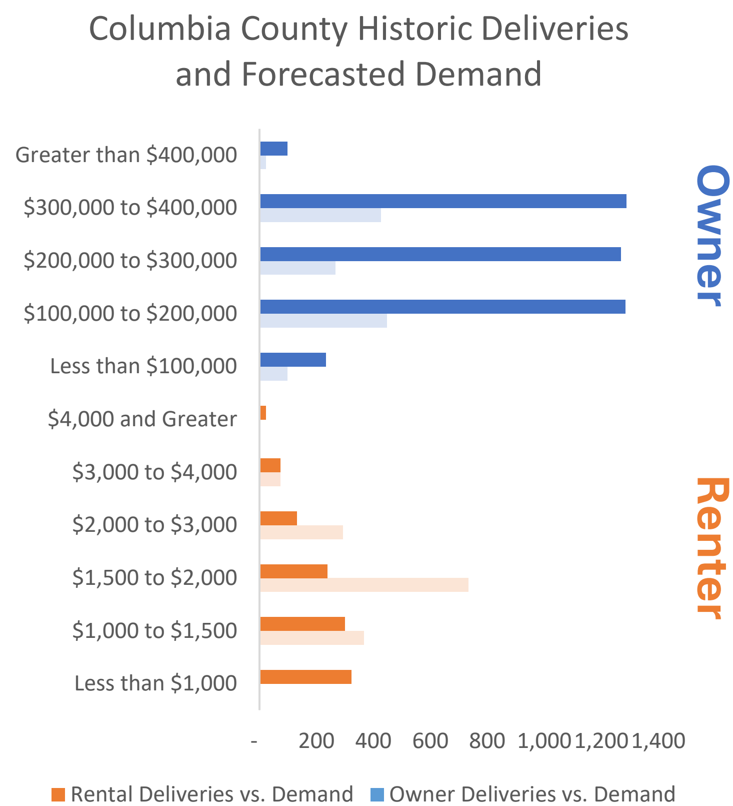
## Market Profile

- Strong water, sewer and road infrastructure
- Strong economic and population growth
- Newest housing stock in the region on average
- Local policies may limit future production

## Housing Needs

**Total Five-Year Gap: 2,539 Units**

**Total Five-Year Demand: 5,261 Units**




**In the chart to the right:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Smaller-format for-sale options that deliver much needed entry-level options AND Diversity of mid-market options**

**Affordable workforce rentals AND Mid-market, luxury and senior rental options in amenity-rich locations**

**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

## Implementable Strategies

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
2. Unlock the potential of publicly owned land to address local housing needs by determining which parcels might be contributed towards private-led housing projects with affordable components.
3. Encourage housing near major employers to reduce commute burdens, diversify housing options and support economic mobility by revising zoning ordinances to allow for a mix of uses.
4. Develop and adopt a residential "Pre-Approval Catalog"

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Create incentive tools, such as Tax Allocation Districts/Tax Increment Financing districts to support commercial redevelopment and infill projects that create housing units.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Establish an incentive framework that encourages local employers to become invested stakeholders and partners in public efforts to address workforce housing needs through employer-sponsored housing programs.
4. Ensure that a share of new housing in high-demand areas is affordable to local workers by adopting inclusionary zoning overlay districts.

# Columbia County

## Overview

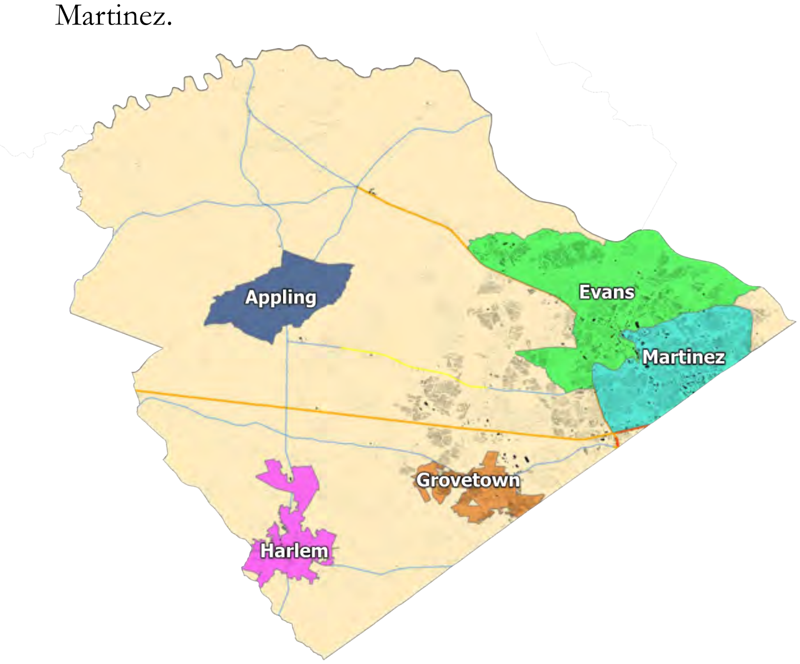
***Columbia County has long been recognized as a premier residential location within the Aiken-Augusta region.***

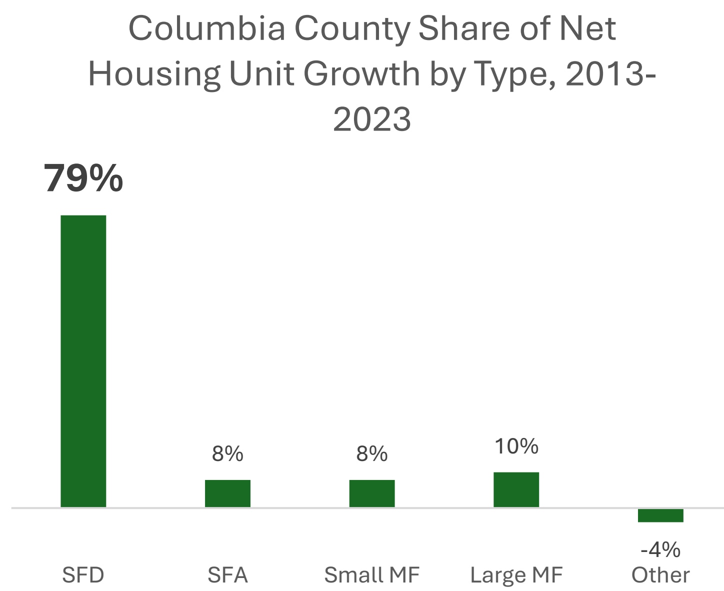
Its strong schools, high-quality amenities, and strategic location have contributed to sustained population growth and a reputation as a benchmark for regional development. Over the past several decades, the county has experienced historic expansion, adding approximately 100,000 residents since 1990, making it one of the fastest-growing counties in the state.

While Columbia County is not a major employment hub relative to the broader region, its economic landscape has continued to evolve, with key developments such as an Amazon fulfillment center and the new Wellstar MCG Hospital bringing hundreds of jobs and new investment to the county. These additions have strengthened the local economy and diversified employment opportunities.

## Columbia County Housing Today

The county's housing market has grown significantly, adding more than 10,000 units between 2013 and 2023, a 21% increase in inventory. This expansion has been primarily driven by single-family detached and townhome construction, with new development concentrated in Grovetown, Harlem, Evans, and Martinez.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

While multifamily housing has been introduced in recent years, much of it resulted from previously approved entitlements, and new projects have become less common under the county's current land use policies.

As Columbia County has evolved, it has taken steps to manage its growth through deliberate land use and zoning policies. Recent years have seen a slowdown in permitting and new housing deliveries, not due to a lack of demand but as a result of strategic policy decisions aimed at shaping the county's future.

With housing demand in Columbia County remaining strong, the pace of new development will play a significant role in determining future affordability and accessibility. If current trends continue, home prices are likely to rise at an accelerated rate, creating challenges for those seeking to enter the market.

## Barriers & Challenges

Columbia County's growth potential remains incredibly high, with strong demand for housing and few inherent obstacles to new residential development. Unlike many communities that struggle with geographic or economic limitations, Columbia County's primary barriers to growth are not market-driven but policy-driven.

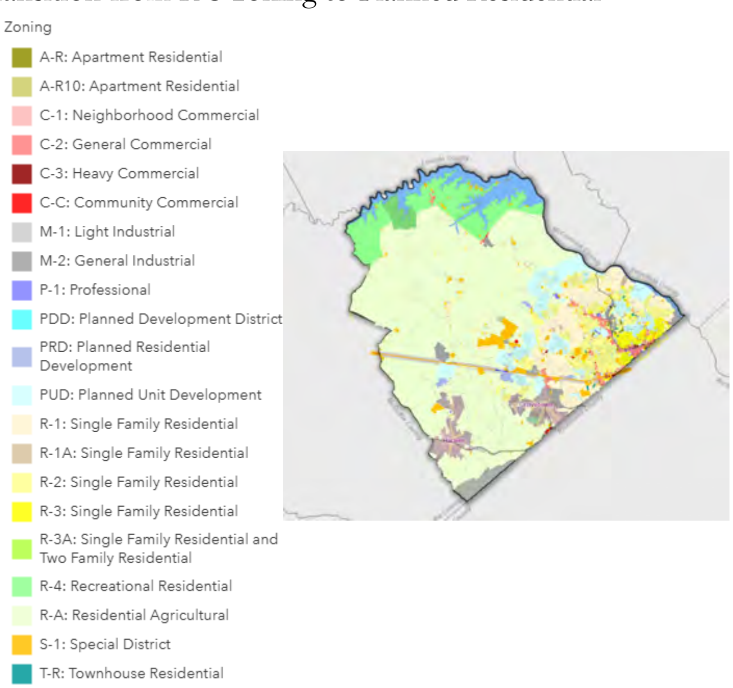
# Columbia County Overview

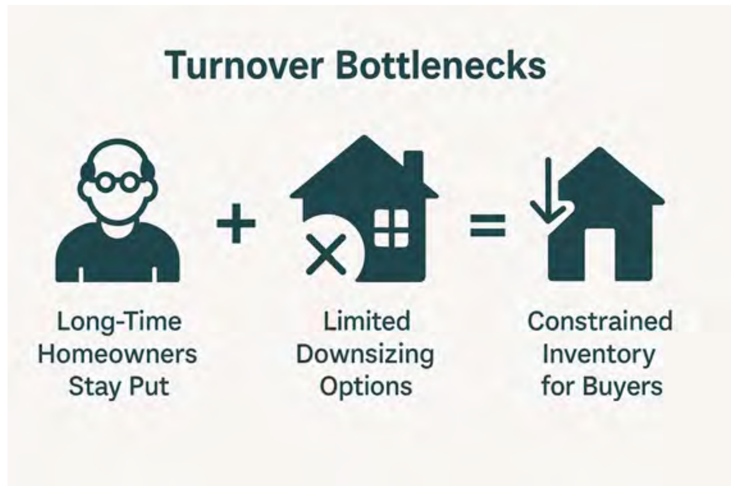
While some infrastructure constraints, particularly water and sewage capacity in the western and northern extremities of the county, pose challenges to expansion, they are relatively limited in scope and can often be addressed through strategic investment.

Instead, the most significant barriers to expanding the housing inventory in Columbia County are largely the result of deliberate policy choices aimed at restricting residential development. Through land use regulations, zoning changes, and infrastructure requirements, the county has taken an active role in shaping how and where new housing can be built.

Columbia County's development policies reflect a desire to maintain high-quality standards and ensure that new housing aligns with the expectations of its residents. The county has implemented various requirements for new communities, balancing growth with infrastructure considerations. While these measures are intended to promote long-term sustainability, some developers have expressed concerns about the feasibility of meeting infrastructure investment expectations, particularly in the absence of impact fees.

Columbia County's approach to residential growth has evolved over time, shifting away from smaller-lot development in favor of lower-density patterns. The transition from R-3 zoning to Planned Residential Development (PRD) has adjusted the framework for new communities, placing an emphasis on larger-lot formats. While this strategy supports a vision of preserving community character, it also influences the range of housing options available to prospective buyers, particularly middle-income households looking for more compact and affordable choices.




The county's housing market has been shaped not only by local policies but also by broader economic conditions.

Higher interest rates have contributed to lower turnover, as existing homeowners are less inclined to sell and take on new mortgages at higher rates. At the same time, Columbia County has expressed interest in retaining more service members from Fort Gordon, yet many military personnel, given the transient nature of their assignments, ultimately become landlords rather than long-term owner-occupants. This trend has led to an increase in rental properties, a dynamic that the county is working to navigate while ensuring the long-term stability of its housing market.

Additionally, the county's senior population faces limited downsizing opportunities, as housing options tailored to their needs remain scarce. Many older homeowners who might otherwise sell their homes and transition to lower-maintenance housing options find few viable choices within Columbia County, further constraining turnover and limiting entry points for first-time homebuyers.

# Columbia County Overview

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

Columbia County's long-standing reputation as the Aiken-Augusta region's most desirable place to live presents a strong foundation for future success. However, ensuring continued competitiveness will require a proactive approach to housing and land use. As regional preferences evolve, communities that offer a mix of housing types, integrated amenities, and a variety of lifestyle-oriented districts will be best positioned to attract and retain talent.

The county's historical identity as a bedroom community is one that may hold less relevance conceptually as employment centers become more dispersed. This presents an opportunity for Columbia County to embrace a more balanced development model, one that accommodates housing demand while reinforcing the qualities that have made it a desirable place to live. Policies that provide for a wider range of housing options, particularly near commercial centers, could help sustain long-term economic vibrancy and ensure that Columbia County remains a leader in the region.

While other jurisdictions in the Aiken-Augusta region are beginning to embrace more diverse and integrated development patterns, Columbia County has an opportunity to set the standard for high-quality, well-planned growth. By leveraging its existing strengths and adapting to emerging market dynamics, the county can continue to thrive while maintaining the character and quality of life that residents value.

*Fayetteville's Trilith community, which represents one of the most aspirational walkable, mixed-use communities in the Southeast demonstrates how increasing residential and commercial density can still be executed in ways that are consistent with the character of Columbia County*

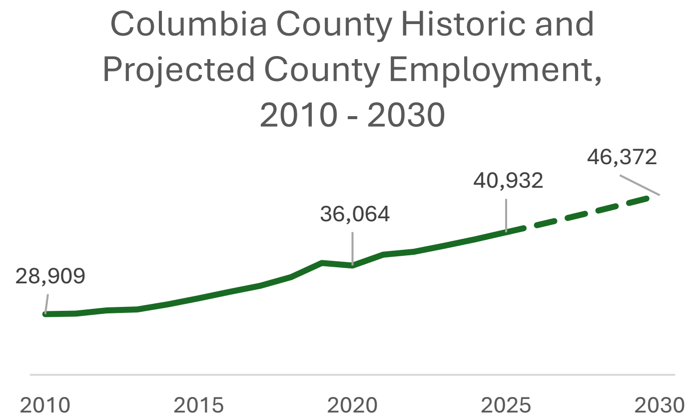
# Economic Drivers – Columbia County

## Employment by Industry

The chart below compares Columbia County's employment sectors based on average annual wage, the size of each sector, and their respective historical growth rate.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the largest employment sectors are retail trade, accommodation and food services, and health care and social assistance. There are vast wage disparities between employment sectors. Sectors such as professional and technical services, manufacturing, and health care, who consistently outperform the county median wage of $51,173, contrast substantially with sectors such as accommodation and food services, arts, entertainment, and recreation, as well as retail trade.

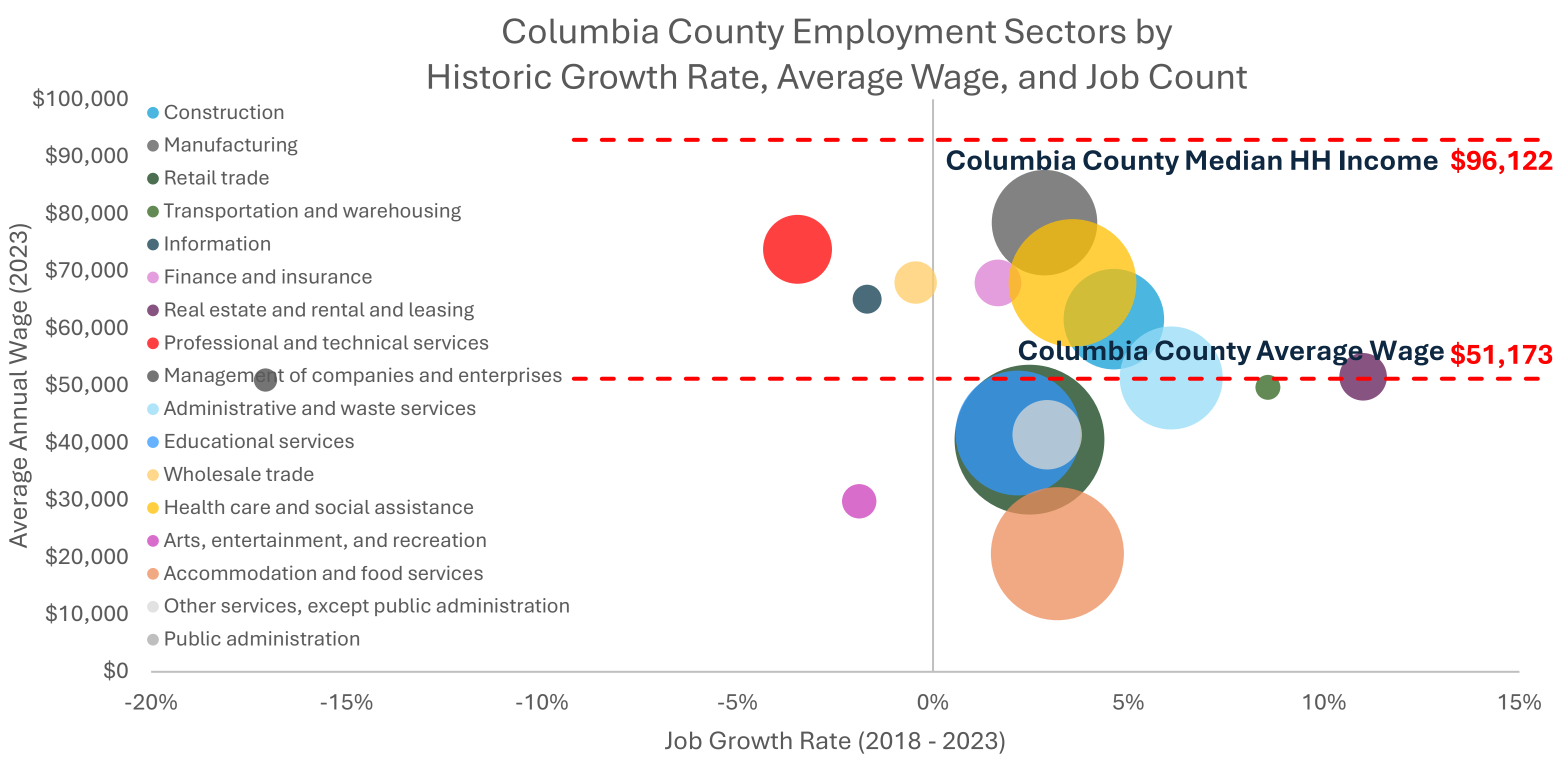
The employment sector experiencing the highest growth was the real estate and rental leasing sector, which expanded by 11% between 2018 and 2023. This indicates a strong demand for real estate related services such as home sales, rental demand, leasing, etc. This growth can imply that Columbia County has attracted interest in new development or turnover of properties and the services that complement it.




*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall County Employment

Columbia County is becoming an increasingly attractive place to work. The county has experienced a consistent and dramatic trend of employment growth, rising from 28,909 jobs in 2010 to 40,932 jobs in 2025. A slight plateau was encountered in 2020, likely due to the pandemic, though this pause was short lived. With a projection of approximately 46,372 employed by 2030, the upward trend is expected to continue. As new economic investments such as the Amazon fulfillment center and the WellStar MCG hospital roll in, the region is poised to attract and bolster a diverse workforce.



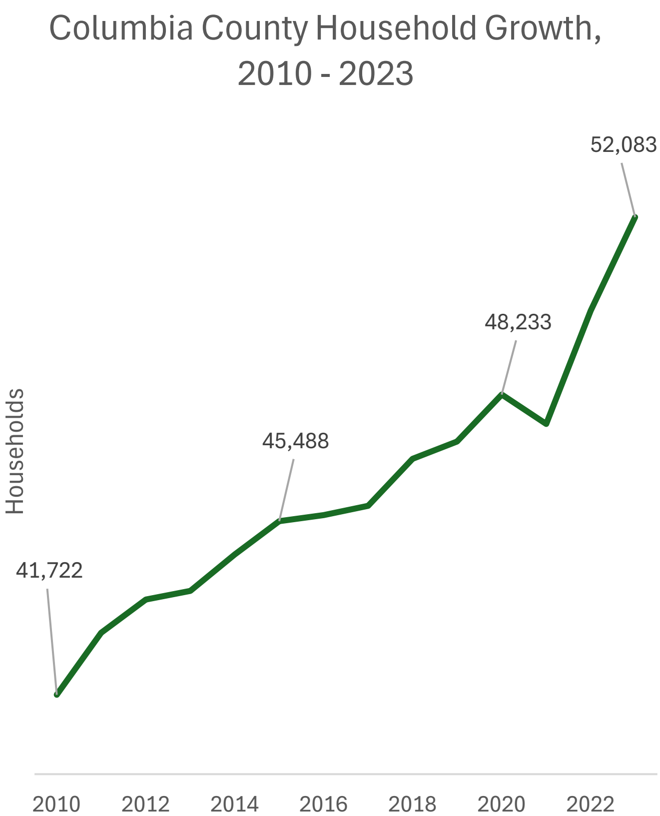

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – Columbia County

## Household Growth

Compared to much of the general region, Columbia County has experienced much more consistent and significant household growth, increasing consistently from 41,722 households in 2010 to 52,083 households in 2023. This indicates a consistent inflow of new residents and stable, growing demand.

Though household growth has been high over the last decade, the county's efforts to slow the rate of housing production within the county may dampen household growth and household formation within the county over the next five years and beyond.

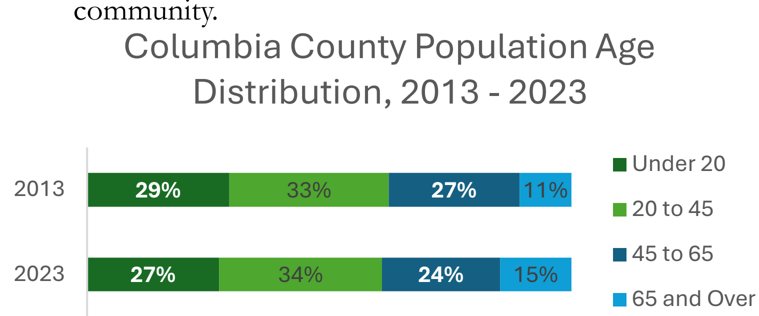


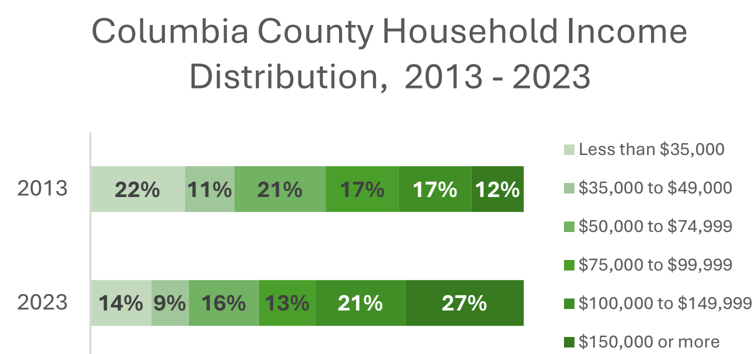

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Age

Between 2013 and 2023, Columbia County experienced a small shift in its age distribution to reflect its aging population. Residents under 20 decreased by 2% from 29% in 2013 to 27% in 2023. Residents aged 45 to 65 decreased by 3% from 27% in 2013 to 24% in 2023. The distribution of residents aged 20 to 45 remained steady with 1% of fluctuation. The largest shift in age distribution was with age 65 and over, increasing from 11% in 2013 to 15% in 2023.

The aging trend in Columbia County suggests a growing need for housing that accommodates older adults, particularly as the 65 and over population increased from 11% to 15% over the past decade. At the same time, the decline in residents under 20 and those aged 45 to 65 indicates potential demographic shifts that could impact school enrollments, workforce availability, and housing demand. With the 20 to 45 age group remaining stable, ensuring a mix of housing options that appeal to young professionals, families, and retirees will be essential for maintaining a balanced community.




## Household Income

The household income distribution saw drastic changes. The distribution of residents with an income of $100,000 or more increased by 19% from 2013 to 2023. The most substantial growth occurred within the group earning $150,000 or more, growing by 15%. Concurrently, the share of residents making less than $35,000 decreased by 8%, from 22% in 2013 to 14% in 2023. **Median household income grew from $69,306 to $96,122.** This shift suggests a growing demand for higher-end housing options while also potentially reducing the availability of naturally occurring affordable housing for lower-income residents. As incomes rise, ensuring a balanced housing market that accommodates a range of price points will be key to maintaining economic diversity and workforce accessibility.



*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

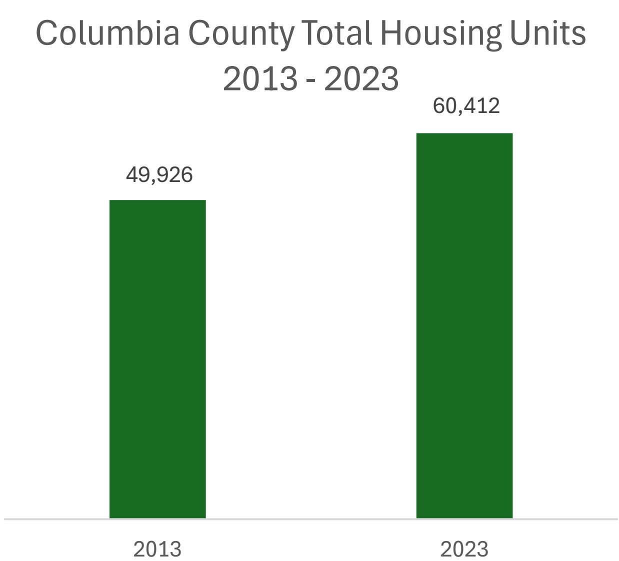
# Housing Supply – Columbia County

## Growing Inventory

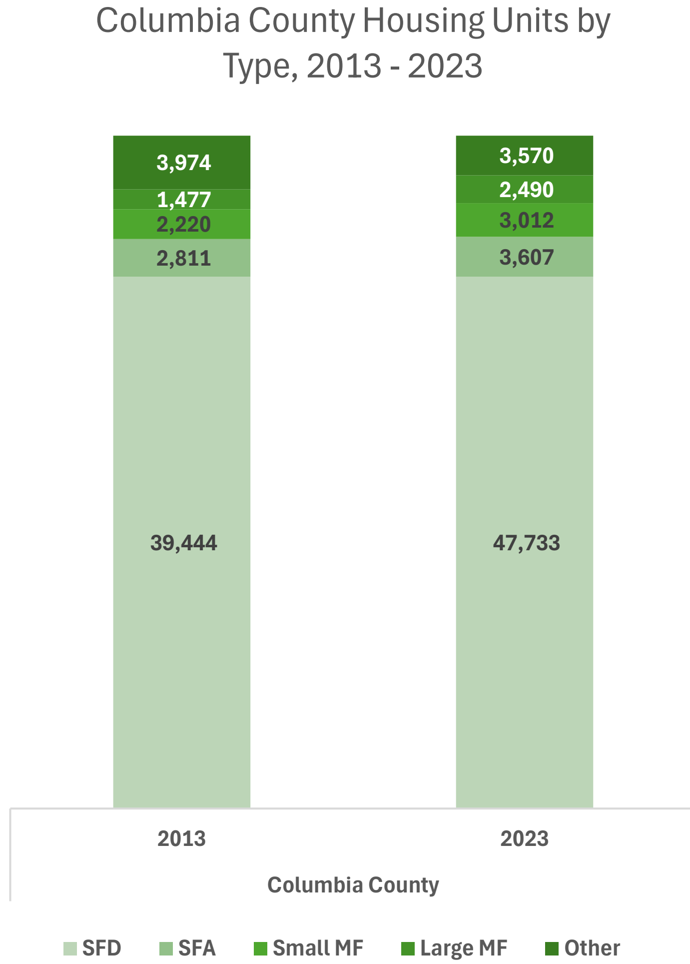
The housing inventory in Columbia County grew by 21% in the decade from 2013 to 2013, adding 10,486 units. This was a higher rate of growth and higher absolute number of new units than any county in the Aiken-Augusta region, reflecting that builders are responding to the strong demand to live in Columbia County.

The county's rapid housing expansion underscores its status as a highly desirable residential destination, driven by strong job growth, high-performing schools, and quality amenities. This level of development has helped Columbia County absorb much of the region's population growth, maintaining relative affordability despite rising demand. However, the county's shift towards slower growth in recent years may result in future market dysfunction or shifts away from Columbia County towards other communities open to growth.

As land availability declines and infrastructure capacity is tested, the county will need to balance continued growth with strategic planning to ensure housing diversity, transportation efficiency, and long-term sustainability. Encouraging higher-density development in key areas and expanding infrastructure to support future growth will be critical to maintaining Columbia County's position as the region's leading housing market.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

Single family detached units account for substantially all of the new housing units delivered in Columbia County over the last decade. 79% of new Columbia County housing units were single family detached products, with the remainder of new housing construction evenly split among single family attached, small multifamily, and large multifamily.

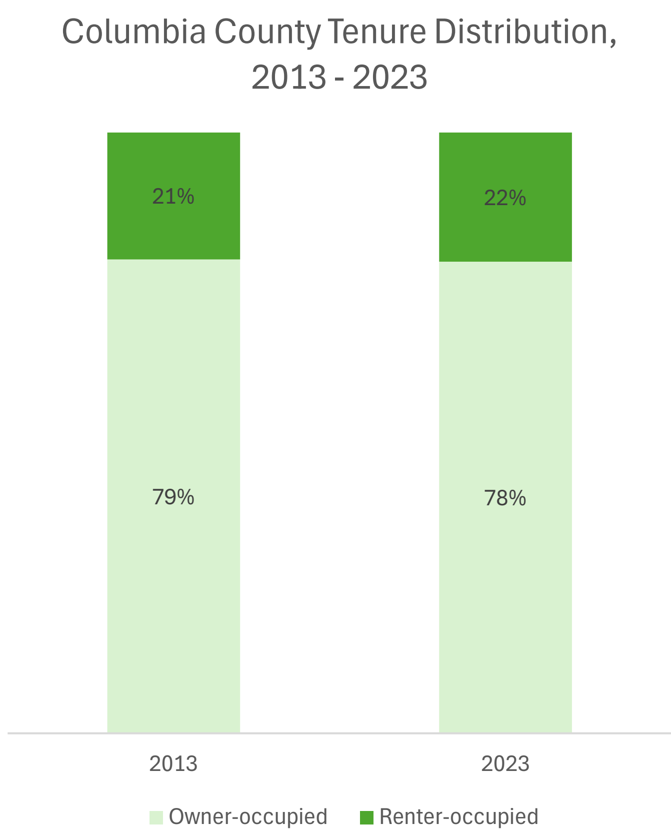
Whether the result of restrictive land use policies, homebuyer demand, or builder specialties, an overwhelming focus on a single housing unit production could limit the ability of Columbia County to accommodate workforce housing demand and to create amenity-rich mixed-use community centers, which will be key to assuring that Columbia County remains the premier residential community in the Aiken-Augusta Region.

