

416 Housing Element

41.16.1 Introduction

The Housing element is integrated with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. ~~A full understanding of the County's housing policy and plans should include a study of these elements.~~

The GMA planning goals for housing are as follows:

- ~~Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state~~Encourage the availability of housing to all economic segments of the population
- Promote a variety of residential densities and housing types
- Encourage the preservation of existing housing stock

~~Changes to GMA in 2021 created new requirements for housing elements. In addition to providing an~~ The Housing element includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs within the County, ~~housing elements must also:~~

- ~~show there is sufficient land capacity to accommodate projected housing needs at each income level.~~
- ~~make adequate provisions for existing and projected housing needs, and~~
- ~~update policies and regulations to address racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion.~~

~~These updated goals and policies are provided in~~ Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan ~~identifies goals and policies for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing. A full understanding of the County's housing policy and plans should include a study of these elements referenced above.~~ Chapter 3: Land Use provides analysis to identify sufficient land for multiple housing choices to meet the projected needs of all economic segments of the County.

41.26.2 Existing Conditions

6.2.1 Population and Households

Count of population

~~According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM),~~In 2024, Benton County had a total population of 217,850 ~~in 2024,~~ with 37,805 residents (17%) living in unincorporated areas.² ~~According to~~Based on data from the 2000 Census and the 2019-2023 American Community Survey, ~~the average countywide~~ household size in Benton County has ~~remained fairly steady over~~

² Source Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), 2024.

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the past two decades, slightly increased just slightly from 2.68 persons in 2000 to 2.71 in 2023.³ In 2023, the total number of households countywide was 76,696.⁴

In 2023, The 2019–2023 American Community Survey data also indicate the median household income for Benton County was \$87,316.⁵ (Table 6-1, Table 6-3) shows the proportion of the population within each income group range.

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Table 6-1 Table 6-3
Percentage of Households Per by Income Range Groups, Benton County (2019-2023)

Income Range	Percentage of Households
Below \$25,000	11.4
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	15.7
Between \$50,000 and \$99,999	29.7
Above \$100,000	43.2

Source: US Census American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023

41.2.1.16.2.1.1 Special Housing Needs Housing

Citizens with special needs living in the county include those who require some assistance in their day-to-day living, such as the physically or mentally disabled, senior citizens, and institutional and group home settings residents. Social service programs and assisted housing in Benton County all serve a portion of those with special needs.

6.2.1.1.1 Households with Disabilities

Figure 6-1 shows renter households in Benton County by disability status and income. While there are households with disabilities across the entire income spectrum, the overall proportions are lower for higher-income groups. For example, the percentage of households with an independent living/self-care limitation among households with extremely low incomes (24%) is more than double the percentage among households with moderate incomes or higher (10%).

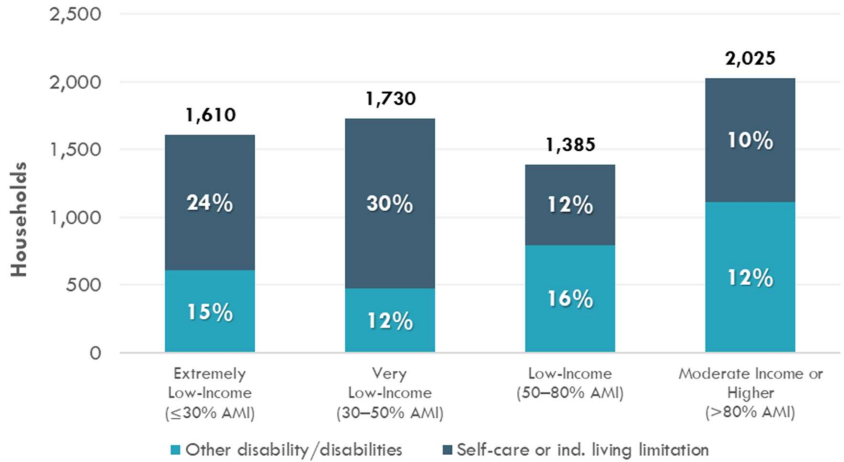
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³ Source: 2000 Census and the 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) Five-year estimates.

