COLUMBUS AHEAD · TALENT & HOUSING

Missing Middle Housing:

Closing Columbus's Housing Mobility Gap

Recommendations & Action Items to Catalyze Workforce Housing and Downtown Growth

Presented to the Columbus City Council

A Columbus Ahead Initiative · In partnership with United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley / Home for Good

Source: Housing Solutions Report, Home for Good & United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley (2026)

THE CORE CHALLENGE

The Housing Mobility Gap

> *"The system is able to stabilize individuals, but it is unable to transition them forward."*

The housing mobility gap is the lack of housing options that let individuals and families move between levels of stability as income and circumstances change. In Columbus, this gap is driven largely by the absence of workforce ("missing middle") housing, limited transitional options, and system fragmentation.

- Individuals exiting homelessness have no viable next step
- Workforce households remain in units meant for lower-income residents
- Service providers can't move people through programs
- Hospitals & jails become default stabilization points

WHY IT MATTERS

The Economic Case for Housing Mobility

3,033+

additional housing units needed in Muscogee County by 2035

1,044

families on the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list today

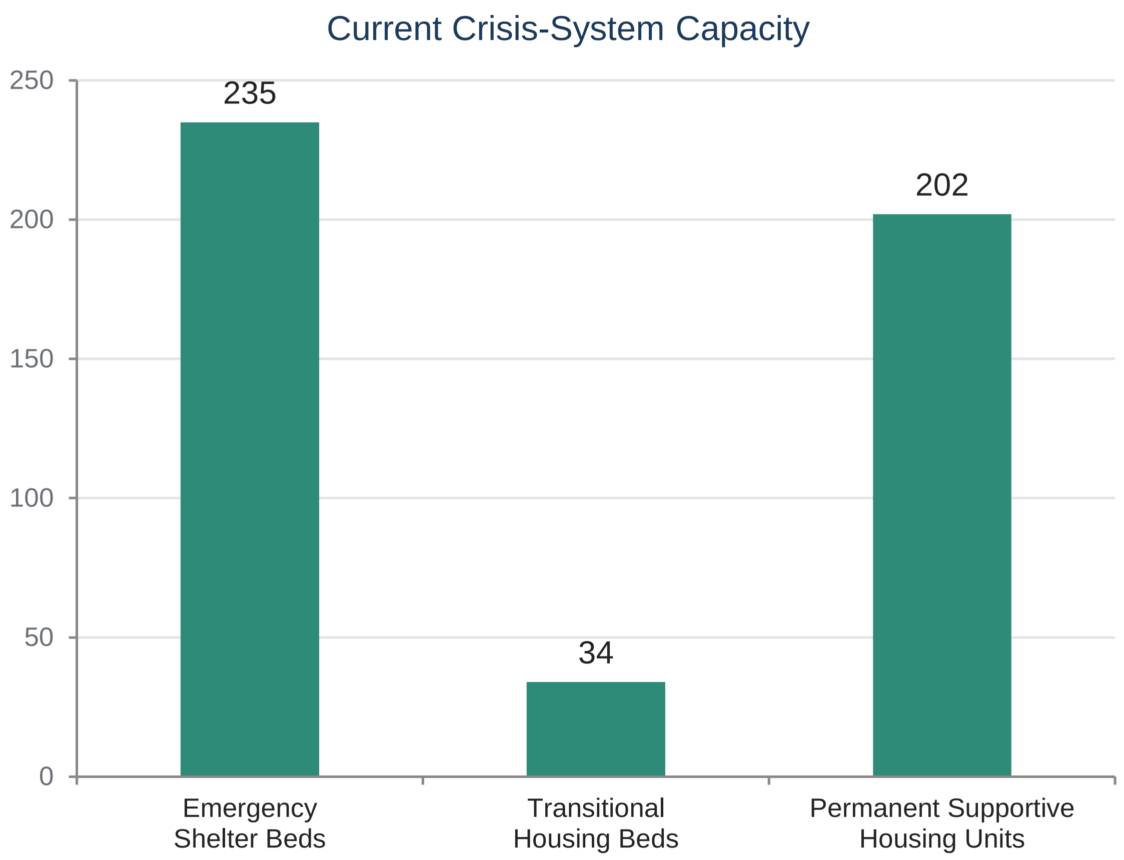
~27,000

individuals on housing waiting lists communitywide

Rising costs are outpacing wages, leaving workforce households cost-burdened and unable to move up — which limits labor mobility for downtown employers and constrains the talent pipeline Columbus Ahead is working to grow.

Source: Columbus Regional Housing Study (2025); Housing Authority of Columbus, GA

A System Built for Crisis, Not Capacity



Meanwhile, community-wide housing demand:

2,286 affordable units managed by the Housing Authority of Columbus, GA

1,044 families on the Housing Choice Voucher waitlist

~27,000 individuals on housing waiting lists communitywide

The visible, unsheltered homeless population is only a small share of overall housing need — the deeper shortage is workforce and middle-income housing.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Every Missing Middle Home Moves the Whole System

Modeling assumes each new workforce housing unit creates one "move-up" opportunity elsewhere in the housing continuum.