# Housing Supply – Columbia County

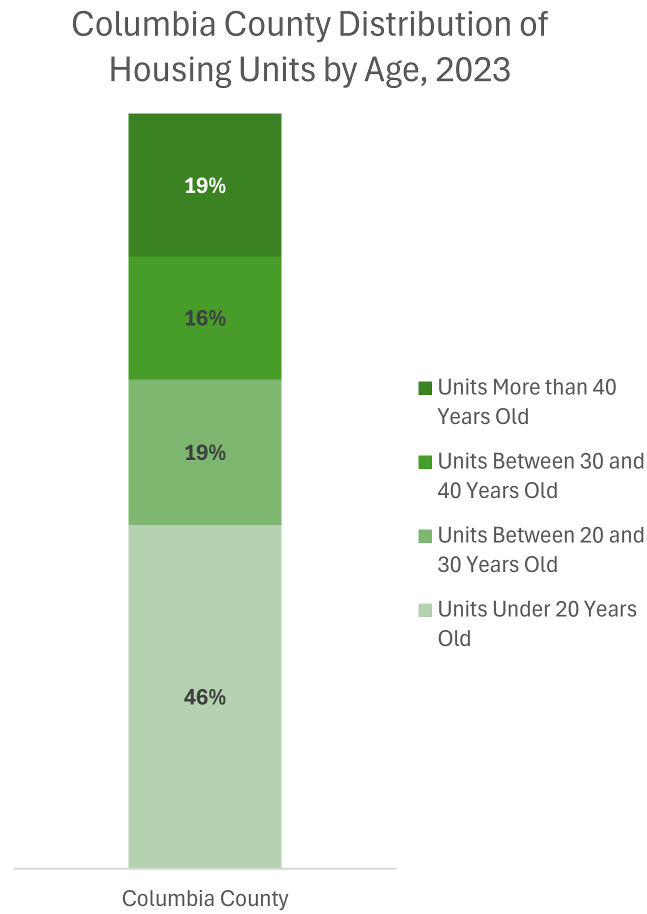
## Tenure

The tenure distribution remained consistent between 2013 and 2023, with a decrease in 1% among homeowners and a 1% increase among renters. This marginal shift is an indication of steady homeowner preferences. At 78%, Columbia County has a high level of homeownership. Only Edgefield County, at 80%, has a higher percentage of owner-occupied housing units.

This distribution may shift over the next five years or more, particularly if the county's housing inventory is not expanded and diversified. Columbia County will remain an aspirational community, but rising home prices driven by limited supply may make homeownership less attainable for many households. As a result, more residents may turn to renting single-family homes, a trend that has already grown in recent years. Many would-be starter homes are being purchased by investors or residents and listed as rentals, further limiting entry-level homeownership opportunities.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

The large number of new units delivered in Columbia County in recent years has also had strong impacts on the distribution of housing units by age. Columbia County has the largest percentage of housing units under 20 years old (46%) and the lowest percentage of housing units over 40 years old (19%) of any county in the region. This distribution emphasizes how dramatically the influx of new housing has reshaped the area.

Unlike most of the other counties in the region, Columbia County's relatively young housing stock is unlikely to require major renovation or replacement for decades to come. Additionally, the fact that nearly half of the units in the county were built in the last twenty years is a strong signal that demand and market feasibility are both most robust in the region within Columbia County.

# Housing Accessibility – Columbia County

## Rental Market

Columbia County is a residential housing market of choice with the Aiken-Augusta region. The CoStar estimated county average rent was $1,409, which was the highest average rent of any county in the region. According to salary levels reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, dual-income households earning salaries in most of Columbia County's industries would be able to afford rent in Columbia County without being cost burdened, defined as spending less than a third of their income on rent.

However, single-income households across nearly all industries face significant cost burdens, as their attainable rent levels fall below the county's high average rent. This suggests that while Columbia County remains an attractive market for dual-income households, affordability challenges may limit rental options for lower-wage workers, young professionals, and single-earner families, potentially pushing them to seek housing in neighboring counties.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Construction | $1,201 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,205 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,530 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,809 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $1,326 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,434 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $892 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $1,638 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $729 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $1,338 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened |
| Information | $1,269 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,330 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $1,325 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,432 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $1,005 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $1,845 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $1,439 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,642 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | $994 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,059 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $1,001 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,073 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $918 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $1,685 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $1,324 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,431 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $655 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $1,203 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $454 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $833 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $911 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $1,672 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $1,378 | $1,409 | Cost Burdened | $2,530 | $1,409 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – Columbia County

## For-Sale Market

The adjusted median home price in Columbia County was $329,000. This adjusted median home price was the highest out of every county in the study area, and paints a stark picture of the challenges facing potential homebuyers in Columbia County. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics Salary data, no single-income or dual-income household earning salaries from Columbia County industries would be able to affordably purchase the average local home.

This widespread cost burden indicates that even higher-wage industries in Columbia County are unable to keep pace with rising home prices, effectively pushing homeownership out of reach for most local workers. As a result, many households may be forced to either rent for longer or seek more affordable homeownership options in neighboring counties, impacting workforce retention and long-term economic stability.

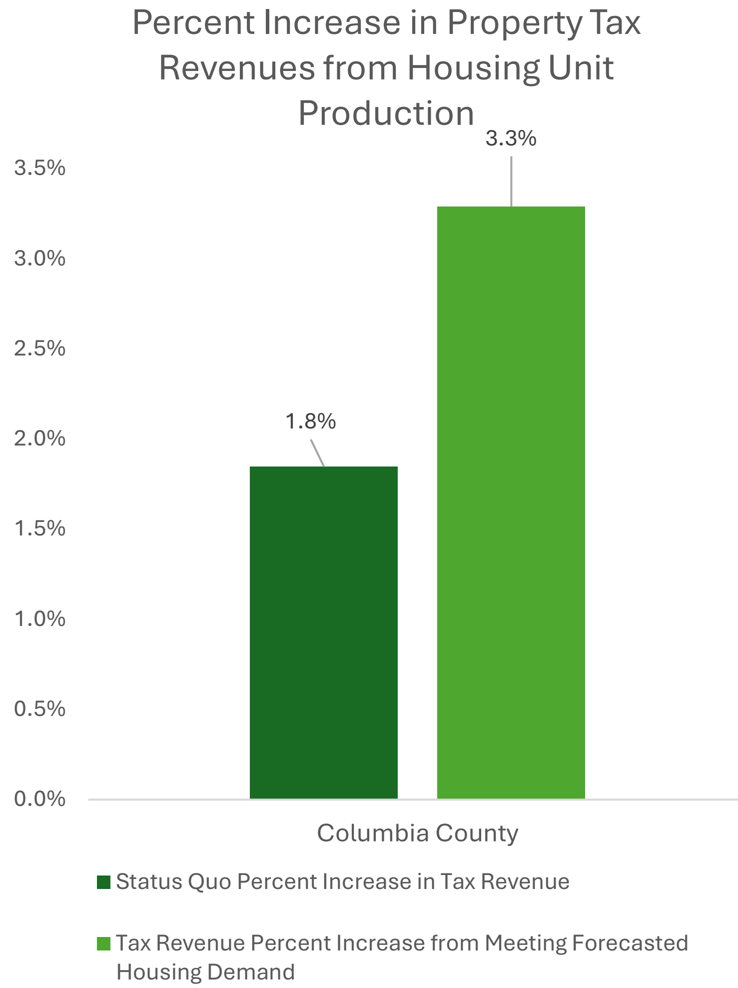
| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Construction | $144,137 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $264,635 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $183,575 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $337,044 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $159,108 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $292,123 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $107,049 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $196,543 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $87,448 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $160,555 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Information | $152,304 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $279,629 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $158,945 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $291,822 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $120,580 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $221,385 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $172,685 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $317,050 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | $119,258 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $247,029 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $120,103 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $248,779 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $110,107 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $202,157 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $158,918 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $291,773 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $78,627 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $144,359 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $54,455 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $99,980 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $109,312 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $200,697 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $165,373 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened | $303,625 | $329,900 | Cost Burdened |

# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production Columbia County

Nowhere else in the Aiken-Augusta Region are the fiscal benefits of meeting market demand for housing more pronounced than in Columbia County. The demand for housing within the county is incredibly large and will far exceed supply added should the next five years of deliveries in the county resemble the last five.

Because the county has a strong existing tax base due to the scale of its existing housing inventory, adding new housing units to the county's tax digest represent relatively small, but meaningful percent increases in revenue for the county. If Columbia County proceeds to add housing at the same pace that it did over the last five years, the county can expect an approximately 1.8% increase in tax revenues. If the county opts to meet the market where it is and allow for housing production to be greatly increased over the next five years, the increase in revenues from the housing units added is estimated to amount to an approximately 3.3% increase in tax revenues for the county.

Unlike many of the other counties in the region, Columbia County has excellent existing infrastructure and services, meaning that while other counties must keep an eye on the balance between revenues earned from new housing unit production and the cost of supporting that development, Columbia County is poised to receive greater net increases in tax revenue as a result of new housing production.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Columbia County | County | $1,526,787 | $2,715,853 | $1,189,065 | **$3,851,036** |
| | School | $3,418,033 | $6,080,003 | $2,661,971 | |

Unlike other counties in the region, Columbia County does not have the same concerns when it comes to infrastructure, meaning that while upgrades and maintenance may be necessary, which can be costly, the cost of adding new housing units is lower relative to other counties where adding new housing units would mean significant investments in expanding water, sewer and road infrastructure.

For Columbia County and Columbia County Schools, there are significant advantages to meeting market demand for housing. The table above illustrates that by not meeting market demand for housing within the county, the county is effectively cutting their revenue potential in half.

There is a clear fiscal advantage to delivering units in a way that meets market demand, representing an additional $1,189,065 for the county, and an additional $2,661,971 for the county's school district, representing a total fiscal benefit of approximately $3,851,036.

# Demand & Gap – Columbia County

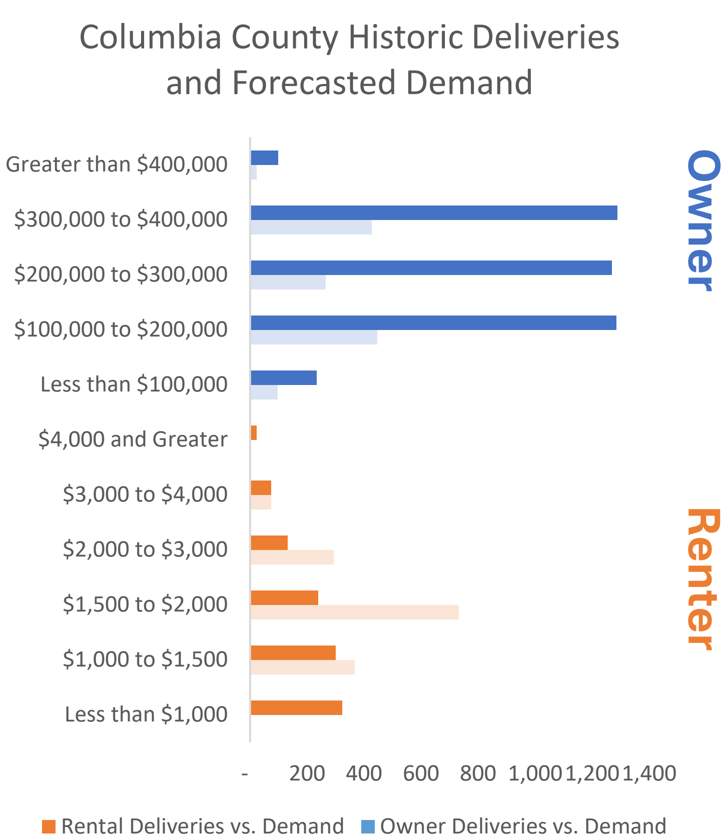
## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

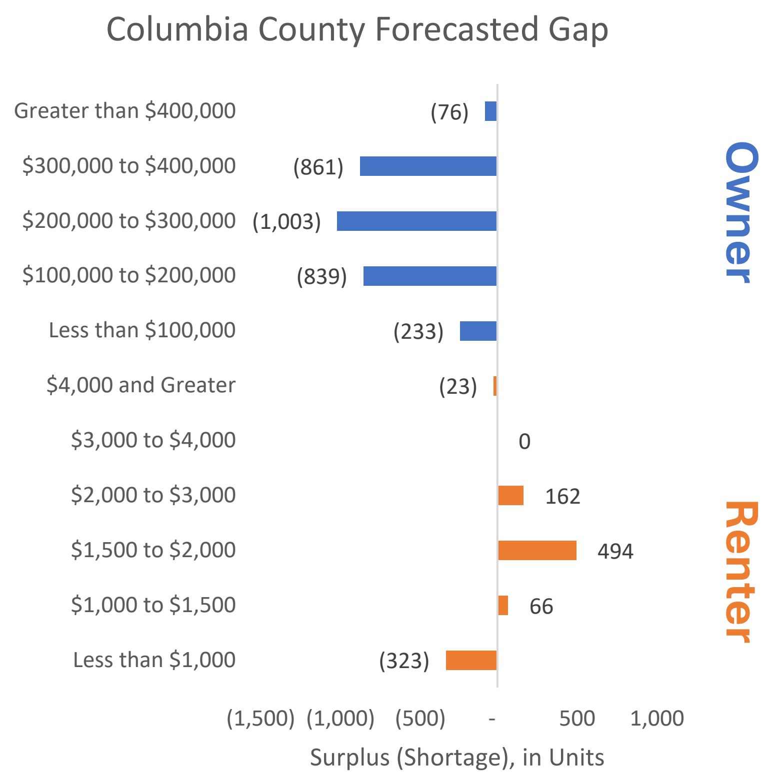
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

Columbia County's position as the most aspirational community within the Aiken-Augusta Region means that demand for new housing in the county is very high. While the county has grown significantly since 2010, the rate that the county has added new housing to its inventory since 2020 has been significantly dampened due to policies aimed to slow growth.

The chart below shows the magnitude to which demand for new housing would outstrip deliveries if the Columbia County market produced new units at the same rate it did the past five years for the next five years. If historic delivery trends persist, demand will far outstrip supply particularly across all for-sale segments.




## Forecasted Gap

As a result of restrictionary land use, zoning and permitting within Columbia County, which has resulted in constriction of housing unit deliveries in the county over the past year and which threaten to continue to restrict growth between 2025 and 2030, the county's forecasted gap is significant.

The gaps in the market are particularly pronounced among for-sale products priced between $100,000 and $400,000, with units priced $200,000 to $300,000 representing the most in-demand housing segment within the county. Additionally, while the gap expressed above reflects the last five years of growth against forecasted demand, the county has recently adopted a stricter stance on multifamily development. In the past five years, multifamily deliveries helped satisfy rental demand, but this trend may not continue. With fewer new rental projects expected in the next five years, gaps in the market across all rental segments may deepen significantly.

# Strategies & Recommendations – Columbia County

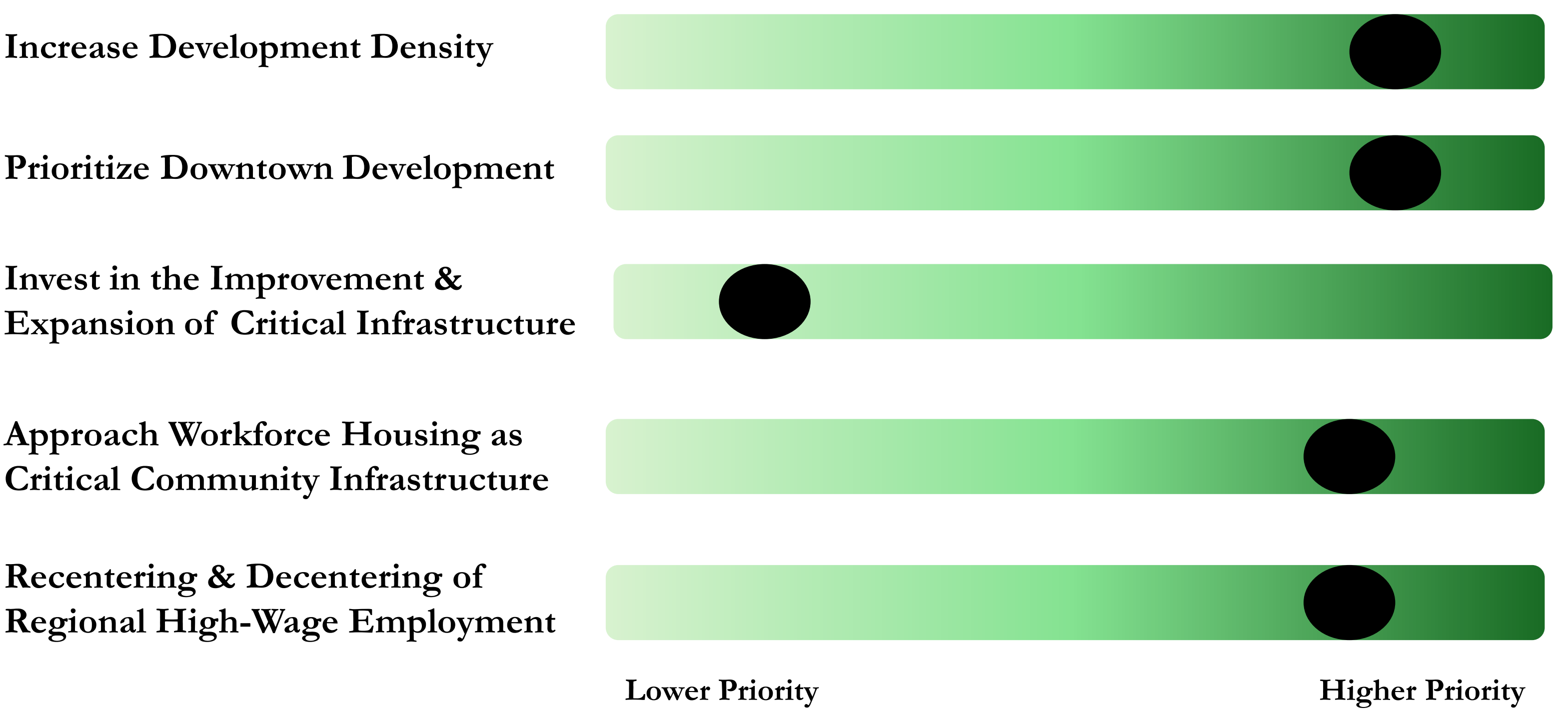
## Strategic Priorities

**Columbia County's strong market position affords it the unique ability to shape its growth trajectory with intentional policy choices. While demand for housing remains high, limiting growth too aggressively could have unintended consequences, including housing shortages, rising costs, and reduced economic competitiveness.**

As a regional employment hub with a strong public school system and a high quality of life, Columbia County must consider how its land use policies and growth management strategies impact long-term affordability and workforce retention. **Restrictive growth policies, if not carefully implemented, may accelerate housing cost increases, making it more difficult for essential workers, young families, and long-time residents to remain in the community.**

Given this reality, Columbia County should prioritize policies that allow for strategic, sustainable growth while maintaining the community character that residents value. **Encouraging higher-density, mixed-use developments in targeted areas, particularly near employment centers, can help accommodate demand without contributing to sprawl. Additionally, increasing housing variety, such as townhomes duplexes and multifamily products will ensure that new development serves a broader segment of the county's workforce and aging population.**

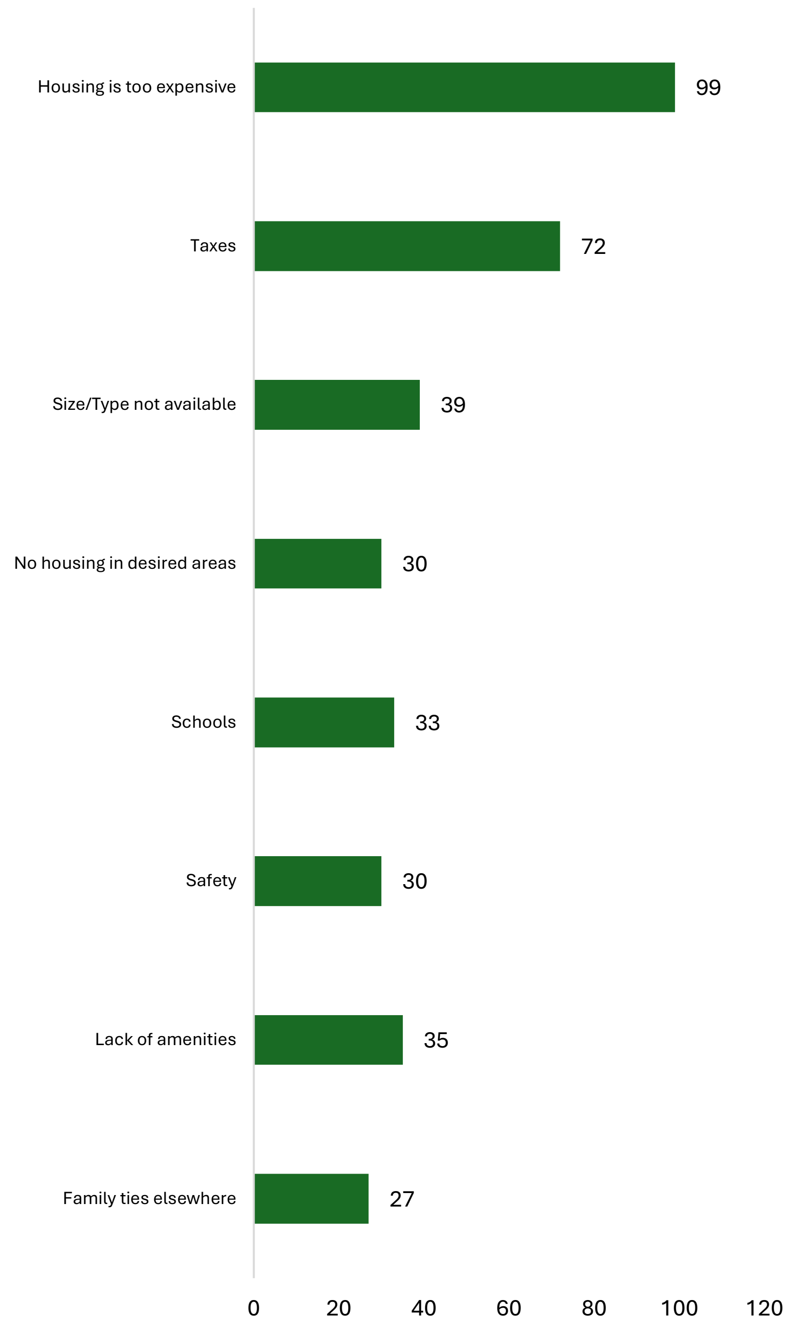
Columbia County's ability to balance growth with housing accessibility and economic vitality will depend on how well it aligns land use decisions with long-term regional needs. While large-scale expansion may not be a current priority, thoughtful planning decisions today will shape the county's ability to remain both desirable and accessible in the years to come.



# Survey Findings – Columbia County

Housing Type Preferences


Obstacles to Choosing Where to Live

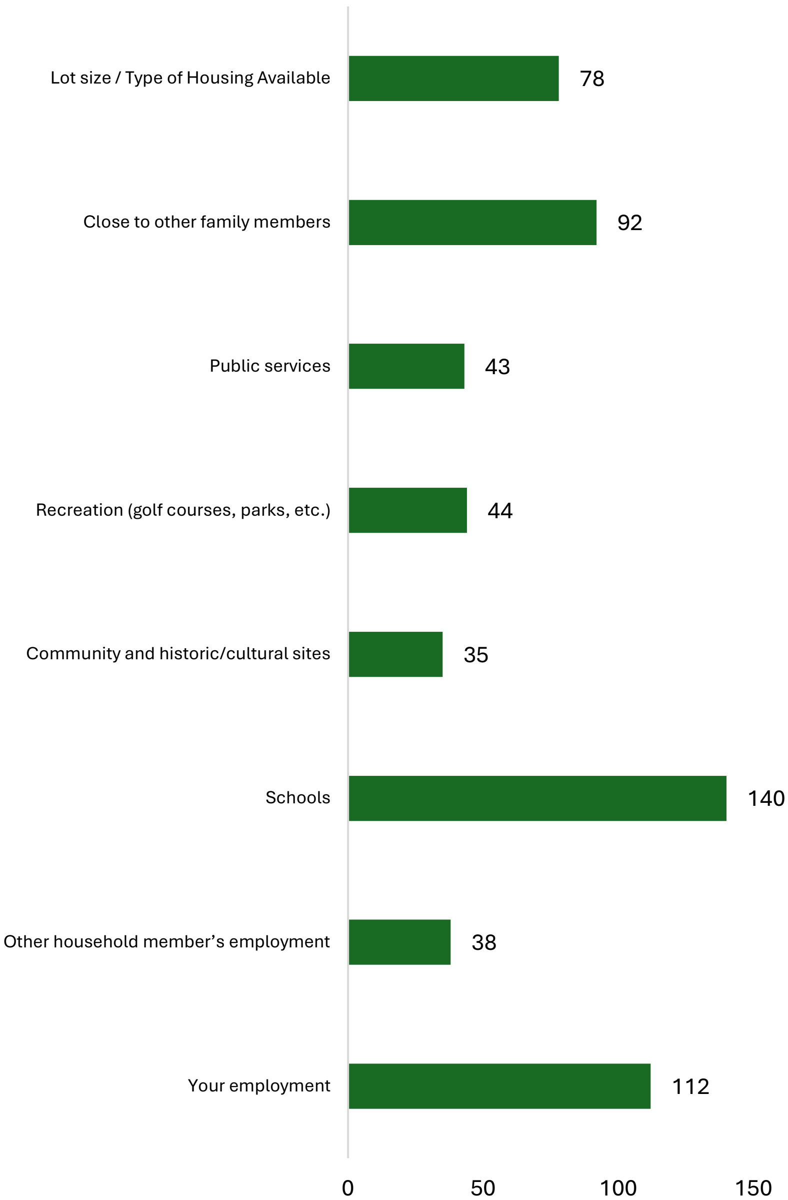



The scale of response from Columbia County residents is much larger than some of the other counties in the survey, however the favoritism of large-lot single-family detached products and single-family detached products in general is just as clear if not clearer in the responses provided by Columbia County residents. No respondent from Columbia County identified a preference that was anything other than a single-family detached product.

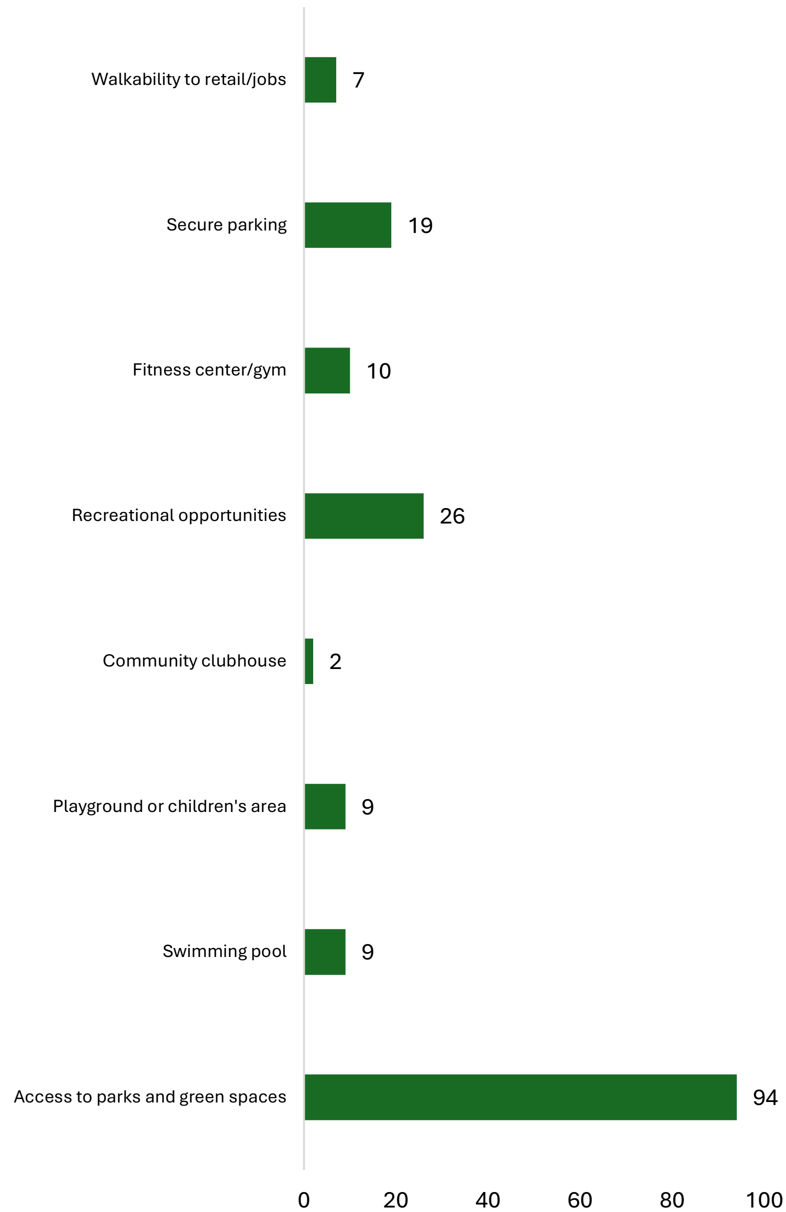
The primary obstacles identified by Columbia County respondents were housing cost and taxes. Columbia County residents represent some of the highest income households in the region, with Columbia County for-sale prices and rental costs setting regional ceilings. For survey respondents who already live in the county, cost pressures may still limit their ability to move into their ideal home in their ideal location within the county.

# Survey Findings – Columbia County

Reasons for Living Where They Do




Most Valued Community Amenities




Columbia County's regionally recognized excellence in the category of educational services clearly plays out among survey respondents identification of why they live where they do, ranking even above employment for respondents. While workers who move to the region for their job might choose Columbia County for its schools, such workers might identify employment as their reason for living in the county, however the county's schools are so high quality that many long-time residents of the region may also seek to live in Columbia County specifically for its schools. Such households might be more likely to identify schools over employment.

Columbia County respondents consistently identified access to parks and green spaces as their most valued community amenity. Columbia County is regionally renowned for its parks and trails and it is clear that survey respondents who reside in the county feel that having these community amenities is a very important part of the experience of living in Columbia County.

