

Housing Affordability and Availability Needs Assessment

Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, 2025 Update

Introduction and Purpose

The Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan Update provides a framework for promoting a diverse housing supply, protecting and improving the health and livability of neighborhoods, and making adequate provisions for the current and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community. Safe and affordable housing is essential to realizing Skagit County’s vision as a vibrant community.

Recent changes to the Growth Management Act (GMA) resulted in new requirements for this Housing Element update. These include:

- *House Bill 1337* amended RCW 36.70A to add significant changes to local government roles for regulating accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within urban growth areas (UGAs). Consequently, this plan includes additional consideration for the role of ADUs in meeting housing needs inside UGAs.
- *House Bill 1220* as amended in the GMA (RCW 36.70A.070) requires the county to “plan for and accommodate” housing affordable to all income levels. This requires changes in the Housing Element to address housing provisions by income bracket to show how the county is planning for housing. Additional requirements for housing element updates now include:
 - An inventory of housing needs by income level as well as needs for emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing
 - Analysis to show sufficient land capacity for these housing needs as well as accommodation of moderate density housing options within Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)
 - Adequate provisions to address projected housing needs, including documentation of programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability, considering housing locations in relation to employment, and consideration of the role of ADUs.
 - Identifying policies and regulations that result in racially disparate impacts (RDI), displacement, and exclusion, and implementation of new policies and regulations to undo these impacts

Definition

HB 1220 added new terms in the housing element statute. Commerce developed the following definitions with a statewide stakeholder group to create a common understanding of the undefined terms.

- **Discriminatory effect:** The effect, regardless of intent, of differentiated outcomes for a group based on a protected classification. May be an action or failure to act. Protected classifications include race/color, national origin, religion/creed, sex/gender/domestic violence status, familial status, disability, marital status, sexual orientation and military/veteran status.
- **Disinvestment:** A process by which a community is not prioritized for investment, or by which a system, policy or action disincentivizes investment in a specific area. Disinvestment processes occur over time, often in the long term.
- **Displacement:** The process by which a household is forced to move from its community because of conditions beyond their control.
 - Physical displacement: Households are directly forced to move for reasons such as eviction, foreclosure, natural disaster or deterioration in housing quality.
 - Economic displacement: Households are compelled to move by rising rents or costs of home ownership like property taxes.
 - Cultural displacement: Residents are compelled to move because the people and the institutions that make up their cultural community have left the area.
- **Displacement risk:** The likelihood that a household, business or organization will be displaced from its community.
- **Exclusion in housing:** The act or effect of shutting or keeping certain populations out of housing within a specified area, in a manner that may be intentional or unintentional, but which leads to non-inclusive impacts.
- **Gentrification:** The process of neighborhood change resulting in households being unable to remain in their neighborhood or move into a neighborhood that would have been previously accessible to them. The neighborhood change includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood, such as rising land values and rising housing costs, as well as demographic change representing a shift in the income, racial composition, or educational level of residents. This is also referred to as “neighborhood exclusionary change” or “exclusionary displacement.” Gentrification creates discriminatory effects when it forces the displacement of long-time residents and businesses.
- **Inclusionary zoning:** A regulatory tool that requires permanent affordable units to be included within new residential development projects or requires payment for construction of such units elsewhere (fee-in-lieu). “Permanent” refers to affordable unit availability in the long term, specifically, for 50 years as defined by the Washington code.
- **Infrastructure:** The facilities and systems that serve a country, city, or area, such as transportation, parks, communication systems, energy and utility systems, and schools.
- **Market forces:** Economic factors that impact the provision, price and/or demand for housing.
- **Racially disparate impacts:** When policies, rules or other systems result in a disproportionate impact on one or more racial groups.
- **Median household income:** The household income for the median household in a region. Can also be understood as the midpoint of a region’s income distribution.

- **HUD Median Family Income (MFI):** U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculates MFI for counties each year and uses this information to set income limits for affordable housing eligibility. MFI varies based on household size.

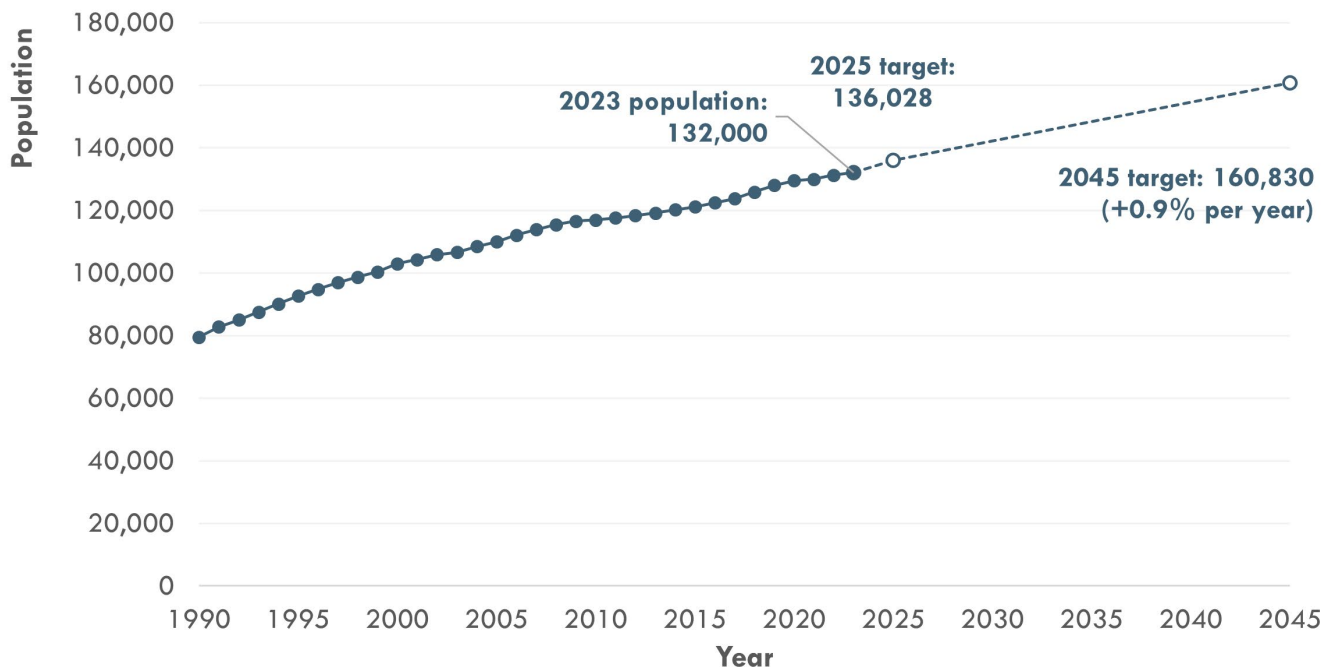
Summary of Key Findings

- As of 2020, approximately 6,000 households in Skagit County were spending over half of their income on housing costs. These families and individuals have limited income remaining to cover other essentials like food, transportation, and education. Many experience housing insecurity, and are at risk of losing their homes if housing costs continue to rise.
- In 2023, approximately 3,373 individuals experienced homelessness or unstable housing countywide.
- Rental housing costs increased consistently since 2018. This has reduced the supply of lower cost housing options, and likely increased the number of households experiencing housing insecurity since 2020.
- Typical home sale prices continue to rise, making it difficult for a first-time homebuyer to purchase a home under \$500,000.
- Racial disparities in housing affect many BIPOC households, who have lower homeownership rates and are more likely to be cost burdened compared to their White counterparts.

Population Characteristics

According to the Office of Financial Management (OFM), the total population of Skagit County in 2023 was approximately 132,000. Between 2000 and 2023, Skagit County has grown by 29,021 people, an average annual increase of 1.1%. Looking forward, the Growth Management Act Steering Committee (GMASC) projected a 2045 population target of 160,830 for the county, which presents an expected 0.9% average annual population growth over the next two decades. Approximately 80% of the growth in Skagit County is expected to occur within incorporated cities and their UGAs.

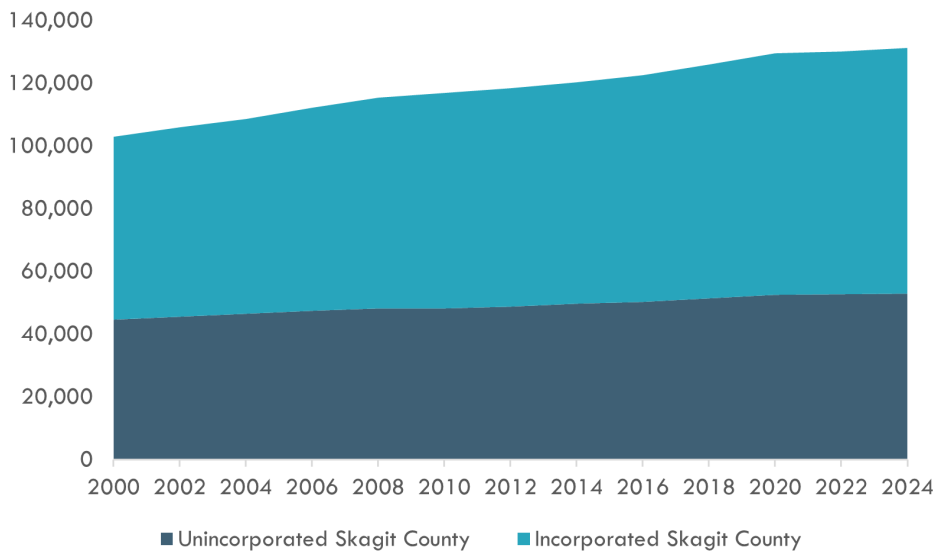
Exhibit 1. Skagit County - Population Growth: Historic and Projected (1990 – 2045)



Sources: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Office of Financial Management, 2023; Community Attributes, 2023; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 2 shows that between 2000 and 2023, Unincorporated Skagit County has grown by 8,559 people, an average annual growth of 0.8% and Incorporated Skagit County has grown by 20,462 people, an average annual increase of 1.3%.

Exhibit 2. Skagit County – Population trend / unincorporated / incorporated (2000 – 2024)



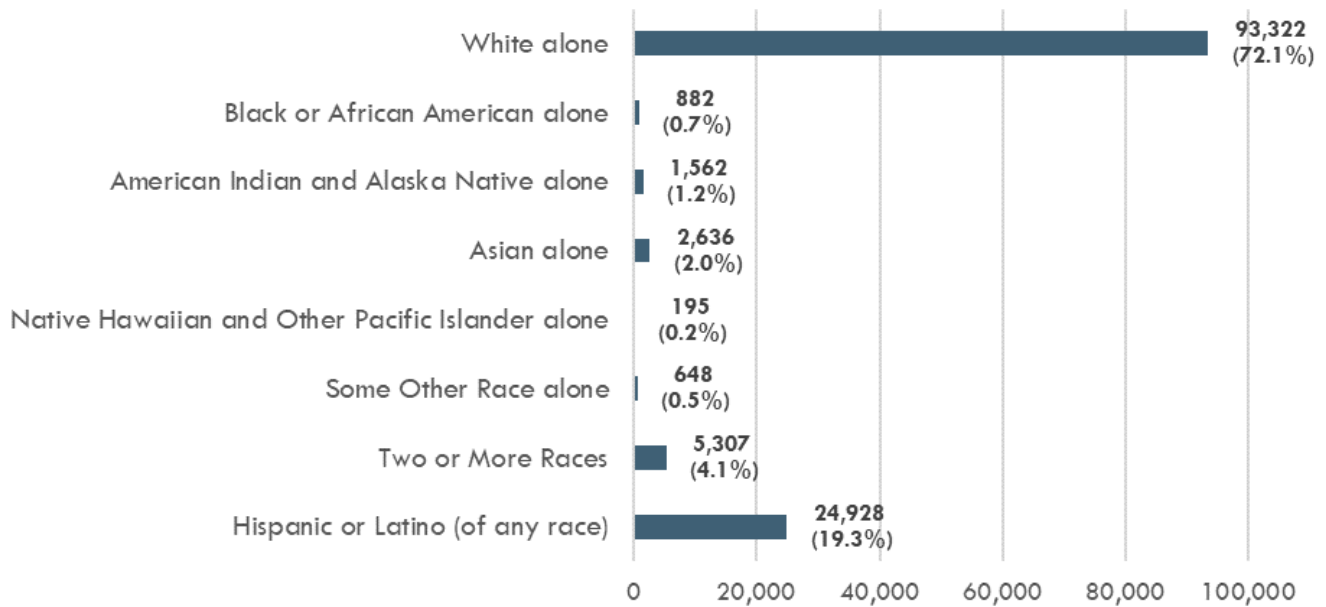
Source: OFM Intercensal Estimates 2000-2010 & 2010-2020; BERK, 2024.

Racial and Ethnic Makeup

As of 2022, Census data estimates that 72% of the Skagit County population identify as White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, which is a higher percentage than Washington state at 65.5%. As shown in Exhibit 3, about 19% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, which is higher than the 13% of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino in Washington State. 84% of the Hispanic or Latino population in the county are Mexican, compared to 76% for the state.

The largest racial groups represented in the non-Hispanic/Latino population in Skagit County are those who identify as two or more races and Asian alone. These groups represent 4% and 2% of the population, respectively. Smaller proportions of the population identify as American Indian and Alaska Native, Black or African American, or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.