⁴ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates.

⁵ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates.

Figure 6-1 Renter Households by Disability and Cost Burden, Benton County (2016-2020)



Sources: US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2016-2020; BERK, 2025.

6.2.1.1.2 Older Residents

Approximately 32,722 Benton County residents are age 65 or older, representing about 16% of the total population. An additional 24,571 residents are between the ages of 55 and 64, suggesting that the county's elderly population is likely to grow significantly in the coming decade.⁶ Older adults have varying housing needs, but many depend on affordable and accessible options located in communities that support aging, including proximity to healthcare and essential services.⁷ While some older residents in Benton County can afford suitable housing and care, many others have may face financial barriers that limit their housing options. This can result in greater isolation and significant challenges to accessing resources and care.

6.2.1.1.3 Group Quarters

The U.S. Census Bureau classifies all individuals not living in traditional housing units, such as houses, apartments, mobile homes, or rented rooms, as residing in group quarters. Group quarters are categorized into two types: institutional and non-institutional. Institutional group quarters include facilities such as correctional institutions, nursing homes, and mental health hospitals. Non-

⁶ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates

⁷ Source: Molinsky, J. (2022, August 18). Housing for America's older adults: Four problems we must address. *Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies*. <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/housing-americas-older-adults-four-problems-we-must-address>

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institutional group quarters include settings like college dormitories, military barracks, group homes, missions, and shelters. Benton County had a total group quarters population of 2,158.⁸
total⁹

6.2.2 Housing Inventory

As of 2023, The 201523 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates data indicate there were 71,47381.792 housing units currently exist in the entire Benton County, including both cities and unincorporated areas (U.S. Census Bureau 202315).¹⁰ Unincorporated information is also provided below, along with a breakdown for cities. About 68.5 percent of the housing units are owner-occupied and 31.52 percent renter-occupied (Table 6-2Table 6-1).

Table 6-2Table 6-1
Benton County Housing Types and Occupancy, Benton County (2019-2023)

	Estimate in 201523	Percent
Total Housing units	71,47381.792	100.00
Occupied housing units	67,43076,696	934.800
Vacant housing units	4,0435,096	6.200
Tenure		
Owner-occupied housing units	45,50852,533	678.50
Renter-occupied housing units	21,92224,163	321.50
Unit Types		
1-unit, detached	44,59951,896	632.40
1-unit, attached	2,787,4,953	32.470
2 units	2,85089	4.003,5
3 or 4 units	3,0172,776	3.790
5 to 9 units	3,697479	4.590
10 to 19 units	3,4342,734	3.34.80
20 or more units	4,5097,360	6.309.0
Mobile home	7,6487,101	10.708.7
Boat, RV, van, and other	350489	0.430

Source: American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2015) US Census American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023

Single-family housing is the predominant housing type throughout the Countycounty. In 20152024, 665 percent of all units were single family, 24.23 percent were multi-family dwellings, and 11 percent

⁸ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates.
⁹ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates.
¹⁰ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates.

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were Manufactured-manufactured homes. The unincorporated county also has a large number of manufactured homes, which approximately 37 percent of homes in the unincorporated county considered manufactured homes, or Factory-Assembled Structures (Table 6-3Table 6-4). In unincorporated Benton County, large lot single family homes in a rural setting with accessory structures continue to be the preferred housing type. These are mostly developed on 5-acre or larger lots. The 1-acre lots also include larger single-family homes compared to homes in the County's urban areas. The unincorporated County also has a large number of manufactured homes as shown in Table 6-4.

Table 6-4

Table 6-3
Housing Mix, Cities in Benton County Jurisdictions, (2024)

Jurisdiction	Single family	Multi-family	ADUs	Manufactured Homes	Total Dwellings ¹
Unincorporated	8,097	220297	15	4,915	13,32411,962
Kennewick	21,491	9,48810,365	20	2,036	33,91229,356
Richland	19,101	6,3097,567	10	803	27,48122,130
Prosser	1,768	580581	1	234	2,5842,301
West Richland	5,177	305610	14	860	6,6614,530
Benton City	1,132	482111	2	290	1,5351,194
Total	56,766 (6566.4%)	17,08419,531 (22.84%)	62 (0.1%)	9,138 (110.7%)	85,49771,284 (100%)

Notes:
¹Does not include RV, Boats, and Vans
 Source: American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2015), Office of Financial Management (OFM), 2024

Housing units with 2 or 3 bedrooms are the most common in Benton County, accounting for approximately 63% of all occupied housing units.¹¹ Table 6-4 shows the bedroom size composition for the entire county, along with a breakdown by individual cities.

