



**SOUTHSIDE**  
PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

2023/24  
REGIONAL HOUSING STUDY

# CONTENTS

## INTRO

---

Executive Summary	I-1
Acknowledgments	I-2
About the Study	I-2

## REGIONAL

---

Findings	R-1
Solutions	R-3
Towns Solutions	R-7

## BRUNSWICK CO.

---

Findings	B-1
Solutions	B-5

## HALIFAX CO.

---

Findings	H-1
Solutions	H-5

## TOWN OF SOUTH BOSTON

---

Findings	SB-1
Solutions	SB-3

## MECKLENBURG CO.

---

Findings	M-1
Solutions	M-6

## TOWN OF SOUTH HILL

---

Findings	SH-1
Solutions	SH-3

## WRAP UP

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Conclusion & What's Next	C-1
--------------------------	-----



[SouthsidePDC.org](http://SouthsidePDC.org)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

***The region needs more housing investment to satisfy demand and realize its economic potential.***

Housing demand is growing across the Southside Planning District Commission (PDC) region, composed of Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg counties. Business growth and economic development in each county is increasing the number of jobs available in the region, which is likely to sustain increases in housing demand. Increased demand is improving prices and rents in the market, but not without consequences.

Increasing demand since 2015 has improved the health of the housing market throughout the region, but in some localities, demand has surpassed supply. For example, the Town of South Boston has an extremely competitive rental market, pushing up rents and excluding some workers.

**Even in places where overall supply and demand are balanced, housing gaps still require additional development to respond to specific demand segments:**



**Rental housing & homeownership opportunities for low/mid-wage workers\***

**Moderately priced apartments for young professionals**

**Turn-key housing for young families**

***Housing is a key element of the region's competitiveness.***

The region is increasingly connected to the Richmond, Raleigh, and Greensboro metropolitan areas, as well as the nearby Danville micropolitan area. Although Southside PDC localities are preferred by those seeking rural and small-town lifestyles, substantial growth among businesses has put these communities in direct competition with more urban places to attract and retain employees. The region needs more amenities and high-quality services to satisfy skilled workers, as well as enough housing that is affordable for service industry workers.

All three counties have seen substantial increases in rent, with the Town of South Hill in Mecklenburg County demonstrating the most dramatic change in the region. When an area's rent becomes unaffordable, longtime residents who work low-wage jobs may have to leave. Even workers who are able to pay rent may choose to leave if they no longer have enough extra income to save for a home. Home prices in the region are increasing beyond affordable levels for some workers, and those workers are likely to seek a place where they have the opportunity to buy a home and build wealth.

This report provides details about the housing market in the region, housing needs and housing gaps, as well as strategies to address local housing challenges and goals. Citizens can use this report to learn about housing issues in the region. Developers, builders, and local governments can use this report and the more detailed technical report as a road map for providing the mix of housing types the region needs to support further economic development.

*\*Household income less than \$60,000 is a particularly important gap.*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Southside Regional Housing Market Analysis would not have been possible without the collaborative input, feedback, and participation of the following partners: Virginia Housing, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech, HousingForward Virginia, Brunswick County, Town of Alberta, Town of Brodnax, Town of Lawrenceville, Halifax County, Town of Halifax, Town of South Boston, Mecklenburg County, Town of Boydton, Town of Chase City, Town of Clarksville, Town of La Crosse, Town of South Hill, Southside Planning District Commission staff, the Virginia Association of REALTORS, and all community focus group participants.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

The Southside PDC in partnership with the Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech (VCHR) and HousingForward Virginia (HFV) conducted this study to identify housing needs, challenges, and opportunities in the Southside Virginia region and develop solutions for purposeful housing development and research-driven housing projects. Serving the counties of Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg, the Southside PDC was established as the official regional planning and development agency to promote intergovernmental cooperation and coordination on mutual problems of regional significance.



## Housing Need and Market Analysis

VCHR used a number of public and proprietary datasets to analyze the housing markets across the southside region:

- 2010-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates
- 2014-2021 Consolidated Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data
- 2021-2024 Lightcast occupation wage data
- 2014-2023 Virginia Association of REALTORS home sale data
- 2021 U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD OnTheMap data
- 2024-Q3 CoStar rent and vacancy data for South Boston and South Hill
- Local real estate tax assessment data
- Local certificate of occupancy data

The availability of quality, publicly available data is limited for many rural jurisdictions and other small places since the U.S. Census Bureau is unable to collect enough sample data to make reliable estimates. Analysis of limited and sometimes unreliable data requires additional time and effort by the research team to collect and validate data. The team analyzed and reported reliable data and then supplemented this data with local data and collected additional data through interviews and focus groups.

**The team conducted eight focus groups and 11 interviews with key housing experts and stakeholders:**

<b>Realtors and real estate agents</b>	<b>Employers</b>
<b>Builders and contractors</b>	<b>Local government staff and officials</b>
<b>Developers</b>	<b>Economic development staff</b>
<b>Service providers</b>	<b>Lenders</b>
<b>Educators</b>	<b>Building officials</b>



## Solution Development

This study features policy solutions for the region and its local jurisdictions. These recommendations were developed in a **collaborative process** between HFV, the Southside PDC, local government representatives, and other community stakeholders **over five phases**:

1

**Gathering context:** HFV first assembled important background information from prior studies and plans, feedback from local listening sessions, community input from focus groups and interviews, and the findings from VCHR’s needs analysis.

2

**Defining priorities:** HFV synthesized material for the jurisdictions and for the whole region to propose important opportunities, challenges, and objectives for their housing solutions

3

**Preliminary solutions:** HFV used those priorities to suggest a wide range of potential policies and programs that could advance each community’s respective housing goals. Working together with the Southside PDC and locality staff, HFV consolidated these options into a short list for the jurisdictions and the region.

4

**Initial drafts:** HFV then prepared working drafts of each solution to present for staff feedback. Solutions incorporated current best practices in housing policy and program development, and accounted for both administrative and political capacities.

5

**Final versions:** A final round of input from the Southside PDC and local government staff helped HFV refine each solution into its full, complete versions.

*Two tiers of solutions are provided to the region and each jurisdiction:*

### PRIORITY SOLUTIONS

provide higher levels of detail and reflect strategic objectives for those communities.

### SECONDARY SOLUTIONS

are less detailed & usually include strategies that communities can pursue in the background, or following additional research.

Throughout the Southside PDC region, localities need to address key housing gaps and housing conditions. Focus group and data findings helped the study team identify common barriers to addressing these challenges, including homebuyer readiness, vacant and abandoned housing, developer capacity, and regional coordination. This section reviews these findings, and the following section outlines regional solutions to address them.

## Market Competitiveness & Homebuyer Readiness



Across the region, median days on the market (DOM), from list to close, has decreased substantially. Decreasing median DOM indicates that homes are selling faster and is evidence of increasing demand. Prices increase when demand increases faster than supply, so increases in price show that the market is becoming more competitive. In Mecklenburg County, median sale price increased 34% from 2014 to 2021 for properties sold within five miles of a lake. However, properties that are not located near the lakes saw a more drastic increase of 104%. During the same time period, median price in Halifax increased 65%. In Brunswick, median price rose from \$67,500 in 2017 to \$169,000 in 2023, marking a 150% increase.

Price and interest rate increases, along with increased competitiveness, mean that many would-be first-time homebuyers are struggling to find an affordable home. As such, the readiness of first-time homebuyers becomes more important to their success. Some local lenders and housing providers offer limited homebuyer education and credit repair guidance; however, more in-depth services are needed to support potential buyers in the ongoing market context.



## Vacant and Abandoned Housing



Across the region, a large portion of housing has been vacant in the long term: 1,862 units (9%) in Mecklenburg, 947 (12%) in Brunswick, and 2,915 (17%) in Halifax. The units are abandoned, slated for demolition, or otherwise held in the long term without being offered for sale or for rent. About 23% of long-term vacancies in Halifax are in South Boston while the rest are primarily in the unincorporated parts of the county. In Mecklenburg, a majority of long-term vacant properties (88%) are located in unincorporated areas of the county.\*

Abandoned properties can be a health and safety hazard. In contrast, properties held in the long term may be livable housing units and an opportunity to increase the region's housing inventory if they are located in desirable locations and are not dilapidated. Increasing prices may encourage owners who have been holding vacant units in the long term to sell, reducing the number of long-term vacancies. However, some owners will not respond to improved market conditions. These properties will require additional local and regional attention to address.

## Development



The region is fortunate to have builders and subcontractors but lacks needed development capacity. Most available land and redevelopment opportunities with infrastructure are in or nearby the region's towns. Parcel accumulation, design, demolition, infrastructure upgrade, and other site preparation measures need to be led by developers. Developers are experienced in real estate transactions, engineering, and design that needs to occur in advance of project proposals. They also lead equity investment and

financing for site preparation in advance of building, as well as construction and permanent financing. Participants in builder and developer focus groups identified development capacity as a key barrier to creating new housing; therefore, the region needs to attract or create additional development capacity. Primary Solution 2, Secondary Solutions 1 and 2, and the Regional Towns Solutions will support development and help the region attract developers in the short term, while growing local capacity for development in the longer term.

*\*Similar data regarding the location of vacant units is not available for Brunswick.*



## Primary Solution 1: Pool resources to improve homebuyer readiness across the region.

### *What It Does*

Many residents across the region struggle to find affordable homes to buy. Young professionals, and families with workers in growing industries are especially challenged. While an increase in supply is necessary (and addressed by other recommendations in this study), ensuring that potential buyers are “ready to go” can increase their odds of future success. This solution would create a new regional service to help people prepare for homeownership through education and one-on-one support.

### *How to Do It*

- Create and fund new housing counselor positions to serve the entire region.
- Get certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to unlock more funding and resources.
- Offer classes and individual help on budgeting, credit, mortgages, and more.
- Partner with lenders, real estate agents, and major employers.