# Edgefield County

# Edgefield County

## Market Profile

- Needed improvements to water and infrastructure
- Strategically located to absorb economic and population growth from Columbia, Aiken and Richmond

## Housing Needs

**Total Five-Year Gap: 623 Units**

**In the chart to the right:**

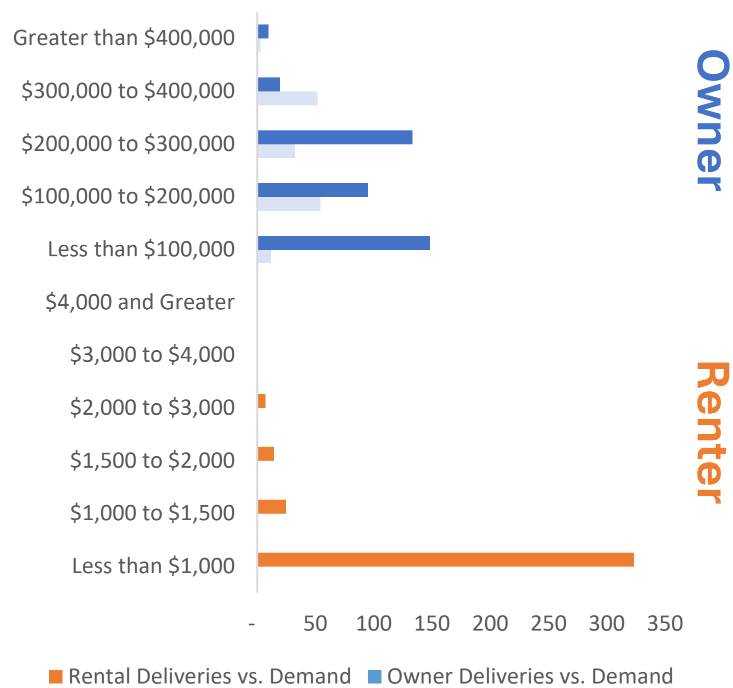
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Entry level for-sale options AND Greater product diversity for mid-market for-sale options**

**Affordable workforce rentals AND Mid-market rental options in amenity-rich locations with existing infrastructure**

**Total Five-Year Demand: 775 Units**

Edgefield County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

## Implementable Strategies

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
2. Apply for federal and state grants in order to leverage available state and federal funding for water and sewer expansion
3. Promote safety and attractiveness in downtown through events programming.
4. Unlock the potential of publicly owned land to address local housing needs by determining which parcels might be contributed towards private-led housing projects with affordable components.
5. Develop and adopt a residential "Pre-Approval Catalog"

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Rezone or create overlays to allow for higher-density residential development near job centers, along commercial corridors and where existing infrastructure is already sufficient to support higher densities.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Generate consistent local revenue to support investments in transportation, water and sewer projects through the creation of special tax districts like TADs/TIFs, SSDs and CIDs
4. Leverage Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support redevelopment of underperforming downtown areas to include more housing.

# Edgefield County

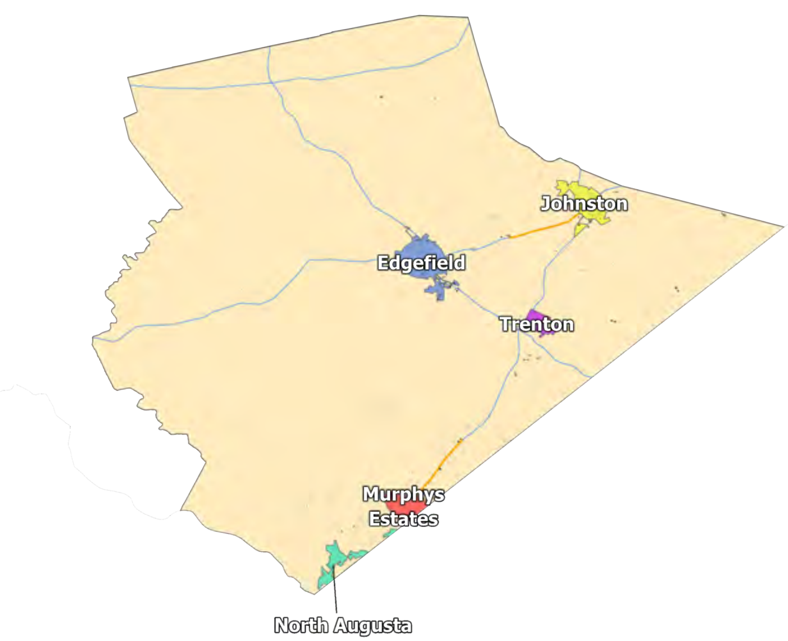
## Overview

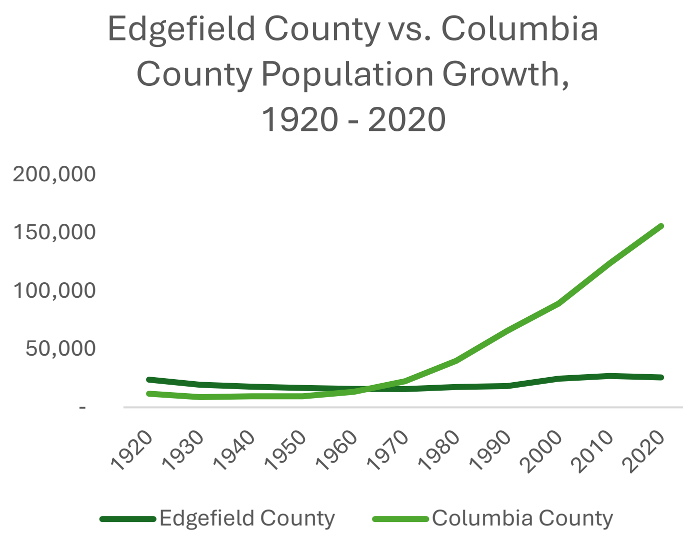
Edgefield County, South Carolina is located north and west of Aiken County, east of the Savannah River. Historically, the county has been defined by its large land area and excellent soil resources, which have made it a major source of agricultural products in the region, first among which are peaches. In recent years, the county has seen a growing population, largely due to the expansion of the North Augusta community into the county, in addition to economic development wins, with Generac opening a facility in the county in 2021.

The county contains several communities, including Edgefield, the county seat, as well as Johnston and Trenton in addition to North Augusta, which spans between Aiken and Edgefield counties.

## Edgefield County Housing Today

Household and housing unit growth in Edgefield County has been slow but stable over the last decade, adding roughly 600 units between 2012 and 2022. The lack of water and sewer infrastructure in the county have served as a major limiting factor on growth potential in the unincorporated portions of the county, which in turn impacts the maximum development potential of any given parcel in the county.




Source: KB Advisory, U.S. Decennial Census, 1920-2020

While the cities of Edgefield and Johnston do have capacity, development interest in those communities has remained relatively limited, with most of the recent development in the county concentrated around I-20's Exit 5. Most residents of Edgefield County accept that accessing retail options, work and entertainment and recreational opportunities largely exist only outside of the county. Aiken in particular is a major destination for Edgefield County residents.

Economic development has occurred within Edgefield County even despite a lack of household and housing unit growth in the county, with Generac opening a manufacturing facility in the county in 2021. The county's advantageous location along I-20, as well as its proximity to other more populous communities in Aiken and Richmond counties continue to provide a competitive edge to the county.

Edgefield County and Columbia County had similar populations at the middle point of the 20th century, however, since that time Columbia County's population has grown from 9,525 to more than 165,000 residents while Edgefield County's population has grown from 8,107 to roughly 28,000 residents. The difference in population growth trajectories of these two counties, both positioned well to absorb suburban growth from Augusta and Aiken respectively, suggests both a willfulness to curb growth, as well as a region that is capable of absorbing growth that may

# Edgefield County Overview

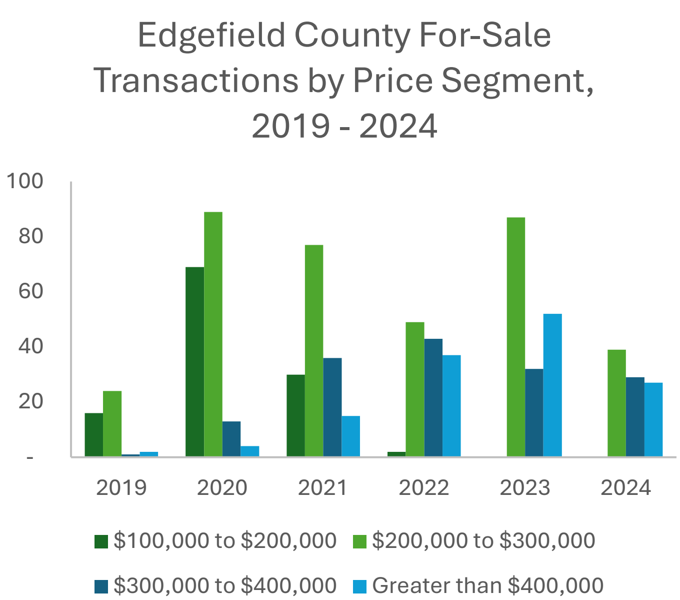
have occurred within the county elsewhere within the region without causing major housing market disfunction in Edgefield County.

While growth pressures within Edgefield County are currently manageable, there is a need for new housing production that satisfies both entry-level and mid-market housing segments, with most new housing production in the county being either luxury or custom-built, catering to the upper market. The county's housing inventory currently lacks diversity, with most existing units defined as single-family detached homes and another significant portion of the local inventory being defined as manufactured or mobile homes.

## Barriers & Challenges

Water and sewer infrastructure presents both a barrier and an opportunity for development within Edgefield County. Extending infrastructure to many parts of the unincorporated county is not feasible due to the high costs of installation and maintenance, coupled with the low return on investment resulting from the sparse distribution of potential clients in these areas. However, the incorporated communities within Edgefield County, Edgefield first among them, have the capacity to accommodate growth. Focusing growth within the county's existing communities achieves multiple goals simultaneously: preserving economically and culturally valuable agricultural lands, avoiding fiscally unsustainable water and sewer expansions, and adding new homes and households to existing areas, thereby fostering greater community complexity and enabling the development of more retail options and community amenities.

*Source: Google Earth*




Source: KB Advisory, SmartRE

The general lack of retail options and community amenities within Edgefield County poses a significant challenge to attracting new residents, especially in the context of a region with several communities with a diversity of recreational and cultural amenities. While retail options are unlikely to show up in Edgefield County without growth in population, the county does have control over investments in public infrastructure like parks and trails, as well as over programming, such as live events and First Fridays throughout the downtown areas of Edgefield and Johnston. Both of these initiatives have the potential to provide potential residents with reasons beyond just work to live in Edgefield County.

Edgefield County's population is aging, a common challenge in areas experiencing low growth. To support this growing non-working population in the years ahead and mitigate the risk of significant demographic decline, the county should adopt a proactive approach. This includes encouraging 55+ developments in more walkable areas to reduce service demands, as well as attracting housing that meets the needs of working-age households, helping to establish a sustainable foundation for the county's future population.

# Edgefield County Overview

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

The most important prerequisites for growth in population and housing in any area are the presence of high-quality access infrastructure, which permits residents, retailers and industry with the necessary connections to other places in order to operate successfully and sustainably, as well as the presence of employment opportunities, which bring workers and wages into a given area, opening the door to the potential for new residents to purchase residential products in that area. Community services and amenities are of near-equal importance but cannot exist without access infrastructure and economic opportunities.

Considering these general prerequisites for growth, Edgefield County is positioned well to grow, should it so choose. The county's biggest asset that can serve as an engine of future growth is I-20, which intersects with the county providing it with greater locational advantages than many of the other counties in the region. Immediate access to the I-20 corridor positions Edgefield well to absorb both new industrial facilities that can be easily accessed by freight and workers, in addition to new residential developments, which would be well positioned to access jobs both in Edgefield County and in other job cores across the region.

*Source: Google Earth*

Additionally, Edgefield County can enhance its connectivity to the global economy by prioritizing the expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure. Initial efforts should focus on the cities of Edgefield and Johnston, where development is more likely and aligns with the county's planning goals, before extending to outlying areas. By investing in this infrastructure, the county can attract highly educated, high-income remote professionals seeking the charm and quality of life offered by a small-town lifestyle.

The county's success in recent years of attracting industry while avoiding growing in population significantly, while a seemingly functional growth strategy, may not be sustainable long-term due to the infrastructure upgrades that may become necessary to facilitate the movement of workers into the county. Undoubtedly, the deprioritization of housing the county's workforce locally represents a lost opportunity to capture property and sales tax revenues locally.

The cities of Edgefield and Johnston have the opportunity to lead growth within Edgefield County by prioritizing downtown development and events programming, both of which will contribute to creating vibrant, attractive hubs, improving the quality of life and expanding available retail and entertainment options for existing residents, while also showcasing Edgefield County to prospective residents. By enhancing the appeal of their downtown areas through mixed-use developments, improved walkability, and dynamic public spaces, these cities can foster a sense of community and encourage economic activity. Events programming can further support this effort by drawing people into the downtown areas, showcasing local culture, and stimulating local businesses. Together, these initiatives can position Edgefield and Johnston as catalysts for sustainable growth and prosperity across the county.

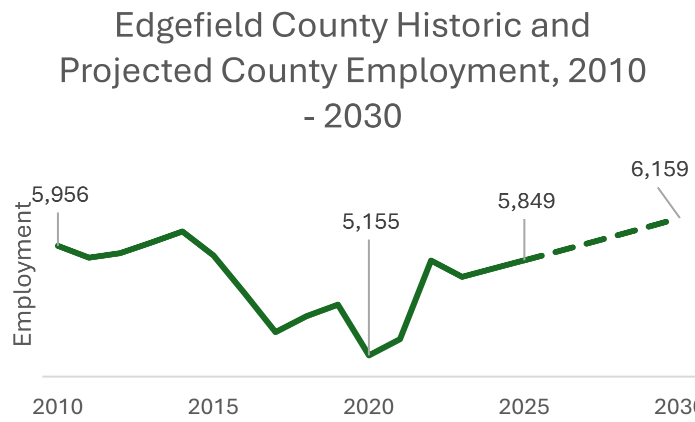
# Economic Drivers – Edgefield County

## Employment by Industry

Edgefield County has a wide mix of employment opportunities, and more of a concentration in manufacturing jobs than the broader Aiken-Augusta region. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the five industries that employed the most workers in Burke County were manufacturing, health care, retail trade, and public administration, and construction.

Large employers provide significant numbers of jobs in each of those industries. For example, the Generac Power Systems facility, the Edgefield Medical Center, and the Trenton Correctional Institute are each employment anchors for the County.

The chart below describes the region's industries according to three different dimensions, the number of employees employed in each sector, the average wage of employees in the sector and the annual rate of growth that each industry experienced between 2018 and 2023. Manufacturing jobs experienced consistent growth due to expansion at the Generac Power Systems facility, while administrative and waste services and retail trade experienced declining job opportunities.



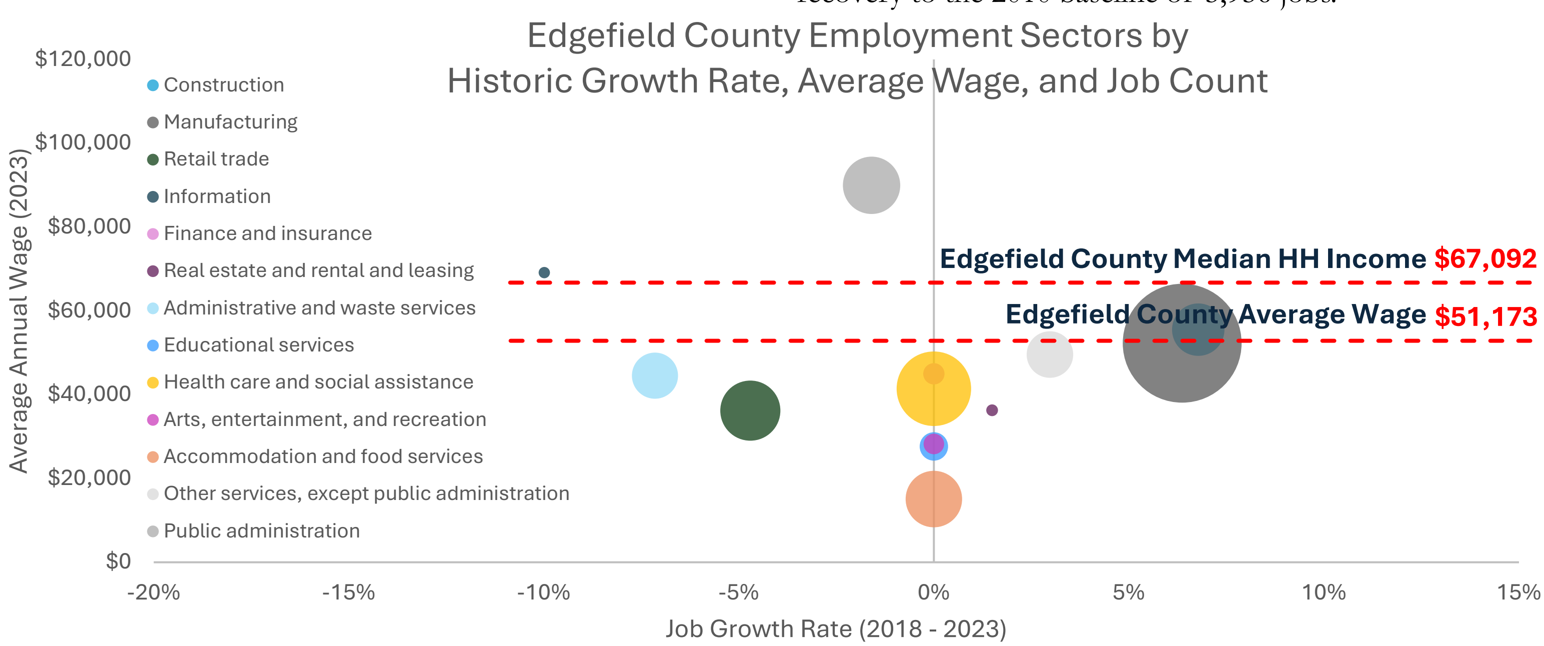

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Overall County Employment

The 2020 Covid pandemic had a strong impact on local employment in Edgefield County. Despite a regional recovery from pandemic job losses, employment has not returned toe pre-pandemic levels.

From November 2023 to December 2024 the average unemployment rate in Edgefield County was 4.1%, above South Carolina's 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.0% and Georgia's comparable rate of 3.3%.

If the Aiken-Augusta region continues to add jobs at the 1% annual rate that it achieved from 2018 to 2023, and if Edgefield County matches that growth rate, the County could expect to add 310 new jobs by 2030. This prediction would mark a full employment recovery to the 2010 baseline of 5,956 jobs.



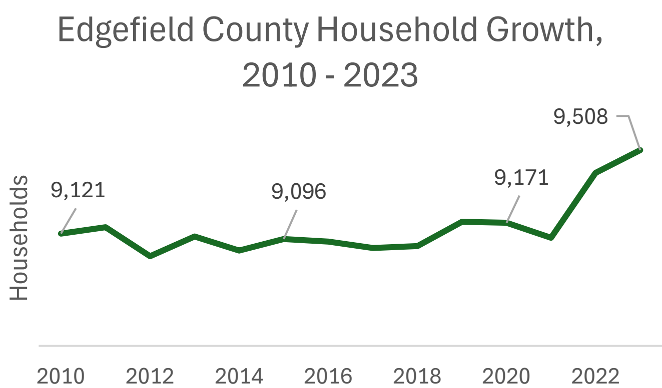

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – Edgefield County

## Household Growth

Edgefield County has recently entered a new shift in population growth. From 2010 to 2021 the population remained relatively flat, then began to grow rapidly. From 2021 to 2023, Edgefield County added 406 households, more growth than in ten previous years combined. The number of households in Edgefield County has increased by 4.2% since 2010, with functionally all of that increase happening post-pandemic.

The county has emerged as a popular housing choice for Aiken County workers. In a survey prepared for this housing study, an overwhelming number of the 69 respondents from Edgefield County reported that they worked in Aiken County.



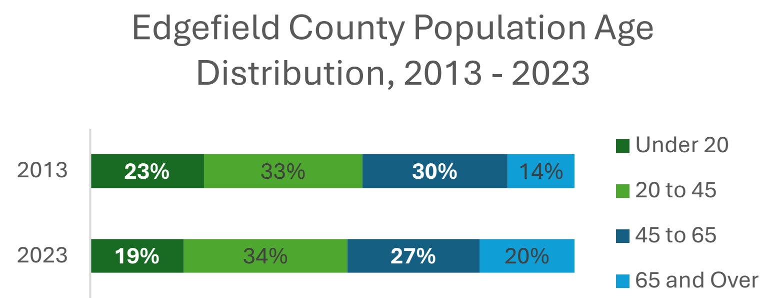

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

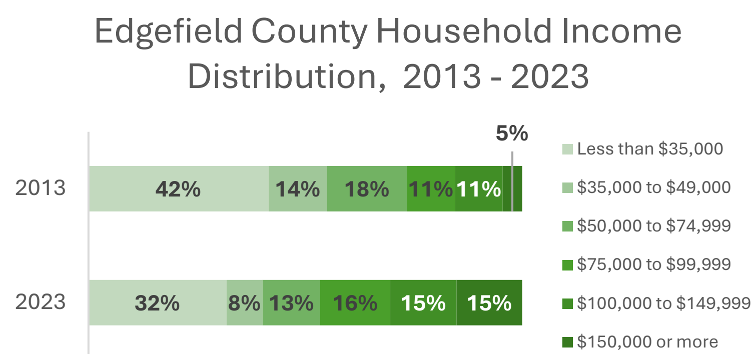
## Age

Edgefield County is slowly aging. Alongside every county in the region, the proportion of Edgefield County residents who are seniors 65 and over increased from 2013 to 2023.

A full 20% of Edgefield County residents are now 65, compared to only 14% in 2023. The increase in the proportion of the population over 65 led to decreases in the population under 20 and the population aged 45 to 65. The population aged 20 to 45 stayed constant as a share of Edgefield County's overall distribution as the amount of people to age out of that bracket remained consistent with the number of people to age into it.

While not yet an overwhelming concern, there may be heightened demand for eldercare services and falling enrollment in schools within the region should this trend continue. A lack of young residents in the region can also have negative effects on the region's manufacturing workforce, with decreasing rates of replacement of workers as they enter retirement.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

**The median annual earnings in Edgefield County, last estimated at $51,173 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2023, has risen by over $10,000 since 2013**.

The rise in median and average annual earnings is shown through a near doubling in the proportion of Edgefield County households reporting six figure or higher annual earnings. In 2013, 16% of households earned $100,000 per year or more. By 2023, that proportion had increased to 30%.

Not only did the high earning segment of Edgefield County increase, the proportion of the population earning less than $50,000 shrunk by almost a quarter. New employment opportunities in Edgefield County and nearby areas have had a positive effect on the county's household income distribution

# Housing Supply – Edgefield County

## Growing Inventory

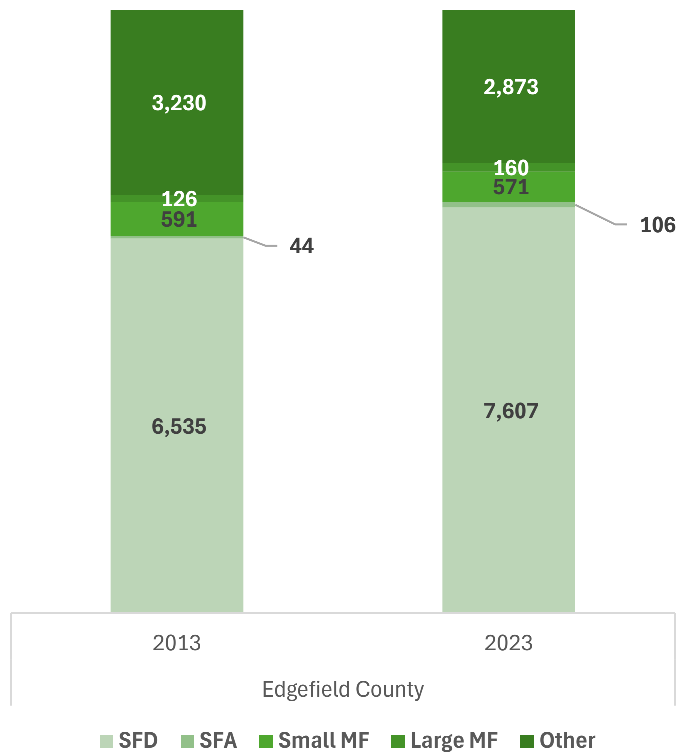
From 2013 to 2023, the total housing stock in Edgefield County grew from 10,526 to 11,317, an increase of 791 units, or 7.5%. This outpaces the 4.2% growth in households over that period.

The recent increase in households and housing units in Edgefield County suggests that the strong growth in Aiken County may be beginning to have spillover effects on their next-door neighbors. Much of this growth has occurred along the county's southern border, occurring north of I-20 Exit 5 and within the City of North Augusta which has recently expanded into Edgefield County.

Edgefield County Total Housing Units, 2013 - 2023


Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

Edgefield County Housing Units by Type, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

Functionally every unit of net new housing added to the Edgefield County's housing inventory since 2013 has been a single family detached home. The net supply of single family detached homes increased by 1,072 from 2013 to 2023, meaning an average construction rate of just over 100 single family detached housing units per year.

Marginal gains in single family attached housing (such as townhomes) and large multifamily developments (such as apartment complexes) were more than offset by the loss of 357 Other units (a category which includes mobile homes).

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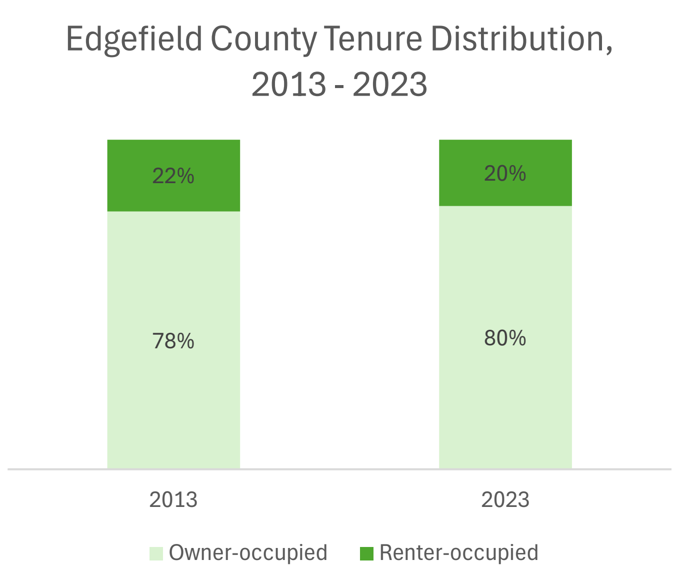
# Housing Supply – Edgefield County

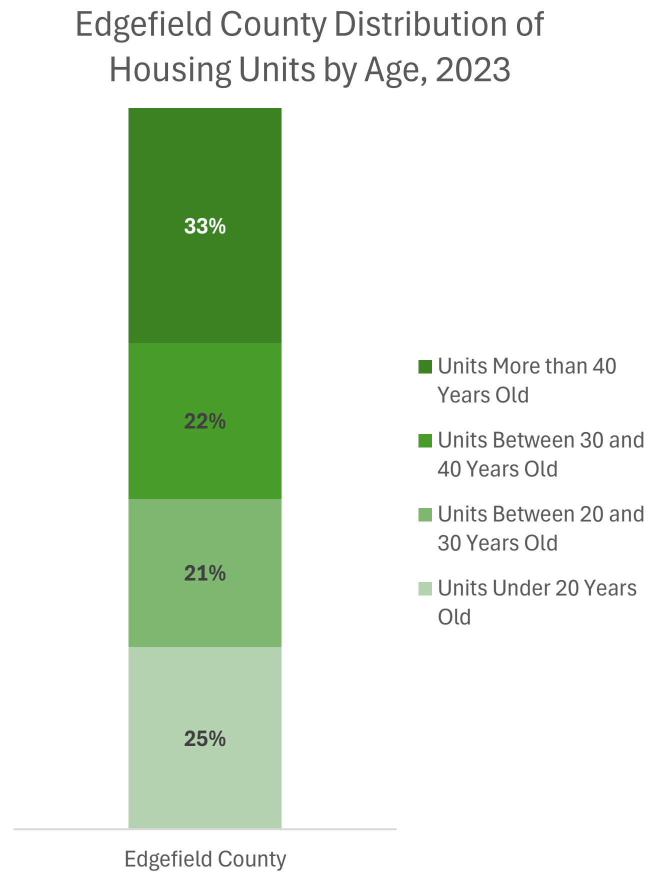
## Tenure

Edgefield County's high homeownership rate of 80%, the highest in the Aiken-Augusta region, reflects its predominantly rural character and the prevalence of single-family housing development. This slight increase from 78% in 2013 suggests a continued trend toward homeownership, which aligns with the county's steady population growth and its appeal to families and retirees seeking affordable housing in a suburban-rural setting. The county's proximity to major employment centers in Aiken, Richmond, and Columbia Counties, combined with its lower cost of living compared to urbanized areas, has likely contributed to sustained demand for owner-occupied housing.

The decline in renter-occupied housing from 22% to 20% over the decade suggests that new housing development in Edgefield County has largely catered to buyers rather than renters. Given that much of the county's growth has taken place in low-density, single-family developments, there may be limited availability of rental options, particularly for workforce residents who are not yet prepared for homeownership. If Edgefield County continues to grow, ensuring a balance of housing options that includes both rental and for-sale housing will be important for supporting a diverse population and meeting the needs of younger workers and those seeking more affordable housing alternatives.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

The age distribution of the age of housing units in Edgefield County closely mirrors the distribution of housing units in the Aiken-Augusta region as a whole. The distribution reflects consistent levels of homebuilding over the last several decades.

While the fact that a quarter of the county's housing units were produced over the last twenty years, which indicates growing market demand and development feasibility, the county still has a significant number of units that are over forty years old or will soon be older than forty years old.

The county should both work to encourage new housing production in the county to expand options and also to replace any units that may be lost to obsolescence. Additionally, creating programs to assist homeowners with renovations and updates to aging housing units can help to keep older units active within the county's inventory.

# Housing Accessibility – Edgefield County

## Rental Market

In the study area, the CoStar estimated average home rent in Edgefield County was $723. This was the second lowest estimated average rent among every county in the study area, above only Barnwell County. According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, potential renters in most single-income and dual-income households would be able to afford rent without spending more than a third of their earnings on rent.