250

HOMES ADDED

Up to 250 affordable units potentially freed

Modest improvement in affordable housing turnover

500

HOMES ADDED

Up to 500 affordable units potentially freed

Meaningful increase in housing movement

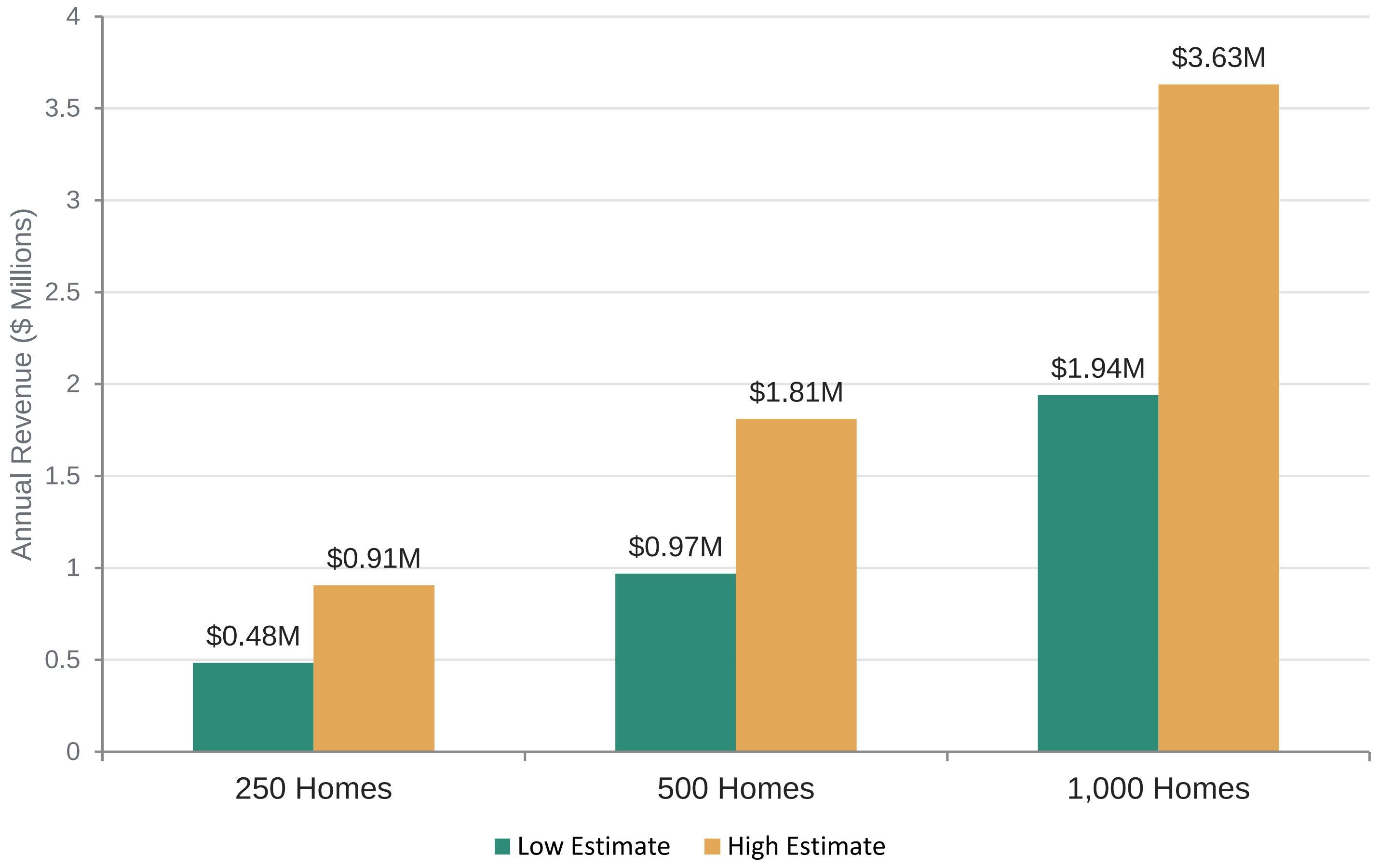
1,000

HOMES ADDED

Up to 1,000 affordable units potentially freed

Major system-level impact on waitlists and exits

Estimated Annual Property Tax Revenue



Strategic Implication

Missing middle housing does more than add units — it creates movement within the existing housing system.

Tax revenue is not the primary goal. It is the return generated when Columbus restores housing mobility and lets the system function as intended.