### *Who Does What*

The Southside PDC would manage the program, with funding from member localities. Local housing professionals and employers would help promote the service and refer potential homebuyers.

### *How to Fund It*

Member localities could contribute based on population. The Southside PDC could also pursue grants from HUD, Virginia Housing, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), as well as local banks and other community-based businesses.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of people receiving counseling each year
- Percentage who successfully purchase homes
- Geographic spread of new homeowners across the region
- Impact on overall homeownership rates, especially for younger households



## Primary Solution 2: Create regional tools to address vacant and abandoned homes.

### *What It Does*

Many neighborhoods in the region struggle with vacant and abandoned homes that hurt property values and quality of life. This strategy would create new ways for local governments to work together to identify these properties, determine who owns them, and take action to fix the problem.

### *How to Do It*

- Combine local datasets to build a regional database of vacant properties.
- Create a standard way to assess conditions of residential properties.
- Develop tools to research and monitor property ownership.
- Provide guides on legal pathways to address vacant homes under current state law.
- Explore the potential for a regional land bank to facilitate acquisition and redevelopment.

### *Who Does What*

The Southside PDC would manage the program and create the tools. Member localities would contribute data, conduct property assessments, and use the tools to address vacant homes in their communities.

### *How to Fund It*

Member localities could contribute based on population or number of vacant properties. The Southside PDC could also pursue grants from Virginia Housing, DHCD, and federal sources like HUD.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of vacant properties identified and assessed
- # of ownership issues resolved
- # of vacant properties rehabilitated or demolished
- Improvement in neighborhood property values



## Secondary Solution 1: Create framework for strategic development along town-county borders.

### *What It Does*

Towns and counties often struggle to coordinate growth at their borders, leading to missed opportunities. This solution outlines a collaborative process to create a playbook to be used in future conversations between towns and counties about planning and development goals along their shared borders.

### *How to Do It*

- Identify key growth areas along town-county borders within the region.
- Form joint town-county teams to plan for each area.
- Explore boilerplate agreements on how to share costs and benefits.
- Propose consistent rules for development in these areas.
- Coordinate efforts to strategically attract new businesses and residential development.

### *Who Does What*

The Southside PDC would guide the process and provide technical help. Towns and counties would work together to create plans, align their rules, and share resources for development in border areas. Localities would then incorporate these efforts into their long-term planning documents.

### *How to Fund It*

Towns and counties could contribute staff time and resources. The Southside PDC could seek grants from state agencies like DHCD to support the planning process.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of joint plans created for border areas
- Amount of new housing and business development in these areas
- Increase in tax revenue for both towns and counties
- Improved coordination between town and county governments



## Secondary Solution 2: Boost regional capacity to support housing development.

### *What It Does*

The region faces challenges in building diverse and affordable housing options, both for current residents and for new incoming workers. These barriers include developer capacity, financing options, and other related issues. This solution outlines possible strategies for the Southside PDC to pursue that would support efforts of local governments, builders, and other partners to create more housing choices.

### *How to Do It*

- Create a regional housing trust fund to support affordable housing projects.
- Provide and coordinate technical support to local governments on housing issues.
- Work with schools to train more construction workers.
- Promote research and testing of new ways to build affordable homes.
- Start a regional land bank to reuse vacant properties.

### *Who Does What*

For some initiatives, Southside PDC staff would play a managing role; for others, the Southside PDC may simply initiate or coordinate efforts among partners. Member localities would contribute funding and use the new services. Schools and businesses would partner on job training programs.

### *How to Fund It*

Member localities could arrange additional contributions to the Southside PDC for housing-specific investments. The Southside PDC could also seek grants from Virginia Housing, DHCD, and federal agencies.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of new homes built with Southside PDC help
- Amount of money raised for housing projects
- # of people trained for construction jobs
- Increase in types of housing available in the region



## Primary Solution 1: Revitalize towns with mixed-use development.

### *What It Does*

Many town centers in the region have underutilized historic buildings that as a result act as community liabilities. This solution aims to breathe new life into these areas by promoting mixed-use development that combines housing and businesses. It focuses on converting upper floors of existing buildings into apartments, while encouraging vibrant commercial uses on the ground floors.

### *How to Do It*

- Establish a task force of local officials, business owners, and community members to guide the process.
- Update zoning rules to allow mixed residential & commercial uses in downtown buildings.
- Offer incentives like tax breaks or expedited permits to encourage property owners to redevelop their buildings.
- Improve public spaces with better sidewalks, lighting, and gathering areas.
- Actively recruit developers and businesses experienced in small-town revitalization projects.

### *Who Does What*

Town councils provide leadership and approve policy changes. Planning and economic development staff manage the detailed work of updating regulations, coordinating with property owners, and recruiting new businesses. Community organizations and residents provide input to ensure plans meet local needs.

### *How to Fund It*

Funding can come from state programs like Virginia Main Street grants, federal and state historic tax credits, and local sources like meals taxes. Private donations and corporate sponsorships may also support specific projects.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of buildings rehabilitated and new housing units created downtown
- Increase in occupied storefronts and new businesses opened
- Growth in foot traffic and event attendance in the downtown area
- Improved satisfaction among residents and visitors



### Primary Solution 2: Implement a regional adaptive reuse program.

#### *What It Does*

Many towns in the region have empty or underused non-residential buildings outside their central areas. This solution aims to repurpose these buildings into new homes or businesses, addressing housing needs and promoting economic development across the entire region.

#### *How to Do It*

- Create a regional inventory of vacant buildings suitable for reuse.
- Develop a package of incentives to encourage property owners and developers to invest in these buildings.
- Update zoning rules to make it easier to convert non-residential buildings to new uses.
- Connect property owners and developers with technical assistance providers to help navigate the reuse process.
- Market available properties and showcase successful projects to attract more interest.

#### *Who Does What*

The Southside PDC can assist with coordinating the overall program. Town councils would approve local policy changes. A regional team of planners, economic developers, and building officials can work together to implement the program. Property owners and developers will partner to carry out specific reuse projects.

#### *How to Fund It*

Funding can come from state programs like the Industrial Revitalization Fund, federal and state historic tax credits, and a pool of money contributed by participating towns. Private foundations and companies interested in community development may also provide support.

#### *How to Measure Success*

- # of buildings repurposed across the region
- # of new housing units
- # of new businesses opened in repurposed spaces
- Increase in property values of rehabilitated buildings
- Reduction in vacant properties region-wide



## Secondary Solution 1: Address water & sewer needs via strategic infrastructure planning & financing.

### *What It Does*

Limited water and sewer capacity can hold back new housing development in the towns. This solution aims to improve infrastructure planning and find new ways to pay for upgrades, making sure systems are in place to support new homes.

### *How to Do It*

- Assess current and future water and sewer needs across the region.
- Align infrastructure planning with housing development goals.
- Explore new funding options, including state programs and partnerships with developers.
- Encourage housing growth in areas that already have good infrastructure

### *Who Does What*

Town councils would approve infrastructure plans and funding strategies. Public works staff can lead the assessment of infrastructure needs. Planning departments would ensure that infrastructure and housing plans work together. Finance departments would explore funding options and manage grant applications.

### *How to Fund It*

Funding can come from state programs like the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA), federal grants from USDA Rural Development, and local sources like municipal bonds. Developers may also contribute to infrastructure costs for new projects.

### *How to Measure Success*

- Increase in water and sewer capacity to support new housing
- # of new homes built in areas with improved infrastructure
- Reduction in areas with inadequate water/sewer service
- Success in securing diverse funding sources for infrastructure projects

# LOCAL FINDINGS & SOLUTIONS



**While the preceding section outlines commonalities across the Southside PDC region, each locality presents its own unique challenges and opportunities.**

This section will outline some of the key local findings, and present solutions to address local housing concerns and goals. The study team crafted these solutions in partnership with local staff and stakeholders. As such, the solutions align with local goals and capacity.

# BRUNSWICK CO.

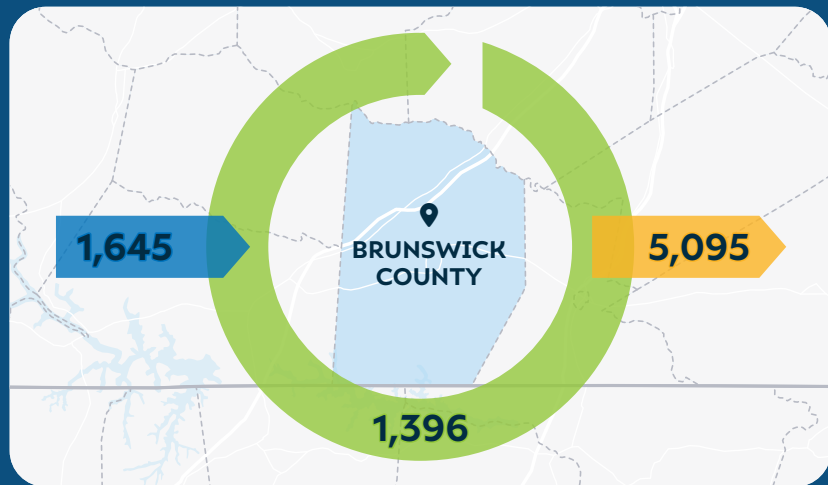
## Findings

Brunswick County is approximately 70 miles south of Richmond and 90 miles northwest of Raleigh, North Carolina. Approximately 16,000 people reside within more than 6,100 households in the county, which includes three towns; Alberta, Brodnax, and Lawrenceville. The county borders the state of North Carolina and is surrounded by the Virginia counties of Mecklenburg, Greensville, Lunenburg, Nottoway, and Dinwiddie.

