Housing & Neighborhoods

Housing Analysis

In many communities, young adults and the elderly have limited housing options due to a combination of their lower income levels along with the pricing and availability of housing. This kind of financial challenge can impact people of all ages.

The general rule of thumb based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is to spend a maximum of 30% of a household's income on housing costs, yet many people find themselves spending more on housing, leaving less of their income available for other household expenses. Finding attainable housing can be challenge and it can stress family finances.

The chart below demonstrates that nearly half of all renter households and about a quarter of owner households are cost burdened. Cost burdened is defined as households spending more that 30 percent of income on housing. In 2001, only slightly more that 40 percent of renters were cost burdened. The supply of multifamily for-sale housing is decreasing. Multifamily for-sale housing has historically represented about 20 to 25 percent of total multifamily permits. This type of housing is often more attainable because of its lower cost. In the past 8 years, multifamily for-sale housing has represented 6 to 7 percent of total permits, reflecting a significant post-Great Recession decline.

REVIEW OF HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

WHAT DO WE WANT?
Attractive, safe, quiet and well-maintained neighborhoods; a diversified range of housing for people of all ages and abilities; and active neighborhoods that promote community connectedness.

HOUSING OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage maintenance of and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods.

2. Ensure that infill and redeveloped residential properties are compatible with the surrounding area and adjacent parcels.

3. Provide a diverse range of housing options that meet the affordability, maintenance, and lifestyle needs of current and future residents.

4. Support neighborhoods by improving walkability and access to goods and services.

CHART 9: COST-BURDENED US HOUSEHOLDS BY OWNER/RENTER

Nearly Half of Renter Households and a Quarter of Owner Households Are Cost Burdened

Share of Households with Cost Burdens (Percent)

● Renters ● Owners
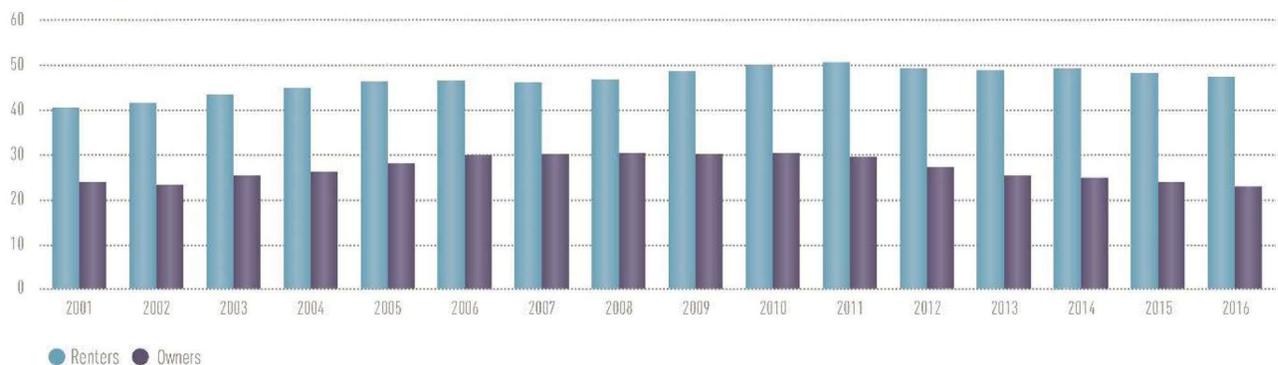
Notes: Cost-burdened households pay more than 30% of income for housing. Households with zero or negative income are assumed to have burdens, while households paying no cash rent are assumed to be without burdens.
Source: JCHS tabulations of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

ATTAINABLE HOUSING

Benchmark: Thriving communities provide a wide spectrum of housing options to support all residents. The availability of "attainable" housing helps accommodate everyone from young adults who are just beginning to live on their own, to older residents looking to downsize while staying in the community. While there is no universal definition of "attainable housing," The term was recently defined by the Urban Land Institute as "non-subsidized, for-sale housing that is affordable to households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the area median income (AMI)."

New construction has delivered larger homes with more bedrooms even though household size was dropping. "Although one- or two-person households make up more than 60 percent of total households, nearly 50 percent of the homes delivered are four bedrooms or more. Less than 10 percent of the homes offer fewer bedroom options like one and two bedrooms," as noted by ULI.