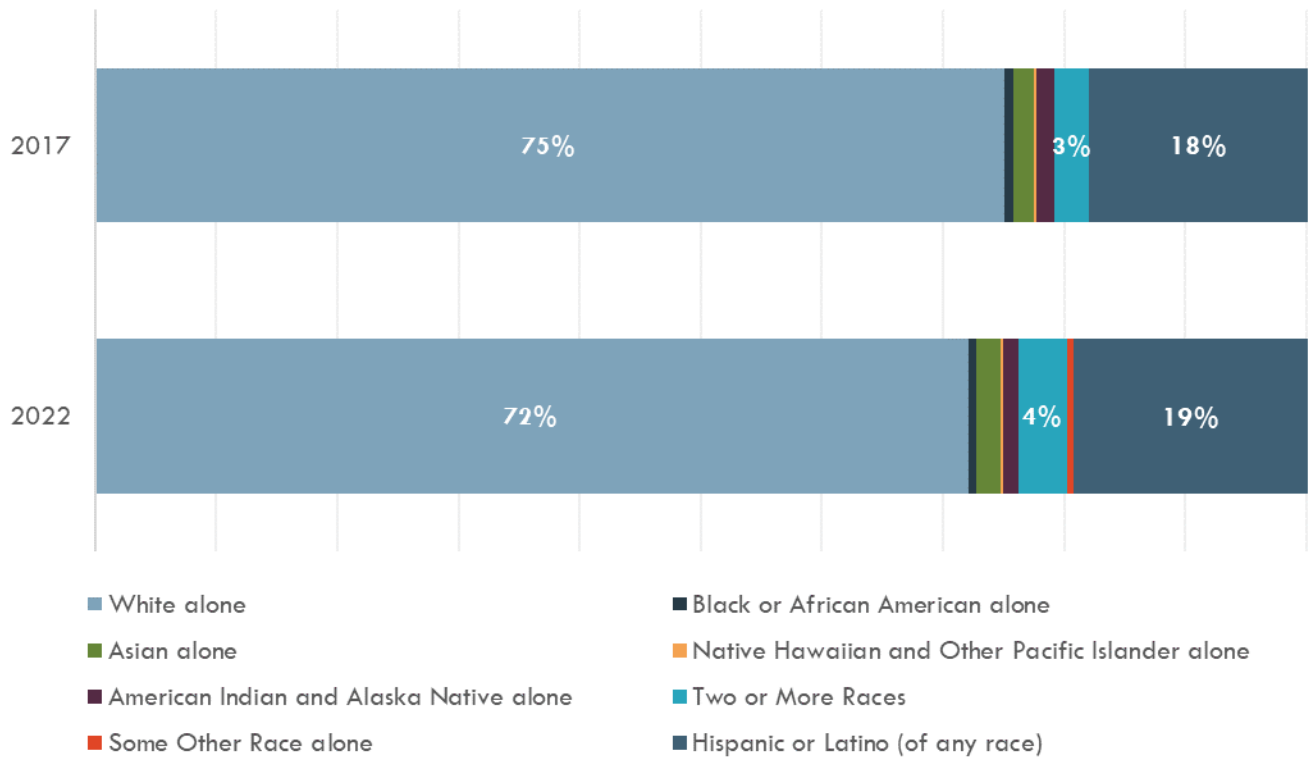
Exhibit 3. Skagit County – Race and Ethnicity of Population (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Over time, the population of Skagit County is getting more diverse. As shown in Exhibit 4, between 2017 and 2022, the percentage identifying as White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, decreased from 75% to 72%. The percentage identifying as Hispanic or Latino increased from 18% to 19%.

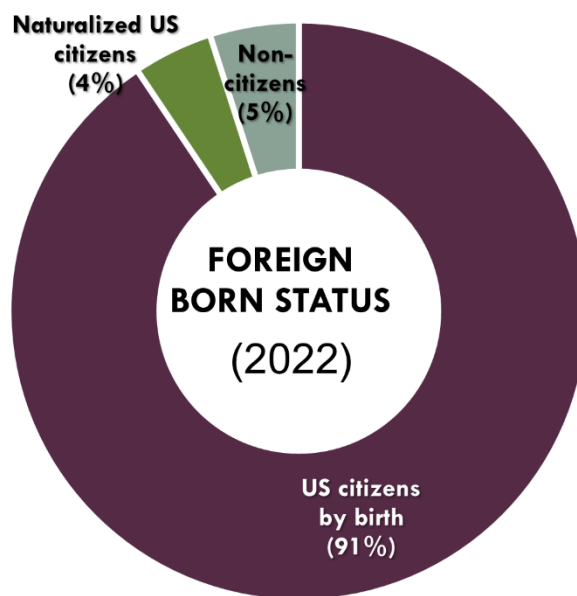
Exhibit 4. Skagit County - Population by Race and Ethnicity, Comparison Over Time (2017 and 2022)



Sources: US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

As shown in Exhibit 5, 91% Skagit County’s population was born in the United States with an addition 4% of the population being Naturalized citizens. This is a higher rate than the statewide US-born population which is at 85%.

Exhibit 5. Skagit County – Foreign-Born Populations (2022)

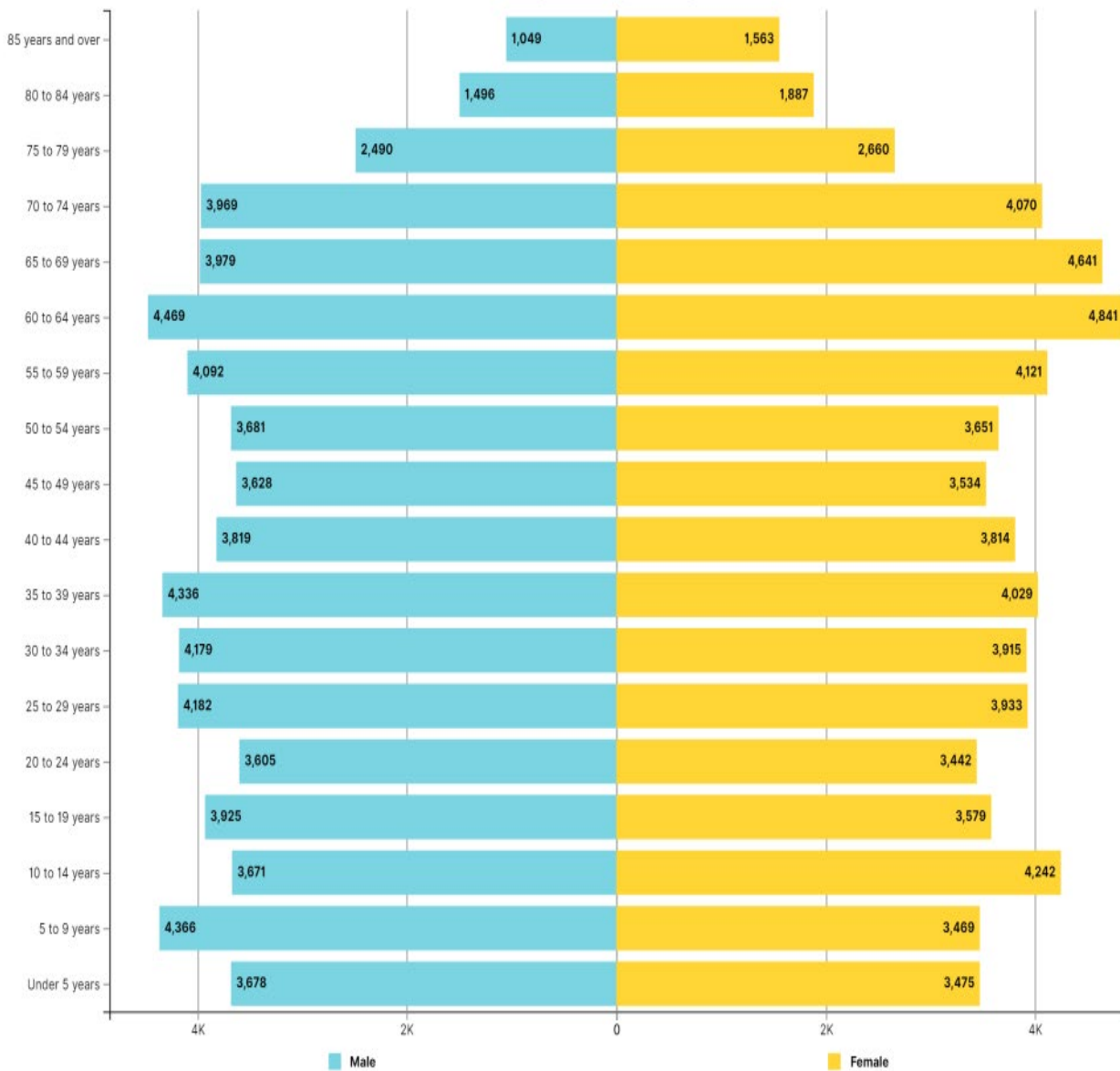


Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Age of Population

Exhibit 6 shows Skagit County’s population by age groups and gender. The gender makeup of the county is 49.9% male and 50.1% female. There is a larger distribution of male population in the young to middle age groups (30.4% male vs 28.9% female in the 0-49 age group). Correspondingly, there is a larger distribution of female population in the near retirement to retirement age groups (19.5% male vs 21.2% female in the 50+ age group).

Exhibit 6. Skagit County – Population by Age and Gender (2022)

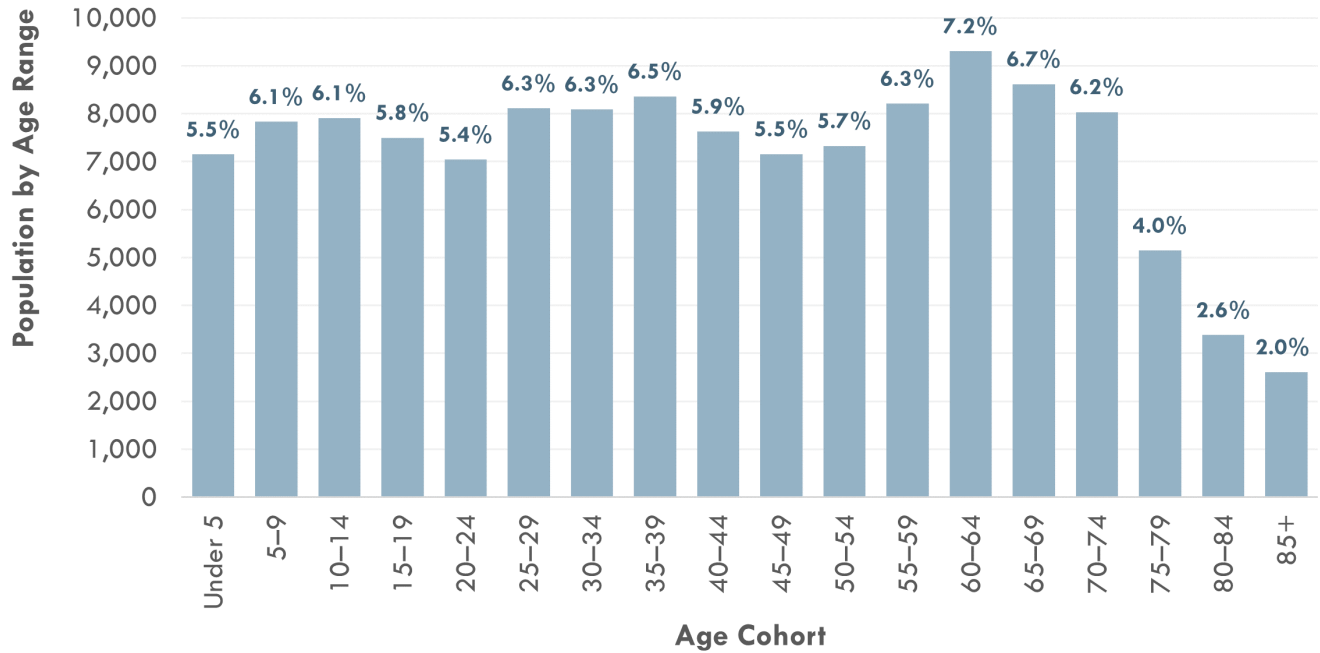


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2022.

Exhibit 7 shows that Skagit County’s age distribution is diverse. The largest single age group is people between the ages 50-64 (19.2%), the age range associated with people who will be of retirement age

within the next 15 years. The next two largest age groups are people between the ages 20-34 (18%) and 35-49 (18%) who are people likely in their prime working years and may have young families. Correspondingly, about a quarter of Skagit County’s population (23.5%) is children 19 and under, which indicates that many of the County’s households are families with children. Finally, approximately 21.5% of Skagit County’s population is of retirement age (ages 65+). In total, 40.7% of the County’s current population is either of retirement age or will be in retirement age within the next 15 years.