In Brunswick County, 64% of households have at least one working individual. The majority of the working Brunswick County residents (78.5%) commute out of the county for their primary job. About 21% of individuals who work in the county also live in the county, 21% of workers commute to neighboring counties, and 20% commute to the Richmond metropolitan area.

## 2021 Inflow/Outflow of Brunswick County Workers for Primary Jobs

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD



Brunswick County's median age is 44.6 years. A substantial proportion of households (42%) includes at least one member who is 65 or older, which is higher than the average in the commonwealth of Virginia (29.9%). It's likely that the households who do not have at least one worker are retired since 25% of all households receive retirement income and 44% receive Social Security Income.



## Brunswick Co. » Findings

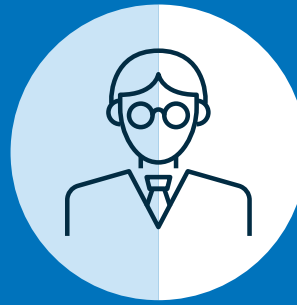


**6,165**  
households in  
the county

**73%**  
households own  
their homes

**38%**  
households led by  
people 65+

Among the top 10 occupations in the Southside PDC region, single-earners in only three occupations can afford the median rent in Brunswick County without straining their budget.



Specifically, only heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, registered nurses, and general and operations managers can comfortably afford median rental rates by allocating 30% or less of their monthly income.

A significant proportion of workers in Brunswick, particularly those in service and support roles, may find it challenging to secure affordable housing. The data becomes even more concerning when considering homeownership. Only registered nurses and general and operations managers can afford the median owner costs with a mortgage as a single-earner with median wages. This reality presents a potential hurdle for many workers wishing to lay down roots in Brunswick.



**MEDIAN COST OF RENTING** is unaffordable for **home health/personal care aides, cashiers, & fast food/counter workers**, even when earning at the 90th percentile of wages.

**MEDIAN COST OF HOMEOWNERSHIP** is unaffordable for **stockers/order fillers, retail sales people, and nursing assistants**, even when earning in the 90th percentile of wages.



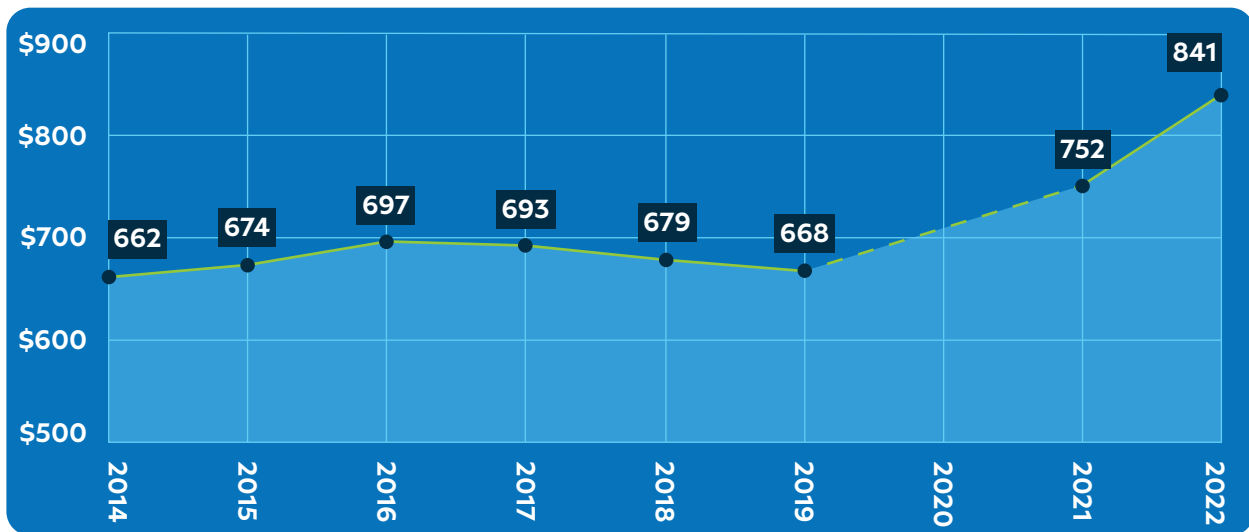
## Brunswick Co. » Findings

Households are considered to be cost-burdened if more than 30% of their income is spent on housing. In Brunswick County, 33% of renters are cost-burdened and 13% of the total renter households spend over 50% of their income on housing costs. About 36% of homeowners with a mortgage are cost-burdened, while 9% of homeowners who own their home free and clear are cost-burdened.

Brunswick County has a total of 7,940 housing units, which is 29% more units than households. Of vacant units, 53.3% are long-term vacancies: abandoned, slated for demolition, or otherwise held in the long term without being occupied. Meanwhile, 38.4% of vacant units are held for seasonal, recreational, or other occasional use, demonstrating demand from second-home buyers over and above demand from residents and prospective residents.

### Brunswick County Median Gross Rent

Source: VCHR tabulation of 2014-2022 ACS 5-year, not adjusted



Note: The U.S. Census Bureau deemed 2020 data experimental and it has been omitted from the study.

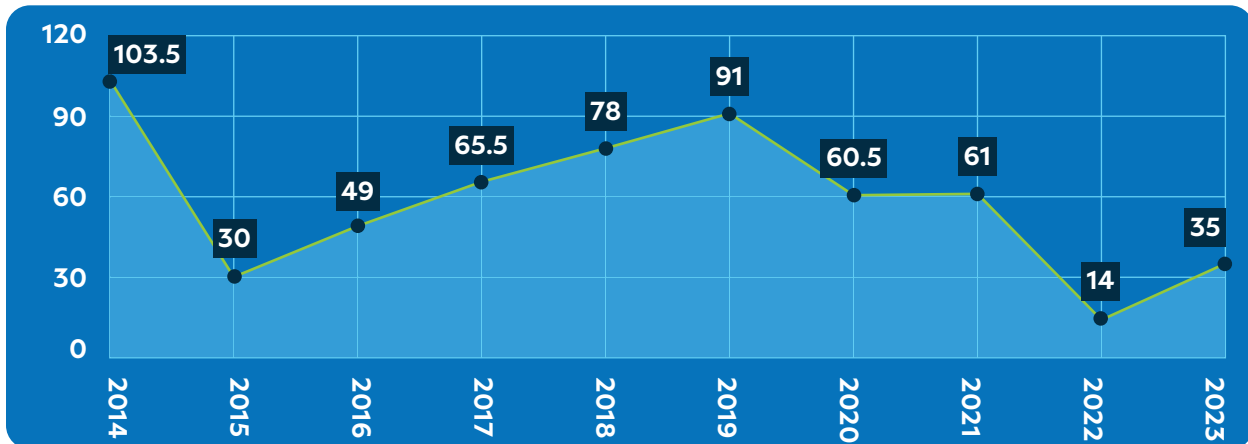
Despite a considerable number of vacant homes in Brunswick County, fewer than 2.5% of all housing units are available for sale or rent. This limited availability of housing units indicates a tight housing market for both renters and owners. Tightness in the housing market highlights the continued need for an increase in the number of available rental properties and homes for sale.

There are approximately 1,670 rental units in the county. The number of vacant rental units in Brunswick County is small, with fewer than 2.5% of total rental units vacant for rent. Combined with recent increases in rents—26% over the past three years—demand for rental units has likely increased beyond supply.



### Brunswick County Median Days on the Market (DOM)

Source: VCHR Tabulation of 2014-2023 Virginia Association of REALTORS Data



The for-sale housing market in Brunswick County has generally been healthy, with only a few instances of DOM above 60 or below 30. In 2014, the median DOM stood at a relatively high 103 days, suggesting homes took more than three months before being sold. In 2022, median DOM dipped to 14, a temporary shift to a “seller’s” market, perhaps related to increased demand for rural properties in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Median DOM returned to 35 in 2023. The overall decrease in median DOM indicates increasing demand and improving market health; however, DOM is not consistently low enough to indicate that supply is inadequate. DOM below 30 indicates that the market is shifting to a seller’s market that may begin to exclude first-time homebuyers or those who need unconventional financing.

Though the overall housing market can be considered balanced, evidence from the rental market indicates that demand may be greater than supply for rental stock that is in good condition and located in close proximity to employment and services. Development of smaller rental units that meet the needs of workers and seniors is encouraged. Both groups are likely to need smaller, subsidized units. Including market-rate units in the same development may make larger developments more viable and encourage diverse communities in terms of age and income.

Given the number of senior, cost-burdened owners, maintenance and investment in much of the owned stock is likely too limited. Furthermore, a large part of the housing stock is vacant, abandoned, or otherwise held in the long term without being occupied. There should be opportunity and focus on rehabilitation assistance or programs such as tax abatement for seniors, critical home repair, USDA home renovation loans, and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), among others.

Finally, supports for low-income families are limited in the county. Many households endure substandard housing as their only option and may be forced to leave the county in the event of crisis. More than 500 households in the county are spending more than 50% of their income for housing, and many of them are at risk of experiencing a housing crisis in the event of any economic hardship. Brunswick County will need a combination of homeownership supports and affordable rental housing to stabilize these households.



### Primary Solution 1:

## Address water & sewer needs via strategic infrastructure planning and financing.

#### What It Does

Brunswick County lacks sufficient water and sewer infrastructure to support new housing development, hindering growth and affordable housing initiatives. This solution aims to develop a comprehensive approach for planning and financing infrastructure improvements to enable more housing construction, especially affordable options. It leverages new state funding opportunities and coordinates across County departments to align infrastructure expansion with housing goals.



#### How to Do It

- Assess current infrastructure and develop a long-term master plan.
- Pursue federal, state, and Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) funding for projects.
- Update development regulations to support efficient infrastructure expansion.
- Form partnerships with developers to share costs in priority areas.