The same ULI report notes that small housing, under 1,400 square feet, has historically represented about 16 percent of new construction, but in the last cycle, it has averaged closer to 7 percent. When combined with the next size category, 1,400 to 1,800 square feet, the overall distribution of "small homes" has declined from just under 40 percent to 22 percent.   Homes over 2,400 square feet have increased from 32 percent to 50 percent of new construction since 1999, according to the ULI .

What does this mean for Lathrup Village?

As noted above, attainable housing has been defined as non-subsidized, for-sale housing that is affordable to households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the area median income (AMI)."

In terms of affordability, in general, housing costs should not exceed 30% of income. In consideration of the outflow of residents for jobs outside the city, transportation costs should also be included in the consideration of affordability, as they generally are the second biggest household expense (after housing).

The Center for Neighborhood Technology compiles data based on a variety of sources to create a "Housing + Transportation Affordability Index." Their analysis typically shows that residents living in areas considered "affordable" in terms of housing costs less than 30% of median household income may often incur higher transportation costs. They suggest that housing and transportation costs combined should not exceed 45% of median household income. In Lathrup Village, the average housing costs are about 33% of income, while transportation costs are about 24% of income. Together, these two expenses consume about 54% of the household income for Lathrup Village residents.

CHART 10: ANNUAL EXPENDITURES FOR HOUSING & TRANSPORTATION

33% Housing
24% Transportation
43% Everything else
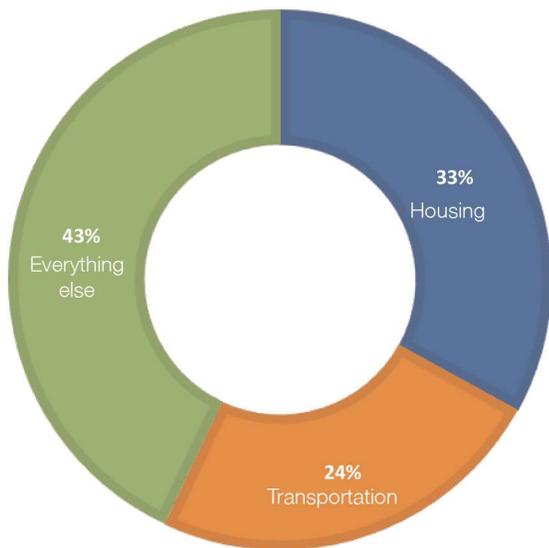
Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology

Housing in Lathrup Village

The City's residential neighborhoods, by and large, are what defines the character of Lathrup Village. Most of the City's neighborhoods are included in the Historic District as described earlier Maintaining this character has been a continuing goal of the City for many years. Key considerations include encouraging ongoing home and yard maintenance, blight enforcement, and tree maintenance and preservation.

As noted earlier, the demographics of the City is changing; the population is getting older. Given that the vast majority of housing units in the City are single family detached homes, the Comprehensive Plan should consider how to address the housing needs of its residents in the future. Older adults should be able to "age in place" in their existing homes. However, new trends in population shifts suggest that younger and older adults alike are interested in vibrant, more urban-style communities. Through public input and previous planning efforts, the community has expressed a need to both retain existing residents as well as attract younger people to the City.

The current composition of the city's housing stock is well-suited for young families with its selection of single family residential homes, the majority of which has three or more bedrooms. However, there are few opportunities for young adults or empty nesters looking to get started or downsize into a smaller home with low maintenance. To offer options to its current and future residents, Lathrup Village has made zoning changes to accommodate this housing style as a part of envisioned redevelopment in the Village Center and Southfield Road Corridor. Providing alternatives to single family detached housing is a key component of a future Village Center, and also can give older adults the opportunity to "age in community."

It should be noted that needs of older adults go beyond housing, and include access to transportation, opportunities for socialization, and access to services.

Aging in Place

Issues related to aging in place include home design and maintenance. The home must be safe and accessible for older residents. Improvements can range from the simple, such as replacing light switches and faucets, to more significant improvements, such as kitchen and bath remodeling. The City should explore ways to educate the community on the elements of Universal Design, which is intended to make spaces that are accessible to all, not only aging adults, but also families with small children.