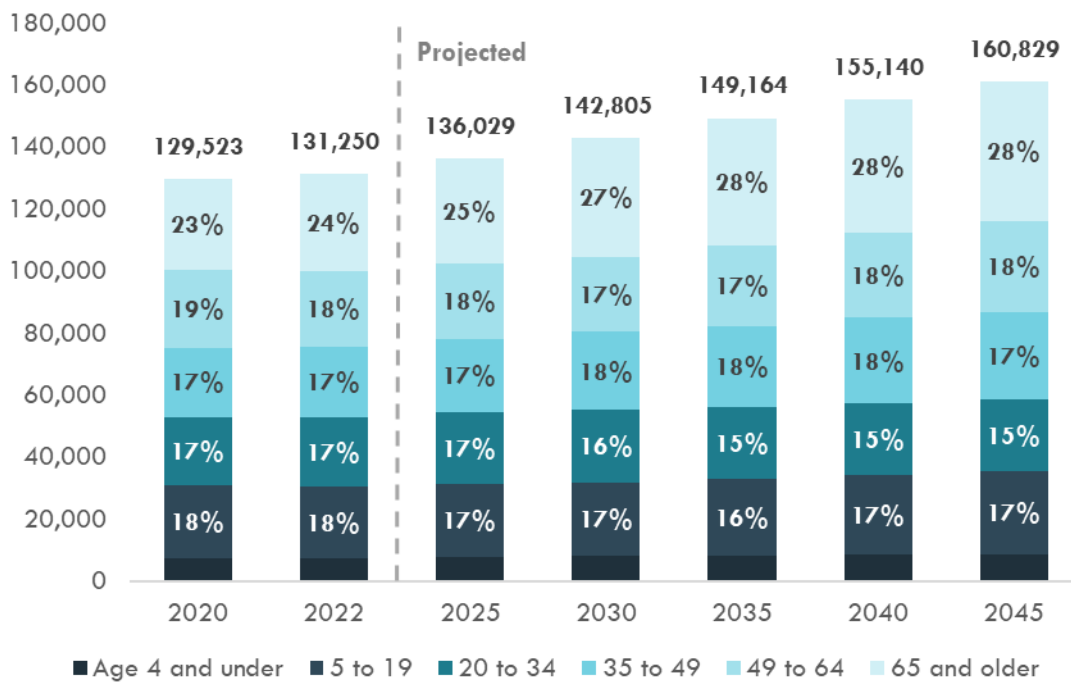
Exhibit 7. Skagit County – Age Structure of Population (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

An increase in the senior population will impact the region’s housing needs. Between 2020 and 2045, Skagit County’s population of residents 65 and older is projected to increase from 29,373 (23 percent of the county’s total population) to 45,022 (28 percent of the population). See Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8. Skagit County - Population by Age Cohort, Estimates and Projections (2020-2045)



Sources: OFM, 2023; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Note: Projections reflect the OFM Medium projection series.

Households Characteristics

A household is a group of people who live together in a housing unit. Members of a household could be related, unrelated, or living alone. In 2022, there were approximately 50,824 households living in Skagit County.¹ This section presents a profile of these households. This information is critical for informing policy recommendations about the types and sizes of new housing needed.

Exhibit 9 shows the number of occupied housing units in Skagit County by jurisdiction, which is a proxy for households.² In 2024, there were 52,043 occupied housing units in Skagit County, of which 20,774 (39.9%) were in unincorporated areas.

Exhibit 9. Occupied Housing Units by Jurisdiction (2023)

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	
Anacortes	8,167
Burlington	3,980

¹ B25009: Tenure by Household Size; US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

² According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the count of occupied housing units is the same as the count of households. <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/definitions.pdf>

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	
Concrete	344
Hamilton	113
La Conner	520
Lyman	158
Mount Vernon	13,117
Sedro-Woolley	4,870
Unincorporated Skagit County	20,774

Source: OFM, 2024.

Household Sizes and Types

According to the Census, the average household size in Skagit County was 2.51 in 2022.³ Looking to the future, the demographic trend of an aging population will likely result in a decreasing average household size over time, presuming there is an adequate supply of new homes to accommodate housing needs. This is because elderly residents are much less likely to have children living in their homes, and often are living alone or with one other person. The Washington State Dept. of Commerce projects that the average household size will be approximately 2.42 by 2045.

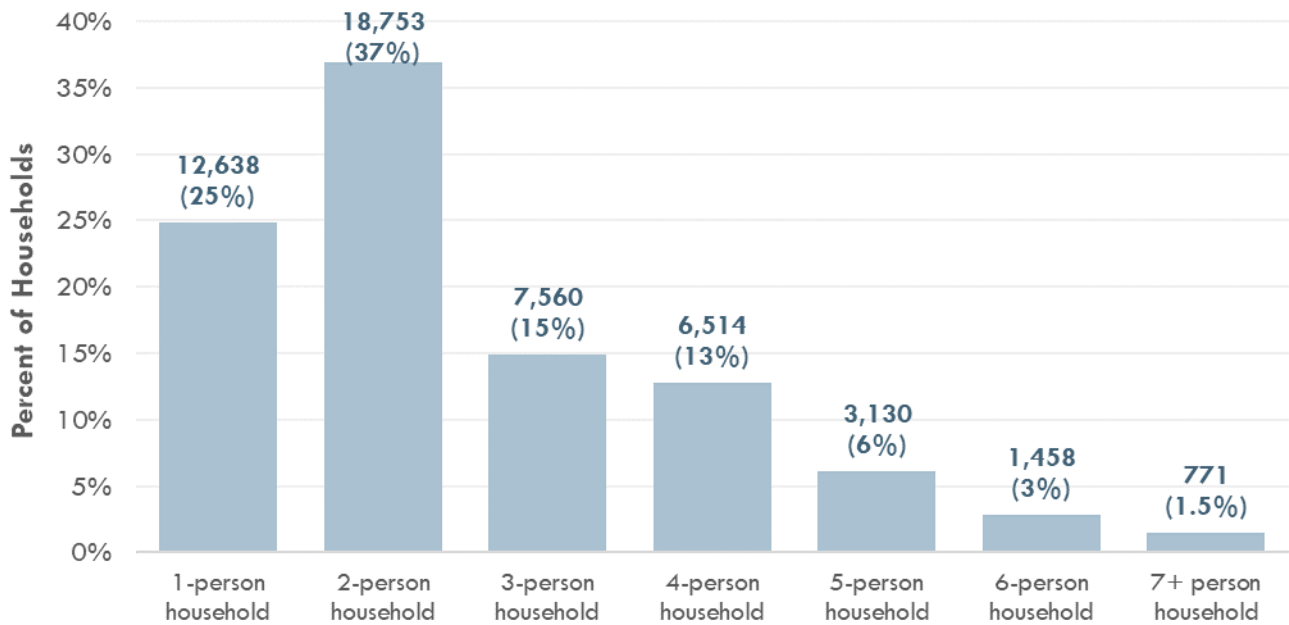
As of 2022, approximately 68% of households in Skagit County were families and 32% were non-family.⁴ According to the U.S Census Bureau, family households include two or more people living together that are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Non-family households are defined as persons living alone or with only non-relatives.

Exhibit 10 breaks down all households in Skagit County by the number of people living together. According to the 2018-2022 American Community Survey, two-person households are the most common in the county at 37%, followed by one-person households at 25%, and three-person households at 15%. Only about 10% of households have more than four members.

³ B25010: Average Household Size of Occupied Housing Units by Tenure; US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁴ B25011: Tenure by Household Type (Including Living Alone) and Age of Householder; US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

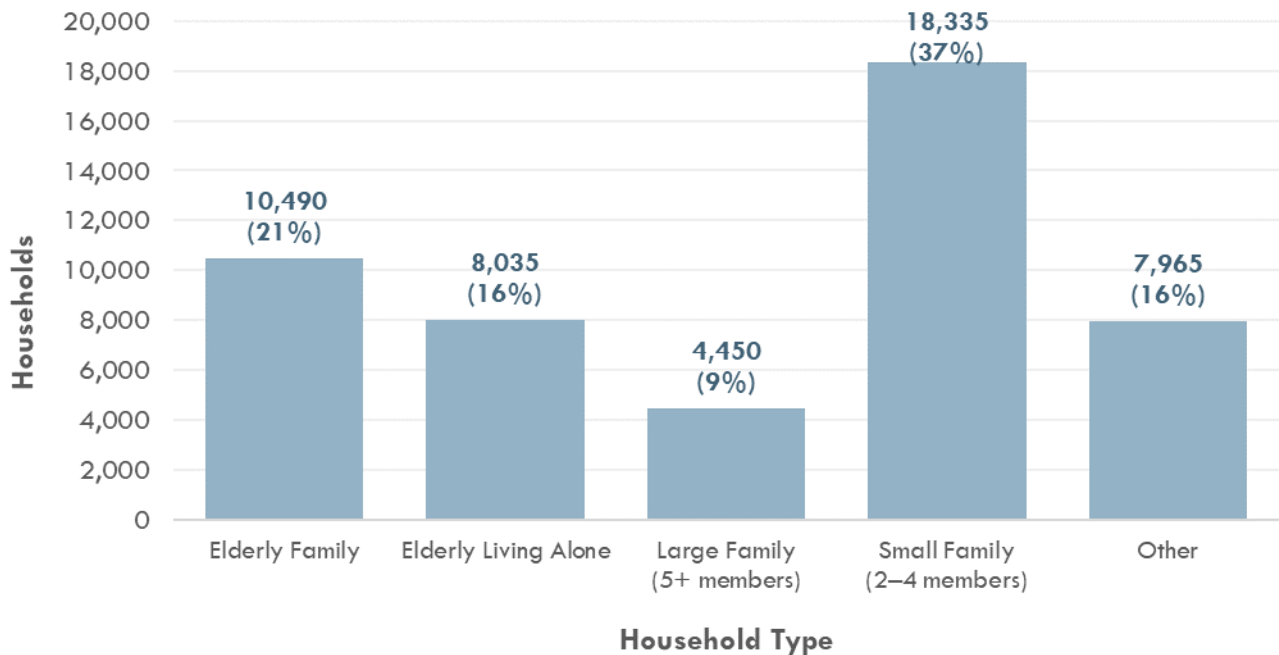
Exhibit 10. Skagit County - Households by Household Size (2022)



Sources: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 11 shows the distribution of households by type. The largest group (37%) are small families with 2 to 4 members. Many of these households are couples without children. This group excludes elderly families, which include a member who is age 62 and above. “Other” households include non-elderly people living alone as well as unrelated persons living together in a shared home.

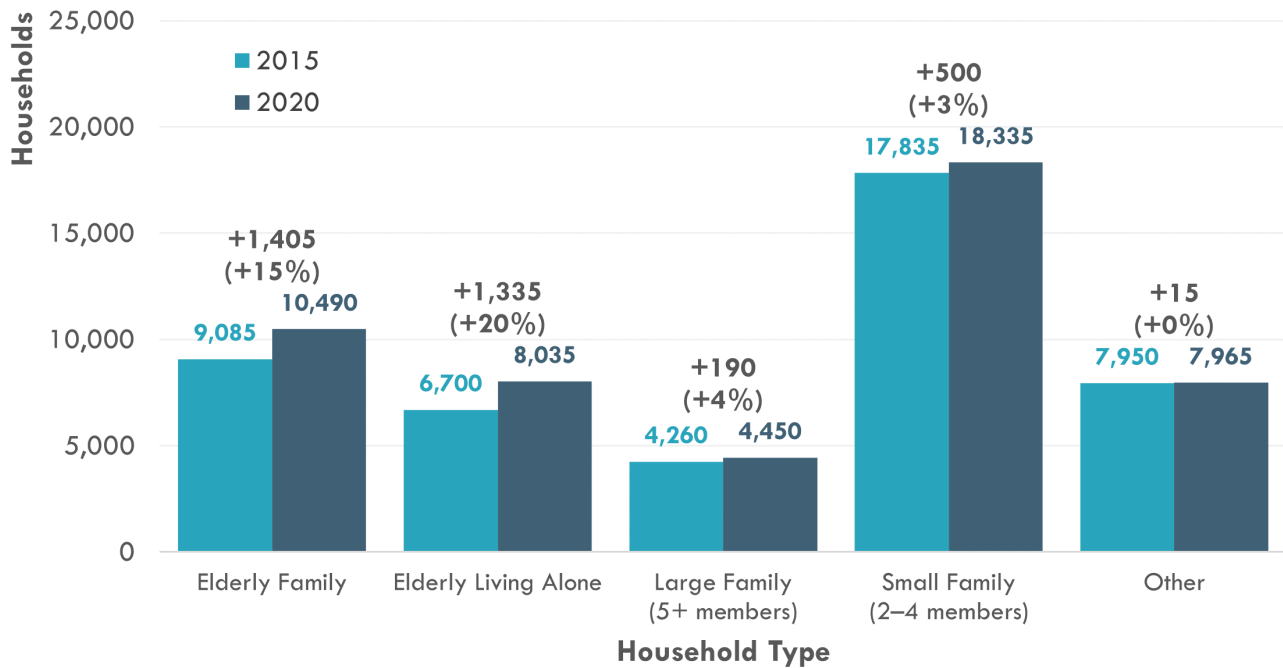
Exhibit 11. Skagit County - Households by Type (2020)



Sources: US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2016–2020; BERK Consulting, 2024.

The change in the number of households by family type shown in Exhibit 12 is consistent with the demographic trend of an aging population in Skagit County. The elderly families and elderly living alone households rose significantly over the last 5 years (+15% and +20%, respectively) while the number of large and small families (+4% and +3%) rose slightly. Non-family households stayed the same. This data indicates that there is a relatively high number of households aging into elderly years and/or elderly households are moving into Skagit County. The smaller increase in small families and non-family households may indicate that those households are moving out from Skagit County or aging into elderly households. The large and growing number of elderly households call for housing policies and strategies that support a diversity of housing options such as accessory dwelling units for family members or caregivers, and smaller housing units closer to services for those looking to downsize.

Exhibit 12. Skagit County - Households by Type (2015 and 2020)



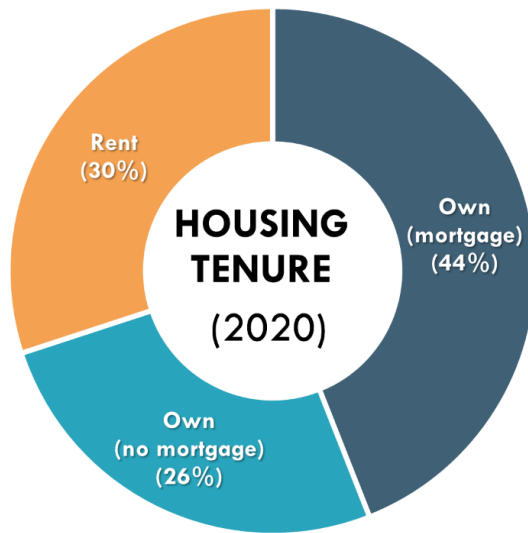
Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Household Tenure

Tenure refers to the ownership status of a home. The tenure mix (owner or renter) in an area provides insights into the housing situations and needs of different population segments. An overview of tenure patterns is vital for understanding housing needs and developing appropriate policies and programs.