#### Who Does What

The Board of Supervisors provides overall direction and approves major decisions. County departments collaborate on planning, funding, and implementation, with Public Works leading technical aspects. VRA offers guidance on new funding options for housing-related infrastructure.

#### How to Fund It

A mix of federal and state grants, VRA loans, municipal bonds, developer partnerships, and dedicated local funding sources could be used to finance infrastructure improvements. The County can leverage new state legislation that allows housing-related infrastructure to be financed through VRA without impacting bond capacity.

#### How to Measure Success

- # of new housing units connected to public water/sewer
- Amount of external funding secured for infrastructure
- New housing developments facilitated by expanded infrastructure
- Improved water quality and system reliability pose consistent rules for development in these areas.



## Primary Solution 2:

# Develop a range of tools to support historic revitalization & new housing developments.

### *What It Does*

Brunswick County is home to a noticeable amount of historic properties that are vacant or otherwise not used to their fullest potential. Repurposing these structures into new housing could serve a dual mission to preserve the county's history and to create new, much-needed housing opportunities. This strategy aims to create a comprehensive toolkit to support historic revitalization projects that incorporate residential units into their designs. It leverages existing building stock, revitalizes town centers, and ensures that new development enhances the county's unique character.

### *How to Do It*

- Create financial and regulatory incentives for adaptive reuse projects.
- Implement zoning overlays to facilitate mixed-use development in historic areas.
- Streamline the permitting process for historic revitalization projects.
- Establish a technical assistance program for developers working on historic properties.
- Develop design guidelines balancing preservation with modern housing needs.

### *Who Does What*

The Board of Supervisors approves new policies and incentives. The Planning Department develops zoning changes and streamlined processes. The Planning Department and other stakeholders provide guidance on preserving historic character. The Economic Development Department promotes opportunities to developers. Local developers utilize the new tools and incentives to create housing.

### *How to Fund It*

A mix of County general funds, state-level funding from agencies like the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, federal grants, and private foundation support could be used to develop and implement the toolkit. The County could also leverage New Markets Tax Credit investments where applicable.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of historic buildings rehabilitated for residential use
- Total housing units created through revitalization projects
- Private investment leveraged through incentive programs
- Reduction in vacant properties in target areas
- Improved property values and increased activity in town centers



### Secondary Solution 1:

## Explore potential for community land trust (CLT) uses.



#### **Q** *What It Does*

The county lacks mechanisms to ensure long-term housing affordability and community control over development. This solution aims to explore creating a new CLT or partnering with existing CLTs to develop permanently affordable housing options in the county. CLTs are nonprofits that acquire and manage land to preserve long-term affordability, typically offering homes at 25-30% below market rate.

#### **⚙️** *How to Do It*

- Form a working group to study CLT models and potential partnerships.
- Develop a business plan for establishing or partnering with an existing CLT.
- Create educational materials about the CLT model for residents.
- Identify and acquire initial properties for CLT use.
- Establish policies, procedures, and funding mechanisms for CLT operations.

#### **👤** *Who Does What*

The Board of Supervisors approves CLT initiatives and provides initial support. The Planning Department researches models and coordinates with partners. Local nonprofits may operate the CLT or partner in its development. The Virginia Statewide CLT can provide guidance and support, or offer a direct model to use. Community members apply for homeownership opportunities, and CLT homeowners may participate in its governance as board members.

#### **💰** *How to Fund It*

Funding could come from Virginia Housing Community Impact Grants, USDA Rural Development programs, federal HOME and Community Development Block Grant funds, local foundations, and in-kind support through donation of County-owned land.

#### **📊** *How to Measure Success*

- # of permanently affordable homes created
- # of low- and moderate-income households served
- Reduction in housing cost burden for CLT homeowners
- Increase in community engagement around affordable housing issues
- Amount of public and private funding leveraged for affordable housing



## Secondary Solution 2:

# Use the next comprehensive plan update to prioritize housing opportunities in long-range planning goals.

### *What It Does*

Housing needs can be better integrated into Brunswick County's long-range planning goals. This solution aims to make housing a central focus of the next comprehensive plan update, creating a more integrated approach to community development. By incorporating housing as a key component, the County can ensure that future land use decisions, infrastructure investments, and economic development strategies align with housing needs and opportunities.

### *How to Do It*

- Form a housing working group to guide the comprehensive plan update.
- Conduct a housing needs assessment and gather community input.
- Draft housing goals and strategies for the plan, including zoning changes.
- Develop measurable targets for housing production and affordability.
- Use innovative engagement tools to involve residents in the planning process.

### *Who Does What*

The Board of Supervisors approves the updated plan and zoning changes. The Planning Department leads the update process. The proposed housing working group can provide input on housing needs and goals. Community members participate in engagement sessions and offer feedback. Regional planning organizations may provide technical assistance and data support.

### *How to Fund It*

The County could use general budget funds for the update process. Additional sources include Virginia Housing planning grants, DHCD Community Development Block Grants, and partnerships with local universities for research support.

### *How to Measure Success*

- Adoption of a comprehensive plan with robust housing goals
- # of zoning changes implemented to support housing diversity
- Increase in building permits issued for diverse housing types
- Progress toward specific housing production and affordability targets

# HALIFAX CO.

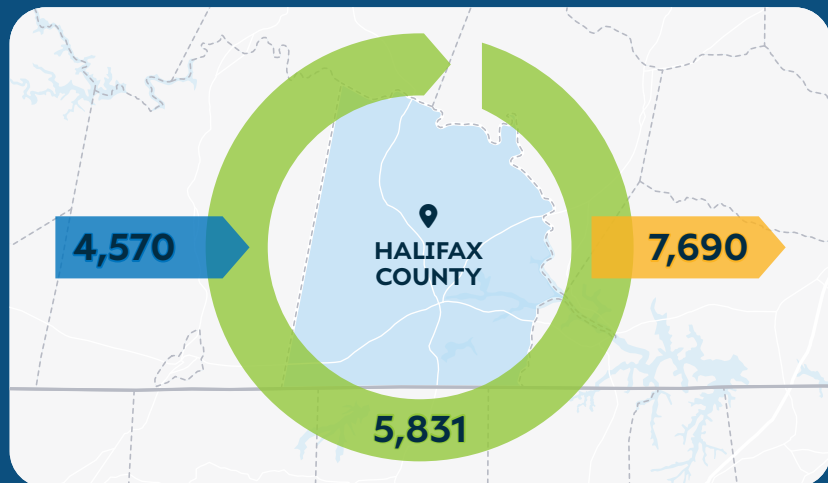
## Findings

Halifax County is located approximately 115 miles southwest of Richmond and 85 miles northwest of Raleigh, North Carolina. About 34,000 people comprise more than 13,500 households in Halifax. The county includes four incorporated towns: South Boston, Halifax, Virgilina, and Scottsburg. The two large towns, South Boston and Halifax, are connected to mid-size cities (Danville, Lynchburg, and Greensboro) and larger cities (Richmond and Raleigh) via major highway corridors: U.S. 58, U.S. 501, and U.S. 360.

About 57% of Halifax County residents commute out of the county for their primary job. Halifax is likely the residence of choice for these households, since they could choose to live in a larger market where they work. Similarly, 56% of people who have their primary job in Halifax County also live in the county. The remaining commute from a neighboring jurisdiction.

## 2021 Inflow/Outflow of Halifax County Workers for Primary Jobs

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD



Most households in Halifax County include one or two people, and most are families, related as either married couples, traditional nuclear families, single parents with children, grandparents raising grandchildren, etc. Fewer than 172 households are composed of roommates.



**13,519**  
households in  
the county

**73%**  
own their  
homes

**39%**  
households led  
by people 65+



### Households by Size for Halifax County Areas

Source: VCHR tabulation of 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

	1-PERSON	2-PERSON	3-PERSON	4+-PERSON	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS
Halifax Co.	4,781 (35%)	4,539 (34%)	2,065 (15%)	2,134 (16%)	13,519
Unincorporated Co.	3,533 (34%)	3,650 (35%)	3,267 (32%)		10,470
South Boston	1,182 (40%)	857 (29%)	897 (31%)		2,936
Halifax	421 (76%)		66-202		555

## Workforce Housing

Sixty percent of households in Halifax County include at least one worker. The households who do not include workers are likely retired. Of the workers in Halifax County, 20% can afford up to \$375/month for housing costs as a single earner and 38% can afford up to \$1,000/month in housing costs as a single-earner. Workers in six out of the top 10 occupations by employment cannot afford median rent as single-earners with median wage. Even though 42% of higher-wage earners are more likely to be able to afford the median rent of \$724/month and median owner costs of \$1,074/month, they, too, have difficulty finding housing due to the limited availability.



**THE MEDIAN COST OF RENTING is unaffordable for home health/personal care aides, cashiers, and fast food/counter workers as single-earners at median wages.**

**THE MEDIAN COST OF RENTING is unaffordable for home health/personal care aides and fast food/counter workers, even when earning in the 90th percentile of wages.**



## Housing Affordability

About 20% of households in Halifax County are cost-burdened, encompassing about 43% of renters and about 18% of homeowners. Focus group participants identified housing insecurity among workers, students, and seniors. Cost-burdened households are more likely to make choices between housing and other necessities when they have low incomes. Among households with low incomes that are cost-burdened, 55% are owners and the remaining 45% rent their home. When cost-burdened owners choose other necessities over housing, they may defer maintenance and forgo upgrades, threatening their well-being and the community’s housing stock. Renters are more likely to experience homelessness in the event of an unexpected expense (e.g., medical emergency or car repair).

## Housing Demand

The rental vacancy rate is less than 3% in Halifax County and even lower in South Boston (less than 1%). Additional rental units are needed to respond to demand and support local economic growth. Well-located, small (efficiency, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom) apartment-style rental units are most likely to satisfy the most urgent and greatest housing demand in the county.