Another issue for older adults staying in their homes is the ability, often physical, to maintain their homes as they have in the past. There are several actions that can be taken that can help to mitigate the burden. One option would be to identify qualified, quality "handymen" entities that would agree to provide services to local residents at a reduced or fixed cost basis. Utility companies often have maintenance contracts on significant appliances as well. The entities involved would benefit through increased promotion at no cost to them and potentially stable and consistent business.

A second option would be to establish a small local company to furnish services on a fixed price or a variety of services for one monthly price. This would operate much like a condominium association and some homeowners associations around the country; but could cover not just exterior but interior minor maintenance elements as well.

Reaching out to aging adults in the community can sometimes be challenging. Strong neighborhood groups can help bridge the gaps in information from service providers, the city and older residents. The neighborhood concept is discussed further in the next section.

Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are the fundamental building blocks of a community. More than just the area in which people live, neighborhoods also include shops, restaurants, parks, places of worship and schools. They tend to be the places where we can attend to at least some of our daily needs within close proximity of where we live.

Often, neighborhoods draw together people of similar ethnicities, incomes and life circumstances. Sometimes they have defined boundaries based on streets or natural features. Regardless of their shape or composition, neighborhoods can serve as a needed link between the individual and the overall community.

Neighborhoods are connected by physical elements like streets and sidewalks as well as by loose or formal social connections, like a neighborhood watch program, neighborhood association, time bank or phone chain. Well-connected neighborhoods are better able to share information about the community at large, encourage civic participation in events and activities, and raise awareness of resources that may be available for people when they're needed. In disconnected neighborhoods, people may be less likely to feel they're part of the overall community and may miss out on opportunities to participate in civic life. This presents challenges for local governments as well as schools, businesses and service organizations. Strengthening neighborhood connections helps tie the community together and improve quality of life for all.

Planning at the neighborhood level can provide an opportunity to engage more people because the topics have more immediacy and relevance. It can take advantage of some built-in neighborhood networks, where they exist, that provide another avenue for communication and outreach. While often neighborhood groups get active when faced with a controversial development project (as evidenced by the common term NIMBY – Not in My Back Yard), proactive neighborhood engagement might better prepare a community for new development/redevelopment.

Neighborhood planning looks at issues specific to an area within a larger community. Some of the issues that could prompt long-range planning include:

- Preservation and Conservation. Conserving the built and natural heritage of an area

- Sustainability. Developing sustainability policies and initiatives

- Access and Civic Engagement. Improving access to local democracy, social services, and government institutions

- Housing and Community Development. Addressing sector-specific issues such as housing or economic development

- Transportation and Connectivity. Enhancing opportunities for active transportation by changing the physical treatment of neighborhood streets and public spaces[1]

The American Planning Association developed a Policy Guide on Neighborhood Collaborative Planning in 1998. It finds that "neighborhoods are the strategic building blocks of overall community development. Neighborhood collaborative planning requires understanding of the economic, social and physical characteristics in order to maintain both the sense of place and the sense of community."[2] The APA recommends seven general policies about neighborhood planning:

- Comprehensive plans provide the framework for neighborhood planning and should be done within the context of a community-wide plan.

- Where there are identifiable neighborhoods, a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan should reflect neighborhood plans and neighborhood plans should support the broader needs of the community and region.

- Planning decisions should be directed to the most

---

1 Neighborhood Planning for Resilient and Livable Cities, Part 1 of 3: Why Do Neighborhoods Matter and Where Are We Going Wrong? Jayne Engle, Montreal. Nik Luka, Montreal and Uppsala. September 2014

2 American Planning Association Policy Guide on Neighborhood Collaborative Planning, 1998.

appropriate level. Planning decisions that have limited impact on the community as a whole should be made by, or on the basis of advice given by, those neighborhood groups primarily affected. On the other hand, planning decisions that affect the community as a whole should not be overly influenced by a single neighborhood's needs or interests.

- Neighborhoods should be encouraged to seek the best organizational structure that is suited to achieve their goals and objectives such as, but not limited to neighborhood associations, co-ops, development corporations.