A strong majority of households in the county own the home they live in. **Exhibit 13** shows that 70% of Skagit County households own the home they live in and 30% of households rent the home they live in. The results are not far off from the Washington State averages of 64% and 36%, respectively. Given the substantial proportion of homeowners, there may be opportunities for growth in rental units to accommodate those who cannot afford to buy or prefer the flexibility of renting. In the next section, household income and cost burden for residents in Skagit County is examined and the results suggest that the county would benefit from affordable housing, especially in the rental market.

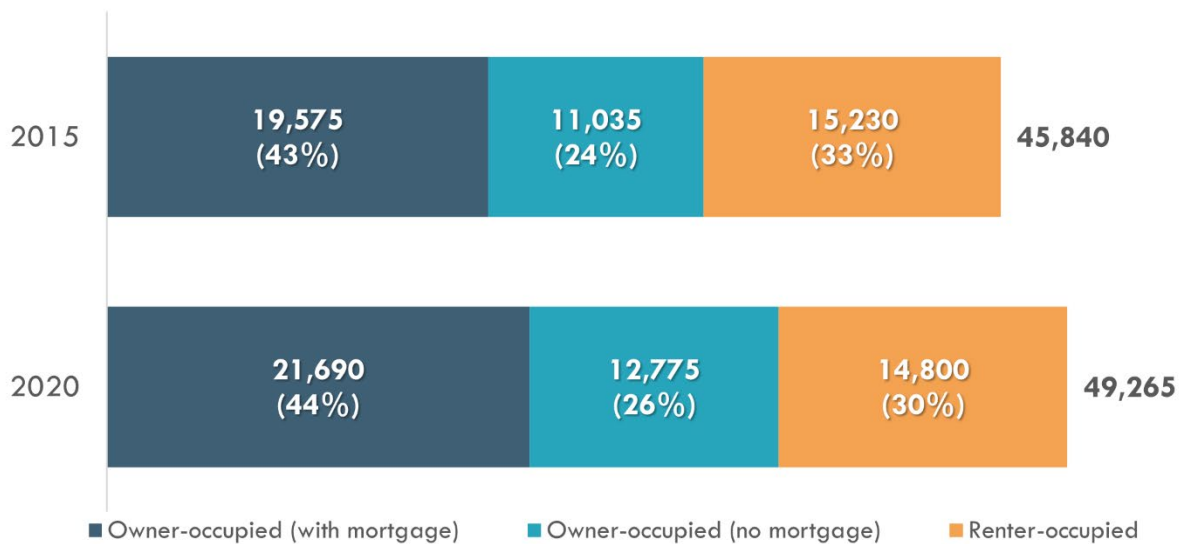
Exhibit 13. Skagit County – Tenure by Ownership vs Renters (2020)



Sources: US Census Bureau, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Between 2015 and 2020 there was little change in percentage of tenure. Renter-occupied units decreased by 3% and owner-occupied units rose by 3% in that time span.

Exhibit 14. Skagit County – Five Year Change with Home Ownership and Renters (2015 and 2020)

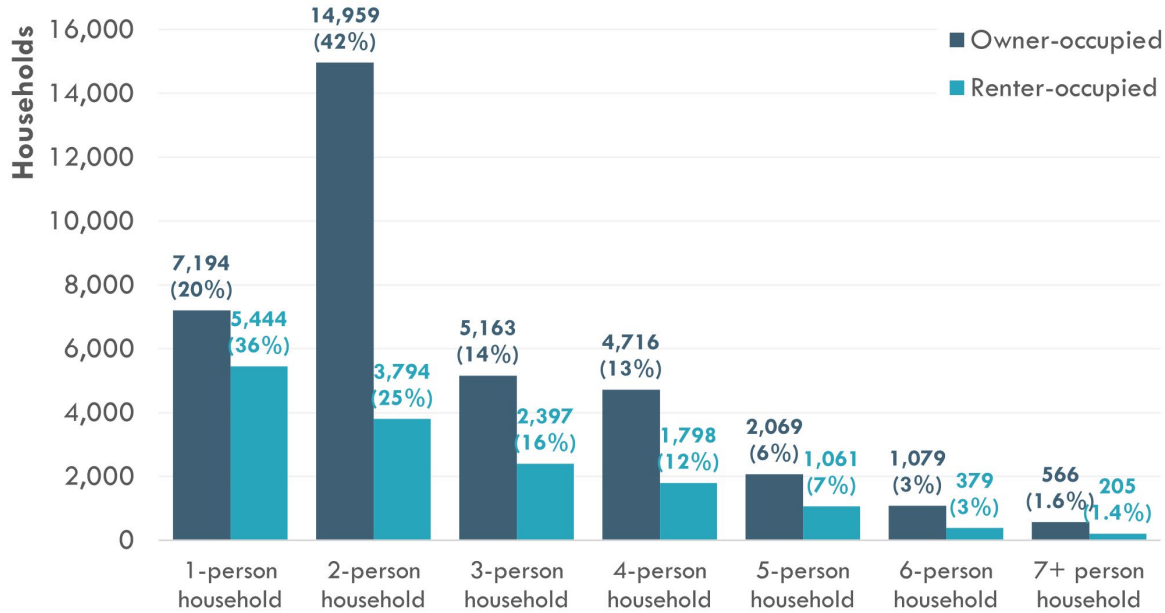


Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

The most common type of household size are 2-person households for owner-occupied units and 1-person households for renter-occupied units. In total, 1- and 2-person households make up 62% of all the households in the county. Owner-occupied 2-person households are the most common type of household at approximately 29% of the total number of households. The high percentage of 1- and 2-person

households may necessitate a focus on smaller housing units and apartment complexes to meet the needs of the population effectively. The breakdown between household size by tenure is shown in Exhibit 15.

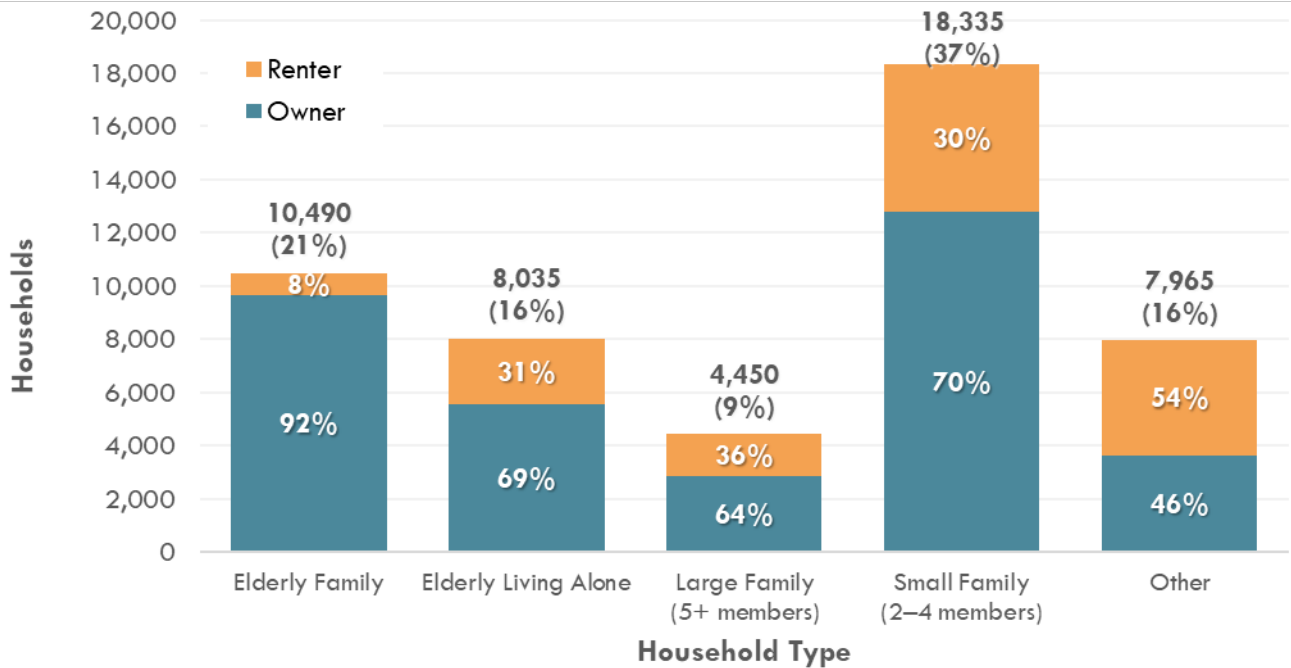
Exhibit 15. Skagit County – Owner and Renter Households by Size (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

An analysis of the types of families both renting and owning their homes shows that elderly families (21% of the county’s households) own their home at a very high rate (92%). The next highest percentage of families that own their home are small families between 2 and 4 people (37% of the county’s households) which own at a 70% rate. In general, families and elderly living alone own their home at higher rates and non-family households (16% of households and own at 46% rate). See **Exhibit 16**.

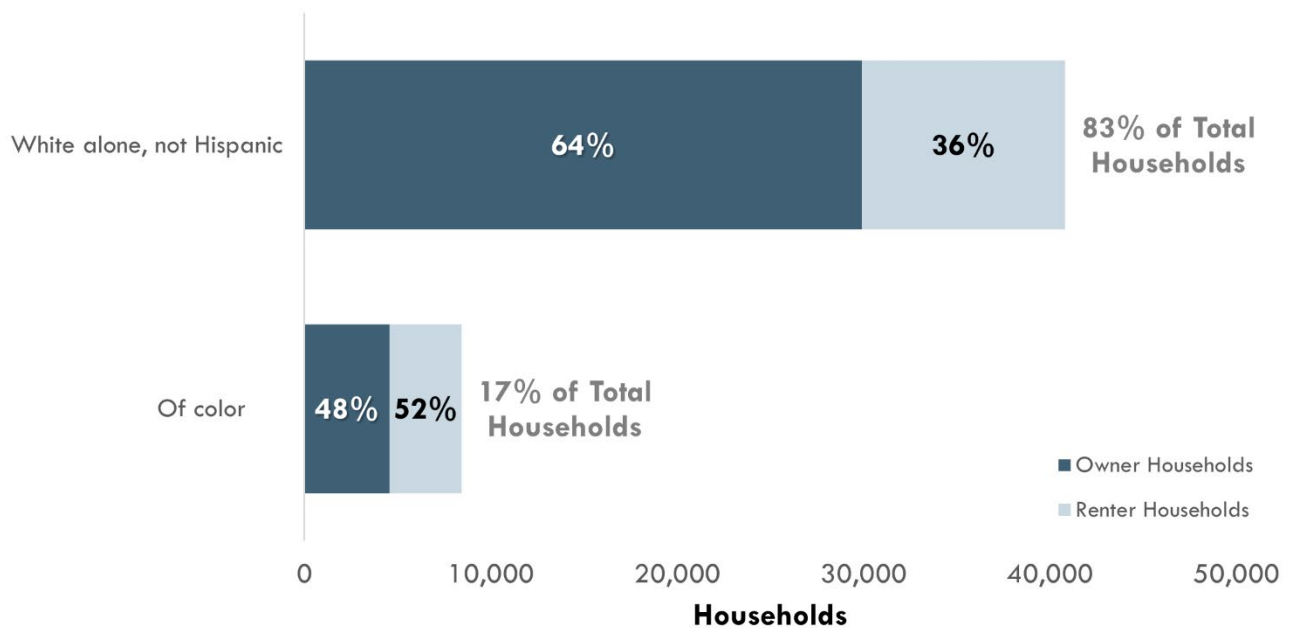
Exhibit 16. Skagit County - Households by Type and Tenure (2020)



Sources: US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2016–2020; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Analyzing tenure in Skagit County by Race and Ethnicity can help the County better understand the needs of the communities living here. Exhibit 17 shows that White, non-Hispanic households are more likely to own the house they live in (64%) than People of Color (48%) in Skagit County.