The current relative affordability of an Edgefield County rental may not be sustainable. The limited inventory of homes for sale, the potential of priced-out homebuyers elevating demand in the rental market, and possible spillover demand from nearby counties may put upwards pressure on rents in the coming years. This would dramatically change the affordability picture for Edgefield County residents.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Industry** | **Single-Income Attainable Rent** | **County Average Rent** | **Single-Income Cost Burdened Status** | **Dual-Income Attainable Rent** | **County Average Rent** | **Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status** |
| Construction | $1,149 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,790 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,083 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,687 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $0 | $723 | No Data | $0 | $723 | No Data |
| Retail Trade | $755 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,206 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $1,213 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,151 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $1,254 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,225 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $934 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,495 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $757 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,209 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $925 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,480 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $303 | $723 | Cost Burdened | $535 | $723 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $303 | $723 | Cost Burdened | $534 | $723 | Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $593 | $723 | Cost Burdened | $1,074 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $331 | $723 | Cost Burdened | $582 | $723 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $1,028 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,646 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $629 | $723 | Cost Burdened | $1,140 | $723 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – Edgefield County

## For-Sale Market

The 2023 adjusted median home price in Edgefield County was $308,000. This was the second highest adjusted median home price of any county in the study area, after Columbia County.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics salary data, no average single or dual-income household earning salaries from any of Edgefield County's industries would be able to afford to purchase a home in Edgefield County without being cost burdened – spending more than a third of their income on housing costs. Over the long term, this sounds a warning for housing costs across the county. In 2023, 80% of housing units in Edgefield County were owner-occupied. It is now extremely difficult for an Edgefield County worker to join their ranks.

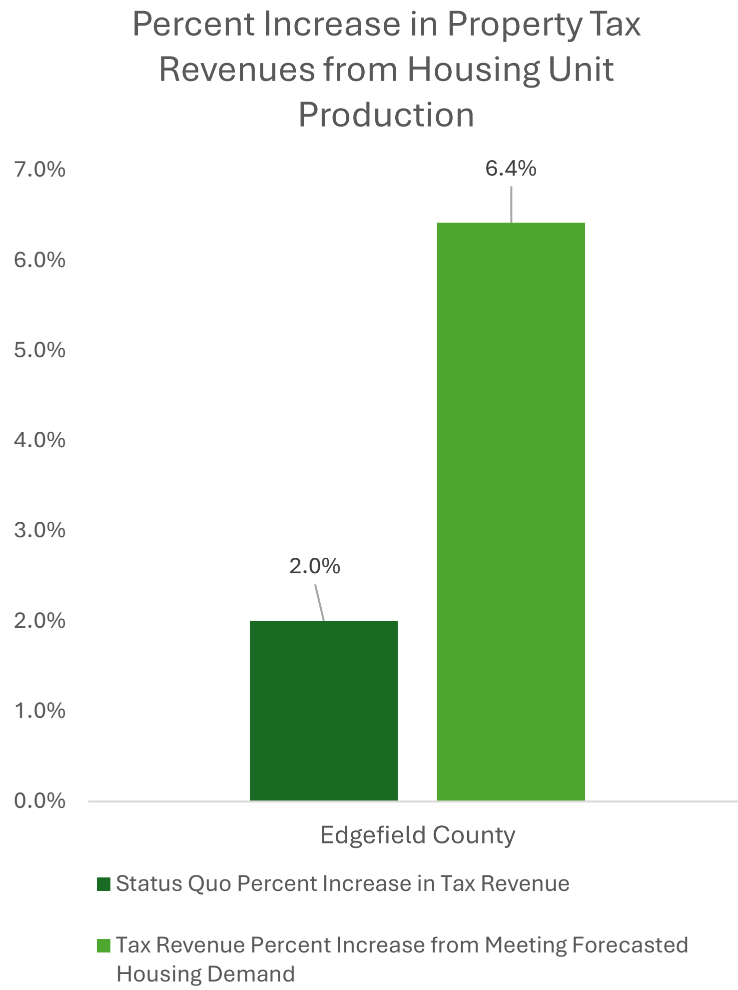
| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Construction | $137,918 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $214,829 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $130,000 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $202,438 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $90,606 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $144,733 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $145,553 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $258,178 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Information | $150,503 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $267,016 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $112,122 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $179,397 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $90,822 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $145,078 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $111,034 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $177,645 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $36,375 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $64,140 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $36,331 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $64,062 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $71,132 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $128,917 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $39,675 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $69,818 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $123,381 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $197,533 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $75,425 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened | $136,794 | $308,000 | Cost Burdened |

# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production
# Edgefield County

The fiscal benefit to Edgefield County derived from meeting market demand as opposed to continuing to deliver housing at historic rates represents a significant percent increase in tax revenues. While delivering at historic rates over the next five years has the potential to increase tax revenues in the county by approximately 2%, by meeting the market, the county has the opportunity to increase tax revenues by more than 6%.

A significant consideration for Edgefield County remains its infrastructure constraints. The delivery of new units in parts of the county that do not currently have the necessary infrastructure to support new residential development could represent a necessary investment on the part of the county, diminishing the fiscal benefits of new housing unit deliveries.

In order to maximize the fiscal benefits of new housing deliveries in the county, Edgefield County should work to encourage new development in areas where infrastructure already exists, namely its established downtown areas, such as downtown Edgefield and Johnston. Such considerations are valuable in the context of the absolute amount of tax revenues added by the additional of new housing units, which are relatively small and may not be sufficient to support infrastructure projects on their own.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Edgefield County | County | $103,287 | $330,651 | $227,363 | **$760,344** |
| | School | $242,124 | $775,105 | $532,981 | |

The absolute fiscal benefits of adding new housing units to the county's inventory, both at status quo levels and at levels that meet market demand are both relatively small due to the scale of housing demand in the county. Because of this, it is equally as important as meeting market demand that the county prioritize development within areas that are already equipped with the infrastructure necessary to absorb new housing units. Developing greenfield sites in the unincorporated portions of the county, while possibly a more attractive proposition for developers, ultimately may require that the county make infrastructure investments that would diminish or erase any fiscal benefit that may be derived from new housing unit production.

Beyond these considerations, there is a clear benefit to meeting market demand for housing as opposed to delivering at historic levels, with an approximate benefit of roughly a quarter of a million dollars in new revenue to the county and more than half a million in new revenue to the county's school district, amounting to a total fiscal benefit of an estimated $760,344.

# Demand & Gap – Edgefield County

## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

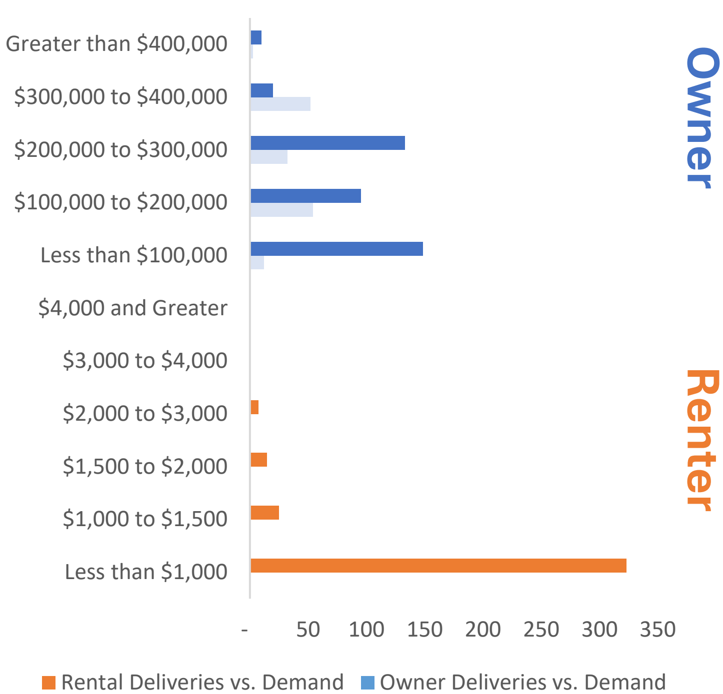
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

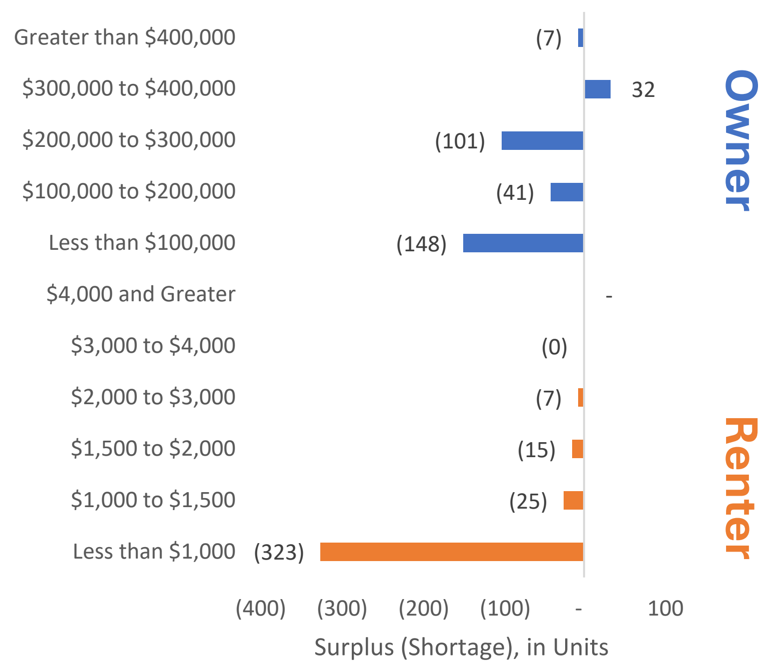
Historically Edgefield County has not been a major absorber of regional housing demand. The last five years of deliveries have been significant in the context of the last several decades in Edgefield County's history.

Much of the growth of the county's housing inventory was spurred on by residential developments north of I-20 Exit 5 and by the expansion of the City of North Augusta into Edgefield County, bringing with it added water and sewer capacity. The county's adjacency to high-growth areas and its location along I-20 have increased demand for housing within the county in recent years and is forecasted to outstrip supply if the county delivers at the same pace that it has over the last half decade.

Edgefield County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




Edgefield County Forecasted Gap




## Forecasted Gap

Increasing demand for housing units within Edgefield County due to the eastward movement of development activity in the region would result in significant gaps between supply and demand should the county continue to deliver housing units at the rate that it has over the past five years.

The county's demand for units that would rent for less than $1,000 monthly represent the most significant segment of demand in the county, largely a factor of relatively low wages across most sectors in the county relative to the region.

Despite the sizable amount of demand that exists for relatively affordable rental units, there is also a significant amount of demand emerging for mid-market for-sale products, particularly products priced at between $100,000 and $300,000. While production in the county remains relatively low, there exists a significant opportunity to capture for-sale demand by offering a discounted alternative to options in Aiken and Columbia by encouraging denser residential development, such as townhomes and duplexes, throughout the county's existing downtown areas.

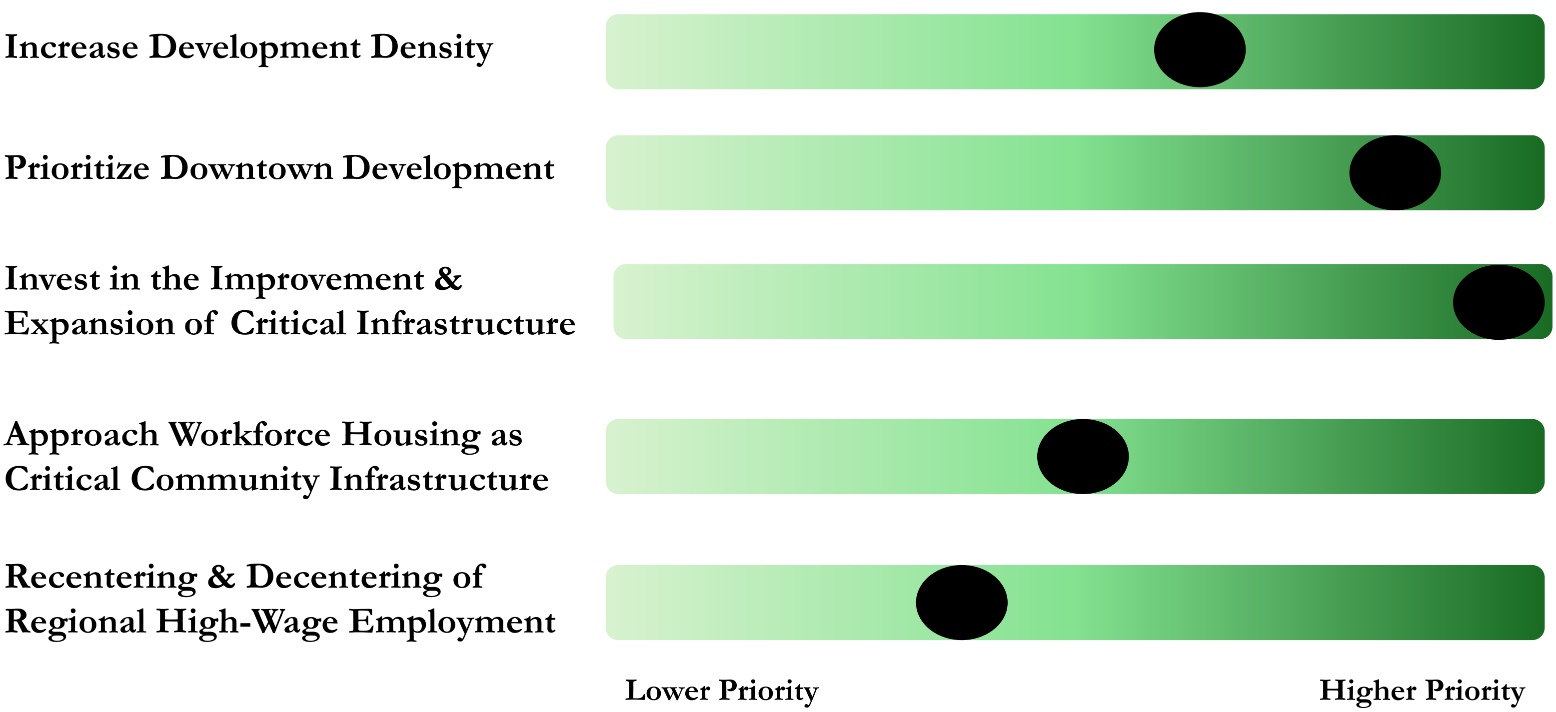
# Strategies & Recommendations – Edgefield County

## Strategic Priorities

Edgefield County's strategic location along I-20 and proximity to major employment hubs positions it as a natural recipient of regional housing demand. **As growth pressures increase in neighboring Columbia, Aiken, and Richmond Counties, Edgefield has the opportunity to expand its housing stock while maintaining its rural charm and small-town appeal. However, the county's ability to fully capitalize on this demand will depend on its capacity to provide critical infrastructure, particularly water and sewer services, to accommodate new development.**

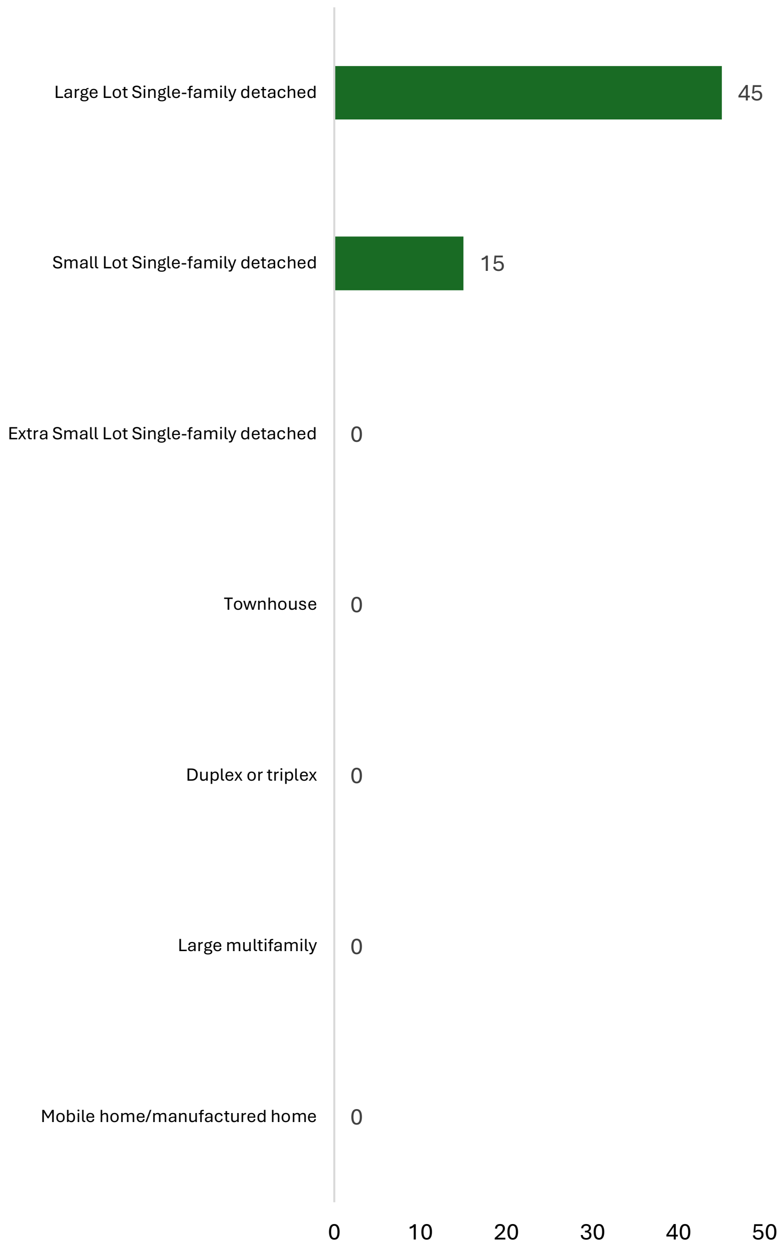
**While large-scale expansion may require substantial infrastructure investment, Edgefield County has a near-term opportunity to direct housing growth into areas that already have sufficient capacity, namely the downtowns of Edgefield and Johnston.** By encouraging infill development and adaptive reuse in these historic cores, the county can facilitate walkable, mixed-use environments that provide new housing while strengthening the local retail and service economy. This approach will not only minimize upfront infrastructure costs but also enhance quality of life by fostering vibrant town centers with access to shops, dining, and cultural amenities.

**To further support housing expansion, Edgefield County should actively explore funding opportunities, public-private partnerships, and regulatory adjustments that facilitate sustainable residential growth. Expanding infrastructure in strategically selected areas along key transportation corridors will ensure that future development aligns with both regional demand and the county's long-term economic goals.** By leveraging its advantageous location, existing infrastructure, and small-town appeal, Edgefield County can position itself as an attractive alternative for residents seeking affordability and connectivity within the greater Aiken-Augusta region.



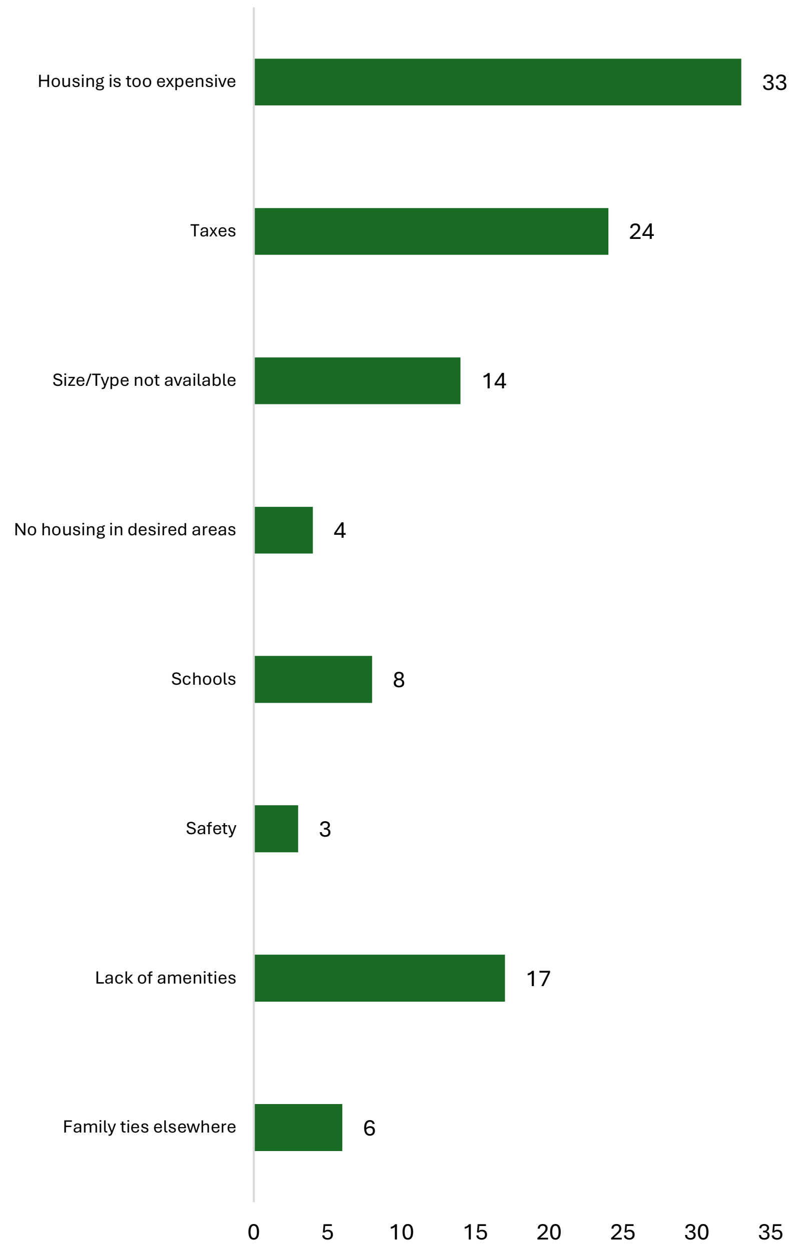
# Survey Findings – Edgefield County

Housing Type Preferences




Edgefield County respondents identified large-lot single-family detached products as their most preferred housing type, with small-lot single-family detached following as a close second. Single-family options were the only options chosen by Edgefield County respondents, reflecting the county's exurban character and the space that comes with the exurban lifestyle of the county.

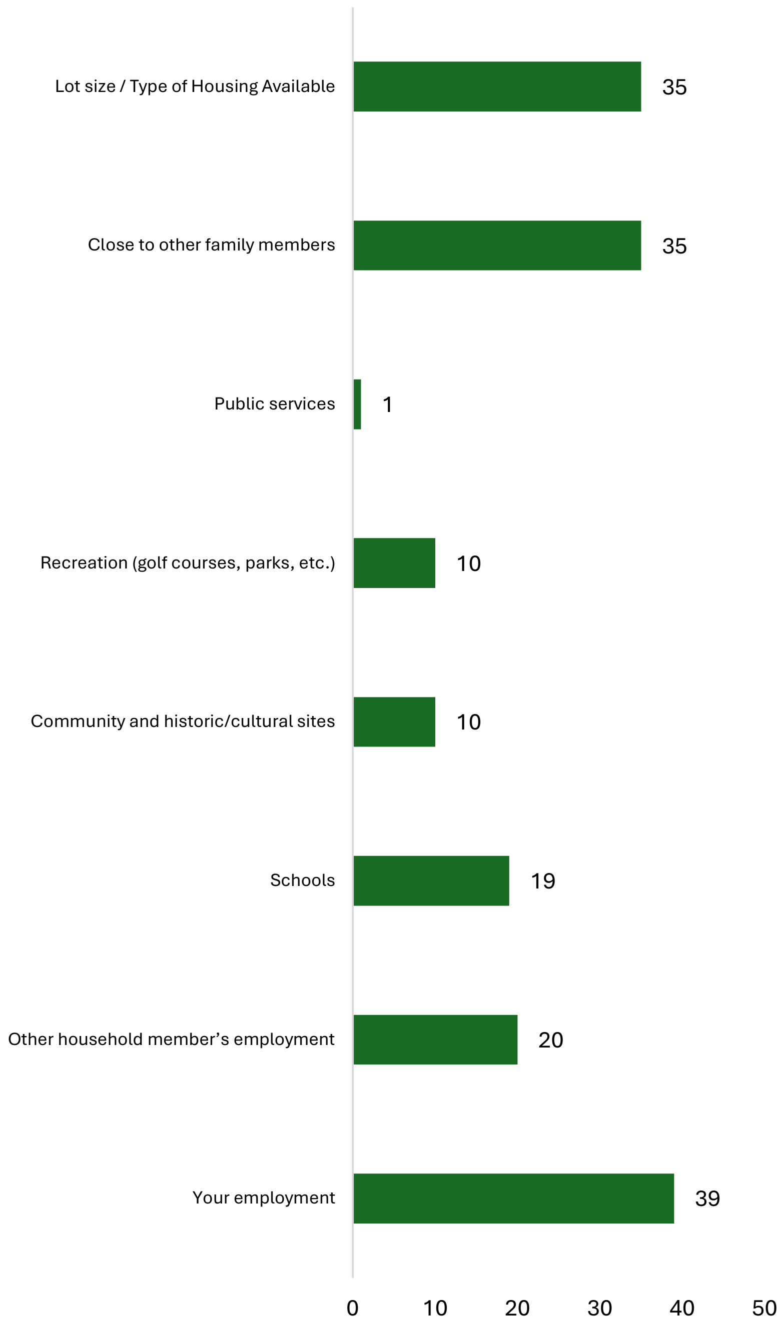
Obstacles to Choosing Where to Live




Edgefield County residents identified housing costs and taxes as the most significant barriers that they face to choosing where they live. Closely behind these obstacles were a lack of amenities and lot size or housing type not being available. These responses suggest that Edgefield County residents may have a preference for more amenity-rich communities in the region, and that the lack of amenities throughout Edgefield County restrict where those seeking to rent or buy a home may consider desirable to a more limited set of locations within the county.

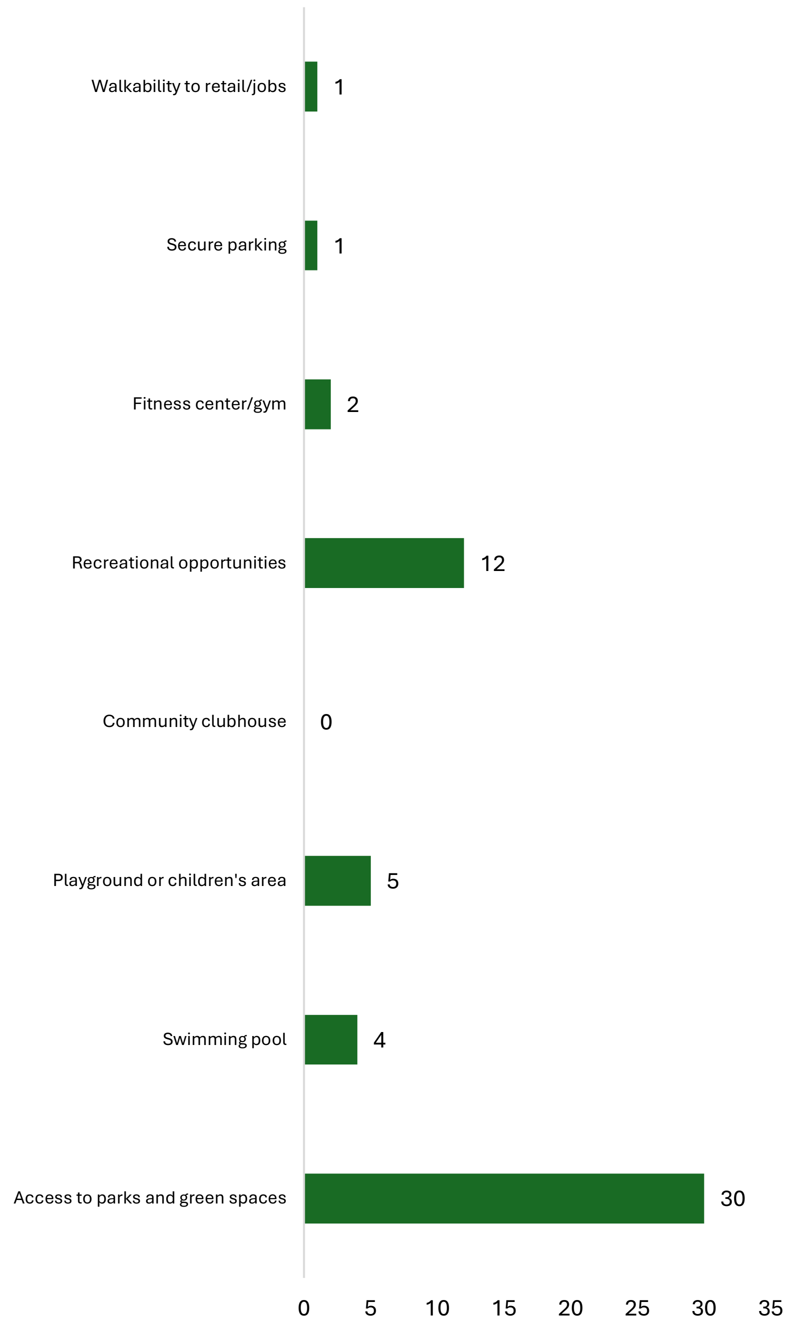
# Survey Findings – Edgefield County

Reasons for Living Where They Do




Edgefield County respondents identified employment, proximity to family and lot size or type of housing as the primary reasons for why they live where they do. This suggests an even balance between residents who would live in Edgefield County regardless of their employment with those who have chosen to live in Edgefield County because of its price advantage and proximity to job centers throughout the region.

Most Valued Community Amenities




Edgefield County respondents consistently identified access to parks and green space as their most valued community amenity. Other popular responses were recreational opportunities, secure parking and playgrounds or children's areas. All of these responses point to an affinity by county residents for outdoor recreation and the opportunities provided to engage in outdoor recreation within Edgefield County.

# McDuffie County

# McDuffie County

## Market Profile

- Needed improvements to water and infrastructure
- Strategically located to absorb economic and population growth from Columbia, Aiken and Richmond

## Housing Needs

### Total Five-Year Gap: 356 Units

**In the chart to the right:**

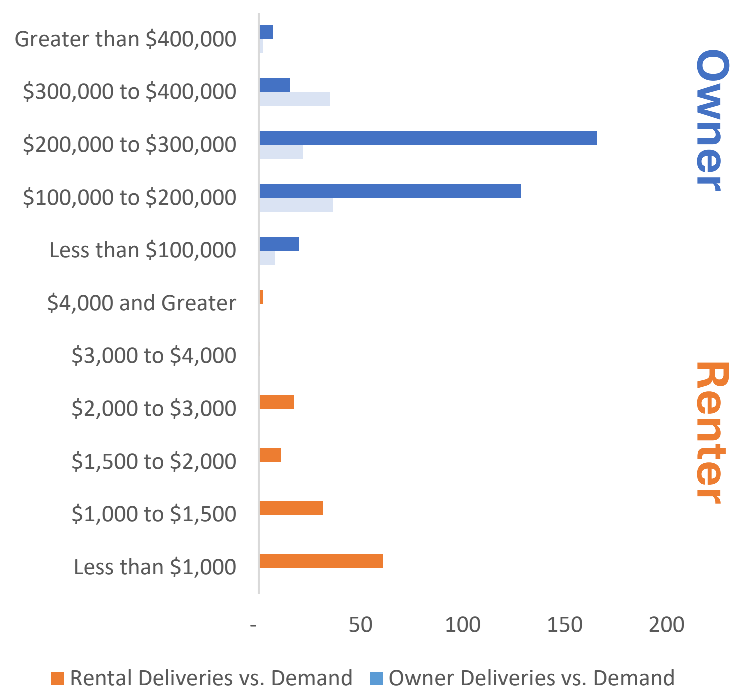
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**Entry level for-sale options AND Greater product diversity for mid-market for-sale options**

**Affordable workforce rentals AND Mid-market rental options in amenity-rich locations with existing infrastructure**

### Total Five-Year Demand: 459 Units

McDuffie County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

## Implementable Strategies

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
2. Apply for federal and state grants in order to leverage available state and federal funding for water and sewer expansion
3. Promote safety and attractiveness in downtown through events programming.
4. Unlock the potential of publicly owned land to address local housing needs by determining which parcels might be contributed towards private-led housing projects with affordable components.
5. Develop and adopt a residential “Pre-Approval Catalog”

**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Rezone or create overlays to allow for higher-density residential development near job centers, along commercial corridors and where existing infrastructure is already sufficient to support higher densities.
2. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
3. Generate consistent local revenue to support investments in transportation, water and sewer projects through the creation of special tax districts like TADs/TIFs, SSDs and CIDs
4. Leverage Tax Allocation Districts (TAD) or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support redevelopment of underperforming downtown areas to include more housing.