Table 6-4
Number of Bedrooms, Benton County Jurisdictions (2019-2023)

	No bedroom	1 bedroom	2 or 3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms
Kennewick	798	3,272	19,912	7,033

¹¹ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-year estimates.

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City of Benton City	1,162	1,194,153	32%
Total Units Incorporated	56,972 (83%)	59,511,72,173 (834%)	27%
Total Units Unincorporated	11,646 (17%)	11,962,13,324 (167%)	14%
Benton County (total)	68,618	85,497	25%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000, 2015) Office of Financial Management (OFM), 2024

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Table 6-6 shows the breakdown of production trends between 2020 and 2024 in Benton County's cities and unincorporated areas. Detached single-family units made up most permitted units, followed by manufactured homes. Across the county, the housing types with the highest number of permits included both single-family and multifamily units.

Table 6-6 Production Trends Permitted Housing Units by Jurisdiction, (2020-2024)

Jurisdiction	Single-Family	Multifamily	ADU	Manufactured Home*
City of Kennewick	1,457	483	17	64
City of Richland	1,593	748	8	17
City of Prosser	189	48	0	5
City of West Richland	702	460	9	18
City of Benton City	137	12	2	9
Total Units Incorporated	4,078	1,751	36	113
Total Units Unincorporated**	602	26	20	112
Benton County (total)	4,680	1,777	56	225

* Note: OFM does not provide permit data for mobile homes. The figures shown represent a net new calculation based on the total number of mobile homes and those that have been annexed.

**Unincorporated Benton County includes rural areas as well as unincorporated urban growth areas outside of cities.

Source: Office of Financial Management (OFM), 2024

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41.2.26.2.4 Affordability

The term affordable, when used with regard to housing, is usually relative to a specific economic segment of the population. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered

cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.

The 2015 Census data indicate approximately 22 percent of the County's housing units cost over 30 percent of the owner's monthly income. [The 2019-2023 American Community Survey data indicate that](#) Approximately 17.6 percent of the county's owner-occupied housing units cost more than 30 percent of the owner's monthly income, while 45.1 percent of renter households are ~~cost-burdened~~ cost burdened.¹³ In total, 26.3 percent of households in Benton County are housing cost – burdened.

6.2.4.1 Subsidized Affordable Housing

Benton County had a total of 3,726 subsidized affordable housing units as of 2023 ~~(Table 6-8)~~.¹⁴ These data do not indicate what affordability levels are served by these units.

~~Data from WCRER indicate that~~ 3,491 of these units (94%) are in the cities of Kennewick and Richland. ~~Data about the location of t~~~~he~~ remaining 235 units is unavailable. ~~are likely to be in unincorporated areas or smaller cities.~~

Table 6-8 Subsidized Rental Housing Inventory by Jurisdiction (2023)

Jurisdiction	Number of Units
City of Kennewick	2,716
City of Richland	775
City of Prosser*	NA
City of West Richland	NA
City of Benton City*	NA
Benton County (total)	3,726

* These data are provided for all counties and cities with populations of at least 10,000.
Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research, 2023

6.2.5 Emergency and Supportive Housing Needs

Emergency and supportive housing are vital for those at risk of ~~or experiencing~~ homelessness. They help people who are homeless or are close to ~~experiencing it~~them. These individuals may become homeless due to affordability issues. Life events, such as domestic violence, racial discrimination, and mental and physical health problems also play a role. These specific types of housing typically

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¹³ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-Year Estimates.