Exhibit 17. Skagit County – Households by Race and Ethnicity of Householder and Tenure (2022)

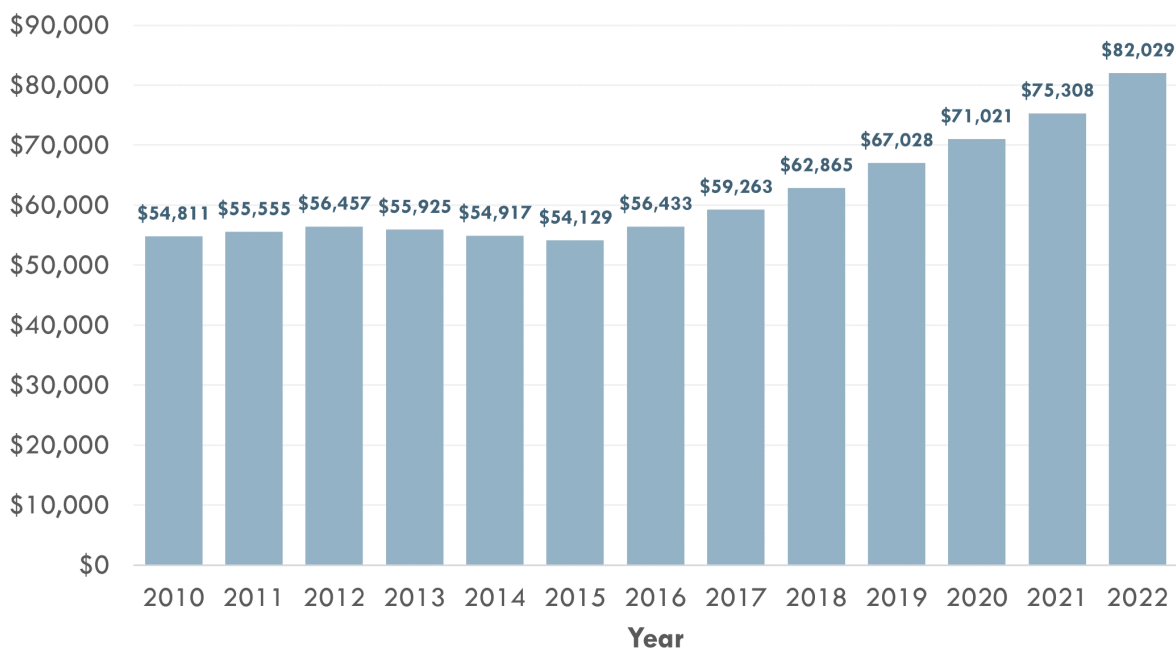


Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Household Incomes

Household income refers to the total combined income of all members of a household. A household's income determines what kinds of housing and which locations are affordable to them. **Exhibit 18** shows the median household income in Skagit County from 2010 to 2022, as defined and calculated by the United States Census Bureau. The county's median household income in 2022 was \$82,029, which is lower than the Washington State average of \$90,325. Median household income rose rapidly in the county and state between 2017 and 2022, a total of a \$22,766 (38.4%) increase for the county and a \$24,151 (36.5%) increase in median household income for the state. The median household income can be further broken down between owner-occupied housing units and renter-occupied housing units. In Skagit County, households that own the housing unit they live in had a median household income of \$96,338 while renter households had a median household income of \$50,440.

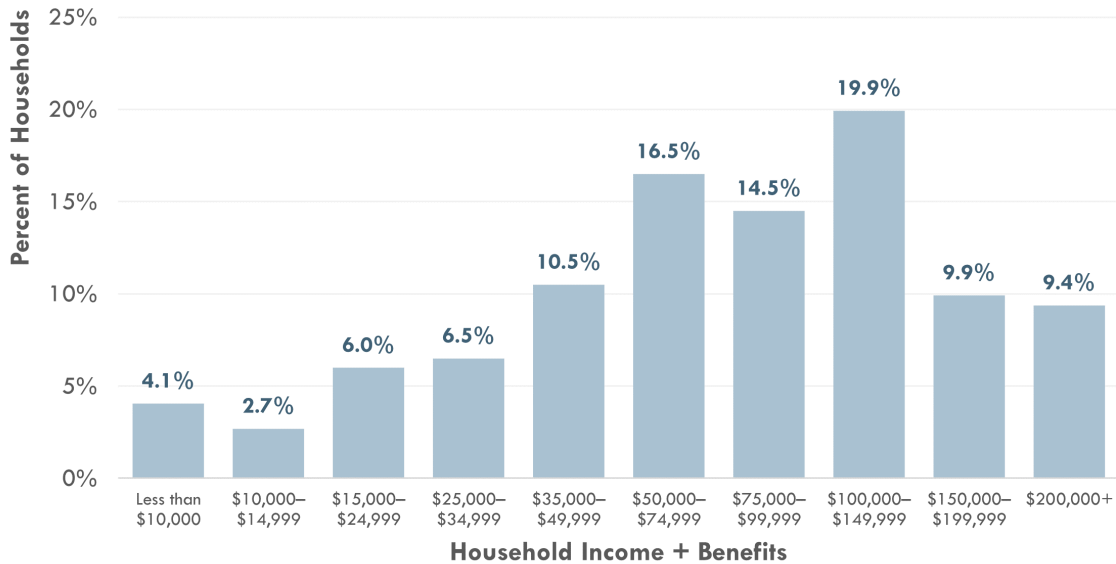
Exhibit 18. Skagit County – Median Household Income by Year (2010 – 2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates (2010 – 2022); BERK Consulting, 2024.

Approximately 51% of Skagit County households have a yearly income between \$50,000 and \$149,999, with the largest share (19.9%) in the \$100,000 to \$149,999 range. 19.3% of households in Skagit County make more than \$150,000. This is lower than Washington State as a whole (26.2% of households make more than \$150,000). 29.8% of Skagit County households make less than \$50,000 a year.

Exhibit 19. Skagit County – Distribution of Household Total Income (2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

For the purpose of quantifying different kinds of housing needs, this study groups all households by income level relative to the HUD-area median family income, or MFI. This is different from the median household income presented above. In 2024, Skagit County’s MFI for a four-person household is \$102,800. However, the charts about households by income level that follow reflect conditions as of 2020, when MFI was \$78,400. **Exhibit 20** shows typical income categories for grouping households by income level. Income thresholds for grouping households into these categories vary based on household size. This is because it takes more income to support a large family than a person living alone. So, for example, a 1-person household in 2024 with an income of \$50,000 is considered to have an income of approximately 70% MFI, whereas a 5-person household with the same income is considered to have an income of 45% MFI.

Exhibit 20. Household Income Categories Associated with MFI Percentages

HOUSEHOLD INCOME CATEGORY	PERCENT OF HUD-AREA MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME (MFI)
Extremely Low-Income Household	0-30% MFI
Very Low-Income Household	30-50% MFI
Low-Income Household	50-80% MFI
Moderate Income Household	80-100% MFI
	100-120% MFI
Upper Income Household	>120% MFI

Sources: HUD, 2024; [RCW 36.70A.030](#); BERK Consulting, 2024.

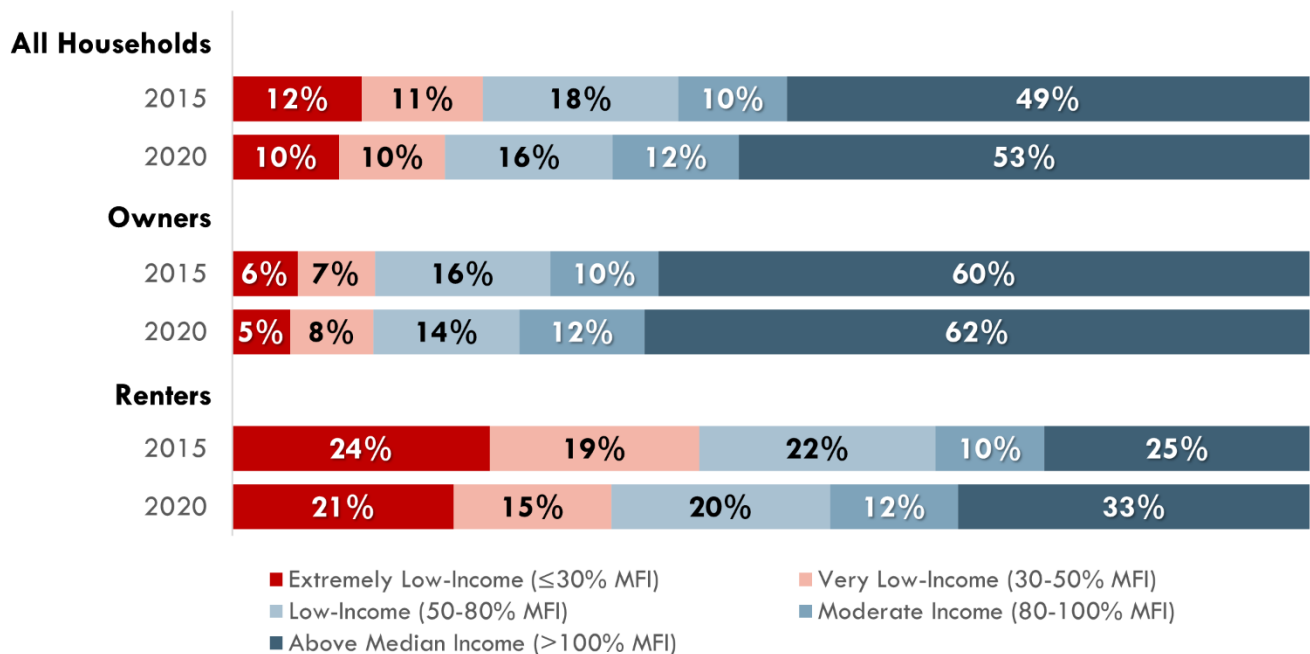
Exhibit 21. Skagit County - Thresholds for Classifying Households by Income Level, (2024)

MFI	HOUSEHOLD SIZE						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
120%	\$86,350	\$98,690	\$111,025	\$123,360	\$133,230	\$143,100	\$152,965
100%	\$71,960	\$82,240	\$92,520	\$102,800	\$111,025	\$119,250	\$127,470
80%	\$56,150	\$64,150	\$72,150	\$80,150	\$86,600	\$93,000	\$99,400
50%	\$35,050	\$40,050	\$45,100	\$50,100	\$54,100	\$58,100	\$62,150
30%	\$21,050	\$24,050	\$27,050	\$31,200	\$36,580	\$41,960	\$47,340

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2024; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Households with incomes above MFI are considered “Above Median Income.” Households below the MFI are broken into four groups that scale with household’s income. Exhibit 22 shows that between 2015 and 2020, the percentage of households, both renting and owning, with incomes below MFI has steadily decreased. The 2020 data shows that 21% of renters and 5% of owners in the county had an extremely low income. These percentages are slightly lower than in 2015, which indicates that much of the household growth in Skagit County has been at the higher end of the income spectrum. Overall, it is apparent that there is a large income gap between renters and owners in the county.

Exhibit 22. Skagit County – Households by Income and Tenure Overtime (2020)

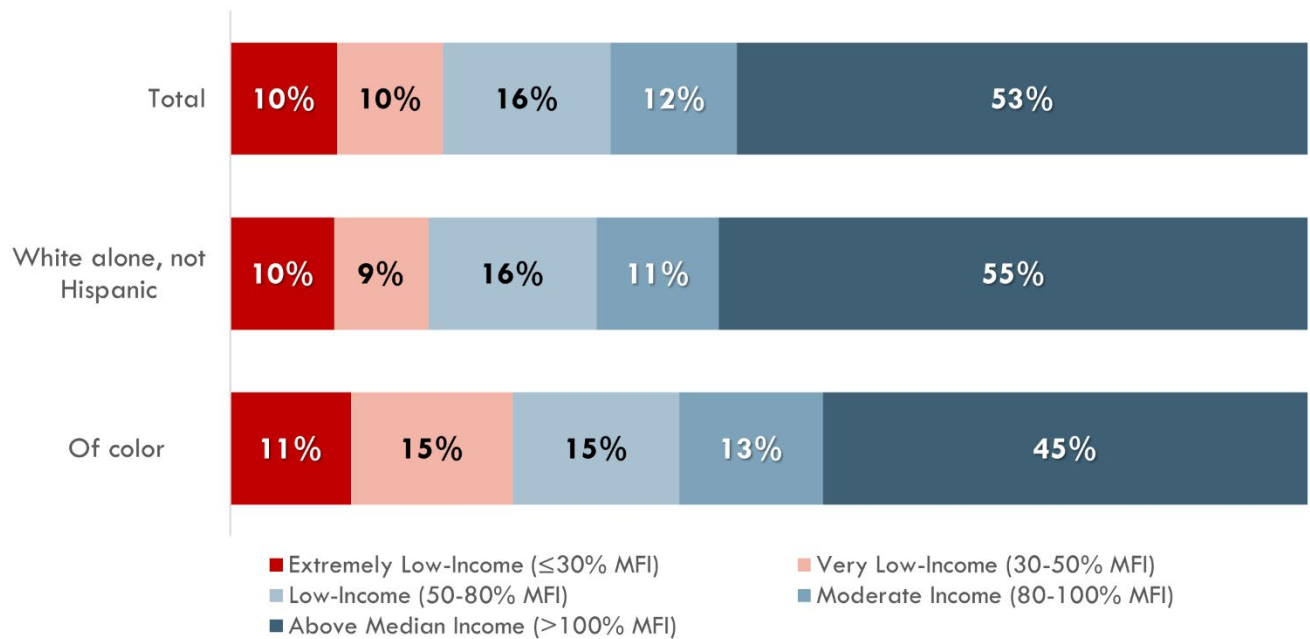


Source: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015 and 2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

White, non-Hispanic households constitute 72% of all households in Skagit County. This large proportion can skew overall median household income data. Analyzing the household incomes of People of Color separately from White, non-Hispanic households provides a clearer picture of their median incomes without the distortion caused by the majority group.

Exhibit 23 shows that largest difference in the proportions of household incomes between White, non-Hispanic households and People of Color households are in general under 50% MFI. 19% of White, non-Hispanic households and 26% of People of Color households are below 50% MFI.