- Neighborhood-based coalitions that assist in the development of individual neighborhood organizations, articulate neighborhood views on community wide issues, and facilitate coordination in the planning process should be encouraged and supported by local government.

- Advocacy planning for neighborhoods should be accepted as a legitimate role for professional planners, both publicly and privately employed.

- To be effective in many cases, neighborhood planning needs to go beyond addressing the physical conditions of the area and also examine issues of social equity. To that end, the APA at the national,

chapter and division levels should work with social service, housing, economic development, public health, educational, recreational, judicial and other organizations to ensure that the issues social equity, children and families receive attention through the efforts of planners.

Communities of all sizes may find thinking at the neighborhood level to be more meaningful for residents and businesses. For example, in Los Angeles, their long-range plans recognize that "many residents do not identify with the City as a whole, but, instead, with their own neighborhood." By planning at the neighborhood level, the city notes, "planning measures can reinforce those neighborhoods and connect them to one another and to larger districts, thereby defining a citywide structure." [3]
The city's strategies for overall growth include focusing on neighborhoods by: improving the appearance of commercial corridors, creating open space and adding visual and recreational amenities; re-purposing rights-of-ways to open space corridors that link neighborhoods to parks; concentrating development in transit-served areas and corridors; allowing streets to function as open space, with design and functional improvements.

---

3 The General Plan Framework, City of Los Angeles, CA.

The challenge for communities is not letting the hyperlocal focus of neighborhood planning and involvement result in competition between neighborhoods or let the voice of the neighborhoods drown out strategies that are good for the overall community. Keeping a "glocal" perspective means that it is important to plan and act locally in neighborhoods while nurturing the relationships between neighborhoods and the community at large, highlighting neighborhood action strategies that result in resilient and livable communities.

What are the essential elements of neighborhood planning? Planning at the neighborhood level requires an understanding of the following:

- **Geographic boundaries**. Think of neighborhoods in terms of walkability – a ten- to 15-minute walk radius – generally one half to one mile. Are there physical boundaries such as busy streets, highways, rail lines, large facilities or other barriers that serve as limits to one's walkability in a neighborhood or otherwise serve as an edge to a clear district?

- **Demographics**. What are the characteristics of the neighborhood? Understanding the income, race, age and household makeup of a neighborhood can help shed light on where issues of equity may need to be addressed.

- **Land uses**. To be walkable and serve some of the daily needs of its local population, a neighborhood needs more than just homes. Are there a mix of uses – perhaps not within the neighborhood, but at its edges, that provide destinations for neighborhood residents? Is there a school, library, park or other community facility that helps define the neighborhood?

- **Transportation networks**. How do people travel within and out of the neighborhood? Are there non-motorized transportation facilities like sidewalks and/or shared-use paths?

- **Historic Assets**. Are there any significant structures that are only found in a specific neighborhood? Historic structures like homes and schools can contribute to the character of a neighborhood – depending on their condition.

- **Natural Resources and Environment.** Are there any natural resources in the neighborhood? How do those resources connect to other neighborhoods or even beyond the community's borders?

- **Public realm**. Are there public spaces like parks, plazas or civic spaces that give the neighborhood the opportunity to engage? Sidewalks and streets should be considered as part of the public realm. How do homes and other land uses in the neighborhood interact with the public realm – particularly its streets and sidewalks?

- **Social network.** Is there an existing social network in the neighborhood for the facilitation and delivery of news and information? How does the neighborhood access community resources offered locally and regionally?

- **Context**. Where is the neighborhood within the context of the community as a whole? What boundaries – physical or social – separate neighborhoods from each other or important community assets? How can individual neighborhoods better interact with other neighborhoods as well as contribute to an improved overall community?

As shown on the map on the following page, the city somewhat naturally can be divided into five neighborhoods, using physical boundaries of Southfield Road and I-696. An additional road boundary of Saratoga provides an easy dividing point between the north and south for the northwest neighborhoods.

While city residents are largely plugged in to community events and activities, efforts to reinforce community and neighborhood identity can help residents communicate with each other as well as help the city more effectively communicate with residents.

MAP 9: LATHRUP VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOODS
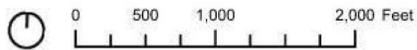
Neighborhoods
CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE

giffels
webster