¹⁴ Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER), Subsidized Rental Housing Profile, 2023.

support individuals and families with extremely low whose income falls within the 0-30% AMI bracket. As of 2020, there were 168 emergency beds county-wide.¹⁵

Permanent supportive housing provides long-term rental assistance with voluntary supportive services. As of 2020, there were 145 permanent supportive housing beds in Benton County.¹⁶

6.2.5.1 Homeless Population and Trends

In July 2024, 2,791 individuals experienced homelessness or unstable housing countywide, with 1,827 of them being homeless only.¹⁷ Table 6-7 Table 6-9 provides a breakdown of unstably housed or homeless individuals by household type.¹⁸ Adults without minors comprise approximately 48.3% of this population.

Table 6-79 Unstably Housed or Homeless Persons by Household Type, Benton County (2024)

Household Types	Homeless or Unstably Housed	Homeless Only
Minor Only, None under Age 12	<11	<11
Minor Only, at Least One under Age 12	<11	<11
Youth (18-24) w/o Minors	186	139
Adults (25+) w/o Minors	1,348	990
Single Parent with Minors	717	454
Two Parents with Minors	534	241
Unknown	<11	0
Total	2,791	1,827

Source: Snapshot of Homelessness in Washington State for July 2024. Washington State Department of Commerce, 2025

The most common and immediate cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable and available housing. With low vacancy rates in Benton and Franklin Counties, even individuals without significant barriers struggle to find affordable options. Landlords can be selective, and rising rents driven by inflation have forced many households to spend a larger share of their income on housing, straining other basic expenses. Many individuals experiencing homelessness face additional challenges such as prior evictions, legal issues, or behavioral health conditions. While rates of mental illness and substance use have remained relatively stable, a shortage of treatment options creates significant barriers to stability. Property damage caused by individuals with untreated behavioral health issues

¹⁵ Source: Washington State Department of Commerce, Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT), 2024.

¹⁶ Source: Washington State Department of Commerce, Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT), 2024.

¹⁷ Source: Department of Commerce, Snapshot of Homelessness in Washington State, July 2024.

¹⁸ "Homeless or Unstably Housed" refers to households experiencing homelessness or housing instability (e.g., they are literally homeless/unsheltered, receiving housing services that indicate housing instability, residing in transitional housing, or couch surfing). "Homeless Only" is a subset of the "Homeless or Unstably Housed" population and includes unsheltered clients/households who are literally homeless (i.e., lack a fixed nighttime residence, are living outside or in a shelter not fit for human habitation, or are living in emergency shelter).

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has also led to increased reluctance from landlords and hotel managers to accept program referrals, further limiting housing opportunities.¹⁹

41.3 Future Considerations

As discussed above, based on the population estimates, the County will need to add 6,716 new homes in the next 20 years. The Land Use element discusses potential areas for future developments and the County's land capacity to meet projected housing needs. The discussion below indicates multiple housing types in various densities to address housing needs and affordability.

6.3 Projected Housing Needs

Washington's Office of Financial Management (OFM) projects that the population of Benton County will grow to 278,456 by 2046.

This is an increase of 71,583 residents between 2020 and 2046. According to the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce), the county needs to add an additional 38,260 net new units of housing to accommodate this growth and address current housing shortage.²⁰ Within the unincorporated rural areas, the county needs to add 4,974 new units. Commerce's Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) identifies the countywide housing needs by affordability level, consistent with new requirements in Washington's Growth Management Act. Table 6-8 Table 6-10 shows the allocation of these projected housing needs by income level to cities and unincorporated rural Benton County. Income levels refer to AMI, or Area Median Income.²¹

Table 6-810. Allocation of housing needs by income level to jurisdictions, 2020-2046

Jurisdiction	Total Units Allocated	Permanent Housing Needs by Affordability Level (% of AMI)						
		0-30% Non-PSH	0-30% PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%
Benton City	765	97	61	152	107	59	67	222
Kennewick	12,626	1,597	1,007	2,513	1,772	974	1,104	3,659
Prosser	765	97	61	152	107	59	67	222
Richland	14,155	1,789	1,130	2,817	1,988	1,092	1,237	4,102
West Richland	4,975	629	397	990	698	384	435	1,442
Unincorporated Rural	4,974	0	0	0	0	384	435	4,155

¹⁹ Source: Benton and Franklin Counties, 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan Annual Report, 2024.