# McDuffie County

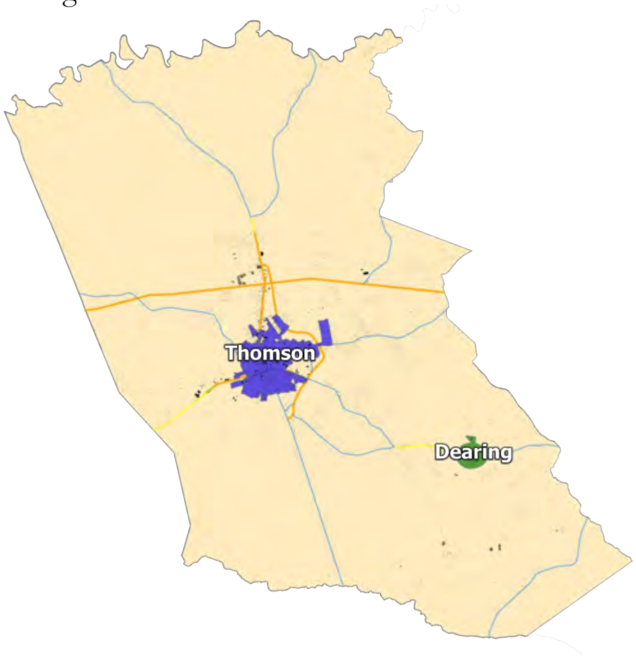
## Overview

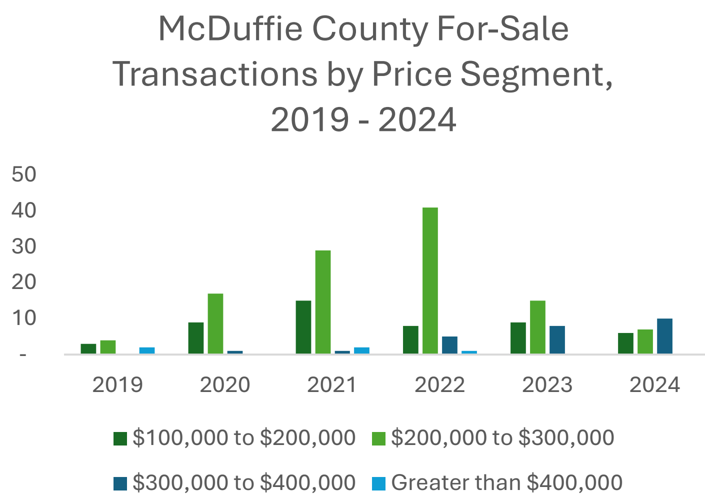
McDuffie County, Georgia, is located west of Augusta along I-20, which bisects the county. It is home to several communities, including Thomson, the county seat, and one other incorporated municipality, Dearing. Historically, McDuffie County has been characterized as a rural community, but the region's growth has brought about something of an identity crisis in recent years.

While much of the county remains defined by its small-town and rural character, it has also begun to function as a bedroom community, with an increasing number of residents commuting to employment opportunities in the region's core.

## McDuffie County Housing Today

Household growth in McDuffie County has ebbed and flowed over the past decade, technically experiencing a loss of 71 households between 2012 and 2022, a figure which obscures a more nuanced growth narrative within the county in which household growth was declining between 2012 and 2016, after which point significant growth occurred once again, adding roughly 145 households since 2016. The growth in households that has occurred since 2016 has been matched by an increase in housing units, with an increase of 166 housing units between 2016 and 2022.




Source: KB Advisory, SmartRE

The majority of the housing unit growth that has occurred within the county over the last decade has consisted of the addition of "Other" housing units, which are classified as mobile and manufactured homes. The for-sale products that have delivered over the past five years have had relatively consistent pricing, averaging around the mid-$200,000s. Rental products within the county consist largely of older single-family homes, with older garden style, government subsidized housing representing most existing multifamily products in the county. In the past few years, investments in housing have been made in downtown Thomson, where adaptive reuse projects have converted older commercial buildings into four apartments each renting for around $1,200 per month. There is additional interest in adaptive reuse projects in downtown Thomson, which will require creative capital stacks to bring to fruition.

While McDuffie County has seen some recent housing growth, the relationship between housing and economic development remains a challenge. The county has struggled to provide a diverse mix of housing that aligns with the needs of both its existing workforce and prospective employers. While new single-family homes have been delivered at relatively stable price points, the lack of mid-market and upper-market housing options has made it difficult to attract professionals and executives who might otherwise choose to live in the county. At the same time, industries considering investment in McDuffie County

# McDuffie County Overview

have expressed concerns about the limited availability of rental housing, particularly for employees who may not be ready to purchase a home. Without a wider range of housing choices, the county risks missing out on economic development opportunities as businesses opt for locations with stronger housing ecosystems.

The county's limited housing variety also affects its ability to retain upwardly mobile residents. Many skilled workers who grow up in McDuffie County or move there early in their careers find themselves looking elsewhere for both job opportunities and housing that better suits their needs. This cycle, where residents leave to find higher-paying jobs and more desirable housing in nearby counties, creates economic leakage, weakening the local economy and reducing the tax base. Addressing these challenges will require a more intentional approach to housing development, one that not only meets current demand but also positions McDuffie County as a place where residents and businesses can grow and thrive over the long term.

## Barriers & Challenges

McDuffie County has sufficient water and sewer capacity to support future growth, but how that capacity is allocated will depend on broader decisions about the county's identity and role within the region. Industrial development is a growing priority, and while it brings economic benefits, it also consumes

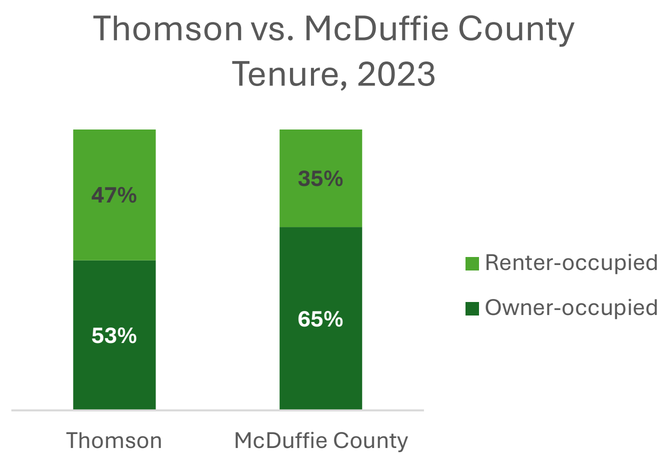

infrastructure capacity that could otherwise support new residential development. If industrial expansion continues to be prioritized without a corresponding plan for residential growth, the county may find itself with limited ability to accommodate new housing, potentially constraining population growth and workforce retention. Striking a balance between industrial and residential development will be critical in shaping the county's long-term trajectory.

McDuffie County leaders have expressed a strong desire to ensure that new housing developments reflect high-quality construction, rather than the mass-graded, cookie-cutter subdivisions typical of national builders. County officials believe that lower-quality, inexpensive housing that requires substantial renovations within a decade is not a true commitment to affordability. While this perspective is admirable, as it prioritizes housing attainability over the long term, it also presents a challenge: builders are unable to significantly reduce home prices in McDuffie County compared to what they would charge for similar homes in Columbia County. However, unlike Columbia County, McDuffie lacks the extensive amenities, services, and school reputation that justify higher home prices for buyers. Without a strategy to enhance local amenities and create value beyond price, McDuffie County may struggle to attract homebuyers willing to pay for quality construction in a market with fewer lifestyle advantages.

# McDuffie County Overview

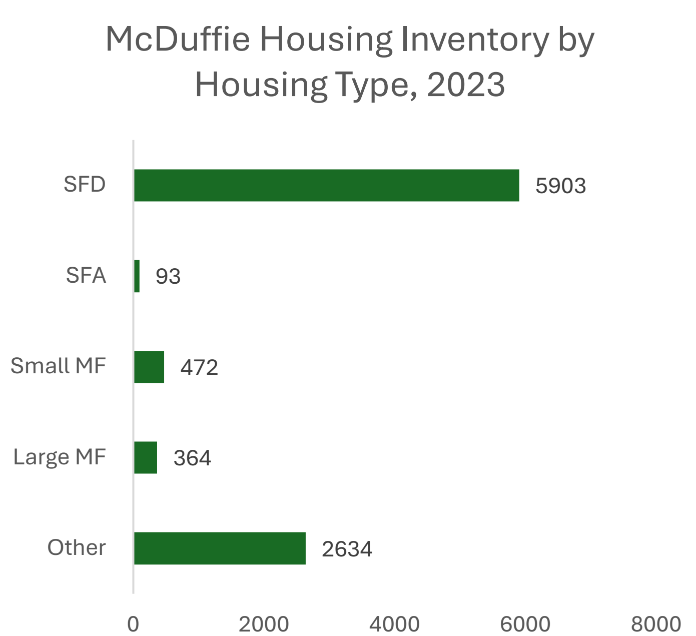
Prospective industries looking to locate in McDuffie County have expressed a desire to see more activity in downtown Thomson and more amenities for employees. Currently, the consensus is that there is a lack of things to do in Thomson and McDuffie County as a whole, making it a less attractive residential location compared to other counties in the region. This lack of amenities not only impacts the county's ability to attract skilled workers but also discourages young professionals and families from settling in the area. Without a more vibrant downtown, recreational options, or cultural attractions, McDuffie County risks losing both talent and investment to neighboring communities with stronger placemaking efforts.

McDuffie County has lost out on industrial opportunities due to a lack of diverse housing options, particularly in the mid-market and upper-market segments. While affordable housing is critical, industrial employers also look for communities that offer housing choices for a range of employees, from entry-level workers to management and executives. Without enough move-up housing options, prospective employers may hesitate to invest in McDuffie County, knowing that their workforce will struggle to find appropriate housing within the community. Expanding housing variety, especially in areas with access to jobs and services, will be essential in making McDuffie County more competitive in attracting new industries.




Within the city of Thomson, rental units account for nearly half of all housing, a significantly higher proportion than in the surrounding county, where owner-occupied units dominate. This imbalance has contributed to a stagnation in renovations of older homes in Thomson, as rental-heavy neighborhoods often see less reinvestment compared to areas with higher ownership rates. When older homes do come on the market, their lack of upkeep, combined with the hidden costs of necessary renovations, makes them less attractive to potential buyers. As a result, much of the housing stock in Thomson remains in a cycle of disrepair, preventing the city from benefiting from reinvestment that could help revitalize neighborhoods and attract new residents.

Despite the county's shortage of mid-market and upper-market housing, many long-time residents are already facing price pressures, with some being priced out of the market. At the same time, many McDuffie County residents who are qualified for higher-earning positions must look beyond the county to find jobs that match their skills and provide competitive wages. This dynamic creates a cycle in which the county struggles to retain upwardly mobile residents, limiting its ability to build a more diverse and economically resilient population. Ensuring that residents have access to a range of housing options and local job opportunities will be crucial for McDuffie County's long-term stability and growth.




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2023

# McDuffie County Overview

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

The most important prerequisites for growth in population and housing in any area are the presence of high-quality access infrastructure, which permits residents, retailers and industry with the necessary connections to other places in order to operate successfully and sustainably, as well as the presence of employment opportunities, which bring workers and wages into a given area, opening the door to the potential for new residents to purchase residential products in that area. Community services and amenities are of near-equal importance but cannot exist without access infrastructure and economic opportunities.


Considering these general prerequisites for growth, McDuffie County is positioned well to grow both its residential and industrial base. One of the county's biggest assets that can serve as an engine of future growth is I-20, which bisects with the county providing it with greater locational advantages than many of the other counties in the region. Immediate access to the I-20 corridor positions McDuffie County well to absorb both new industrial facilities that can be easily accessed by freight and workers, in addition to new residential developments, which would be well positioned to access jobs both in McDuffie County and in other job cores across the region.


*Map above comes from the Fort Gordon (Fort Gordon) Regional Growth Management Plan 2022. The map shows the base's plans to create a new gate that would provide greater access from McDuffie County*

Additionally, McDuffie County can enhance its connectivity to the global economy by prioritizing its expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure. Initial efforts should focus on the city of Thomson, where development is more likely and aligns with the county's planning goals, before extending to outlying areas. By investing in this infrastructure, the county can attract highly educated, high-income remote professionals seeking the charm and quality of life offered by a small-town lifestyle. McDuffie County is particularly well positioned to attract cyber security sector workers employed at Fort Gordon, as plans to improve access to the base from McDuffie County are set to occur over the next several years.

The city of Thomson can lead growth within McDuffie County by prioritizing downtown development and events programming, both of which will contribute to creating vibrant, attractive hubs, improving the quality of life and expanding available retail and entertainment options for existing residents, while also showcasing McDuffie County to prospective residents. By enhancing the appeal of their downtown areas through mixed-use developments, improved walkability, and dynamic public spaces, these cities can foster a sense of community and encourage economic activity. The city and county may have to play an active role in utilizing the stick and carrot respectively by using code enforcement and renovation grants and other funding opportunities to disincentivize some of the inertia that is currently burdening downtown Thomson. Events programming can further support this effort by drawing people into the downtown areas, showcasing local culture, and stimulating local businesses. Together, these initiatives can position Thomson as a catalysts for sustainable growth and prosperity across the county.

While some have begun to describe McDuffie County as a bedroom community within the context of the Aiken-Augusta region, the county should not limit itself to identifying with this somewhat dated conception of community identity. Though I-20 may be thought of as the county's greatest asset because of the access it provides to McDuffie County industry and residents seeking opportunities elsewhere, the most vital assets that McDuffie County must leverage and improve in the years to come are those within its own borders.


*Public art and reactivation of commercial properties in downtown Madison, Georgia*


Communities often struggle to balance opportunity and preservation

True, sustainable growth will not come solely from ease of access to jobs and amenities in other parts of the region, but from strengthening McDuffie County itself as a place where people want to live, work, and invest. This means prioritizing improvements to community amenities, expanding recreational and cultural offerings, and ensuring that local services meet the needs of a growing population. Additionally, assisting homeowners and downtown property owners with renovations—through grants, targeted incentives, and economic development tools such as Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)—can help revitalize aging housing stock and commercial spaces, fostering a more vibrant and attractive local environment. By focusing on internal investment and placemaking, McDuffie County can cultivate a stronger identity and economic foundation, ensuring that its growth is not merely a byproduct of regional expansion but a reflection of its own long-term vision and ambition.

# Economic Drivers – McDuffie County

## Employment by Industry

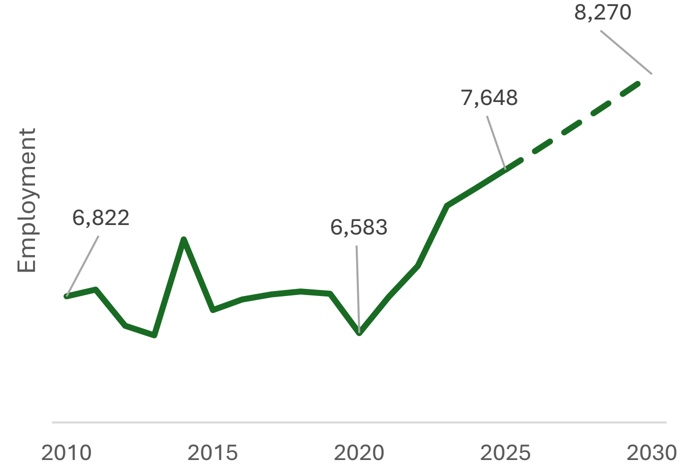
McDuffie County's employment base covers a wider variety of industries. Manufacturing and retail trade are major industries across the Aiken-Augusta region, including in McDuffie County. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the five industries that employed the most workers in McDuffie County were manufacturing, retail trade, educational services, public administration, and transportation and warehousing.

The chart below describes the region's industries according to three different dimensions, the number of employees employed in each sector, the average wage of employees in the sector and the annual rate of growth that each industry experienced between 2018 and 2023. Consistent new manufacturing jobs have offset decreases in the construction, education, and insurance industries.

## Overall County Employment

Local employment in McDuffie County has experienced strong growth since the 2020 Covid pandemic. 2024 employment exceeded pandemic lows by over 1,000 jobs, showing 16% growth since the depths of the pandemic.

McDuffie County Historic and Projected County Employment, 2010 - 2030

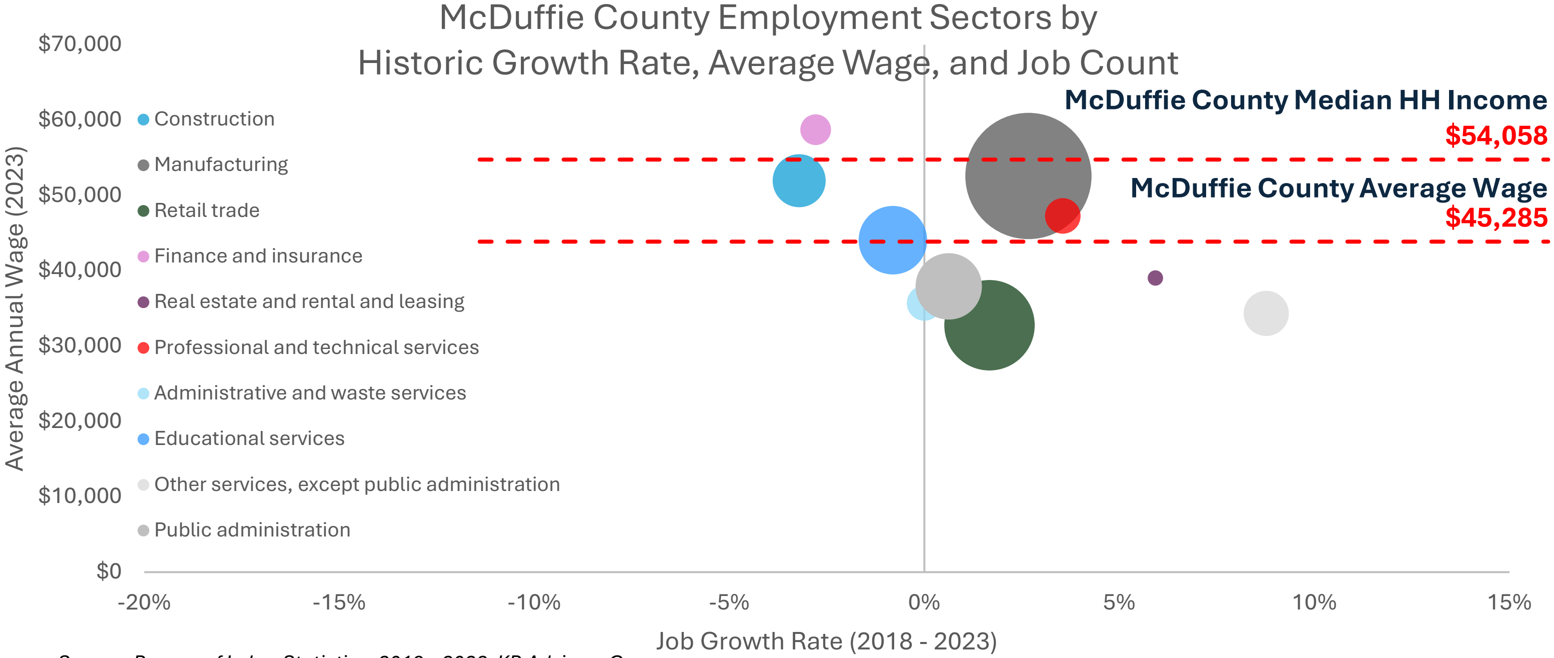



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

From November 2023 to December 2024 the average unemployment rate in McDuffie County was 5.3%, above South Carolina's 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.0% and Georgia's comparable rate of 3.3%.

If the Aiken-Augusta region continues to add jobs at the 1% annual rate that it achieved from 2018 to 2023, and if McDuffie County matches that growth rate, the County could expect to add 623 new jobs by 2030.

McDuffie County Employment Sectors by Historic Growth Rate, Average Wage, and Job Count



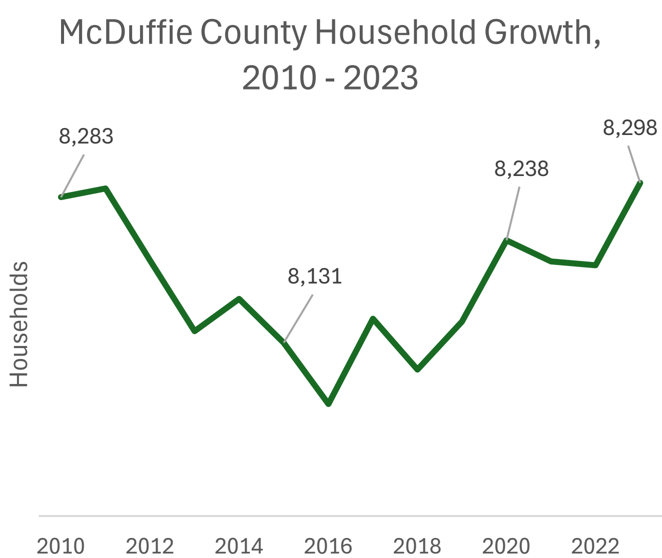

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – McDuffie County

## Household Growth

The population of McDuffie County has remained stable over the last decade. The county has experienced neither the pandemic era population exodus or post-pandemic era population return that has been observed in other counties across the region. From 2010 to 2023, there was a net increase of only 15 households. While McDuffie County did not shrink over the past decade, like Allendale and Barnwell Counties, it had the least amount of growth out of the other counties in the Aiken-Augusta region.

However, given the recent increase in the number of employment opportunities available in McDuffie County, it is possible that more people move to McDuffie County to pursue careers.

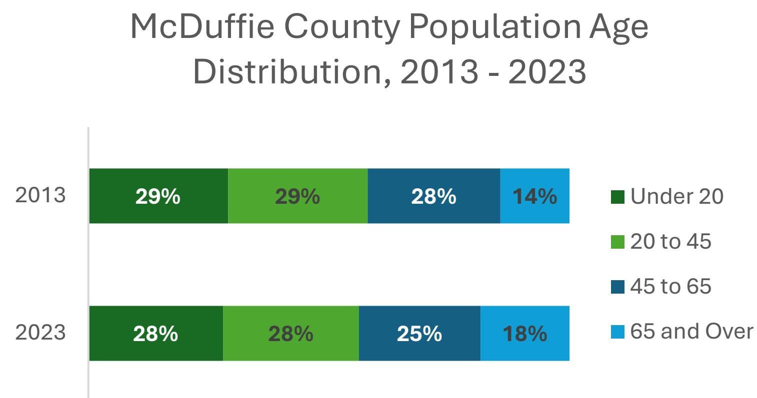


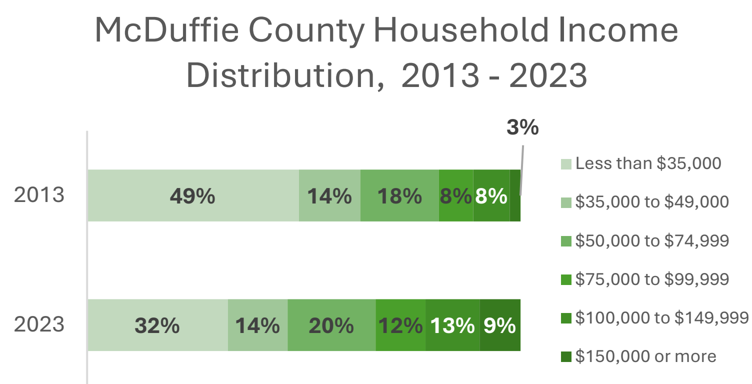

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Age

The age distribution of McDuffie County stayed constant from 2013-2023. The county is aging, experiencing a slight increase in the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, corresponding to a slight decrease in the population aged 45 to 65. This is consistent with every county in the region, although the aging is less pronounced than in some other counties.

In particular, McDuffie County has a slightly larger share of its population under the age of 20 than any other region. This may provide additional workforce to offset retiring workers than other counties would be able to match.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

The income distribution of McDuffie County has begun to improve over the last decade, alongside average income. 49% of households in McDuffie County earned less than $35,000 in 2013, which decreased to 32% of household in 2023.

Conversely, the higher income population has increased over the same period. Approximate 1 in 5, or 22%, of McDuffie County households earned at least six figures in 2023. Although much the region's growth in higher income households occurred in Columbia and Aiken Counties, McDuffie did participate in gaining more higher income households as well. Median income grew from $37,487 to $54,058.

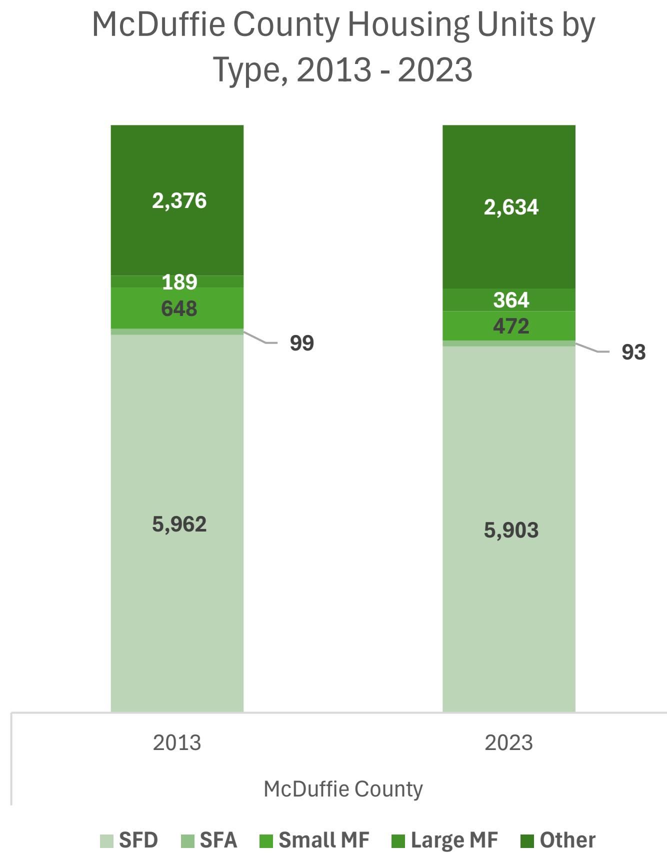
# Housing Supply – McDuffie County

## Growing Inventory

From 2013 to 2023, the total housing stock in McDuffie County remained stable. Net housing increased by 192 units, or 2%. Having a largely unchanged housing inventory matches the small change in the county's population over the same window.

The relative stability of households and housing units in McDuffie stands apart from the growth in neighboring Columbia County. In the future there may be spillover effects into McDuffie County from that growth.


Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

Functionally every unit of net new housing added to McDuffie County's housing inventory since 2013 has been in the 'Other' category, which includes mobile and manufactured homes. This category has grown by 258 units since 2013.

Meanwhile, the number of single family detached units in McDuffie County has experienced a slight decline of about 1% over the last decade, in stark contrast to the high level of new construction in Columbia County. 175 new units in large multifamily developments have been offset by the loss of 176 units in small multifamily developments.

McDuffie County's housing inventory is similar to the makeup of the large Aiken-Augusta region. In McDuffie County, 62% of the inventory is composed of single family detached homes, compared to 66% of the housing inventory for the wider region.

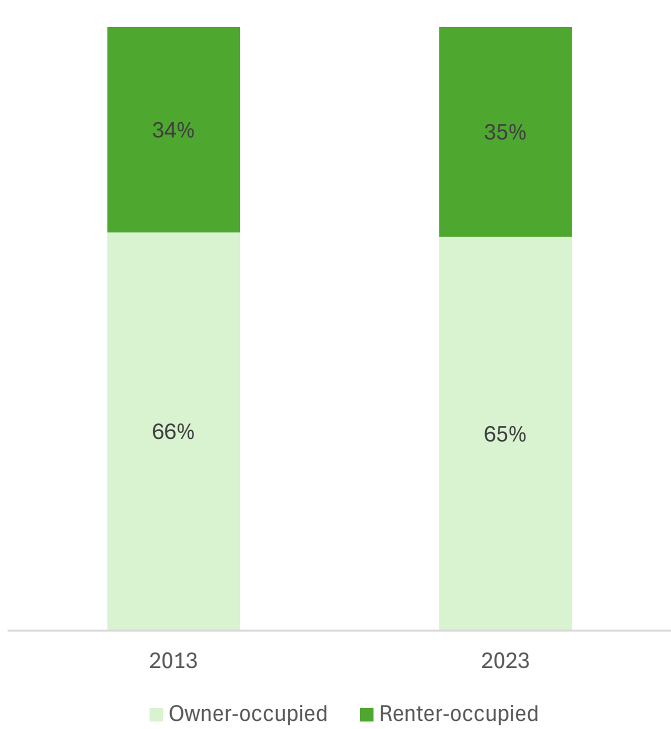
# Housing Supply – McDuffie County

## Tenure

McDuffie County has one of the highest rates of renter occupied housing in the region, 35%, tied with Allendale County and lower only than Augusta-Richmond County. Rentership is much more concentrated within the city limits of Thomson than in the unincorporated portions of the county, largely due to the presence of older, unrenovated homes, which are often rented out by legacy property owners.