### Halifax County Median Gross Rent

Source: VCHR tabulation of 2014-2022 ACS 5-year, not adjusted



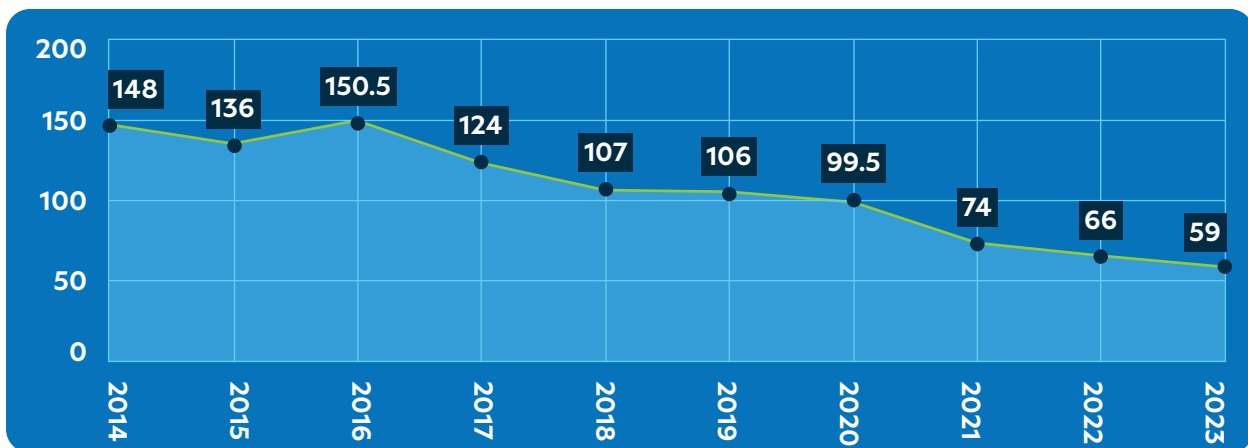
Note: The U.S. Census Bureau deemed 2020 data experimental and it has been omitted from the study.



The steady increase in median sales prices and decrease in the median days on the market (DOM) demonstrate increasing housing demand. Median price increased 65% from 2014-2021. As the market becomes healthier and prices increase, lower-wage employees may no longer have the opportunity to buy homes and build equity. Increasing the diversity of the housing stock by prioritizing smaller units could support early-career workers, service workers, students, and seniors who need more affordable housing options, especially if units are well located and reduce transportation costs.

### Halifax County Median DOM

Source: VCHR Tabulation of 2014-2023 Virginia Association of REALTORS Data



Given anticipated economic growth and associated housing demand, the County needs to incorporate committed affordable housing into its stock. These units should support the near-term housing needs and longer-term wealth-building of low-wage (though critical) workers, as well as seniors who may need to relocate to smaller units nearer services. Low-wage service workers who are critical to community development—as well as healthcare, childcare, and other service industries—have historically been able to afford housing costs in Halifax, but the changing market is leading to housing insecurity among many of these workers.

Existing housing is also an important component of the market and must be maintained and upgraded over time. Currently, there are approximately 3,650 more units than households in Halifax County. Most of those units (2,915) are long-term vacancies that are abandoned, slated for demolition, or otherwise held in the long term without being occupied. Abandoned properties can be a health and safety hazard while properties held in the long term may be livable housing units.

When homeowners are cost-burdened, they may choose to defer maintenance or forgo upgrades in favor of necessities like food, childcare, and medical care. Nearly 1,940 owners in Halifax are cost-burdened and may benefit from programs such as tax abatement for seniors, critical home repair, USDA home renovation loans, and WAP, among others.



### Primary Solution 1:

## Prioritize housing in Halifax County's comprehensive plan update.

#### *What It Does*

Halifax County's current long-term plans may not fully address growing housing needs. This solution aims to make housing affordability and availability a top priority in the County's next comprehensive plan update. By focusing on housing during this important planning process, Halifax County can ensure that future growth and development decisions consider the housing needs of all residents.



#### *How to Do It*

- Form a housing advisory committee to guide the planning process.
- Conduct a thorough assessment of current and future housing needs.
- Engage residents and stakeholders to gather input on housing priorities.
- Review land use and zoning rules to identify barriers to housing development.
- Set clear housing goals and create action steps to achieve them.

#### *Who Does What*

The Board of Supervisors will initiate and oversee the plan update. County planning staff will lead the day-to-day work, with input from a housing advisory committee, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), and community members. The Southside PDC can provide technical assistance and regional context.

#### *How to Fund It*

The County can use its own funds, seek planning grants from state agencies like DHCD and Virginia Housing, and explore partnerships with local institutions or employers to support the process.

#### *How to Measure Success*

- Adoption of a plan with clear housing goals
- Changes to zoning rules that support more housing options
- Increase in building permits for diverse housing types
- # of affordable units created or preserved
- Level of community participation in the planning process



## Primary Solution 2:

# Develop strategies to expand housing quality.

### *What It Does*

Many older homes in Halifax County need significant repairs or upgrades to be safe, healthy, and energy efficient. This solution aims to improve housing conditions by updating policies, providing financial assistance, and connecting homeowners with resources to rehabilitate or replace substandard housing.



### *How to Do It*

- Survey existing homes to identify those most in need of repairs or replacement.
- Update regulations to make it easier to improve or replace older homes.
- Create financial incentives like tax rebates or fee waivers for qualifying home repairs.
- Partner with lenders and nonprofits to provide affordable loans and assistance.
- Educate residents about available programs and support for home improvements.

### *Who Does What*

County staff will lead efforts to update policies, coordinate partnerships, and allocate funding. Local housing organizations will help with outreach and connecting residents to resources. Lenders and contractors will provide financing options and carry out repair/replacement work.

### *How to Fund It*

Funding could come from federal and state housing grants, local government revenues, and partnerships with foundations or major employers in the region.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of homes repaired or replaced
- Amount of funding leveraged for housing improvements
- Increased property values in targeted neighborhoods
- Resident satisfaction with housing quality



### Secondary Solution 1:

## Improve infrastructure coordination for new housing in Halifax Co.

### **Q** What It Does

Limitations in utilities and other infrastructure are making it difficult to build new homes in Halifax County. This strategy aims to improve communication and teamwork between developers, County planners, and utility providers to ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with housing needs



### **⚙️** How to Do It

- Create liaison positions to connect developers, planners, and utility providers.
- Hold regular meetings with all stakeholders to discuss upcoming projects and challenges.
- Seek out new funding sources for infrastructure improvements.
- Assess & increase Halifax County Service Authority’s capacity to support growth.
- Develop a long-term plan for infrastructure that aligns with housing goals.

### **👤** Who Does What

The Board of Supervisors will provide direction and approve major decisions. County planning staff will coordinate activities and lead planning efforts. The Halifax County Service Authority will provide technical expertise and implement improvements. The IDA will pursue funding opportunities, while developers will share their project needs and timelines.

### **💰** How to Fund It

The County can pursue state and federal grants, explore public-private partnerships, and consider impact fees on new developments to fund infrastructure improvements.

### **📊** How to Measure Success

- # of new homes approved in areas that previously lacked infrastructure
- Reduction in project delays due to infrastructure issues
- Increase in water/sewer capacity
- Amount of new infrastructure funding secured
- Improved satisfaction among developers working in the county



## Secondary Solution 2:

# Streamline approvals for priority housing in Halifax County.

### Q *What It Does*

While the approval process for residential development in Halifax County is already efficient, there are opportunities to create faster, simpler approval pathways for housing types that meet community needs, like starter homes or duplexes. By making it easier to build these priority housing types, Halifax County can encourage more of them to be developed.



### ⚙️ *How to Do It*

- Offer early meetings between developers and County staff to identify issues upfront.
- Create a “fast track” process for projects that meet specific community goals.
- Develop pre-approved home designs that can speed up reviews.
- Improve coordination between County departments involved in approvals.
- Regularly evaluate and improve the approval process.

### 👤 *Who Does What*

The Board of Supervisors will approve new policies and provide resources. The Planning Department will lead improvements and manage expedited reviews. The Building Department will help streamline their processes. The IDA will promote new options to developers. Local architects may help create pre-approved designs.

### 💰 *How to Fund It*

The County can use its general fund, adjust permit fees, or seek grants from agencies like Virginia Housing or GO Virginia to support these changes.

### 📊 *How to Measure Success*

- Reduction in approval times for priority housing types
- # of new homes approved through streamlined processes
- Satisfaction ratings from developers and builders
- Increase in applications for priority housing types
- Staff time saved through improved processes

# TOWN OF SOUTH BOSTON



Photo credit: Eduardo Montes-Bradley

## Findings

Situated along the Dan River, the Town of South Boston is the largest town in Halifax County. Its location at the intersection of U.S. 58 and U.S. 501 conveniently connects the town to the City of Danville 33 miles to the west and Roxboro, North Carolina, about 24 miles to the south.

The town includes approximately 2,940 households, a little more than half (53%) of whom are owners. Most households are families (56%) or singles living alone (40%). Nearly two-thirds of households have at least one worker. The remaining households are likely to be retirees. Nearly 34% of households are led by someone 65 or older.

Rents have risen steadily in South Boston since 2015, reaching a median gross rent of \$703 in 2022. Focus group participants explained that rents have continued to increase. CoStar provides more up-to-date information than the ACS, though only for a portion of the town's rental units. For the 486 units included in CoStar, median asking rent was \$890 in the third quarter of 2024. The rental vacancy rate, which is less than 1%, indicates that the market is too tight.



**2,940**  
households

**53%**  
homeowners

**34%**  
households  
are led by  
people 65+



### South Boston County Median Gross Rent

Source: VCHR tabulation of 2014-2022 ACS 5-year, not adjusted



Note: The U.S. Census Bureau deemed 2020 data experimental and it has been omitted from the study.