²⁰ Source: Washington State Department of Commerce, Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT), 2024.

²¹ AMI is an estimate of the median income of all family households that is published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annually. In 2025, AMI for a 4-person household in Benton county was \$105,600. HUD adjusts this value upwards or downwards based on household size when determining income limits that classify all households based on their income level.

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Total	38,260	4,209	2,656	6,624	4,672	2,952	3,345	13,802
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Note: PSH = Permanent Supportive Housing.

Source: [Benton County Countywide Planning Policies](#).

6.3.1 Housing Types to Accommodate Projected Housing Needs

Not all housing types are appropriate for meeting all housing needs. Due to differences in land and construction costs per unit, the affordability of new housing depends in part on housing type. For instance, a new single-family home on a large lot is the most expensive type of home to produce per unit. Multifamily homes, such as apartment buildings, can be produced at a much lower cost per unit.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs): ADUs have potential to increase the diversity of housing options within rural Benton County, areas where detached single-family homes predominate to include smaller and lower cost units. ADUs can be attached or detached from a primary residence on a shared lot. Depending on the context, ADUs can be an affordable housing option for Low-Income (50-80% AMI), Moderate-Income (80-120% AMI) households, or higher-income households.

The zoning code permits the establishment of one attached or detached dwelling per lot in unincorporated areas zoned for single family residences. There are several requirements with regards to parking, occupancy, and use of these ADUs. additional living quarters within single family residences to permit persons who, due to a disability or an infirmity, require the assistance of friends, relatives, or a professional nurse to remain in their home and for persons related to the occupant. These units help meet the needs of the disabled, infirm, or elderly in need of assisted care and are currently allowed by ordinance in all residential zones and the agricultural zoning district of Benton County.

The County plans to review its zoning code for provisions to allow accessory dwelling units in its single-family residential zones in addition to its current code provision of allowing accessory dwelling units for disabled, infirm, or elderly residents.

Between 2020 and 2024, 11 ADUs were permitted in unincorporated Benton County.²²

Affordable Housing Types. Manufactured homes: Factory Assembled Structures and mobile homes offer housing alternatives suitable to low-income and moderate-income groups as well as senior citizens. Factory assembled structures are designed, made off site, and assembled on site. This process helps reduce building material and construction costs. Quality Factory Assembled Structures can be placed on a parcel for approximately 70 percent of the cost of a comparably sized site-built structure. As technology improves, ~~factory~~ ~~Factory assembled~~ ~~Assembled structures~~ ~~Structures~~ can

²² Source: BERK analysis of Benton County permit data, 2025.

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be designed to closely resemble site-built homes. In addition, when placed in mobile home parks or subdivisions, Factory Assembled Structures can offer reduced land and infrastructure costs.

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Factory Assembled Structures are a major source of affordable housing in Benton County. They meet Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards, which make it possible for buyers to get loans to purchase with little or no down payment. This is a very attractive option for those with little savings to buy site-built homes.

Farm Labor Housing. Farm labor housing is available in all zoning districts that allow residential dwelling units, and, further, the County recognizes that RCW 70.114A provides additional opportunities for migrant and seasonal farm labor housing in Benton County.

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Planned Developments (PD). PD developers are offered flexibility in project design and site planning, which can allow for a higher quality development and improved affordability. PDs are generally characterized by flexible site requirements, which focus on overall project design rather than lot by lot design, efficiency in the provision of utilities, and common open space.

Multiple Detached Dwellings. Under the current BCC, the Planning Administrator may approve up to four detached dwellings on an individual lot provided the proposed use complies with all applicable Benton Franklin Health District, Department of Health and Social Services, and Ecology requirements, as well as the density requirements of the Comprehensive Plan. The multiple dwellings provision allows for supervision of elderly or infirmed family members and other flexible living arrangements.