Exhibit 23. Skagit County – Household Income by White and People of Color (2020)

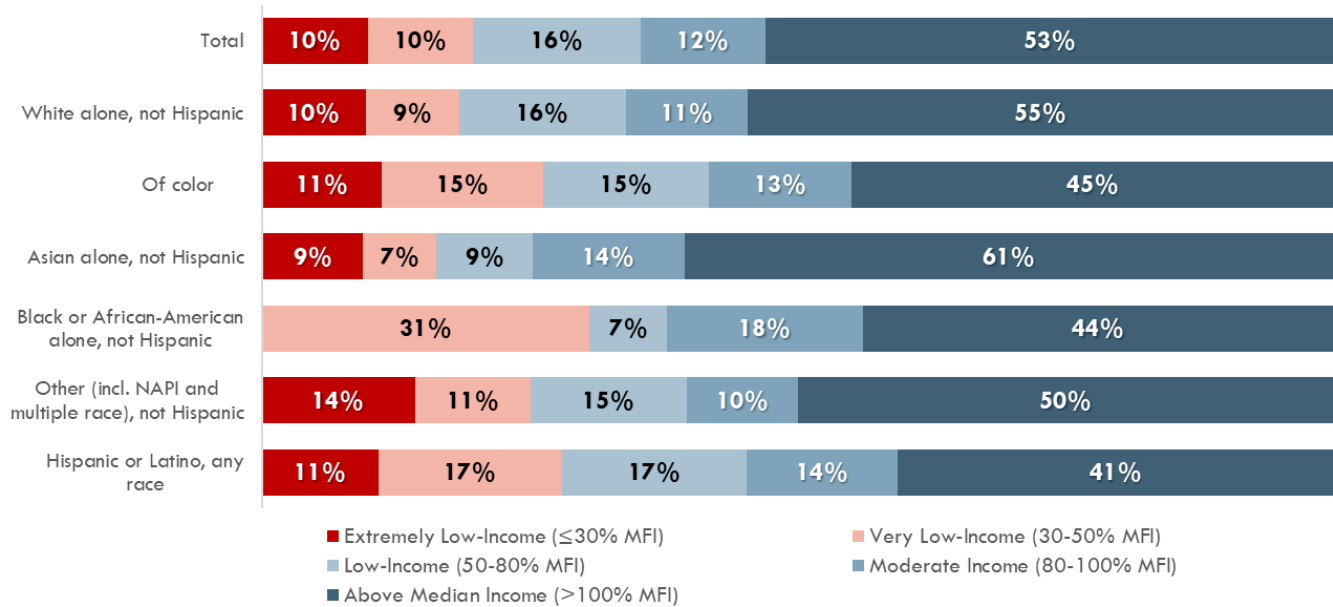


Sources: HUD CHAS (based on ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2011-2015 and 2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 24 highlights that Black and Hispanic or Latino households have the highest percentages of households earning below 100% of the MFI (56% and 59%, respectively). These are the only racial/ethnic groups in the county where a majority of households earn below 100% of the AML.

The data emphasizes that Black and Hispanic or Latino households are more likely to fall into lower income brackets, suggesting economic vulnerabilities within these communities. These findings could inform targeted policy interventions to support the economic well-being of Black and Hispanic or Latino households in Skagit County. Policy options and actions will be further analyzed as part of the [Racially Disparate Impacts](#) report.

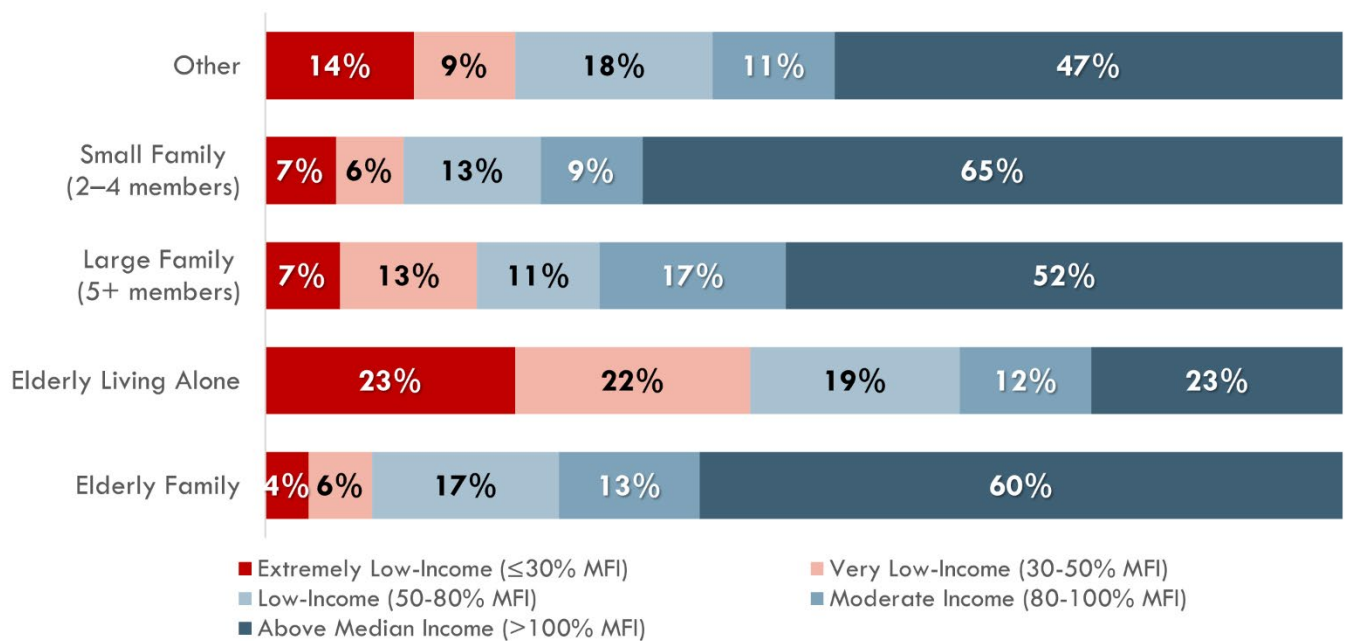
Exhibit 24. Skagit County – Household Income by Race and Ethnicity (2020)



Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 25 compares household types to household income. The exhibit shows that non-family households, small, large, and elderly families all lean heavily to household income above 100% MFI (58%, 74%, 69%, 73%, respectively). However, elderly living alone have a high rate of households making less than 100% MFI (74%). This is most likely due to a high number of elders living off government assistance or having no-income and being supported by family or other support services. This may also be true for the “Other” category which has non-family households and people living alone. This information can help inform the County regarding decisions involving allowing smaller, more affordable homes and supportive housing.

Exhibit 25. Skagit County – Household Type and Income (2020)



Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

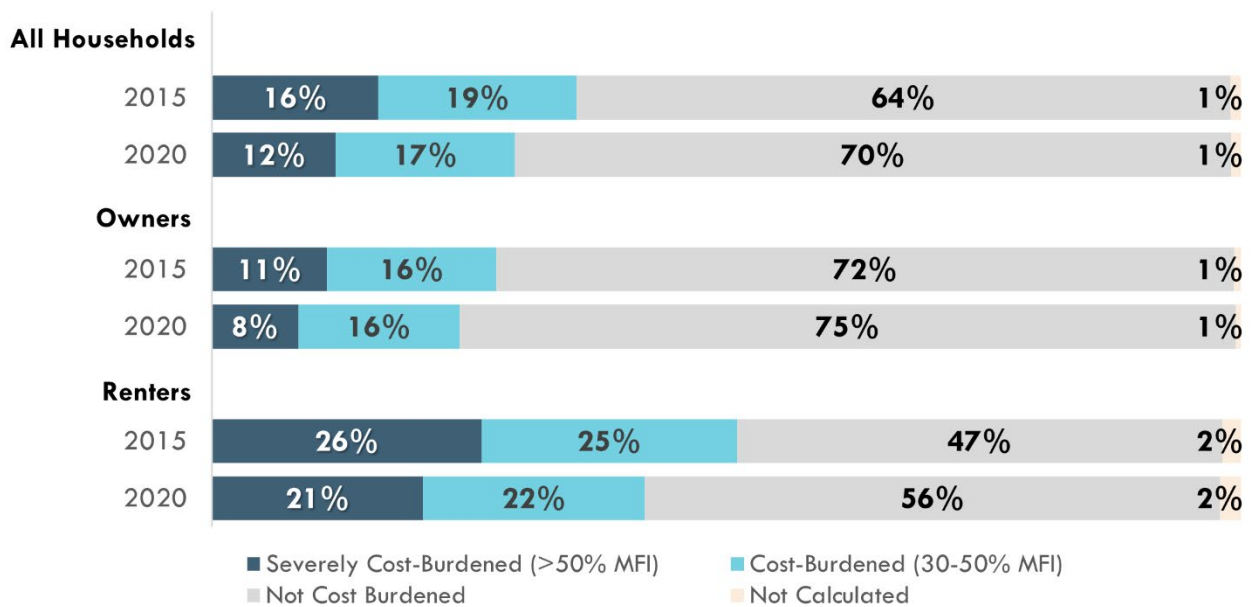
Household Cost-burden

The US Census ACS data can be used in conjunction with HUD median family incomes (MFI) to create estimates of the number of households that are cost burdened. A household is considered cost burdened when more than 30% of their household income is spent on housing. A household is considered severely cost burdened when more than 50% of their household income is spent on housing. The following exhibits below exemplify the number of households which are cost burdened.

Housing cost burden impacts a significantly higher proportion of renter households compared to owner households, indicating the need for affordable rental units. **Exhibit 26** represent the number of cost burdened households that rent the home they live in. The percentages represent the share of total renter-occupied households which are cost-burdened and severely-cost burdened. The figure shows that between the 2016-2020 survey years, 22% of renter-occupied households in Skagit County were cost burdened, which means they were paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs. 21% of these household were severely cost burdened, which means more than 50% of their income was spent on housing costs. Overall, 43% of all the renter-occupied households in the county were paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs (6,364 out of 14,800 total renter-occupied households). This represents a much larger share than households living in the house they own. For owner households, 8% are severely cost-burdened and 16% are cost-burdened for a total of 24% of owner households paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Both the total renter and owner household rate of cost burden has decreased since 2015. The total number of renters experiencing cost burden has also decreased for both renters (from 7,770 in 2015 to 6,225 in 2020) and owners (from 8,465 in 2015 to 8,285 in 2020).

Exhibit 26. Skagit County – Change in Cost Burdened Households by Tenure (2015 - 2020)

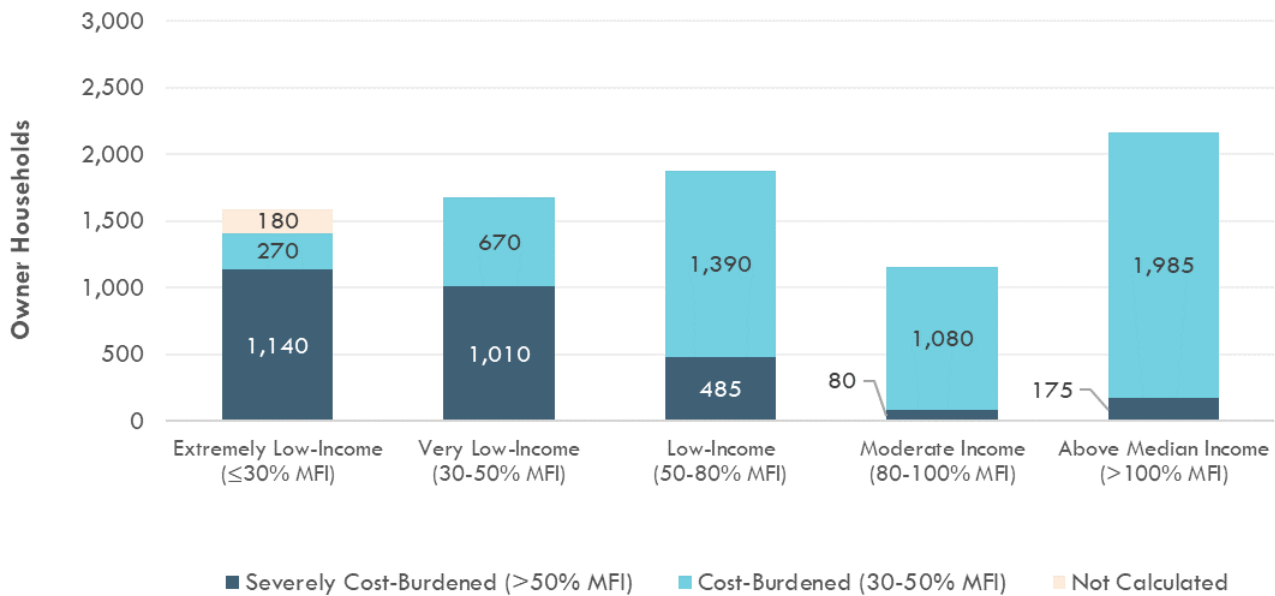


Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

As shown in Exhibit 30 and Exhibit 31, the majority of cost-burdened households had incomes below 80% MFI. Households in the lowest income brackets spent a higher percentage of their income on housing costs, with more than 50% of their income devoted to this expense. While severe cost burden is most prevalent among lowest-income households, housing affordability remains a challenge across the entire income spectrum.