Nearly one-third of households in South Boston are housing cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income for housing. As rents increase and the market becomes increasingly competitive, fewer workers will be able to afford to live in South Boston. Longtime residents who work low-wage jobs may have to leave if they can no longer afford to rent. Even if they can get by paying rent, they may no longer have enough extra income to save to buy a home. As home prices increase out of reach, these workers may choose to leave the region to seek an opportunity to buy a home and build wealth elsewhere.





### Primary Solution 1:

## Leverage partnerships for affordable homeownership.

### *What It Does*

South Boston faces a shortage of affordable homes for purchase under \$200,000, limiting opportunities for residents to build wealth through homeownership. This strategy aims to create more affordable homeownership options by partnering with two key organizations: Southside Outreach Group and the Virginia Statewide Community Land Trust (VSCLT).

### *How to Do It*

Create partnerships to develop affordable homes:

- Work with Southside Outreach Group to build homes on land it already owns.
- Partner with VSCLT to implement a CLT model, separating land ownership from home ownership to reduce costs.
- Combine both approaches to create a pipeline of affordable homes using traditional and CLT ownership models.

### *Who Does What*

The Town of South Boston can lead coordination between partners and provide regulatory support. Southside Outreach Group can contribute land and assist with planning. VSCLT can provide expertise on implementing the CLT model. Local financial institutions can develop specialized mortgage products for homebuyers.

### *How to Fund It*

Funding could come from various sources including the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, USDA Rural Development programs, Virginia Housing, local financial institutions, Town funds, and private foundations. These sources may offer grants, low-interest loans, or specialized mortgage products to support affordable homeownership.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of affordable homes created (aim for at least 20 within two years)
- # of homeowners served
- Average sale price of homes (target under \$200,000)
- Long-term affordability of CLT homes
- Homeowner satisfaction rates
- Increased property tax revenue
- Economic impact of construction activity



### Secondary Solution 1:

## Develop wetlands-friendly zoning & building strategies.

### What It Does

South Boston’s development potential is in part limited by wetlands and restrictive zoning regulations, constraining new housing and urban growth. This solution aims to implement a Wetlands-Friendly Development Initiative to balance environmental protection with development needs by revising zoning regulations, promoting sustainable building techniques, and exploring wetland mitigation strategies.



### How to Do It

Create a comprehensive approach to wetlands-friendly development:

- Review and revise zoning regulations to allow more flexible development near wetlands.
- Promote and incentivize wetlands-friendly building techniques among developers.
- Explore creating a wetland mitigation bank or conservation easement program.
- Implement education and outreach programs on wetlands-friendly development.
- Work with developers to create pilot projects showcasing these techniques.

### Who Does What

The Planning and Zoning Department can lead the zoning review process and develop new guidelines. Local environmental organizations can provide expertise on wetland ecosystems. Developers and builders can participate in pilot projects. State environmental agencies can offer guidance on wetland protection regulations.

### How to Fund It

Funding could come from various sources including EPA Wetland Program Development Grants, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality grants, local budget allocations, and private-sector partnerships for pilot projects.

### How to Measure Success

- # of new developments using wetlands-friendly techniques
- Acreage of wetlands preserved or created through mitigation efforts
- Increase in permeable surface area in new developments
- Reduction in flood-related incidents in newly developed areas
- # of eco-tourism or educational initiatives related to wetland preservation

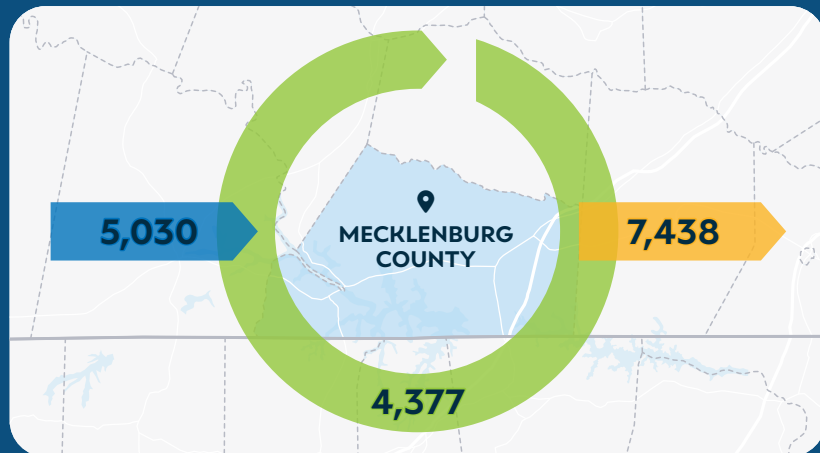
# MECKLENBURG CO.

## Findings

Mecklenburg County is located in south-central Virginia, on the North Carolina border. It is bound by the Virginia counties of Charlotte and Lunenburg to the north, Brunswick to the east, and Halifax to the west, and by the North Carolina counties of Granville, Vance, and Warren to the south. The county includes six incorporated towns: Boydton, Brodnax, Chase City, Clarksville, La Crosse, and South Hill. The Town of Brodnax is split geographically between Mecklenburg and Brunswick counties. The largest town, South Hill, is 80 miles southwest of Richmond and 76 miles northeast of Raleigh, North Carolina. South Hill is conveniently located in the east-central portion of Mecklenburg County adjacent to Interstate 85, the major north-south transportation corridor in the county, and U.S. 58, the major east-west corridor.

### 2021 Inflow/Outflow of Mecklenburg County Workers for Primary Jobs

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD



About 63% of Mecklenburg residents (7,438) commute out of the county for their primary job. Over 50% of workers are commuting over 25 miles to their primary job, with 43.6% commuting more than 50 miles. Workers earning more than \$3,333 per month make up the majority (44.7%) of Mecklenburg residents who commute to a job outside the county. Mecklenburg County is likely the residence of choice for households who commute to larger job and housing markets, since they could likely choose to live in a larger market. Overall, Mecklenburg County has a net outflow of 2,408 employees; however, the Town of South Hill has an inflow of 1,748 employees.



## Mecklenburg Co. » Findings



**13,037**  
households in  
the county

**71%**  
households own  
their homes

**39%**  
households are led  
by people 65+

Most households in Mecklenburg County include one or two people. Seniors 65 and older make up the largest proportion of single-person households at 54%. Most households are families, related in some way as either married couples, traditional nuclear families, single parents with children, grandparents raising grandchildren, etc. Fewer than 525 households (less than 4%) are composed of roommates.

### Households by Size for Mecklenburg County Areas

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

	1-PERSON	2-PERSON	3-PERSON	4+-PERSON	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS
Mecklenburg Co.	4,499 (35%)	5,003 (38%)	1,599 (12%)	1,936 (15%)	13,037
Unincorporated Co.	2,655 (31%)	3,587 (41%)	2,439 (28%)		8,681
Incorporated Towns	1,844 (42%)	1,416 (32%)	1,096 (25%)		4,356

*Note: The Town of Brodnax is split geographically between Mecklenburg and Brunswick and is included with Brunswick County data for the purposes of this report. Brodnax is not included in the towns in this table.*

Most households in Mecklenburg (71%) own their home. The county's incorporated areas have lower rates of homeownership than its unincorporated areas. Nearly 45% of the county's 3,654 renter households live within a town. Nonetheless, the majority of rental units are located in the unincorporated parts of the county.



## Housing Affordability

Almost a quarter of households in Mecklenburg County (3,146) spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Households spending more than 30% of their income on housing are considered cost-burdened and may have to make choices between housing and other necessities such as food, clothing, medical care, and transportation. Over a third of renters in Mecklenburg (36%) are cost-burdened compared to 20% of owners. Twenty-five percent of owners with a mortgage have housing cost burdens, while those who own their home free and clear have lower rates of cost burden.

Households including someone 62 or older make up more than half of households, as well as 52% of cost-burdened households. Ensuring that vulnerable seniors have access to home repair, rehabilitation, modification, and weatherization—as well as alternative housing options—should be a priority for the County.

The severity of housing cost burden is increased when households have low incomes. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Mecklenburg households have low incomes, defined as incomes less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), and among them, 49% are cost-burdened. Also important, over a third of households with low incomes (37%) include seniors 62 and older. Of those households, 56% of households experience housing challenges, cost burden, incomplete facilities, and/or overcrowding.

## Workforce Housing

Just over 9,400 people have their primary job in Mecklenburg, and 46.5% of those workers live in the county. Most households in Mecklenburg (59%) include at least one worker. Those households who do not include workers are likely retired.

Approximately 17% of workers earn less than \$1,250 per month in their primary job, meaning they can afford no more than \$375/month for housing costs as a single-earner. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of workers earn between \$1,251 and \$3,000 per month in their primary job and can afford no more than \$1,000/month for housing costs as a single-earner. Other workers earn more than \$3,000 per month in their primary job. Many workers in the Southside PDC region are likely to struggle to afford housing costs in Mecklenburg, where median rent is \$784 and median owner costs are \$1,268 per month among owners with a mortgage. Workers with higher incomes also struggle to find housing because availability is limited.