Temporary Dwellings. All residential and agricultural districts permit temporary dwellings. These types of housing are also approved with or without conditions by the Planning Administrator. They may be approved in cases of personal hardship and to suit the needs of the agricultural community on a temporary basis. Because such hardships or needs are personal and generally transitory, it is determined that the approval of temporary dwellings do not constitute a long-term land use commitment that would conflict with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

6.3.1.1 Housing Production Trends by Housing Type

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Table 6-9 lists three housing types that can be built in rural unincorporated Benton County. It also shows the typical affordability level of new units, based on BERK's analysis of local market conditions. These housing types and affordability assumptions are consistent with Commerce guidance for updating housing elements.

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Table 6-9 Estimated Housing Production and Assumed Income Levels Served in Rural Benton County

Housing Type	Assumed Affordability Level	Estimated Production, 2020-2024	Average Annual Production
Detached Single family homes	Higher Income (>120% AMI)	892	223
Manufactured Homes	Moderate-Income (80-120% AMI)	229	57
Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)	Moderate-Income (80-120% AMI)	11	3

Sources: Washington Department of Commerce Guidance for Updating Your Housing Element, 2023; Benton County, 2025; [BERK, 2025](#).

6.3.2 Land Capacity for Projected Housing Needs

Counties are not required to show capacity in rural areas for accommodating projected housing need for higher income (> 120% AMI) income-households. But analysis is required to show capacity for accommodating allocated low-income (0-80% AMI) and moderate-income (80-120% AMI) housing needs. **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** [Table 6-10](#) provides this analysis for rural Benton County. It begins by estimating how much of the housing need allocation has already been accommodated through new manufactured homes and ADUs built between 2020 and 2024. Subtracting this from the total allocation results in a remaining housing need of 579 units. Next, it compares the average annual need (approximately 28 units per year for 21 years) to the average annual production of these units types (53 units per year for the previous 5 years). Given that historic average annual production is nearly double the average annual need, it is likely that continuation of these historic development trends in Benton County will result in enough new housing to accommodate moderate-income housing needs.

Table 6-10 Comparison of Allocated Housing Needs to Historic Production Trend, Rural Benton County

Affordability Level (% of AMI)	Housing Need Allocation, 2020-2046	Estimated Production, 2020-2024	Remaining Need, 2025-2046	Average Annual Need, 2025-2046	Average Annual Production, 2020-2024	Surplus or Deficit of Production Rate Capacity Compared to Need
>80-120%	819	240	579	28	53-660	26-32

Sources: Benton County, 2025; [BERK, 2025](#).

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6.4 Adequate Provisions

Growth Management Act requires that communities ensure that their Comprehensive Plan policies and regulations are designed to achieve housing availability for all community members at all income levels. The County does this by reviewing programs and actions, and then identifying gaps in local funding, barriers in development regulations, and other limitations with a course of action to correct.

6.4.1 Consideration for low, very low, extremely low, and moderate income households

Rural Benton County's allocation of countywide housing needs includes moderate-income household (80-120% AMI). See the previous section for a discussion of permitted housing types that can meet these needs. Benton County's allocation of countywide housing needs addresses all low-income housing needs (0-80% AMI) within cities.

6.4.2 Programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability

Analysis of housing production trends detailed in the previous section indicates that there are no barriers to achieving housing availability for moderate-income households. However, the county does have some tools to encourage the production of housing needed to support affordability. These include encouraging the production of lower cost housing types (discussed above), density, and the development review process.

41.3.1.16.4.2.1 Density

A range of residential densities is provided within the unincorporated County to provide broad affordability related to land costs and construction. Within the Rural Community Center areas in Paterson, Whitstran, Plymouth, and Finley, densities of up to 3 DU/acre may occur, including duplexes.

Densities of 1 DU/acre are designated in Rural Transition areas due to their proximity to UGAs and adequate road capacity. These designations are considered limited areas of more intensive rural development enabled by RCW36.70A.070 (5)(d). The density of 1 DU/5 acres is the dominant rural density in Rural Remote areas. Low density residential uses are allowed in Rural Resource areas at 1 DU/20 acres. Minimum lot sizes in each land use and zoning district are identified in the zoning code Chapter 11 of BCC.