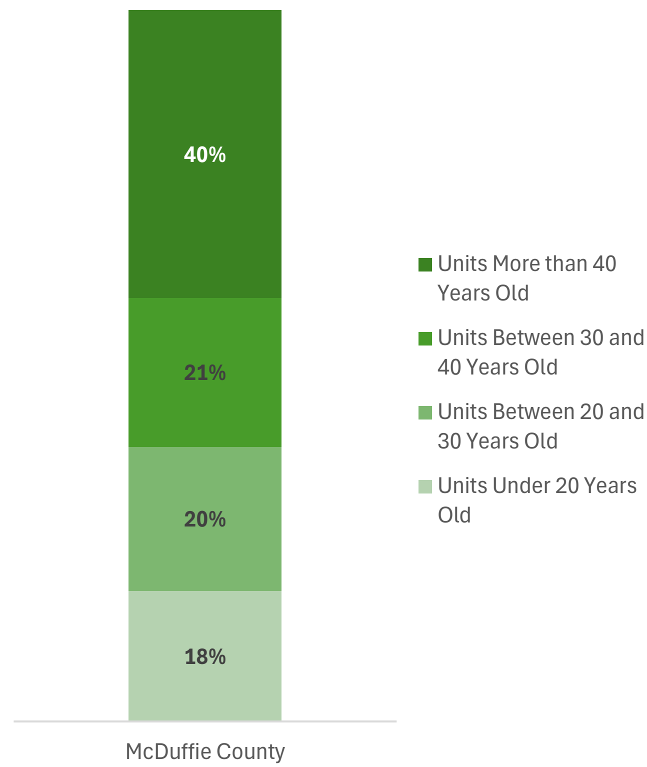
Despite its high share of renters, homeownership remains the dominant tenure type, accounting for 65% of households. The slight decline in the homeownership rate over the decade suggests that more households are opting to rent, possibly due to barriers to entry in the for-sale housing market, including rising home prices, limited new housing construction, or changing financial circumstances among residents. If McDuffie County continues to experience regional spillover growth, ensuring an adequate supply of both rental and for-sale housing will be key to maintaining affordability and meeting the needs of a diverse population.

McDuffie County Tenure Distribution, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2023

McDuffie County Distribution of Housing Units by Age, 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

The age distribution of the age of housing units in McDuffie County closely mirrors the distribution of housing units in the Aiken-Augusta region as a whole. The distribution reflects consistent levels of homebuilding over the last several decades.

While the fact that a fifth of the county's housing units were produced over the last twenty years, which indicates growing market demand and development feasibility, the county still has a significant number of units that are over forty years old or will soon be older than forty years old.

The county should both work to encourage new housing production in the county to expand options and also to replace any units that may be lost to obsolescence. Additionally, creating programs to assist homeowners with renovations and updates to aging housing units can help to keep older units active within the county's inventory.

# Housing Accessibility – McDuffie County

## Rental Market

In the study area, the CoStar estimated average home rent in McDuffie County was $934. This was in the middle of the eight counties in the Aiken-Augusta region. Columbia, Aiken, and Richmond counties had higher average rents, while Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, and Edgefield had lower average rents.

According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, potential renters in dual-income households earning salaries in most McDuffie County industries would be able to afford rent without spending more than a third of their earnings. The same cannot be said, however, for single-income households with jobs in most McDuffie County industries.

Over the long term, the combination of low supply and a challenging homebuying environment may put upwards pressure on rents and change the affordability calculation for McDuffie County workers.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Construction | $1,013 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,860 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,025 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,883 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $721 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,324 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $1,010 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened | $1,854 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $616 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,130 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $1,145 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,102 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $859 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,577 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $922 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,910 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $786 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,442 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $485 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $890 | $934 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $580 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,065 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $756 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,387 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $834 | $934 | Cost Burdened | $1,532 | $934 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – McDuffie County

## For-Sale Market

The 2023 adjusted median home price in McDuffie County was $214,450. This was in the middle of the eight counties in the Aiken-Augusta region. Columbia, Aiken, and Edgefield counties had higher adjusted median home prices, while Allendale, Barnwell, Burke, and Richmond counties had lower average rents.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics salary data, no average single income household earning a salary from any of McDuffie County's industries would be able to purchase a home in the county without being cost burdened, defined as spending less than a third of their income on housing costs. This difficulty extends to earners in many dual-income households as well except for those with two incomes in the finance, insurance, and professional services sectors.

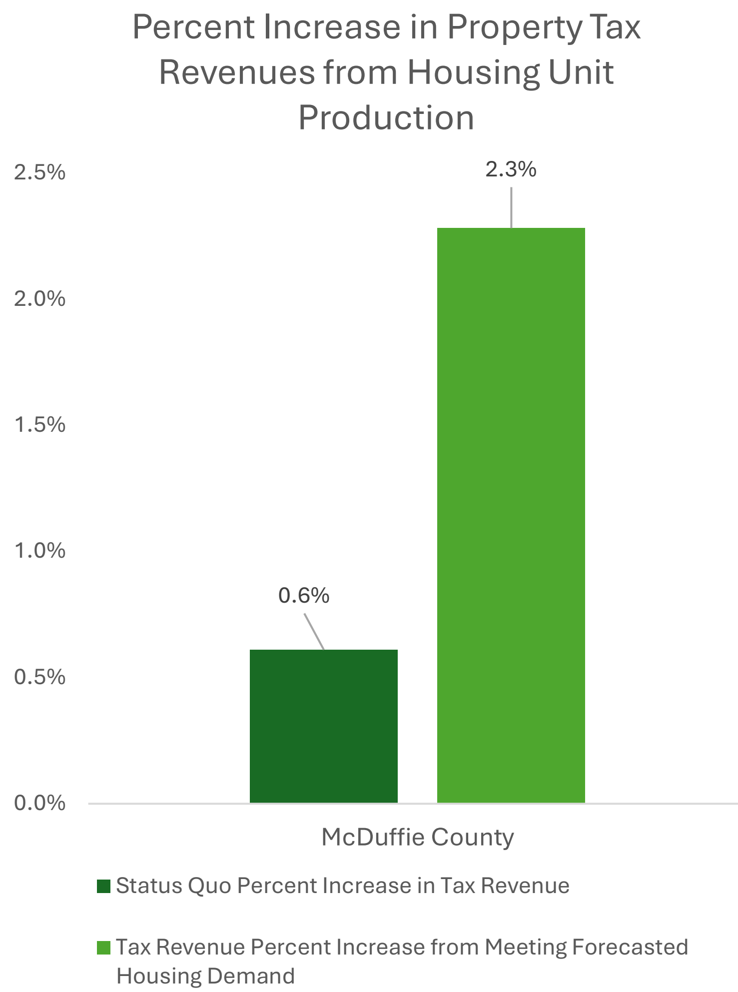
| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Construction | $121,572 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $223,207 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $123,042 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $225,905 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $86,515 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $158,842 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $121,158 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $222,446 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Information | $73,875 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $135,635 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $137,417 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $252,297 | $214,450 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $103,068 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $189,233 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $110,638 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $229,173 | $214,450 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $94,264 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $173,068 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $58,159 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $106,780 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $69,576 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $127,741 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $90,666 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $166,462 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $100,133 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened | $183,843 | $214,450 | Cost Burdened |

# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production McDuffie County

The fiscal benefit to McDuffie County derived from meeting market demand as opposed to continuing to deliver housing at historic rates represents a significant percent increase in tax revenues. While delivering at historic rates over the next five years has the potential to increase tax revenues in the county by approximately .6%, by meeting the market, the county has the opportunity to increase tax revenues by more than 2.3%.

A significant consideration for McDuffie County remains its infrastructure constraints. The delivery of new units in parts of the county that do not currently have the necessary infrastructure to support new residential development could represent a necessary investment on the part of the county, diminishing the fiscal benefits of new housing unit deliveries.

In order to maximize the fiscal benefits of new housing deliveries in the county, McDuffie County should work to encourage new development in areas where infrastructure already exists, namely its established downtown areas, such as downtown Thomson. Such considerations are valuable in the context of the absolute amount of tax revenues added by the additional of new housing units, which are relatively small and may not be sufficient to support infrastructure projects on their own.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| McDuffie County | County | $50,359 | $188,194 | $137,836 | **$425,827** |
| | School | $105,218 | $393,210 | $287,991 | |

The absolute fiscal benefits of adding new housing units to the county's inventory, both at status quo levels and at levels that meet market demand are both relatively small due to the scale of housing demand in the county. Because of this, it is equally as important as meeting market demand that the county prioritize development within areas that are already equipped with the infrastructure necessary to absorb new housing units. Developing greenfield sites in the unincorporated portions of the county, while possibly a more attractive proposition for developers, ultimately may require that the county make infrastructure investments that would diminish or erase any fiscal benefit that may be derived from new housing unit production.

Beyond these considerations, there is a clear benefit to meeting market demand for housing as opposed to delivering at historic levels, with an approximate benefit of roughly $140,000 in new revenue to the county and nearly $290,000 in new revenue to the county's school district, amounting to a total fiscal benefit of an estimated $425,827

# Demand & Gap – McDuffie County

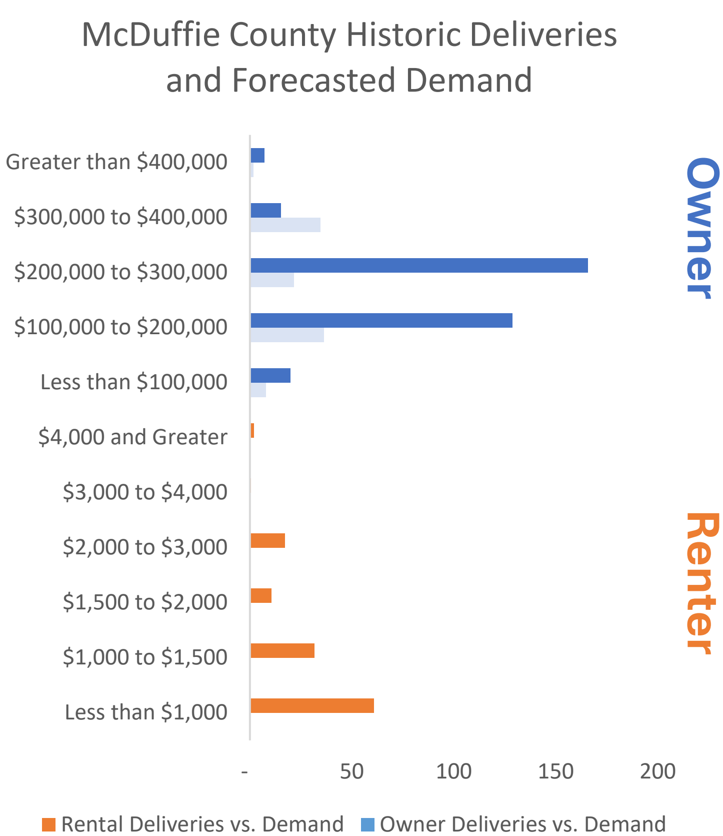
## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

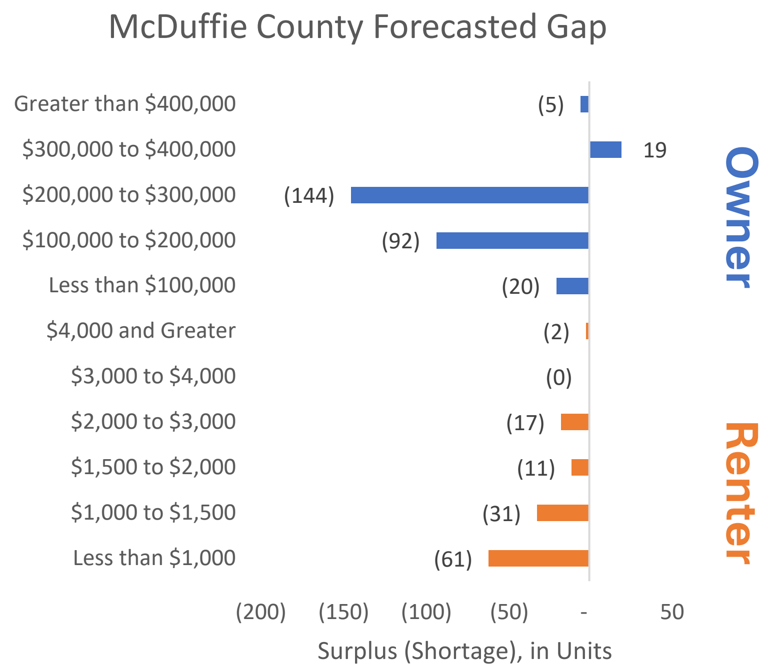
**In the chart below:**

- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

McDuffie County has not historically served as a major absorber of regional housing demand, barely acting as even a bedroom community for Augusta. However, recent shifts in the region which have restricted production in adjacent Columbia County have resulted in an increase in new housing unit production in the county and an increase in demand for housing.

The chart below describes the pace at which the county's housing market has delivered new units over the last five years and considers this pattern against forecasted housing demand for the next five years. Besides the $300,000 to $400,000 segment, the county's demand for housing would exceed supply if deliveries mirrored trends from the last five years.




## Forecasted Gap

While the magnitude of McDuffie County's forecasted gap is not nearly as great as many other counties in the region, the shortfall within certain segments are much more pronounced than others. The demand for for-sale units priced $100,000 to $300,000 but particularly $200,000 to $300,000 would be far greater than supply should historic delivery trends persist.

Additionally, historic delivery trends have not addressed the growing demand for new rental units within the county. While addressing demand for units priced less than $1,000 may require creative financing and the legalization of more innovative housing typologies, there is also growing demand for mid-market rentals within the county, which might take the form of build-to-rent townhomes or downtown loft products considering that the scale of this demand, while important to address, still remains insufficient to support the construction of large multifamily products.

While McDuffie County comes to a decision on the role it wants to play within the regional context, development efforts can and should be directed towards downtown Thomson where density is more in character with surroundings and where infrastructure is already present.

# Strategies & Recommendations – McDuffie County

## Strategic Priorities

McDuffie County's strategic location along I-20 and proximity to major employment hubs makes it well-positioned to capture regional housing demand. **As growth pressures increase in neighboring Columbia, Aiken, and Richmond Counties, McDuffie has the opportunity to expand its housing stock while maintaining its small-town appeal and high quality of life. However, the county's ability to fully capitalize on this demand will depend on its capacity to provide critical infrastructure, particularly water and sewer services, to accommodate new development.**

**While large-scale growth may require significant infrastructure investment, McDuffie County has a near-term opportunity to direct housing development into areas that already have sufficient capacity, namely downtown Thomson. Encouraging infill development and adaptive reuse in the historic core will allow the county to foster a walkable, mixed-use environment that provides new housing while also strengthening local retail and service industries.** This strategy will not only reduce upfront infrastructure costs but also enhance the economic vibrancy of the county's central commercial district, making it a more attractive place for both new residents and businesses.

**To further support housing expansion, McDuffie County should actively explore funding opportunities, public-private partnerships, and zoning adjustments that facilitate sustainable residential growth. Expanding infrastructure in strategic areas along key transportation corridors will ensure that new development aligns with both regional housing demand and the county's long-term economic objectives.** By leveraging its prime location, existing infrastructure in downtown Thomson, and affordability, McDuffie County can establish itself as a key residential destination within the greater Aiken-Augusta region while maintaining its unique character and sense of place.

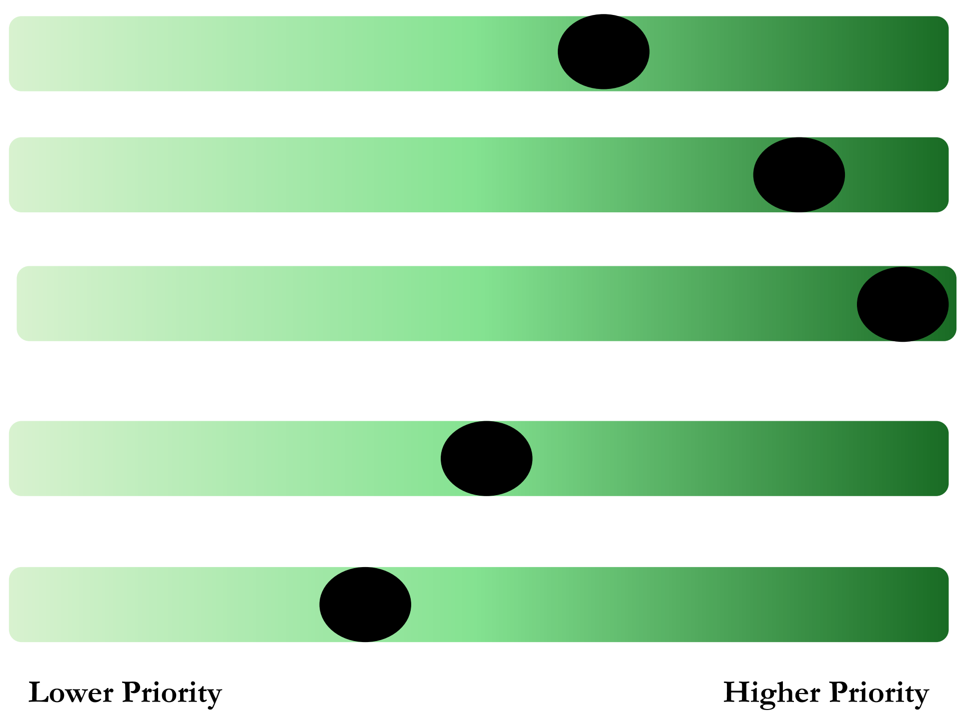
**Increase Development Density**

**Prioritize Downtown Development**

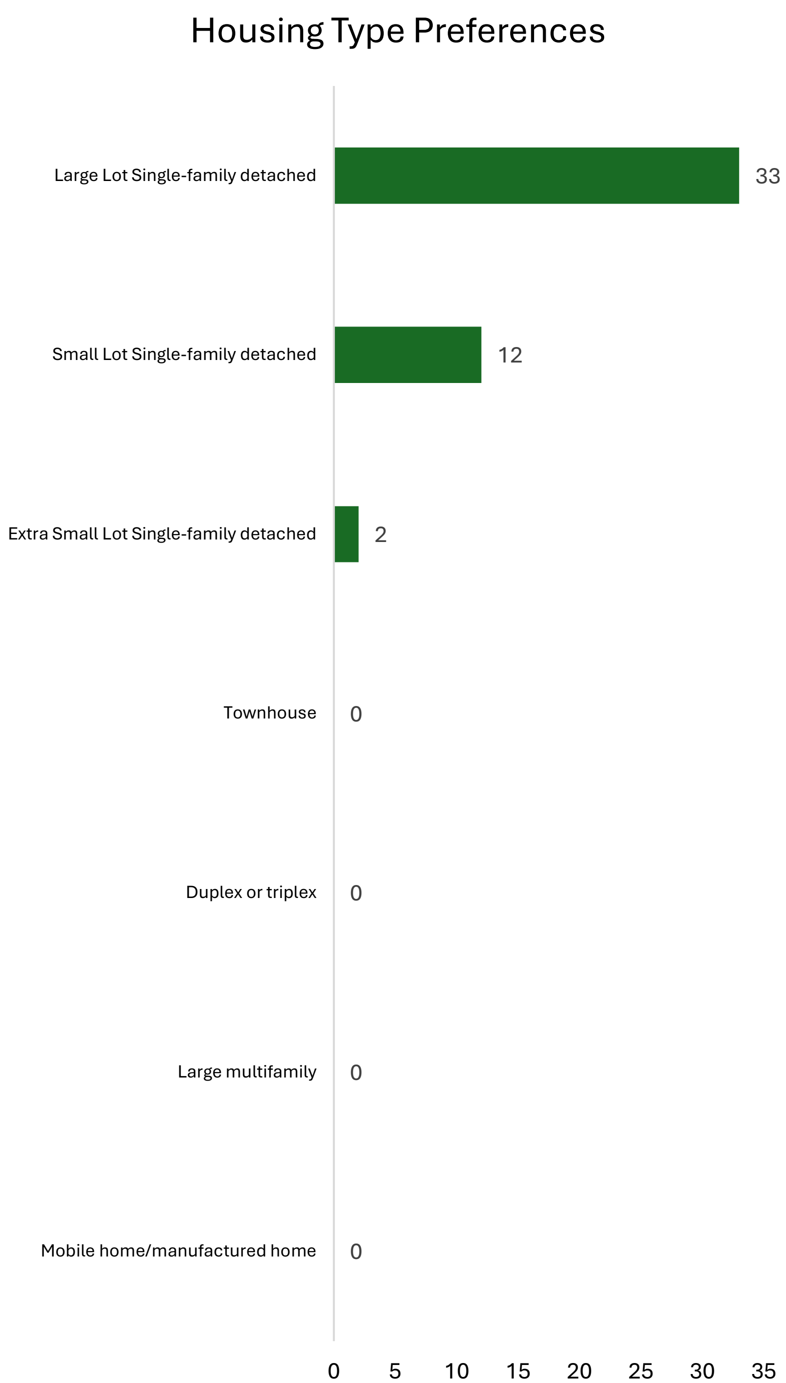
**Invest in the Improvement & Expansion of Critical Infrastructure**

**Approach Workforce Housing as Critical Community Infrastructure**

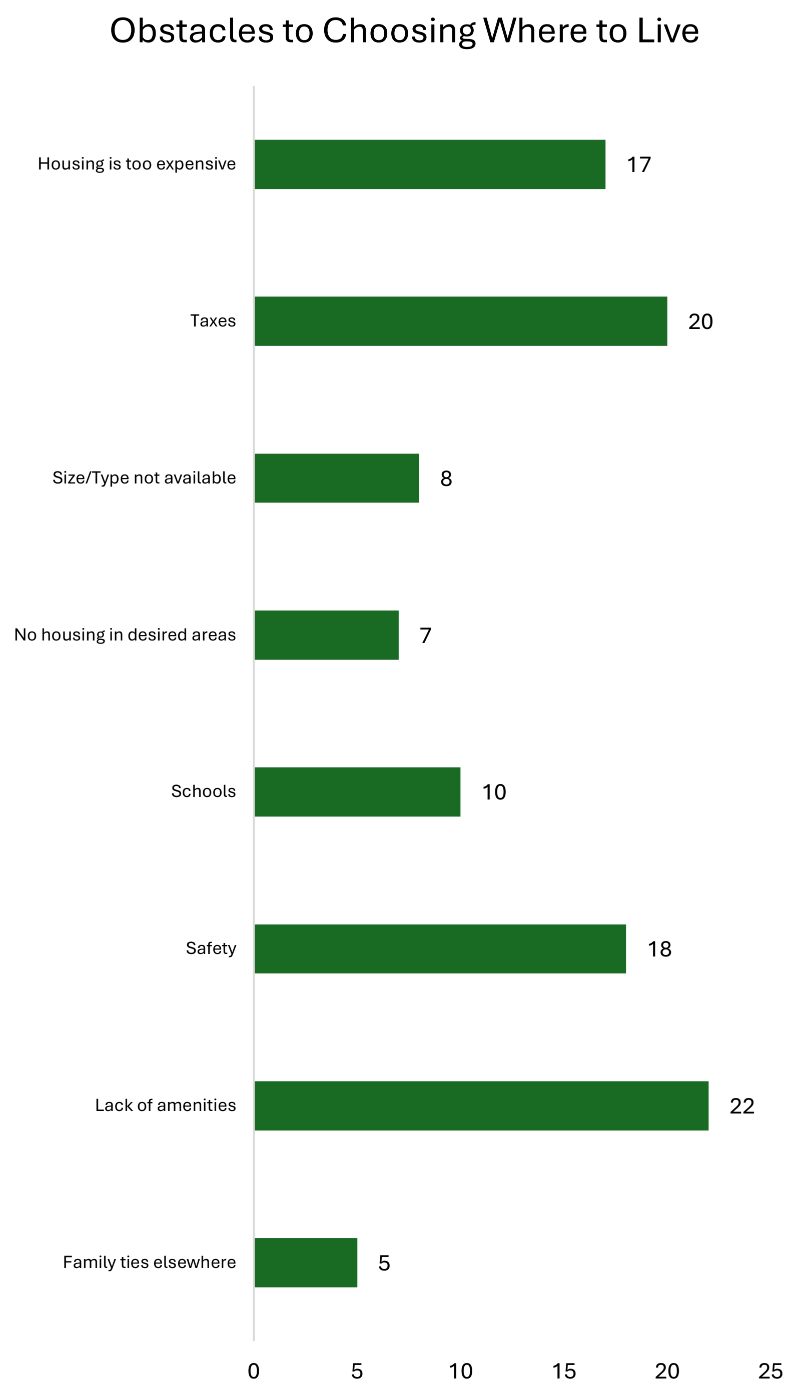
**Recentering & Decentering of Regional High-Wage Employment**



# Survey Findings – McDuffie County

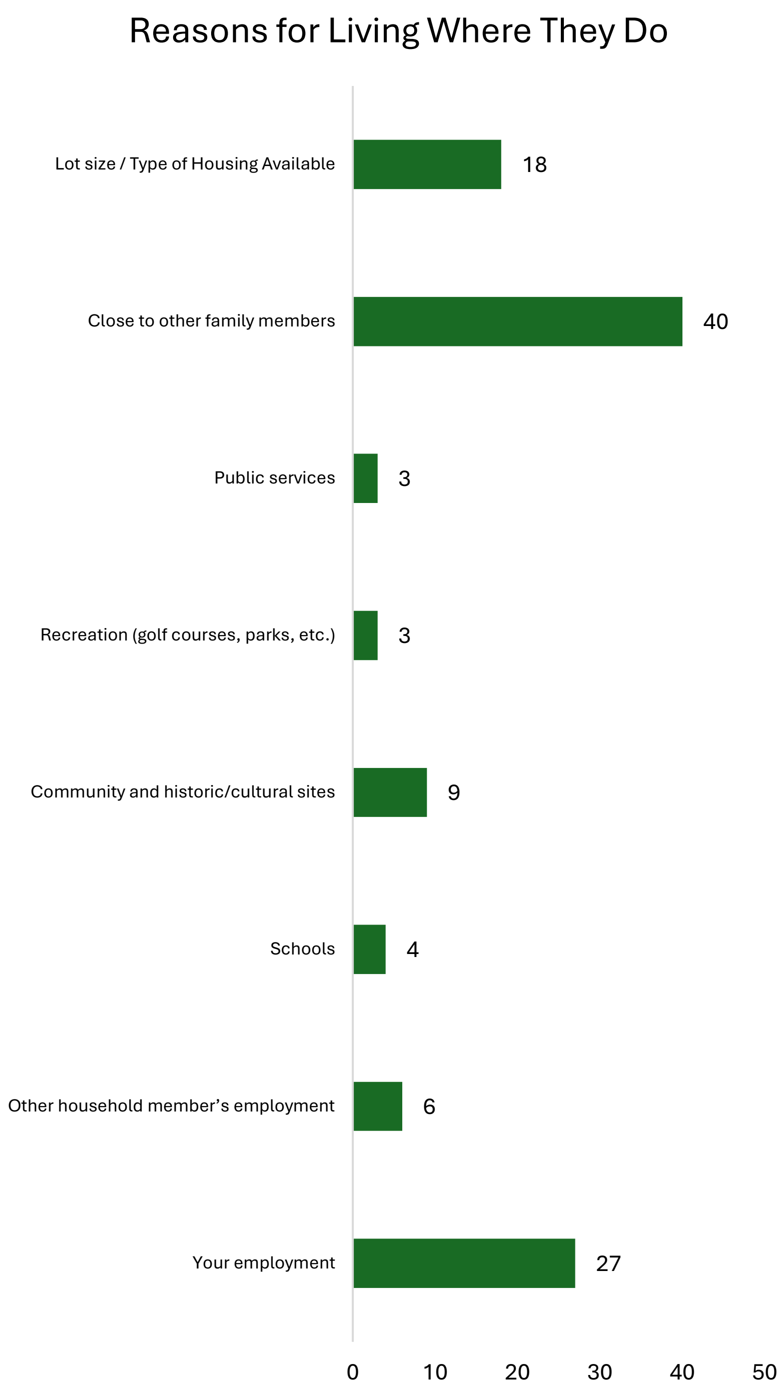


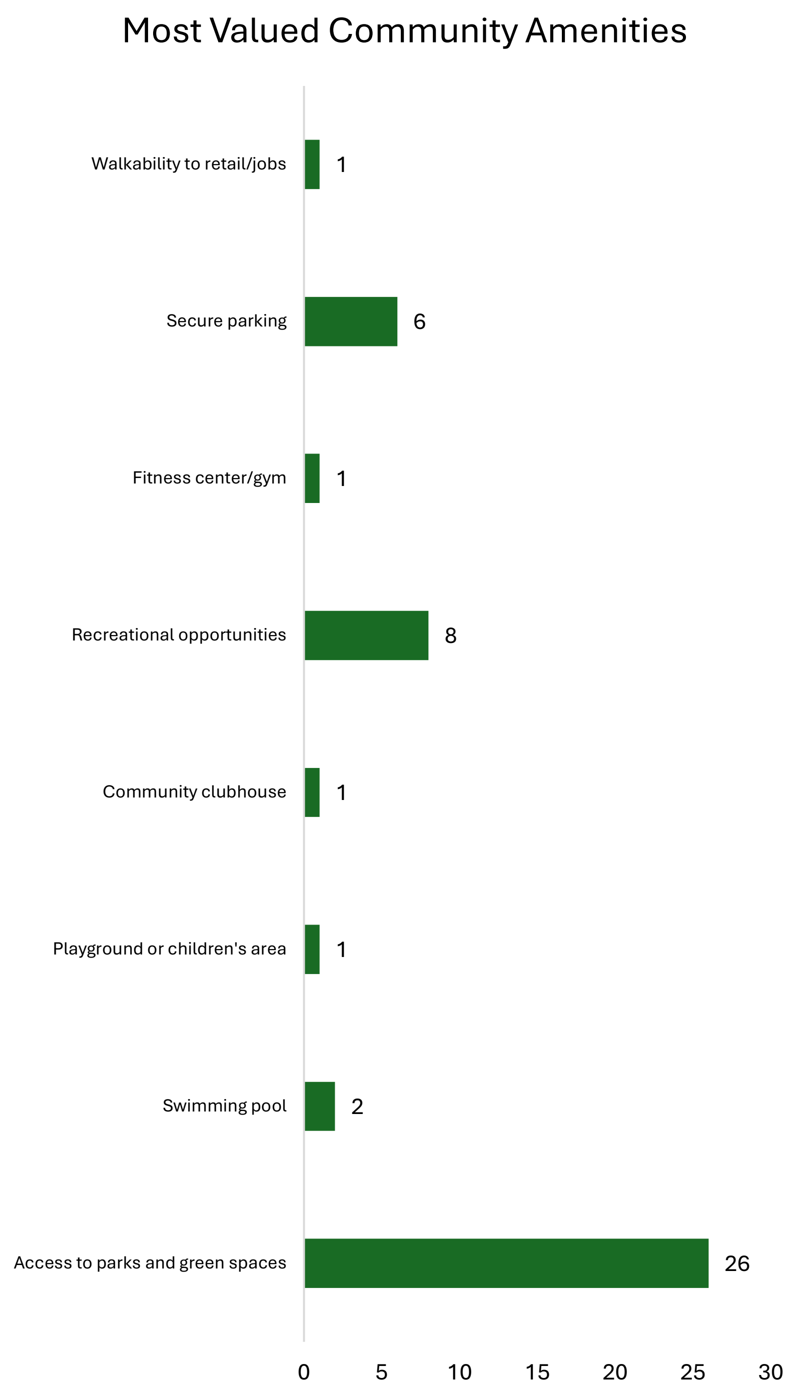

McDuffie County respondents identified large-lot single-family detached units as their preferred type of housing unit. Some respondents identified small-lot and extra-small-lot single-family detached units as their preferred unit types as well. Notably no respondent from McDuffie County chose any option that was not a single-family detached home.