**MEDIAN COST OF RENTING is unaffordable for median wage single-earner home health aides, cashiers, fast food/counter workers, stockers/order fillers & nursing assistants.**

**MEDIAN COST OF HOMEOWNERSHIP is unaffordable for in those same occupations plus retail/customer service workers, even when earning in the 90th percentile of wages.**

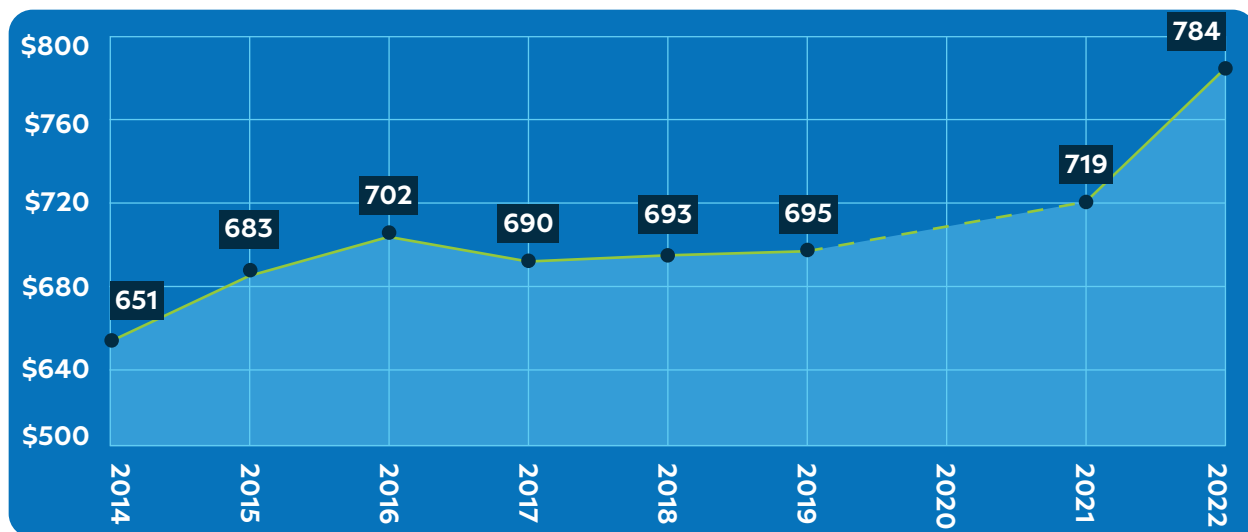


## Housing Demand

Increases in median rent substantiate high rental demand in the county. Median gross rent in Mecklenburg in 2022 was \$784 per month. This rent is 20% higher than the median gross rent in 2014, signaling increased demand in the face of relatively stagnant supply. Indeed, there has been little increase in total housing units (regardless of tenure) over the past decade<sup>1</sup>. There are 43 to 203 vacant rental homes in Mecklenburg County, representing 1-5% of all rental housing units.

### Mecklenburg County Median Gross Rent

Source: VCHR tabulation of 2014-2022 ACS 5-year, not adjusted



Note: The U.S. Census Bureau deemed 2020 data experimental and it has been omitted from the study.

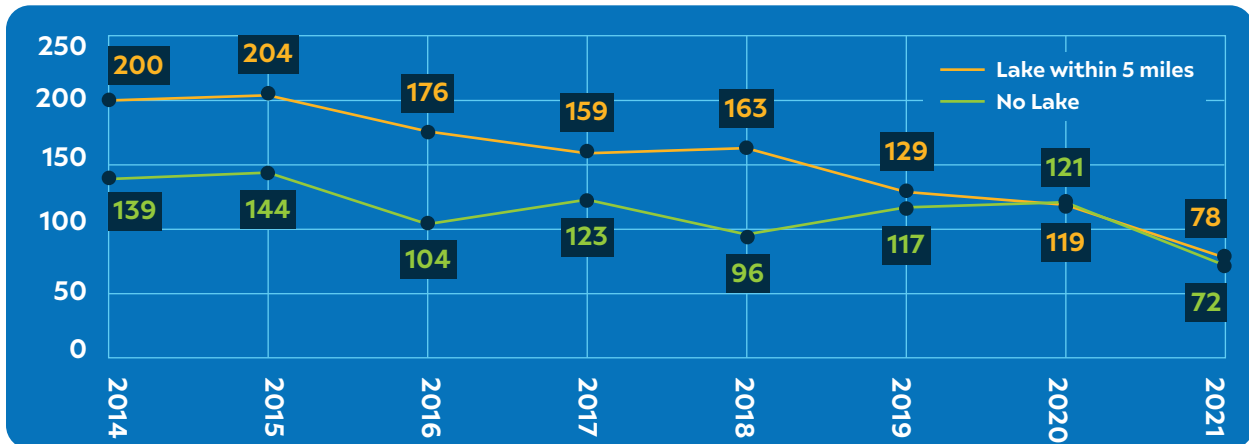
New rental units should respond to both new demand and existing housing challenges. These units should serve diverse demand segments: small households, seniors (living alone or as couples), workers with limited means, and new households relocating for work. Well-located, small (efficiency, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom) apartment-style rental units are most likely to satisfy the most urgent and greatest housing demand in the county.

<sup>1</sup> ACS data suggests a 2% increase in total housing units 2015-2022. The pace of building, including placement of manufactured homes in the County, outside of the Town of South Hill which has its own permitting office, increased between 2017 and 2021 followed by a significant decrease in 2022. A review of the Certificate of Occupancy Data for the Town of South Hill showed an increase of multifamily units from 8 total residential units developed in 2021 to 79 residential units developed in 2022. With the exception of one duplex, all permits for residential units through the county in 2022 were for single-family residences.



## Mecklenburg County Median Days on the Market (DOM) by Submarket

Source: SPDC-VCHR Tabulation of 2014-2023 Virginia Association of REALTORS Data



In Mecklenburg County, a property typically remains on the market for about two and a half months before it's sold. Steady increases in median sale prices are also evidence of increasing demand. Median price increased 34% from 2014 to 2021 for properties sold within five miles of a lake. However, properties not near the lakes saw a significantly more drastic increase of 104%. Median price continued to increase in 2022 but plateaued in 2023. As market health continues to improve, the County should consider solutions that ensure lower-wage employees have the opportunity to buy homes and build equity. Given the desire for increased amenities and economic growth, the County will need to make a plan for incorporating committed affordable housing into its stock. These units should support the near-term housing needs and longer-term wealth-building of low-wage workers through homeownership.





### Primary Solution 1:

## Revise zoning codes to promote creative density options.

#### *What It Does*

Like many other localities, Mecklenburg County's current zoning rules can make it hard for builders to create new housing options affordable to working-class residents. This solution would update those rules to allow for grouping homes closer together while preserving open space. This approach, called cluster development, can lower costs and create more housing choices.



#### *How to Do It*

- Review and revise current zoning codes to allow smaller lot sizes and higher density in certain areas.
- Create guidelines for preserving open space in new developments.
- Offer incentives to builders who use cluster development approaches.
- Educate the community about the benefits of cluster development.

#### *Who Does What*

The County Planning Department can lead the process, with input from builders, environmental groups, and residents. The Planning Commission can provide guidance and create engagement opportunities for the community and stakeholders. The Board of Supervisors is responsible for final review and approval of any changes.

#### *How to Fund It*

This solution does not require long-term funding, but initial planning and policy development activities could be funded by Virginia Housing's Community Impact Grant, DHCD's Community Development Block Grants, DHCD planning grants, and other state/federal programs. The County may also use some of its own funds or building permit fees to cover administrative costs.

#### *How to Measure Success*

- Amount of open space preserved in new developments
- Lower infrastructure costs compared to traditional developments
- More affordable home prices in cluster developments
- Resident satisfaction with new housing options



## Primary Solution 2:

# Facilitate new partnerships across public, private, and nonprofit sectors to expand residential development capacity.

### *What It Does*

Mecklenburg County lacks experienced, qualified developers who can build lower-cost housing, especially for projects leveraging state or federal programs. This solution would bring together partners to attract, train, and support new and existing developers to build their own capacities and skills. These investments will make it easier to expand the supply of homes available at affordable prices.

### *How to Do It*

The following initiatives can be significantly strengthened through partnership with the Southside PDC, which offers two complementary approaches to support implementation in their regional solutions. Through Southside PDC-led initiatives, the County can access technical assistance, specialized expertise, and regional funding mechanisms without having to internally develop all of these resources. This partnership approach ensures that Mecklenburg County isn't shouldering the full burden of implementation alone, but rather leveraging regional resources and expertise while contributing to solutions that benefit the entire region. The County can particularly benefit from the Southside PDC's ability to coordinate with educational institutions, broker relationships with developers, and provide specialized technical services that would be costly to maintain at the county level.

- Create a training program about affordable housing development for local builders.
- Set up a network for affordable housing developers to collaborate.
- Partner with schools to offer courses in affordable housing development.

- Establish a resource center to provide information and support to developers.
- Help guide developers through the process of building affordable housing.

### *Who Does What*

The County Planning Department could lead the effort, working with local schools, experienced developers, and regional planning organizations. Local builders and developers participate in the training and network.

### *How to Fund It*

County leadership could explore dedicating a portion of its general revenue to seed these initiatives, but other long-term options include state grants, partnerships with charitable organizations, support from home builder associations, and small fees for some services.

### *How to Measure Success*

- # of developers trained in affordable housing development
- Increase in affordable housing projects in the county
- Growth of the developer network
- # of new affordable housing units built



### Secondary Solution 1:

## Promote aging in place strategies & retirement developments for the aging population.

### Q *What It Does*

Many seniors in Mecklenburg County need homes and services that support their changing needs as they age. This solution would update zoning rules and encourage new housing options to help seniors stay in their homes or find suitable housing as they retire.



### ⚙️ *How to Do It*

- Allow and simplify rules for accessory dwelling units (small homes on the same property as a larger home).
- Encourage universal design in new construction to make homes more accessible.
- Support retirement communities that combine housing, services, and amenities.
- Promote a mix of housing types in all residential areas.
- Improve community design to be more age-friendly, like better sidewalks and transportation options.

### 👤 *Who Does What*

The County Planning Department can lead zoning updates, while Social Services oversees senior programs. A new Aging in Place Leadership Team could guide overall strategy. Healthcare providers, contractors, and senior organizations would also play important roles.