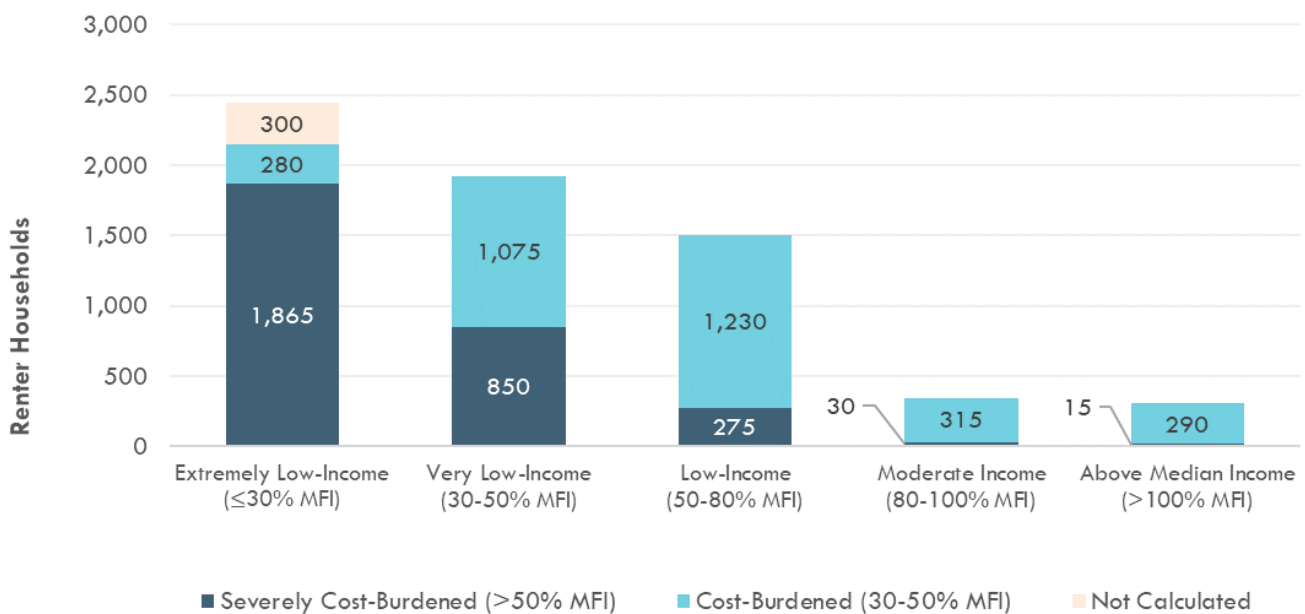
Households facing cost burden, whether owners or renters, often confront difficult choices between housing and other essential needs like food and healthcare. While these challenges affect all households, they manifest differently based on tenure. For homeowners, a common trade-off involves deferring home maintenance. This can lead to living in substandard conditions with issues related to plumbing, heating, electrical systems, and general upkeep. Renters, on the other hand, may seek to reduce housing costs by moving to older or lower-quality units, or to less desirable neighborhoods. Some might resort to overcrowded living situations or accept longer commutes. These compromises can jeopardize a household's health, financial stability, and economic mobility, exacerbating the vulnerability of those already struggling.

Exhibit 27. Skagit County – Cost Burdened Owner Households by Income Level (2020)



Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

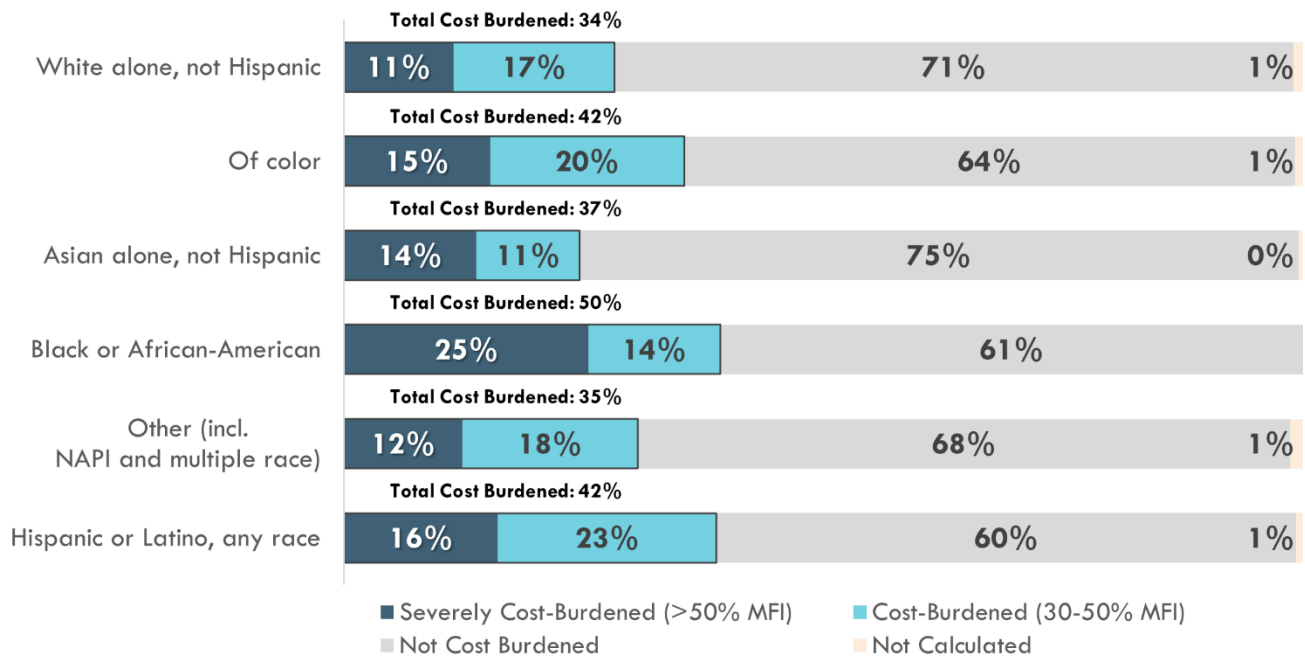
Exhibit 28. Skagit County – Cost Burdened Renter Households by Income Level (2020)



Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

When comparing cost-burden to race and ethnicity, the results correlate to the household income numbers in **Exhibit 24**. The groups experiencing the highest rate of cost burden are Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino of any race (50% and 42%). The highest rate of severely cost-burdened households is Black or African-American households at 25% of the all households being severely cost-burdened. See **Exhibit 29**.

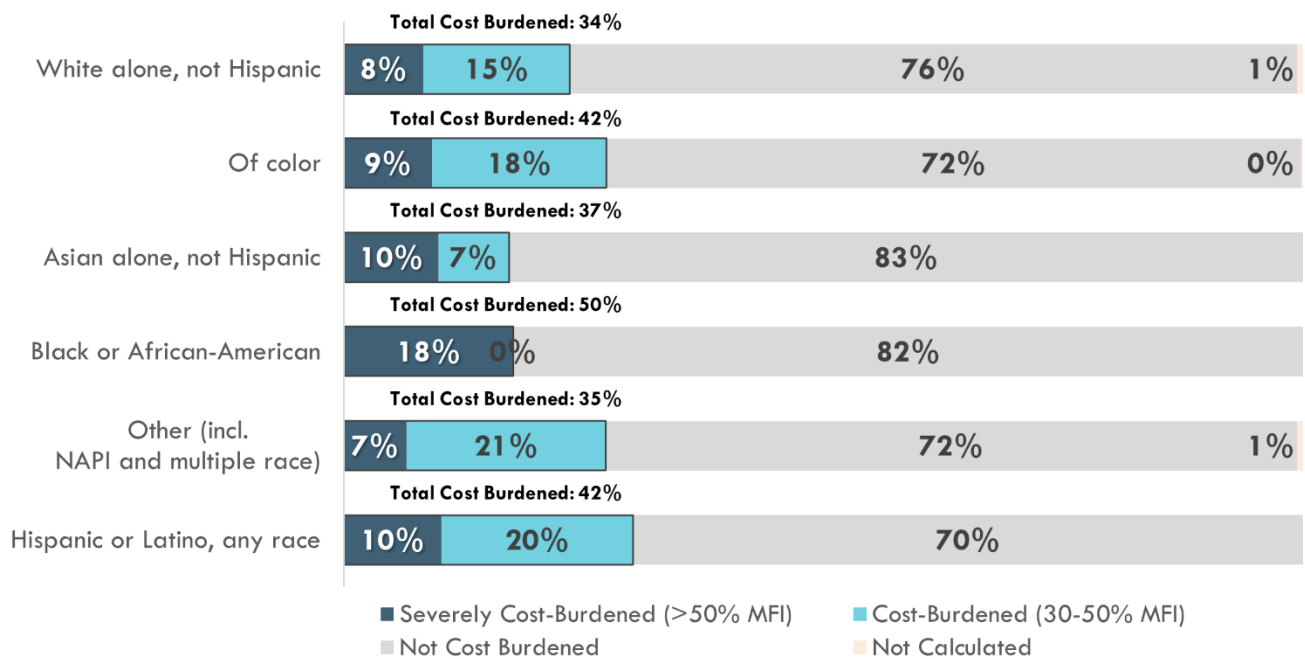
Exhibit 29. Skagit County – All Households by Race and Cost Burden Status (2020)



Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

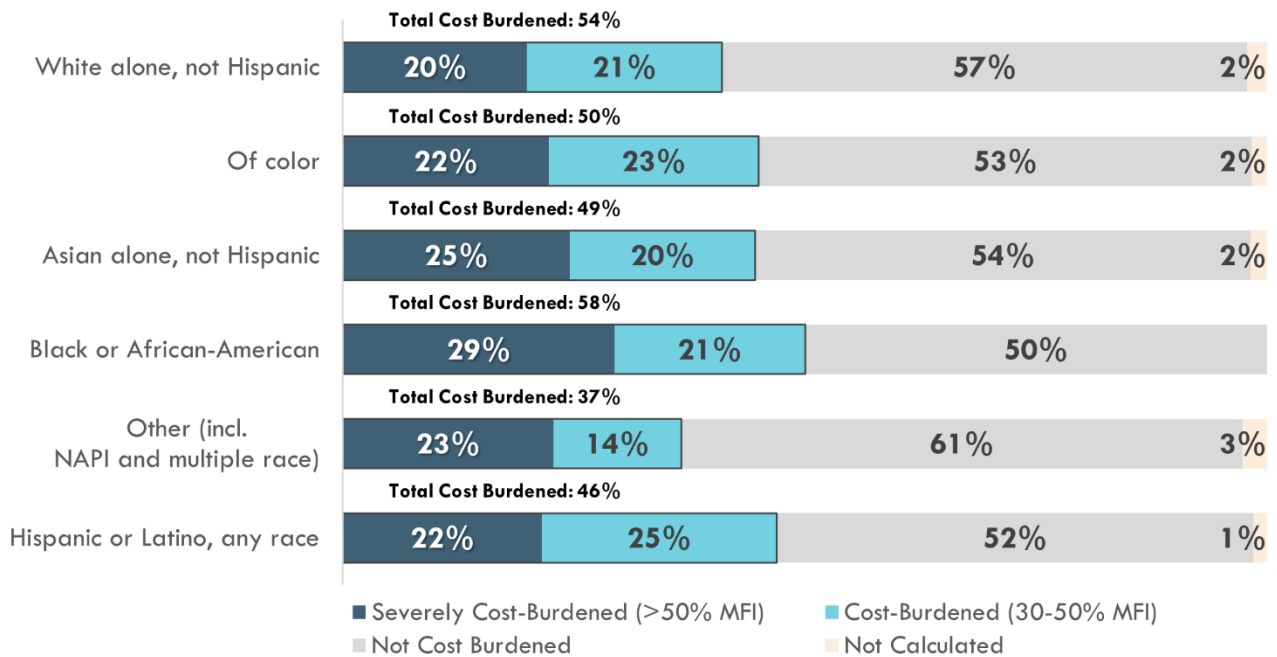
Owners are cost-burdened far less than renters in Skagit County for all races and ethnicities. **Exhibit 30** and **Exhibit 31** show that there is a significant difference between total rate of cost-burdened renter households and owner households, even within specific groups. 50% of Black or African American renter households are cost-burdened compared to only 18% of Black or African American owner households being cost-burdened. This same trend is true for the other race and ethnicities in Skagit County. Again, indicating the need for affordable rental units in the county. A deeper analysis with code options for these racially disparate impacts is included within this report.

Exhibit 30. Skagit County – Homeowners Households by Race and Cost Burden Status (2020)



Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 31. Skagit County – Renter Households by Race and Cost Burden Status (2020)



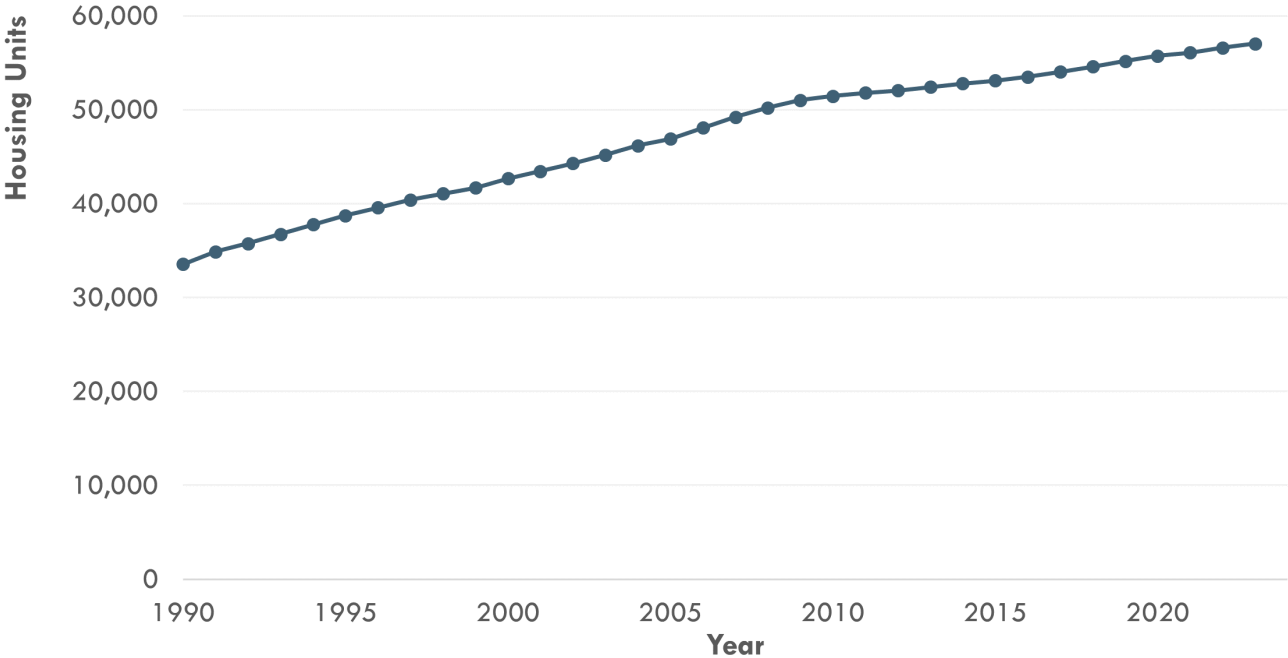
Sources: HUD CHAS (2016-2020); BERK Consulting, 2024.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Housing Inventory