McDuffie County residents identified a number of obstacles that prevent them from choosing where they live, first among them being a lack of amenities, followed by taxes, safety and housing costs. These responses suggest that McDuffie County residents may want to live in certain locations throughout the county but the lack of amenities disincentivizes them from actually living there. Cost pressures and perceptions of community safety also shape markets within McDuffie County.

# Survey Findings – McDuffie County




McDuffie County respondents identified proximity to family as the leading reason for why they live where they do, with employment provided as the second most frequent answer. This response pattern suggests that McDuffie County residents form a relatively strong and stable community of household and workers who are willing to commute wherever they may need to for employment.

McDuffie County respondents consistently identified access to parks and green space as their most valued community amenity. Other popular responses were recreational opportunities and secure parking. All of these responses point to an affinity by county residents for outdoor recreation and the opportunities provided to engage in outdoor recreation within McDuffie County.

# Richmond County

# Richmond County

## Market Profile

- Robus but aging water, sewer and road infrastructure
- Strong economic and population growth
- Historic by aging housing stock
- Hindered by regional perceptions

## Housing Needs

**Total Five-Year Gap: 109 Units**

**In the chart to the right:**

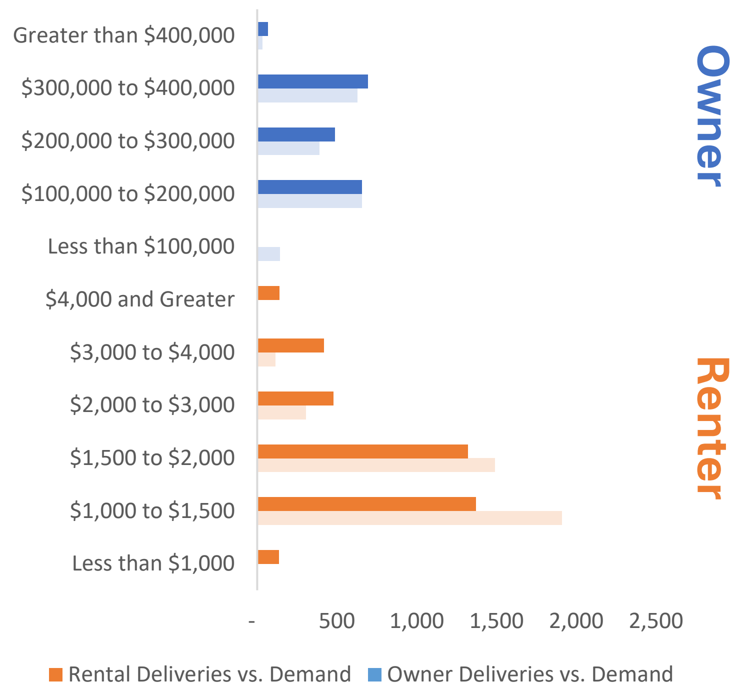
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent **historic delivery patterns**
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent **forecasted demand**, suggesting a need for:

**New for-sale options across a variety of typologies available at mid-market price points that offer urban conveniences**

**Affordable workforce rentals AND Luxury rental options in amenity-rich locations**

## Total Five-Year Demand: 5,775 Units

Richmond County Historic Deliveries and Forecasted Demand




## Implementable Strategies

**Agents of Action:** County & Cities

**Urgent (6 Months – 1 Year)**

1. Legalize innovative housing unit typologies including cottage courts, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
2. Unlock the potential of publicly owned land to address local housing needs by determining which parcels might be contributed towards private-led housing projects with affordable components.
3. Encourage housing near major employers to reduce commute burdens, diversify housing options and support economic mobility by revising zoning ordinances to allow for a mix of uses.
4. Develop and adopt a residential "Pre-Approval Catalog"

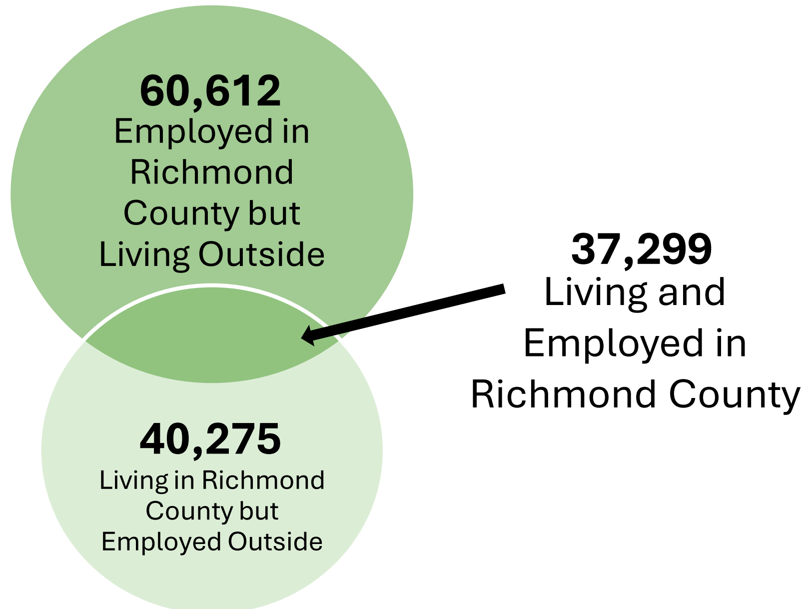
**Intermediate (1 Year – 3 Years)**

1. Create a pipeline between local adult population that may lack the skills necessary to secure high-paying jobs and new industries recruited to the region by aligning industry recruitment efforts with job training programs.
2. Establish an incentive framework that encourages local employers to become invested stakeholders and partners in public efforts to address workforce housing needs through employer-sponsored housing programs.
3. Ensure that a share of new housing in high-demand areas is affordable to local workers by adopting inclusionary zoning overlay districts.
4. Expand access to jobs for low-income residents by improving transportation to key job hubs by partnering with major employers to provide more frequent and flexible transportation options.

# Richmond County

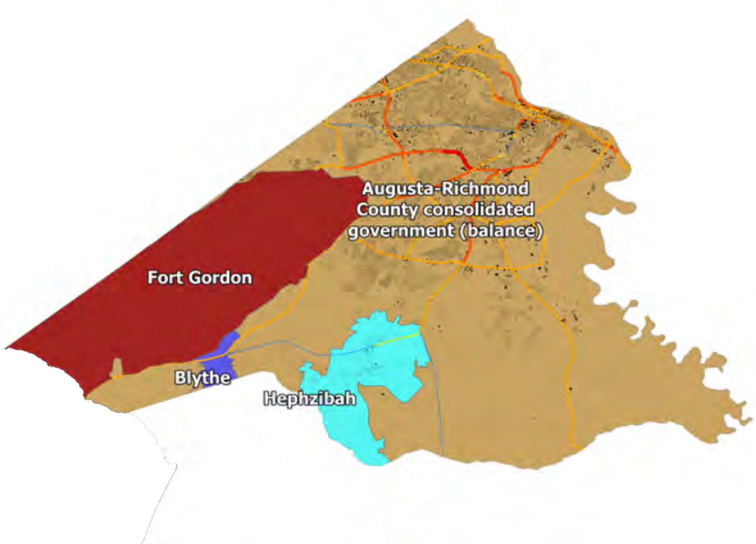
## Overview

Richmond County is positioned at the center of the Aiken-Augusta region and represents the most significant job core in the region with a wide variety of employment opportunities ranging from high-tech national security positions at Fort Gordon, professional and health care service jobs concentrated in downtown Augusta, and high-wage manufacturing, warehousing and logistics jobs located to the south of the county. While Richmond County and Augusta formed a unified government in 1996, the cities of Blythe and Hephzibah maintained their independence during consolidation efforts and remain independent today.




## Richmond County Housing Today

Richmond County represents the historic center of the surrounding region which continues to serve as both the cultural center of the region and the largest source of employment. While the county has not faced any issues attracting industry due to housing related issues, with plentiful housing to suit the needs of the county's workforce throughout the surrounding region, the county has struggled to keep its workforce local. While some counties in the region may have more of a laisse faire attitude towards housing workers locally, Richmond County doing so has been identified as a goal to aspire to.




Often economic advancement for Richmond County residents has been synonymous with a move to one of the surrounding counties, with Columbia County first among them. A lack of new starts, combined with an aging housing stock that is widely in need of renovations are both factors which impose limitations on the county's ability to retain its workforce, particularly for the middle class. Older housing units in Richmond County may be priced appropriately to allow middle-earning housing to purchase them, however the renovations that are often necessary to make them at a minimum habitable and preferably attractive and modern, may represent a prohibitive investment. Newer housing further away from the region's core provide options at prices that middle-income earners can afford without the hassle of updating units.

## Barriers & Challenges

One of the most significant challenges that Richmond County faces in translating workforce wins into residential gains for the county surrounds the county's school system. School quality in the county is not nearly as bad as the region's residents perceive it to be, containing several magnet schools including John S. Davidson High School which has been ranked in the top ten schools in the state and country multiple times in recent years. However, there are also several underperforming schools within the county which attract more attention and contribute towards an



Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On the Map overall perception that the district is distressed and that sending children to a county public school will limit their potential for achievement. This barrier is one that will require a twofold approach, combining strategies geared towards improving underperforming schools in the district and eliminating antiquated school facilities that represent inefficiencies in resource allocations, while also pursuing a public relations campaign to showcase the district's successes. By improving performance and perceptions, the county will indirectly be improving the regional attractiveness of Richmond County as a place to work, play and live.

There is currently a spatial disconnect between jobs and job creation with housing and the needs of the county's current residents, many of whom live in substandard housing in neighborhoods that have not historically received much investment from the private sector. This spatial disconnect has created a scenario where high-quality, well-paying employment opportunities requiring little to no prior training are concentrated in the industrial southern portion of the county, while low-income households living in the county's core face significant barriers to accessing these jobs. Additionally, industrial employers, many of which would like to see more housing opportunities closer to their facilities, face staffing consistency issues when they employ workers who live intown and have unreliable means of traveling to their jobs. A lack of



transportation alternatives that connect the county's core areas with industry to the south represents a failure to extend the benefits of economic development wins to those most in need of the opportunities they represent.

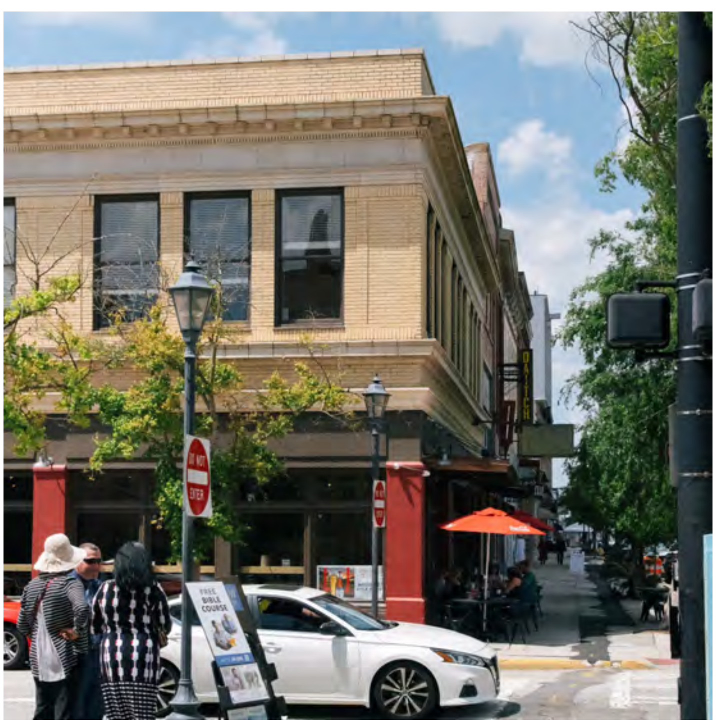
The historic nature of Augusta, while an asset from a cultural perspective and even an attractive residential quality for many, also means that Richmond County's housing stock is old and widely in need of extensive renovation or wholesale replacement, making living within the county financially unfeasible for many. Financial assistance programs aimed at individual homeowners could play a transformative role in addressing the widespread need for renovations and reducing the financial burden of bringing substandard units up to modern living standards. Such programs could include grants, low-interest loans, or tax abatements, all of which would enable more residents to affordably live within the county and preserve the integrity of its historic neighborhoods.

Historic preservation in a place with as rich a history as downtown Augusta should be considered a priority, however the regulations and design guidelines associated with preservation in many cases reduce the feasibility of downtown residential development. For this reason, the existing downtown historic districts limit housing production in the part of Richmond County that has the greatest potential to serve as ground zero for revitalization and a return to the region's core.

# Richmond County Overview

To address these challenges, it is essential to revisit the regulations and design guidelines governing Augusta's historic overlay districts to strike a better balance between preservation and the feasibility of new residential development. Streamlining the approval process, allowing for more flexibility in adaptive reuse, and providing incentives for projects that meet preservation standards could encourage the production of housing while respecting the city's historic character. Prioritizing housing development in downtown Augusta aligns with its established role as the region's employment and cultural hub. Expanding residential options downtown would not only support economic activity and create a true lifestyle center but also help to reestablish Augusta's core as a desirable and dynamic place to live, attracting a diverse mix of residents and further enhancing the city's vibrancy and appeal.

Perhaps the most significant and least easily solved challenge that Richmond County faces in increasing the residential retention of its workforce within the county is organizational dysfunction, which greatly limits Augusta-Richmond County's government to work in an expedient and unified manner towards identified housing goals. Operations level staff turnover in concert with a governance structure that disincentivizes collaboration both currently contribute



to a lack of stability in terms of housing related administrative coordination, government initiatives and policy goals. While there is no single solution to this challenge, it is important to recognize that overcoming many if not all of the other challenges identified will require recognizing and addressing these internal problems to some extent.

## Accelerants & Opportunities for Growth

Richmond County serves as the primary economic powerhouse of the surrounding region, a status that has remained constant even as residential growth has taken off in the counties that surround it. By all accounts, Richmond County has no trouble attracting industry, with hundreds if not thousands of high-quality jobs created over the past five years. Job growth has occurred largely as a result of new manufacturing jobs created in the southern portion of the county and new, highly-specialized national defense jobs based out of Fort Gordon. Both of these economic development wins have injected the region with thousands of new employment opportunities that grant workers meaningful buying power. While presently this translates most often into residential gains for the suburban counties of Columbia County and Aiken County, this doesn't have to be the case and it shouldn't be accepted as the only possible status quo for Richmond County.

Throughout the region, communities struggle with issues surrounding infrastructure, jobs, the availability of diverse retail experiences and high-quality

# Richmond County Overview

community services and amenities. While Richmond County certainly could do more to maintain and improve existing infrastructure and community services, the county largely contains all of the right basic ingredients for residential growth to occur.

Richmond County has the opportunity to capitalize on its economic momentum by aligning urban development efforts with the needs of its existing population and workforce. Encouraging new urban development near lifestyle centers, such as downtown Augusta, can provide much-needed housing options that cater to a diverse demographic while also increasing density in areas that already serve as hubs for employment, culture, and commerce. This approach would not efficiently maximize the capacity of existing infrastructure but also create vibrant, walkable communities that appeal to a broad range of residents, including young professionals, families, and retirees.

To achieve this, the county should focus on streamlining processes for renovations, conversions, and, where appropriate, demolitions of outdated or substandard housing stock, a process which would be well aided by the Augusta Land Bank Authority.

offering incentives for redevelopment, which the Downtown Development Authority has already begun to spearhead, Richmond County can unlock the potential of its existing neighborhoods, transforming underutilized properties into attractive, modern housing. Initiatives such as low-interest renovation loans, tax abatements, and grants for adaptive reuse projects can further encourage private investment, breathing new life into communities while preserving their historic character where possible.

Equally vital to encouraging new residential investment will be is improving connectivity between the county's existing population and the job opportunities being created. Expanding public transit options, enhancing roadway infrastructure, and creating safe, multimodal transportation networks can ensure that residents in the county's core can access the manufacturing jobs in the southern portion of the county. These efforts would not only reduce barriers for low-income households but also strengthen the county's overall economic resilience by enabling more residents to participate in its growth.

# Economic Drivers – Richmond County

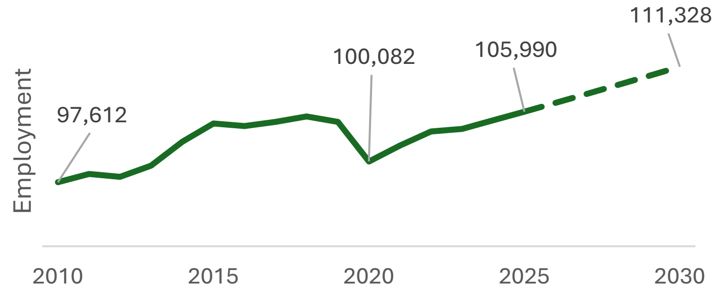
## Employment by Industry

As the regional employment center, Richmond County is anchored by a large number of employment opportunities across various industries. Wellstar MCG Auguta to Fort Gordon, Augusta and Richmond County have provided over 100,000 jobs since 2012.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the five industries that employed the most workers in 2023 were health care and social assistance, educational services, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing. Of these, Educational services and public administration have led the way in job growth in recent years. Together these two industries alone have added approximately 10,000 jobs since 2018.

New and expanded manufacturing and transportation operations have also helped increase local employment. Since 2020, companies including Denkai America, StandardAero, Syensqo, and Aurubis have added over 400 jobs to those sectors, showing that the region is successfully attracting companies to expand employment opportunities.

Richmond County Historic and Projected County Employment, 2010 - 2030




*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

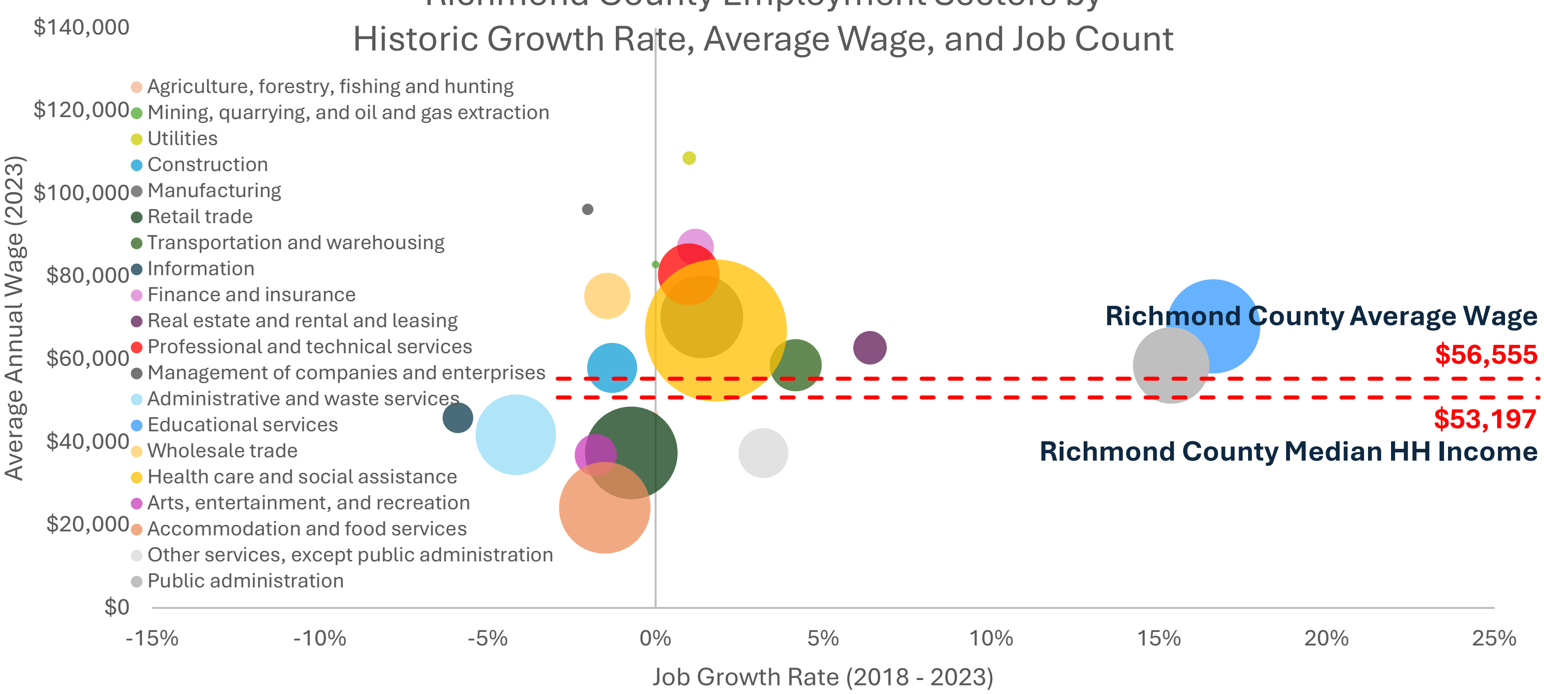
## Overall County Employment

While Richmond County experienced a pandemic era dip in employment consistent with the broader region, the county has since fully recovered and has higher employment now than before the pandemic.

From November 2023 to December 2024 the average unemployment rate in Richmond County was 5.0%, above South Carolina's 2023 average unemployment rate of 3.0% and Georgia's comparable rate of 3.3%.

If the Aiken-Augusta region continues to add jobs at the 1% annual rate that it achieved from 2018 to 2023, and if Richmond County matches that growth rate, the County could expect to add 5338 new jobs by 2030.

Richmond County Employment Sectors by Historic Growth Rate, Average Wage, and Job Count



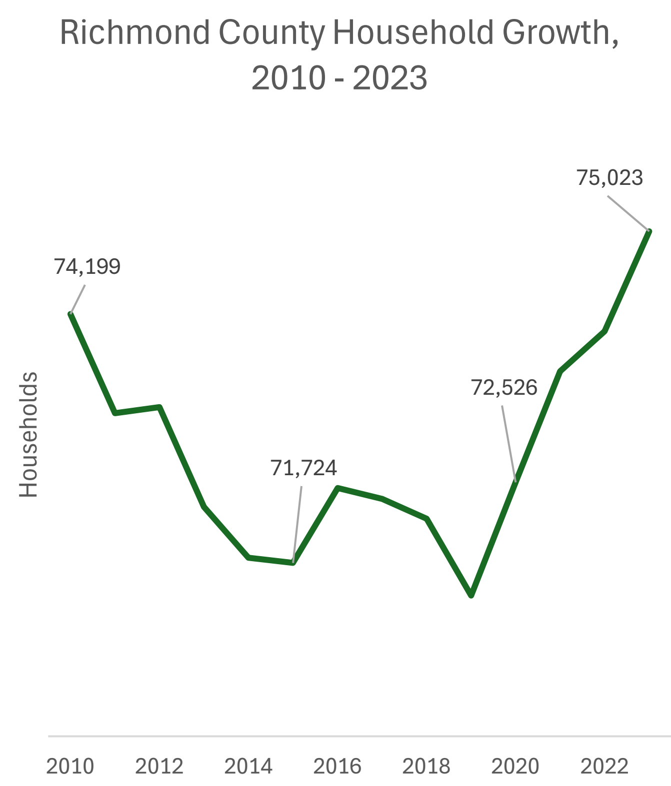

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018 – 2023, KB Advisory Group*

# Demographic Drivers – Richmond County

## Household Growth

Richmond County has not added new households as rapidly as it has added new employment opportunities, reflecting the fact that many new employees to the region are choosing to live in Columbia and Aiken Counties.

Despite the fact that the county has seen small growth relative to its size, Richmond County remains the county with the largest number of households. On an absolute basis, however, Richmond County did still account for a substantial proportion of the region's overall household growth.



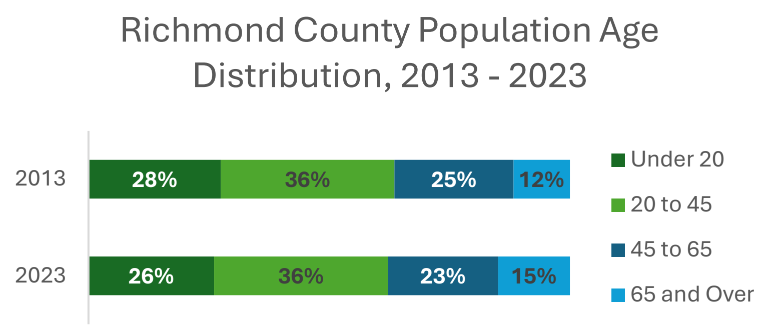

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2023, KB Advisory Group*

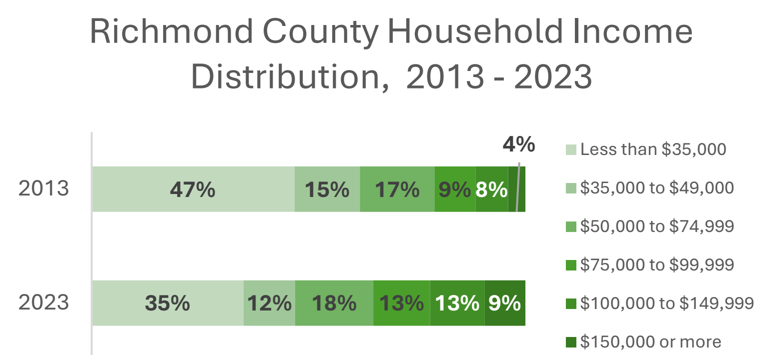
## Age

The age distribution of Richmond County stayed constant from 2013-2023. Every county in the region has experienced an increase in the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, and Richmond County is no exception.

The county has a larger proportion of its population in the 20 to 45 age bracket then any county in the region, which reflects a broad base of younger workers.

In the coming years, Richmond County should continue to monitor its age distribution as regional trends towards older populations increase demands for senior services.




*Source: American Community Survey, 2013, 2023, KB Advisory Group*

## Household Income

Richmond County has seen upward movements in the distribution of household incomes over the last decade. The proportion of households earning $150,000 or more doubled from 4% of households to 9%.

At the same time, the proportion of households earning less than $50,000 fell from 62% of households to 47%, meaning more than half of households earned more than that among.

The growth of high-income households was not as pronounced as in Columbia or Aiken Counties but still paints a positive picture for household income growth. Median income grew from $37,749 to $53,197.

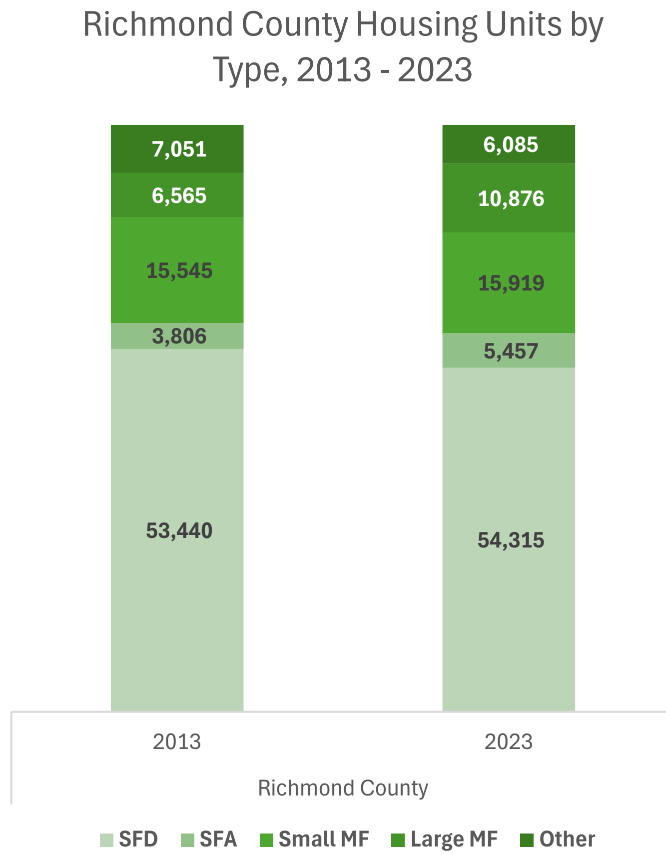
# Housing Supply – Richmond County

## Growing Inventory

As part of the more highly developed core of the Aiken-Augusta region, Richmond County has been steadily adding housing units, although not at a pace sufficient to satisfy potential demand or recapture workers moving to nearby counties.

From 2013 to 2023, the total housing stock in Richmond County grew from 86,407 to 92,652 units, or 7.2%. This outpaces the 3.8% growth in households over that period. There are still fewer housing units in the county than employment opportunities, reflecting the commuter nature of Richmond County as a whole.


Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Type

Overall, Richmond County added 6,245 housing units from 2013 to 2023. New units have been concentrated in large multifamily developments, which added 4,311 units; and single family attached developments, which added 1,651 units. Since 2019 alone, Richmond County has experienced a large influx of multifamily unit deliveries, which accounted for roughly 60% of the region's multifamily deliveries.

The rest of the new production has been split between single family detached homes and small multifamily developments, offset by a decrease in Other units. Richmond County's housing unit diversity allows it to absorb demand across a wide variety of price points and is currently capable of supporting the lifestyle preferences of a wider variety of households than any other county in the region. Richmond County's housing diversity is a key asset which has allowed the county to keep pace with market demand consistently over the last several decades.

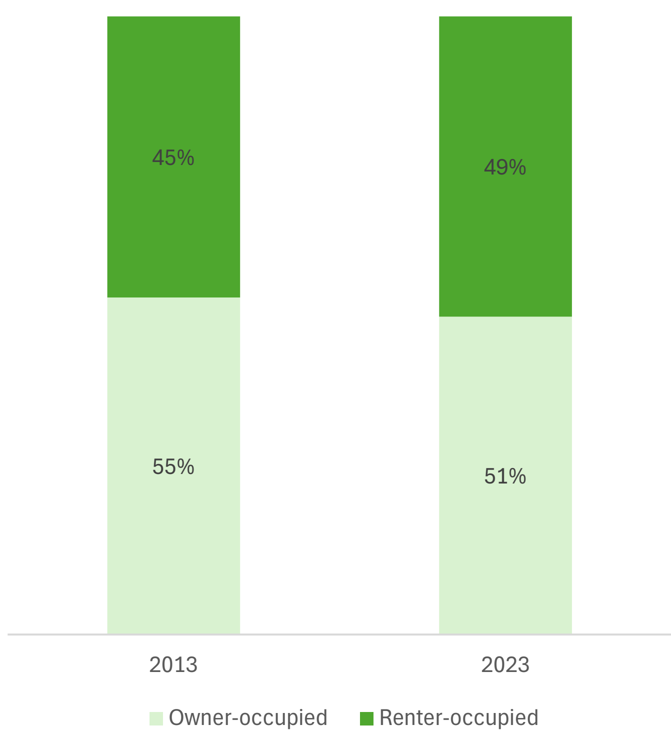
# Housing Supply – Richmond County

## Tenure

Richmond County has the highest rate of renter-occupied housing, 49%, of any county in the Aiken-Augusta region. This is a reflection of several different factors, including a greater prevalence of purpose-built rental housing, purpose-built student housing and lower median household incomes relative to the region.