### 💰 *How to Fund It*

Funding could come from state and federal grants, Medicaid and Medicare programs, and assistance from nonprofit organizations. Some programs may be available to seniors at all income levels.

### 📊 *How to Measure Success*

- # of homes modified for aging in place
- Fewer injuries among seniors at home
- More seniors using community support services
- New housing built with universal design features
- Senior satisfaction with their quality of life and independence

# TOWN OF SOUTH HILL



## Findings

The Town of South Hill is conveniently located in the east-central portion of Mecklenburg County adjacent to Interstate 85, the major north-south transportation corridor in the county, and U.S. 58, the major east-west corridor.

The town includes approximately 2,200 households split evenly by tenure: 50% renter and 50% owner. Nearly half (47%) of households are singles, living alone. Forty-three percent are family households, related in some way either as married couples, traditional nuclear families, single parents with children, grandparents raising grandchildren, etc. About 60% of households include at least one worker. Many of the non-working households are likely to be retirees. About 39% of households include someone 65 or older.

Since 2019, rent in South Hill has increased much faster than the surrounding areas. According to ACS estimates, gross rent reached \$946/month in 2022. More recent data is available from CoStar for a limited number of units in South Hill (about 10% of all rental units). The median asking rent reported for these units rose through the third quarter of 2022, suggesting that demand continues to increase.



**2,200**  
households

**50%**  
homeowners

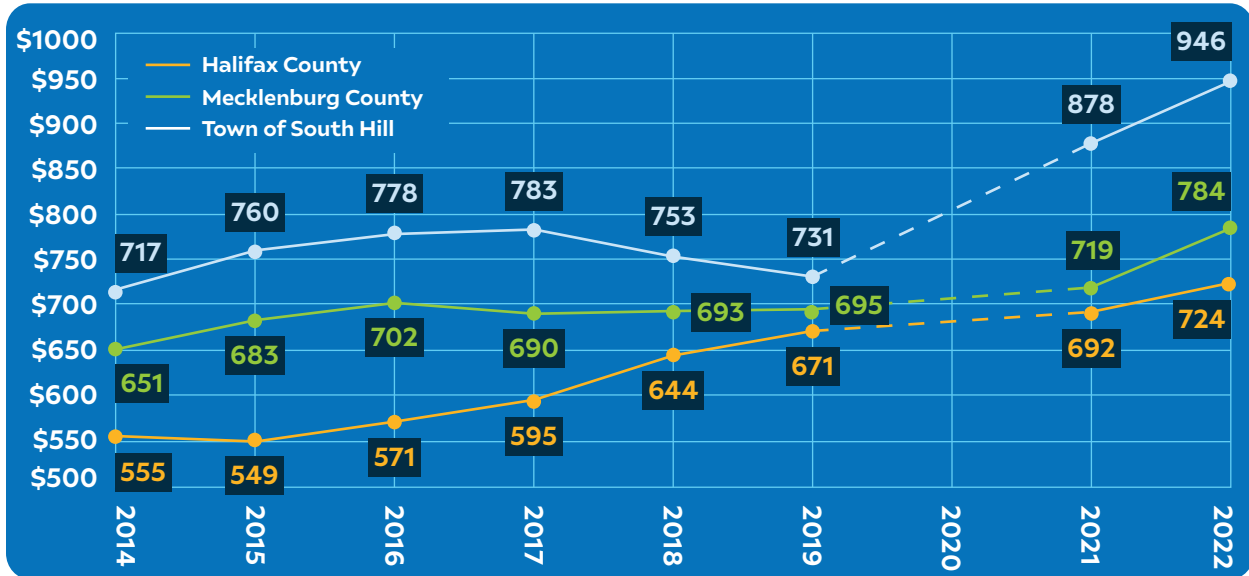
**39%**  
households  
are led by  
people 65+



## Town of South Hill » Findings

### Median Gross Rent by Locality

Source: VCHR tabulation of 2014-2022 ACS 5-year, not adjusted



Note: The U.S. Census Bureau deemed 2020 data experimental and it has been omitted from the study.

Nearly one-third of households in South Hill are housing cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income for housing. Though some owners are cost-burdened, most of these households (more than 70%) are renters. As rents increase, fewer workers will be able to afford to live in South Hill. Longtime residents who work low-wage jobs may have to leave if they can no longer afford to rent. The ability or inability to attract and retain low-wage workers will have implications for services available in South Hill and the region. Without low-wage workers, the region will struggle to provide the amenities and necessary services that support community and economic development.





### Primary Solution 1:

## Create incentives for affordable housing development.

#### *What It Does*

South Hill faces challenges in developing affordable housing for lower-income and housing-insecure residents due to rising costs and regulatory hurdles. This solution aims to create a comprehensive package of financial incentives and reduce barriers to encourage nonprofit and for-profit developers to increase the supply of lower-cost housing in the town.



#### *How to Do It*

- Provide partial real estate tax exemptions for eligible housing projects.
- Create grants and low-interest loans through the Economic Development Authority.
- Reduce or waive certain development fees.
- Streamline approval processes for affordable housing developments.
- Implement zoning changes like density bonuses and reduced parking requirements.

#### *Who Does What*

The Town Council can approve and implement the incentive package. The Town Manager and other staff would develop and administer the program. The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) will collaborate on incentives and partner with developers. Local housing organizations will provide input and conduct outreach.

#### *How to Fund It*

Funding can come from Virginia Housing grants, VRA financing, and private philanthropic foundations supporting community development.

#### *How to Measure Success*

- # of new affordable housing units created
- Reduction in # of people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity
- Amount of outside investment leveraged for new affordable developments



### Secondary Solution 1:

## Support & grow affordable housing developers.

### 🔍 *What It Does*

South Hill lacks a robust ecosystem of affordable housing developers to meet the town's diverse housing needs. This solution aims to implement a comprehensive strategy to attract, train, and support new and existing developers and builders to specialize in affordable housing projects.

### ⚙️ *How to Do It*

- Establish a capacity building program with training workshops and mentorship.
- Form a network of affordable housing developers and builders to foster collaboration.
- Partner with educational institutions to develop specialized courses.
- Create a resource center to provide market data, best practices, & technical assistance.
- Offer project facilitation services to guide developers through the process.
- Initiate demonstration projects to showcase innovative affordable housing designs.

### 👤 *Who Does What*

Town staff would oversee implementation and provide facilitation services. Local educational institutions will develop specialized courses. Experienced developers will serve as mentors. The Southside PDC can assist with data and coordination. Local contractors and small developers would participate in training programs and networks.

### 💰 *How to Fund It*

Funding can come from Town budget allocations, grants from state agencies like Virginia Housing or DHCD, partnerships with philanthropic organizations, and small fees for some services.

### 📊 *How to Measure Success*

- # of developers and builders trained through the program
- Increase in local capacity to develop affordable housing projects
- # of new affordable housing units created by program participants





## Secondary Solution 2:

# Address water and sewer needs via strategic infrastructure planning and financing.

### What It Does

Limited water and sewer infrastructure capacity can constrain new housing development in parts of South Hill. This solution aims to develop a comprehensive approach to infrastructure planning and financing that aligns with housing development goals and leverages a range of funding sources.



### How to Do It

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of water and sewer infrastructure needs.
- Align infrastructure planning with housing and growth objectives.
- Explore innovative financing strategies like grants, bonds, and partnerships.
- Implement policies to manage growth and maximize infrastructure efficiency.

### Who Does What

The Town Council would approve plans and policies. The Municipal Services Department would lead the infrastructure assessment. The Planning Commission can ensure alignment with housing plans. The Finance Department would explore financing strategies, and the Town Manager will coordinate efforts across departments.

### How to Fund It

Funding can come from VRA financing, USDA Rural Development programs, state revolving funds, Community Development Block Grants, municipal bonds, and developer contributions.

### How to Measure Success

- Increase in water and sewer capacity to support new housing
- # of new housing units supported by infrastructure improvements
- Ratio of infrastructure investment to new housing units created
- Reduction in areas with inadequate water/sewer service

# CONCLUSION & WHAT'S NEXT



**Housing is a critical element of the region's competitiveness and a priority that will require efforts from all housing stakeholders in the Southside PDC region.**

This report outlined the market context and solutions needed to address gaps and achieve local and regional housing goals. The technical report provides in-depth details to support the region, localities, and housing stakeholders as they work to implement solutions.



## Conclusion & What's Next



The Southside PDC will initiate the steps to action by formally adopting the Southside Regional Housing Market Analysis and making a commitment to address housing challenges through a regional approach. The Southside PDC will inform the community, stakeholders, and changemakers of the current housing challenges, needs, and opportunities through a Regional Housing Summit. This summit will give all stakeholders the opportunity to collaborate—a crucial step in understanding and tackling housing challenges effectively. Through networking, collaboration, and collective learning, the summit will also encourage partnerships among stakeholders, promoting a unified and potentially regional approach to housing solutions.

The Southside PDC will work closely with its member localities to implement the recommended regional approaches to address housing needs. The Southside PDC will also continue monitoring relevant housing data to ensure that the solutions remain relevant and effective over time. Regular assessment allows for adjustments based on changing conditions or emerging needs.

Additionally, the Southside PDC will provide support to localities in the region seeking to apply for and administer grant funding to implement primary and secondary solutions as outlined in this study. By helping local governments secure funding, the Southside PDC can facilitate the implementation of both immediate and long-term housing solutions outlined in the study.

Together with local and regional leadership, housing stakeholders can create the housing mix needed to support the region's workers, families, and seniors. The solutions in this report take both regional and local approaches to new development and stewardship of existing housing and emphasize preparedness for future growth. With these solutions, crafted in partnership with local and regional staff, the region is poised to meet housing demand and achieve economic goals.



[SouthsidePDC.org](http://SouthsidePDC.org)