Source: GA Dept. of Revenue millage data; Muscogee County effective property tax analyses

WHAT'S IN THE WAY

Why Missing Middle Housing Isn't Getting Built

Zoning Restrictions

Current codes limit duplexes, triplexes & small multifamily housing types

Community Opposition

Neighborhood resistance can delay or prevent needed development

Feasibility Constraints

Rising construction costs make these unit types harder to pencil

Regulatory Complexity

Permitting timelines and process add cost and risk for builders

RECOMMENDATION 1

Set Up a Redevelopment Entity & Housing Trust Fund

A nonprofit-led redevelopment entity paired with a Community Housing Trust Fund can acquire, hold, and redevelop underutilized property with more flexibility than a government-only model.

HOW

Two complementary entities: a redevelopment entity to acquire and market underutilized property, and a Trust Fund to sustain long-term investment in workforce and affordable housing.

LEADING ENTITIES

- Nonprofit-Led Redevelopment Entity & Housing Trust Fund
- Columbus Consolidated Government (planning & development)
- Private developers, neighborhood & philanthropic partners

FIRST ACTION STEP

Convene neighborhood leaders, nonprofit housing organizations, local government, and philanthropic partners to define governance and launch a pilot redevelopment or infill project.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Year 1: Coalition convened; priority redevelopment areas mapped; 1 pilot launched**Year 3:** Zoning/policy updates adopted; pre-approved plan program live**Year 5:** Sustained increase in housing supply across income levels

RECOMMENDATION 2

Increase Attainable Housing Supply

Align zoning, permitting, and incentives so infill and small multifamily development pencil out — without requiring case-by-case rezoning.

HOW

Expand supply through policy alignment, development incentives, and public-private partnerships — prioritizing missing middle housing, infill redevelopment, and context-appropriate density.

LEADING ENTITIES

- Nonprofit-Led Redevelopment Entity & Housing Trust Fund Model
- Private developers, property owners & the local real estate community

FIRST ACTION STEP

Convene CCG, developers, and planning officials to review zoning barriers, identify infill sites, and evaluate pre-approved plans, reduced fees, and streamlined permitting — modeled on Purpose Built Communities and Bibb City redevelopment.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Year 1: Priority infill areas identified; zoning barriers assessed**Year 3:** Increased private investment in housing production**Year 5:** More duplexes, triplexes & townhomes available communitywide

RECOMMENDATION 3

Turn Blight Removal Into a Workforce Pipeline

Students rehab vacant properties while earning skilled-trades credentials — addressing blight and building the construction workforce at the same time.

HOW

Launch a student-led redevelopment pipeline: Jordan Vocational High School students train alongside Columbus Technical College's carpentry, electrical & plumbing programs, rehabbing vacant properties for real-world experience. Pair this with a Truth Spring–style place-based pilot integrating housing redevelopment with workforce training and supportive services.

LEADING ENTITIES

- Columbus Technical College & Jordan Vocational High School
- City of Columbus, Land Bank Authority, local developers/contractors
- Truth Spring (supporting entity)

FIRST ACTION STEP

Formalize a partnership to identify pilot properties, align curriculum pathways, and phase in student-led rehabilitation projects.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Year 1: Aligned trades pathway launched; pilot properties secured**Year 3:** Fewer vacant/blighted properties; more students in trades**Year 5:** Sustainable redevelopment workforce pipeline established

Greenville, South Carolina

1,700+ housing units supported by the Greenville Housing Fund since 2018

10,000+ housing units targeted communitywide through public, private & philanthropic collaboration

50+ cross-sector partners aligned around shared planning & funding

Why it's the right model for Columbus

The Greenville Housing Fund and Greenville Together initiative directly link housing production to workforce and economic development — using workforce housing investment, infill redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and coordinated funding to expand attainable housing.

This is the same model Columbus Ahead is pursuing: aligning government, nonprofits, healthcare systems, philanthropy, and private developers around a shared housing and economic development strategy.

THE PATH FORWARD

What Success Looks Like

YEAR 1

Convene & Launch

- Cross-sector redevelopment coalition formed
- Priority infill areas mapped; zoning barriers reviewed
- At least one pilot redevelopment project launched

YEAR 3

Build Momentum

- Zoning/policy updates adopted for increased density
- Pre-approved housing plans & streamlined permitting live
- Rising private investment in workforce housing

YEAR 5

System-Level Change

- Sustained growth in housing supply across income levels
- Reduced barriers for households moving between housing types
- Scalable redevelopment model driving downtown revitalization

Our Ask of the Council

Support convening

the cross-sector redevelopment coalition and the Nonprofit-Led Redevelopment Entity / Housing Trust Fund planning process

Direct a zoning & policy review

to identify barriers to missing middle housing and evaluate incentive and pre-approval options

Champion the workforce pipeline

connecting Jordan Vocational, Columbus Technical College, and redevelopment partners