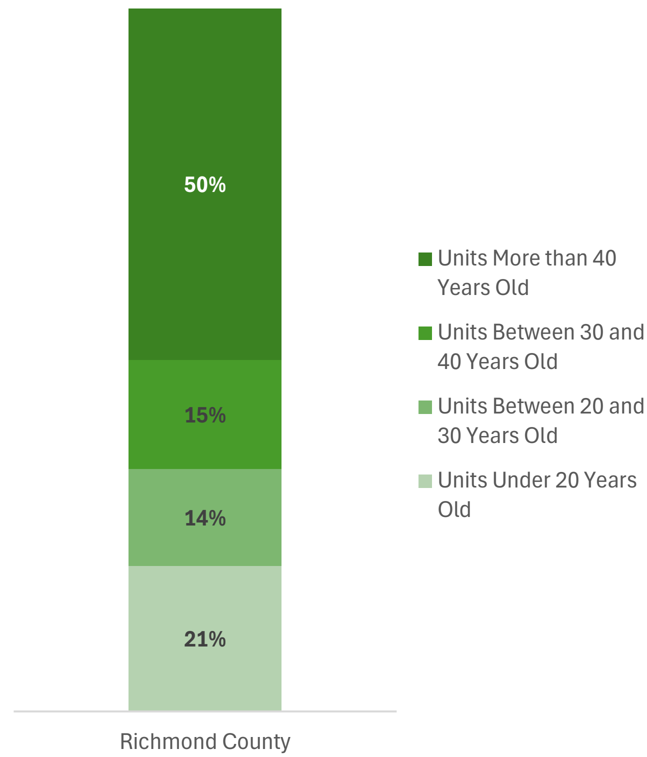
The increase in renter-occupied housing from 45% in 2013 to 49% in 2023 suggests that Richmond County's rental market has expanded alongside shifting housing demand. This trend may be driven by rising home prices, economic constraints limiting homeownership, and the county's role as a regional employment and education hub, attracting students and young professionals who prefer renting. Additionally, new multifamily developments and investor-owned single-family rentals have contributed to this shift, reinforcing Richmond County's position as the Aiken-Augusta region's most renter-oriented market.

Richmond County Tenure Distribution, 2013 - 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

Richmond County Distribution of Housing Units by Age, 2023




Source: KB Advisory, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2013-2023

## Housing Inventory by Age

Richmond County's housing inventory is unique among the counties in the Aiken-Augusta region due to the prevalence of historic housing stock in the City of Augusta and surrounding area. Fully half of the housing units in Richmond County are more than 40 years old, which is the highest in the region.

Richmond County's aging housing stock presents both opportunities and challenges for future development. While many of these older homes contribute to the historic character of Augusta and surrounding communities, they may also require significant investment in maintenance, modernization, or redevelopment. Encouraging both the rehabilitation of older units and the construction of new housing will be key to ensuring a diverse and functional housing market that meets the needs of current and future residents.

# Housing Accessibility – Richmond County

## Rental Market

In the study area, the CoStar estimated average home rent in Richmond County was $1,167. This was the third highest estimated average rent among every county in the study area, below Aiken and Columbia counties. According to the Bureau for Labor Statistics, potential renters in most single-income and dual-income households would be able to afford rent without spending more than a third of their earnings on rent. Richmond County's position as the economic hub for the region means that wages offered by employment opportunities in the county are very strong, especially in the context of Richmond County rentals.

| | Renters | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Rent | County Average Rent | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | $1,031 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $1,894 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | $1,616 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,968 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Utilities | $2,063 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $3,887 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $1,130 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $2,074 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $1,370 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,515 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $1,468 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,696 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $823 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $1,511 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $1,142 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $2,097 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $1,010 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $1,854 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $1,698 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $3,118 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $1,224 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,248 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $1,570 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,883 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | $1,876 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $3,444 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $919 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $1,688 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $1,325 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,433 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $1,305 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened | $2,397 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $811 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $1,490 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $532 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $976 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $822 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $1,509 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $1,141 | $1,167 | Cost Burdened | $2,095 | $1,167 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Housing Accessibility – Richmond County

## For-Sale Market

The 2023 adjusted median home price in Richmond County was $200,000. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics salary data, only those employed in the Utilities and Management of Companies and Enterprises sectors could access the average for-sale home within the county on a single-income. This affordability gap highlights a pressing need for increased access to entry-level for-sale housing and alternative homeownership pathways to ensure that the county's workforce can build equity and remain in the community long-term. Despite this challenge for single-income households, the wages offered by employment opportunities in the county offer dual-income households a high degree of accessibility and the challenge remains retaining these residents within the county.

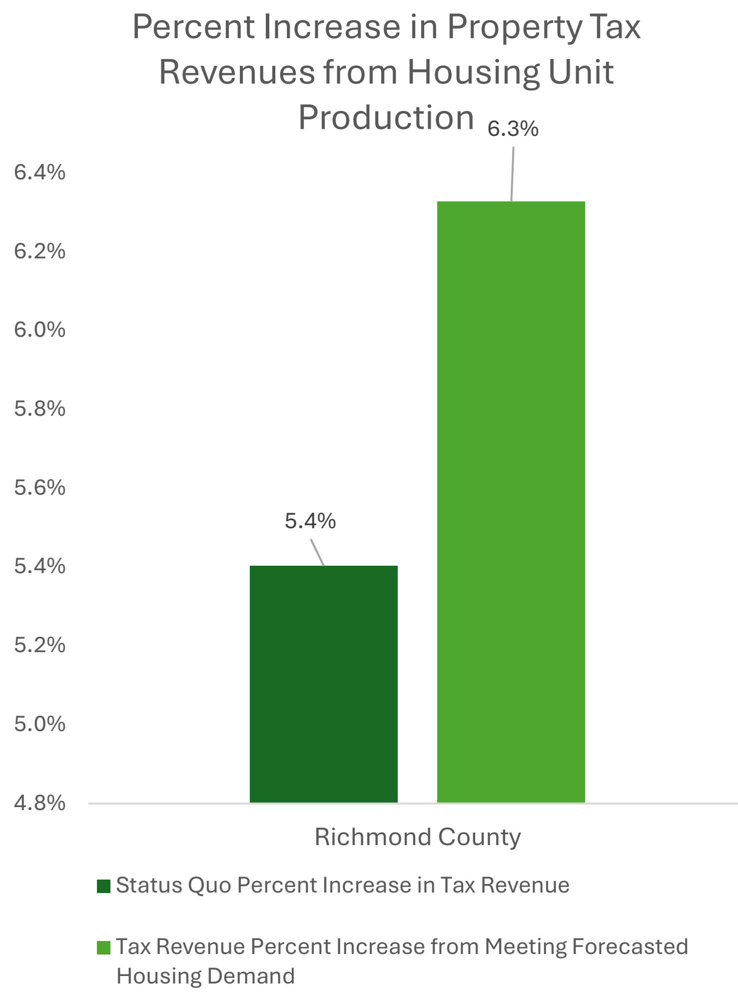
| | Owners | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Industry | Single-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Single-Income Cost Burdened Status | Dual-Income Attainable Purchase Price | County Average Home Price | Dual-Income Cost Burdened Status |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | $123,776 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $227,253 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | $193,965 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $356,120 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Utilities | $247,542 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened | $466,447 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Construction | $135,563 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $248,894 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Manufacturing | $164,392 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $301,824 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Wholesale Trade | $176,216 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $323,533 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Retail Trade | $98,770 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $181,342 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Transportation and Warehousing | $137,085 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $251,688 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Information | $121,155 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $222,440 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Finance and Insurance | $203,767 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $374,117 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | $146,919 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $269,744 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | $188,438 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $345,972 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | $225,099 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened | $413,281 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Administration & Support | $110,337 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $202,580 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Educational Services | $159,020 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $291,961 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | $156,642 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $287,595 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | $97,378 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $178,785 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Accommodation and Food Services | $63,814 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $117,163 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | $98,649 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $181,119 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened |
| Public Administration | $136,944 | $200,000 | Cost Burdened | $251,429 | $200,000 | Not Cost Burdened |

# Fiscal Benefits of Housing Unit Production Richmond County

Despite regional perceptions about Richmond County, the county has consistently grown every decade for the past seventy years, and has added new housing units at a pace that has largely met demand over that time. Over the last five years in particular, the county delivered over 4,000 multifamily units, representing the majority of new units delivered within the county.

The key segments that the county has under-delivered in are luxury rentals priced at greater than $2,000 per month, and across for-sale segments where homes are valued at $200,000 or more. Because of the lack of fulfilment of these upper segments of demand, meeting the market has significant fiscal benefits to the county. For context, the upper market rentals that the county has not delivered as much of might take the form of build-to-rent townhomes or purpose-built senior living with wrap-around services and extensive amenity suites.

Should Richmond County manage to achieve targeted successes, increasing deliveries in key segments to meet market demand, the increase in tax revenues that would flow to the county and county schools would represent a 6.3% increase in tax revenues relative to present tax revenues, which would be a nearly 1% increase over delivering at historic rates.




| County | Tax Recipient | Status Quo Tax Revenue from Development | Tax Revenue from Meeting Forecasted Housing Demand | Recipient Fiscal Benefit | Total Fiscal Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Richmond County | County | $5,379,143 | $6,299,262 | $920,119 | **$1,969,021** |
| | School | $6,132,030 | $7,180,932 | $1,048,902 | |

Because Richmond County already comes very close to satisfying all of its market demand, the absolute difference between delivering new housing units at historic levels and at levels that meet forecasted demand is relatively small, with both scenarios resulting in highly positive fiscal benefits for the county and county schools.

Unlike other counties in the region, Richmond County does not have the same concerns when it comes to infrastructure, meaning that while upgrades and maintenance may be necessary, which can be costly, the cost of adding new housing units is lower relative to other counties where adding new housing units would mean significant investments in expanding water, sewer and road infrastructure.

There is a clear fiscal advantage to delivering units in a way that meets market demand, representing an additional $920,119 for the county, and an additional $1,048,902 for the county's school district, representing a total fiscal benefit of approximately $1,969,021.

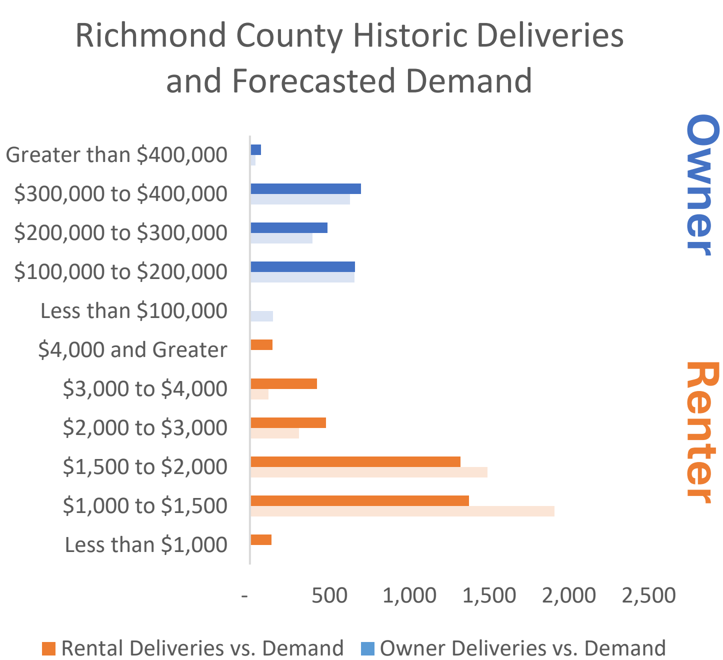
# Demand & Gap – Richmond County

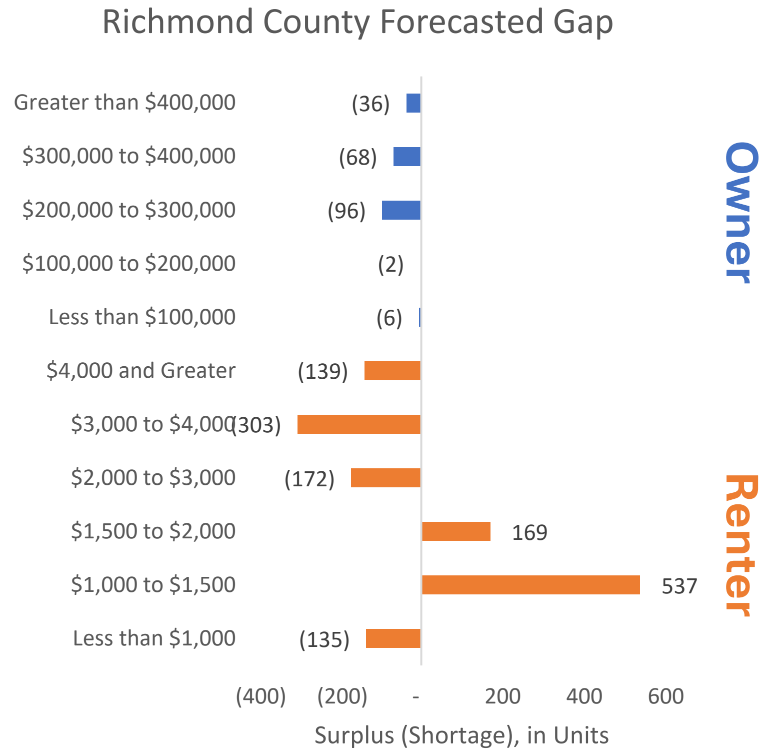
## Historic Deliveries & Forecasted Demand

**In the chart below:**
- Lighter colored blue and orange bars represent historic delivery patterns
- Darker colored blue and orange bars represent forecasted demand

Richmond County has delivered new housing units at high volumes relative to the region and the difference between the last five years of deliveries and forecasted demand is very small considering the scale of total demand within the county.

The county's deliveries of for-sale products have largely kept pace with demand and the delivery of new rental units in the county, most of which have been characterized as units renting for between $1,000 and $2,000 monthly have far exceeded employment and wage driven demand for these products. Key segments that the county could work to deliver more units in include upper-market rentals and affordable rentals. The construction of large-scale multifamily projects tend to target mid-market demand, meaning innovations in housing typology and amenity offerings may be important to satisfying demand at the upper and lower ends of the rental market.




## Forecasted Gap

Richmond County has successfully delivered a high volume of new housing units over the past five years, closely aligning with forecasted demand. The county's for-sale housing market has largely kept pace with demand, with only minor gaps in specific price segments. However, the rental market has experienced an overproduction of mid-market units (priced between $1,000 and $2,000 per month), which has exceeded employment and wage-driven demand for these units. As a result, future development efforts should focus on correcting imbalances in both the affordable and high-end rental markets to better match the county's housing needs.

The forecasted gap analysis highlights a shortage of lower-income rental options (below $1,000 per month) and upper-market rental units ($3,000 and above). Richmond County's recent multifamily construction boom has largely catered to mid-market renters, meaning alternative housing typologies and new amenity offerings may be necessary to attract high-income renters while also expanding affordability for lower-income households.

# Strategies & Recommendations – Richmond County

## Strategic Priorities

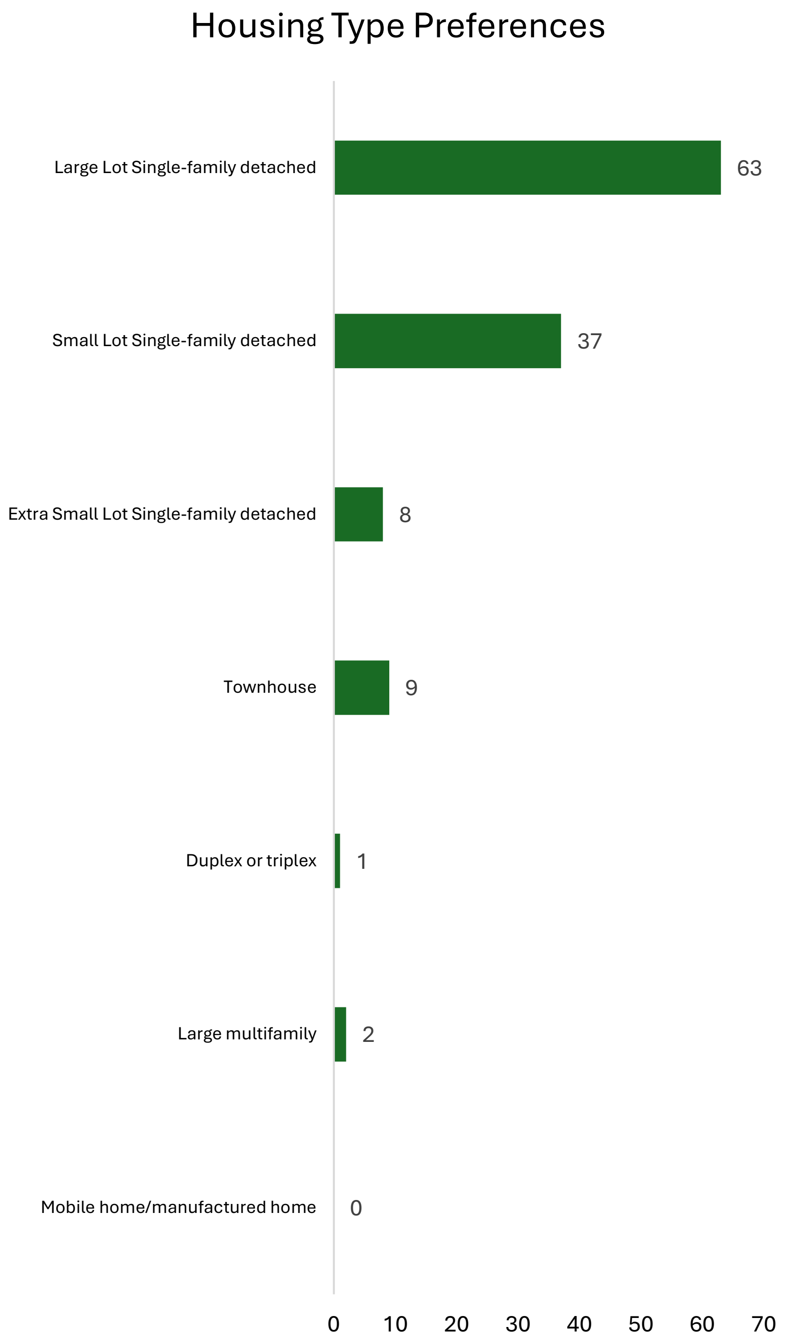
Richmond County serves as the economic and employment hub of the Aiken-Augusta region. The county has delivered a high volume of new housing units, particularly in rental housing, keeping pace with demand. However, recent development has heavily favored mid-market multifamily projects, creating a lack of diversity in new housing options. **Moving forward, Richmond County must expand housing variety, enhance affordability, and leverage urban amenities to attract new residents and investment.**

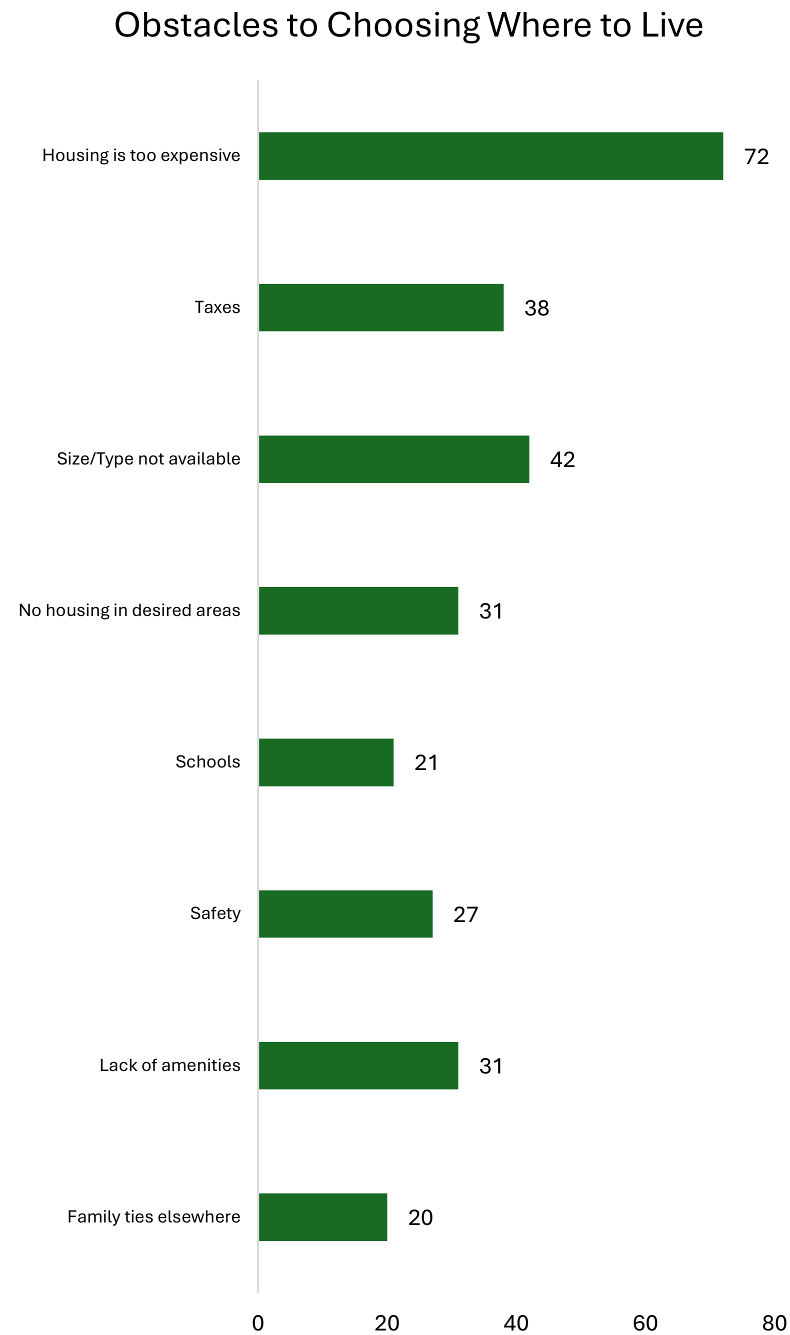
**Downtown Augusta has the potential to be a vibrant regional mixed-use center, but historic district regulations limit large-scale residential development. While preservation protects the area's character, it also restricts density and supply expansion. To navigate this, the county should prioritize adaptive reuse, encourage infill development, and integrate modern housing within the historic fabric.**

**Richmond County must address the negative stigma surrounding its public schools, which has driven middle- and upper-income families to suburban counties.** While long-term education improvements are essential, the county can enhance perceptions by investing in public amenities. **Expanding parks, upgrading facilities, improving safety, and supporting early childhood education can help attract and retain families, strengthening community appeal.**

Additionally, revitalizing aging commercial corridors and reinvesting in urban neighborhoods will be key to maintaining Richmond County's competitiveness. Many areas, particularly around downtown and key employment hubs, offer opportunities for redevelopment, placemaking, and infrastructure enhancements that improve walkability and quality of life. **The county should streamline permitting and offer development incentives to ensure housing growth remains balanced, sustainable, and aligned with economic goals.**

# Survey Findings – Richmond County

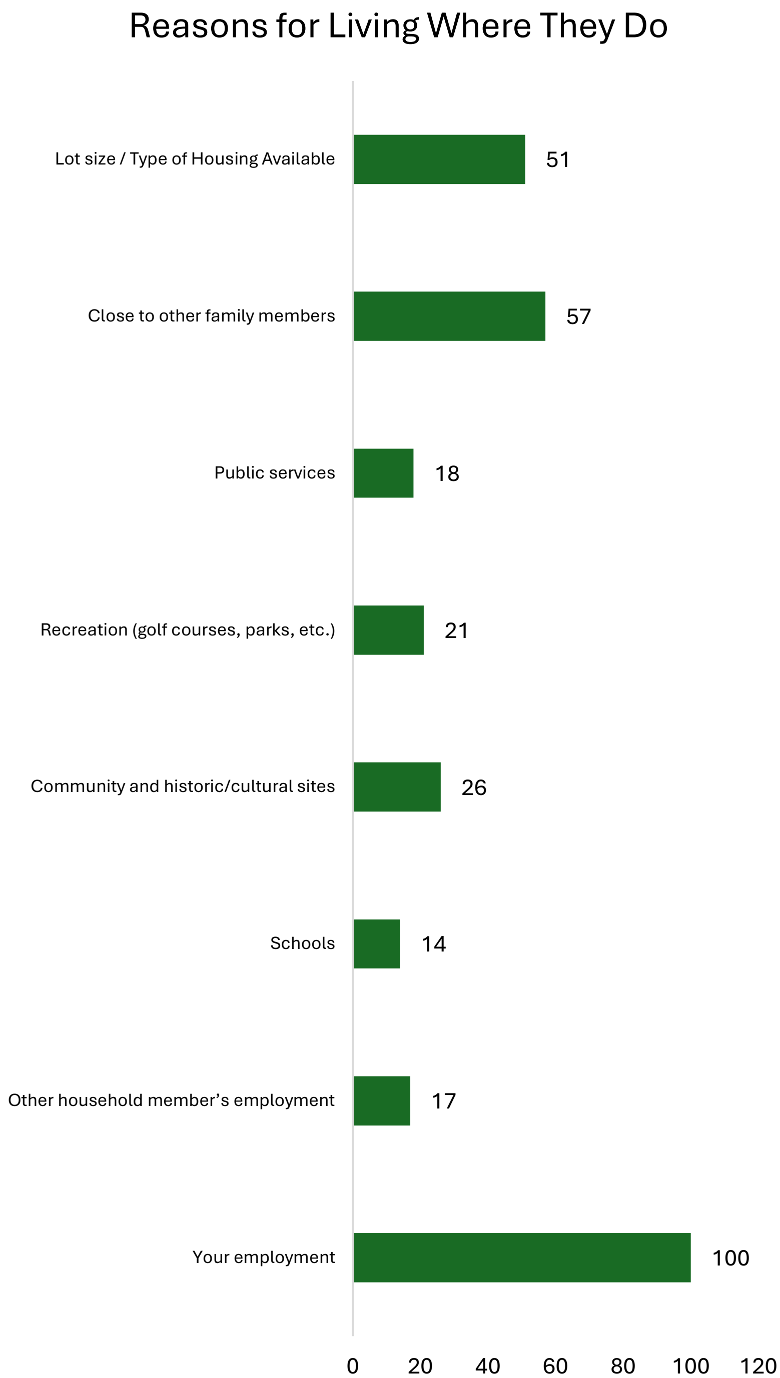


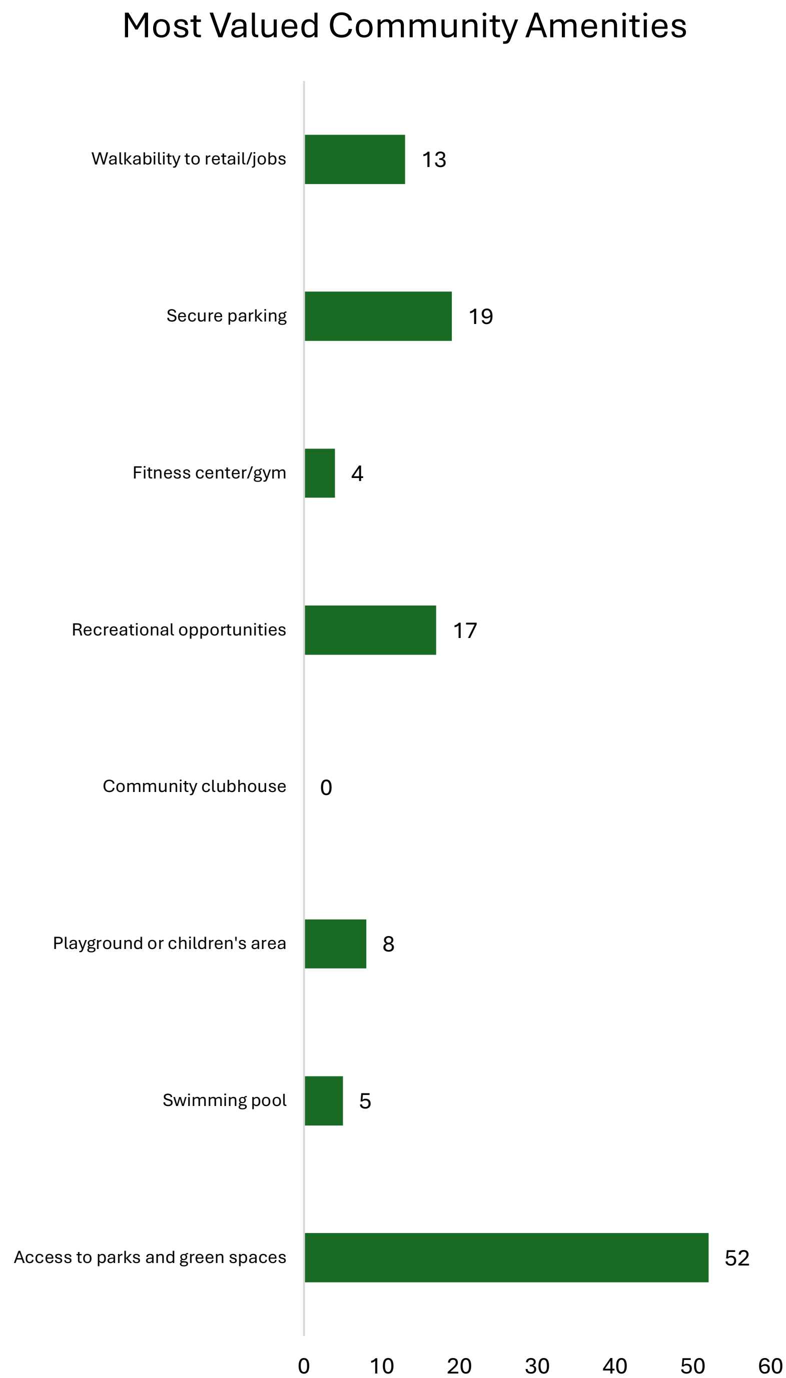




While Richmond County has the most diverse housing inventory in the region from a typology perspective, Richmond County respondents identified housing preferences similar to most other counties in the region, favoring single-family detached unit types over other unit types. Notably, only Richmond County respondents chose large multifamily as their preferred housing type.

While housing costs were clearly the number one barrier that respondents identified with regard to choosing where to live, all other responses were identified at similar frequencies. This reflects the nuanced dynamics of Richmond County's housing market, which is the most established housing market in the region, offering a great deal of variety in terms of price and typology, but also struggling in certain places to provide enough housing, community amenities and high quality public services.

# Survey Findings – Richmond County




Richmond County respondents identified their employment as the primary reason for living where they do, which makes sense in the context of Richmond County's position as the economic center of the Aiken-Augusta Region. Other significant reasons identified were proximity to family and access to desired lot sizes and housing types, reflecting the strength and stability of the Richmond County community and the appeal of more historical and urban-style housing types among residents.

Richmond County respondents identified access to parks and green space as their most valued community amenity. Other amenities that respondents valued highly were recreational opportunities, secure parking and walkability to retail and jobs. This set of responses suggests that Richmond County residents value the urban amenities that living within the county offers.

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