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Commented [BF50]: Might help to add this need gets addressed within the cities

Commented [KR51R50]: addressed

Commented [BF52]: This provides the basis for EIS alternative with some affordable housing - 80% AMI range, as at least Finley and Plymouth have parcel capacity to accommodate

Commented [KR53R52]: We've discussed this point. These areas may be suitable for moderate income housing needs 80-120%), but not low-income.

41.3.1.26.4.2.2 Development Review Process

In addition to land use policies, the County's development review process will be periodically evaluated for efficiency and customer service improvement opportunities. Periodic reviews to improve efficiency and service can help reduce housing development costs and may also encourage developers to use the policy and regulatory features of the Comprehensive Plan which is designed to encourage affordable housing.

6.4.3 Consideration of housing locations in relation to employment locations

As of 2022, there were an estimated 94,736 jobs located in Benton County. Leading sectors include health care and social assistance, administration & support, waste management and remediation, and retail trade.²³

Most jobs in the county are concentrated in its two largest cities, Kennewick and Richland, as well as along Interstate 82 (I-82), extending through Benton City and Prosser. Additional employment opportunities, such as agricultural work, exist in the rural areas of the county's southern region. Additionally, there are job opportunities across the river in Oregon, including data centers in Umatilla and Boarman as well as agricultural and construction work.

Most of the employed Benton County population drives to work. Approximately 75% drive alone and 10% carpool. The average travel time to work is 22 minutes.²⁴ The second most common practice is to work from home (11.6%). The average travel time to work is 22 minutes.²⁵

41.3.2 Benton County's allocation of projected housing needs emphasizes growth in cities with established employment centers and adjoining cities.

6.4.4 Consider the role of ADUs in meeting housing needs

This plan includes considerations for the role of ADUs in meeting housing needs. See discussion in previous section. It finds that ADUs have potential to help address housing needs for Low-Income (50-80% MFI), Moderate-Income (80-120% MFI) households, or higher-income households, depending on context. Encouraging ADU production in UGAs and rural community centers has potential to support meeting housing targets for these affordability levels.

²³ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program, 2022.

²⁴ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-Year Estimates.

²⁵ Source: 2019-2023 ACS Five-Year Estimates.

Commented [BF54]: I think it would be appropriate to give a nod to the significant development/job opportunities happening across the river in Oregon - data centers in Umatilla and in Boardman - agriculture, etc. Some live in south county or south Kennewick and commute down to Oregon for work. Tons of construction jobs also. Plymouth has an RV park where construction labor stays and the community also serves as bedroom area for the OR jobs and ag jobs on large farms in southern part of the County

Commented [KR55R54]: see edits

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Commented [BF56]: And rural community centers with capacity for more growth? Plymouth and Finley?

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Commented [BF58]: Should we also relate this to the target allocation of 80% and greater AMI county will work towards?

Commented [KR59R58]: see edits

6.5 Racially Disparate Impacts

Over the past two decades, the cost of buying or renting a home has risen sharply across Washington State, impacting communities statewide, including those in Benton County. While rising housing costs affect all households, communities of color are disproportionately burdened. These communities are more likely to spend a higher share of their income on housing, live in lower-quality homes, and face barriers to homeownership. As a result, they are often more vulnerable to housing shortages and escalating housing costs.

In alignment with the GMA amendments outlined in HB 1220, cities and counties have a responsibility to begin to undo the policies and practices that have contributed to racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing. They are also tasked with adopting policies that actively mitigate these impacts. The sections that follow Appendix X presents evidence of racially disparate impacts, exclusionary patterns, and displacement risks within Benton County. Based on the findings of this analysis the County revised its Housing Goals and Policies to mitigate racially disparate impacts in housing outcomes. The County reviewed the policies based on the criteria such as:

- Effectiveness of the policies to accommodate housing for all;
- Outcome of the policies such as who benefits and who is burdened by the policies
- Risk level of the policies; policies, whether it increases the risk of displacement for the vulnerable communities

The County also reviewed policies to ensure they didn't include any harmful bias associated with any groups. The Housing Goals and Policies section included new goals and policies to address racially disparate impacts such as displacement of housing due to planning, disinvestment, redevelopment, etc. Policies to provide a variety of housing types as included will also act to mitigate displacement and disparate impacts.

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