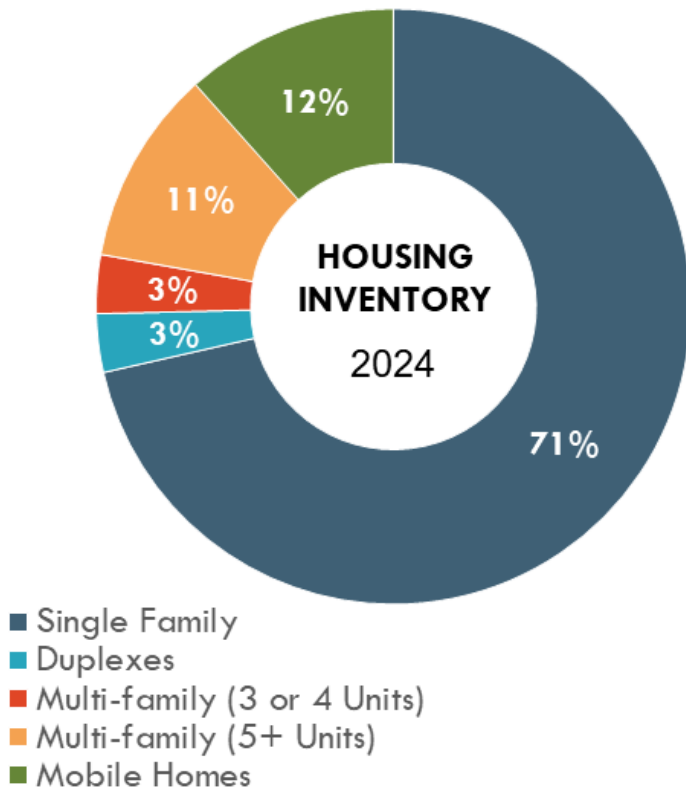
Skagit County had 57,797 housing units as of 2024, a 12% increase from 2010, as shown in **Exhibit 32**. Per the Office of Financial Management (OFM), 71% of housing units countywide were single family homes. The second and third most common housing types countywide were manufactured homes and multi-family housing developments with 5 or more units, respectively. See **Exhibit 33**.

Exhibit 32. Skagit County - Housing Units (1990 - 2022)



Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 33. Skagit County - Housing Supply (2024)

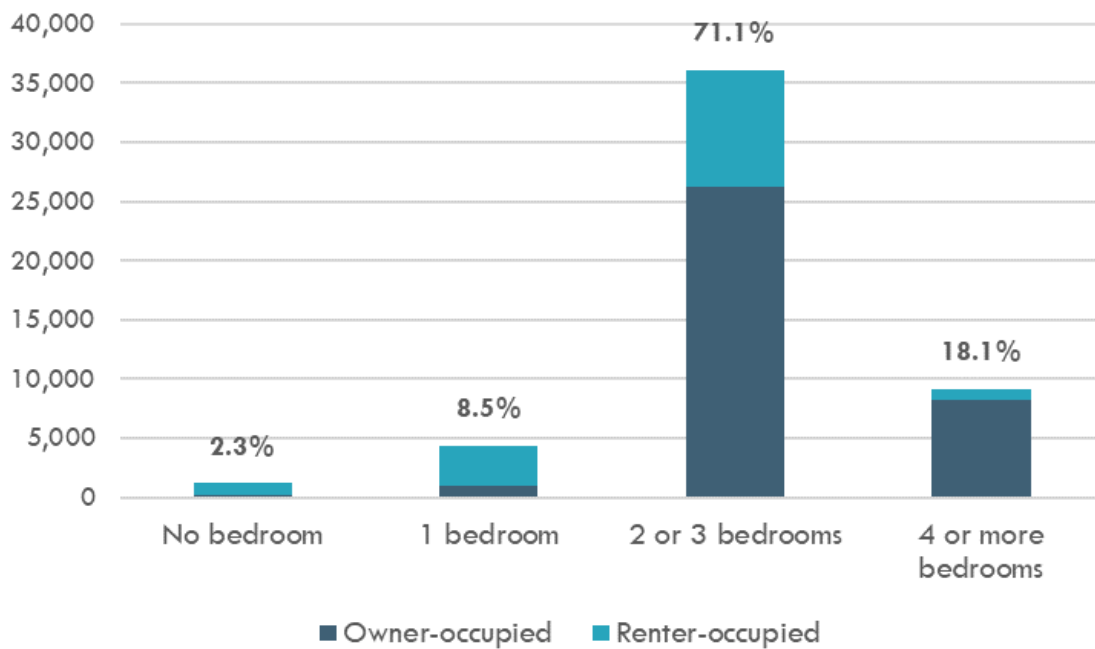


Sources: Washington Office of Financial Management, 2024; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Housing Inventory by Number of Bedrooms

As shown in **Exhibit 34**, most housing units in Skagit County are 2-3 bedrooms whether owner or renter occupied. Larger units tend to be owner-occupied, while smaller units tend to be renter-occupied.

Exhibit 34. Skagit County - Housing by Number of Bedrooms and Tenure (2022)



Sources: US Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; BERK, 2024.

Housing Inventory by Type

Exhibit 35 breaks down all housing units in Skagit County by jurisdiction and housing type. Approximately 43% of all units (24,596 in total) are located in unincorporated Skagit County, which includes both unincorporated UGA areas and rural areas. Within these unincorporated areas, about 77% of units are detached single family homes (19,034 in total) and 20% are classified as mobile homes⁵ (4,950 in total). As of 2023, there were 20,138 housing units in rural Skagit County.

Exhibit 35. Housing Units by Jurisdiction and Type (2024)

	TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	1-UNIT HOMES (SINGLE FAMILY)	2+ UNIT HOME (MULTIFAMILY)	MANUFACTURED, MOBILE, AND SPECIAL HOMES
Anacortes	8,799	6,881	1,719	199
Burlington	4,271	2,131	2,056	84
Concrete	380	277	73	30
Hamilton	129	88	0	41
La Conner	577	419	138	20

⁵ According to OFM, this category includes traditional manufactured homes, mobile homes, recreational vehicles, vans, and boats that provide a separate and distinct living space for an individual or household.

Lyman	176	126	3	47
Mount Vernon	13,744	9,086	3,817	841
Sedro-Woolley	5,125	3,251	1,386	488
Unincorporated Skagit County	24,596	19,034	612	4,950
Total	57,797	41,293	9,804	6,700

Sources: Washington Office of Financial Management, 2024; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Mobile and Manufactured Homes

Mobile and manufactured homes play a significant role in the housing supply for Skagit County. Though often grouped together as a single category, these are two different types of housing. Mobile homes include recreational vehicles (RVs), trailers on wheels, and other vehicles such as vans that are used as housing. Manufactured homes, on the other hand, are homes that are constructed in a factory and then assembled at the building site in modular sections. These types of homes are often much less expensive to produce than homes built on site and therefore are often more affordable than traditional detached homes. Both mobile and manufactured housing can be found in a variety of settings, such as:

- Stand-alone on a lot owned by the homeowner.
- As an accessory to a primary unit on a lot.
- On a leased plot in a campground or manufactured housing community (also known as mobile home parks).

In 2024, Skagit County has a total of 6,700 manufactured, mobile, and special homes⁶, 4,950 of which are in unincorporated areas. Approximately 95 units have been added since 2020.

Housing Production Trends

Exhibit 36 shows the breakdown of net new units built between 2020 and 2024 by jurisdiction. Detached single-family units represented the majority of net new units in unincorporated Skagit County, followed by manufactured, mobile, and special housing, as well as ADUs. Multifamily development was more common in cities and composed the majority of net new housing in Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley.

Exhibit 36. Net New Housing Units by Housing Type (2020 - 2024)

JURISDICTION	ADUS	MANUFACTURED, MOBILE, AND SPECIAL HOMES	DUPLEX	3 / 4 UNITS	5+ UNITS	SINGLE-FAMILY	TOTAL (NET NEW)
Anacortes	40	16	16	49	130	153	404
Burlington	2	-1	2	19	593	11	626

⁶ According to the Office of Financial Management, 'special' housing includes recreational vehicles, tents, and other non-standard living situations.

Concrete	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Hamilton	0	-1	0	0	0	-1	-2
La Conner	1	0	2	7	0	11	21
Lyman	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Mount Vernon	6	2	0	10	136	133	287
Sedro-Woolley	7	15	30	37	100	177	366
Unincorporated	61	63	0	0	0	220	344
Total	117	95	50	122	959	710	2,053

Sources: Washington Office of Financial Management, 2024; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is an urgent challenge in Skagit County. Increased demand for housing paired with limited supply has resulted in rapidly increased housing costs for both renters and potential homeowners. Exhibit 37 shows a snapshot of the profile of Skagit County's entire housing stock by affordability level as of 2020. Note that these estimates are based on survey data collected between 2016 and 2020. Housing costs have increased significantly since this period. Therefore, it is likely that the supply of homes affordable at lower income levels has decreased.

Exhibit 37. Housing Supply by Affordability Level (2020)

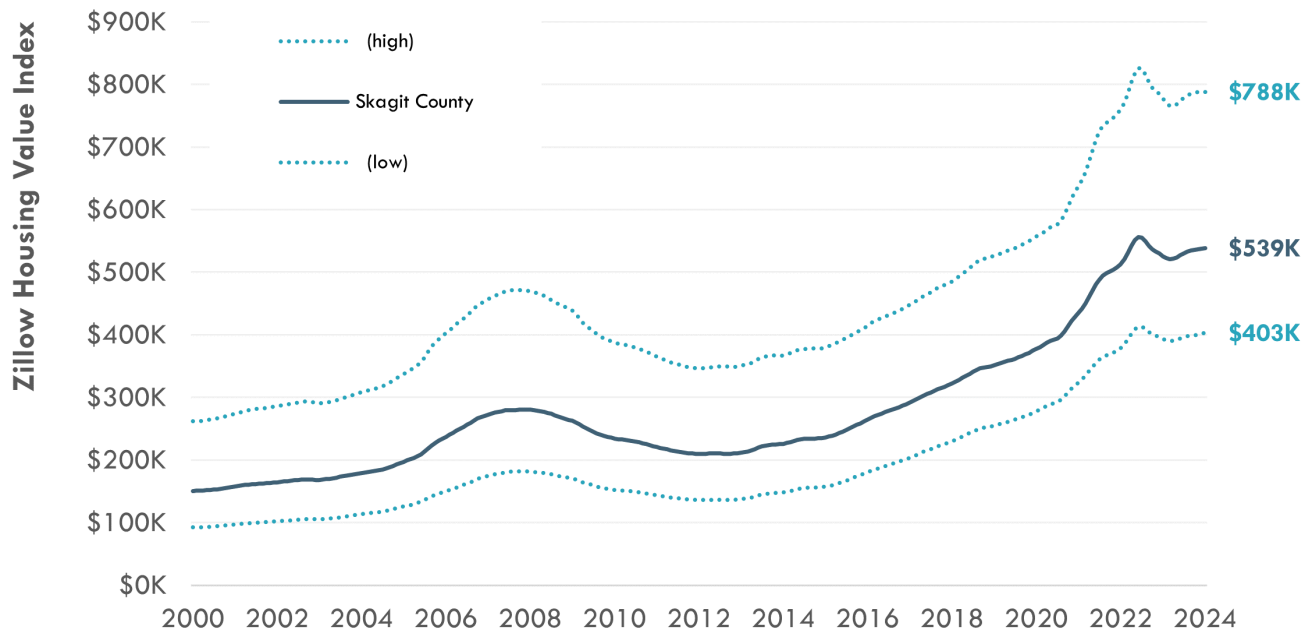
AFFORDABILITY LEVEL (PERCENT OF AREA MEDIAN INCOME)										
		TOTAL	0-30%							EMERGENCY HOUSING
			Non-PSH	PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%	
Anacortes	City	8,395	270	0	333	1,606	1,214	1,110	3,862	30
Burlington	City	3,645	92	0	317	1,539	698	262	737	45
Concrete	Town	376	29	0	81	192	49	9	16	0
Hamilton	Town	131	4	0	22	42	22	8	33	0
La Conner	Town	557	38	0	29	127	128	56	179	0
Lyman	Town	173	4	0	16	49	46	12	46	0
Mount Vernon	City	13,458	586	62	1,888	4,286	2,104	1,037	3,495	207
Sedro-Woolley	City	4,759	231	0	438	1,708	1,305	332	745	28
Unincorporated		21,467	683	0	2,205	4,009	2,523	2,436	9,611	0

Sources: Washington State Dept. of Commerce Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT), 2024; BERK, 2024.

Ownership Housing Costs and Trends

The Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) is a measure of the typical home value and market changes across a given region and housing type. It reflects the typical value for homes in the 35th to 65th percentile range. As of 2024, the typical home value in Skagit County was \$538,598. See Exhibit 38. However new homes typically sell for more. The “high” value of \$788,261 reflects the median of the top third of all home values and is a good proxy for the cost of new single-family homes in the county. At that price a household needs an annual income of nearly \$200,000 and down payment of over \$150,000 to afford to buy. Even a “low” tier home cost of \$403,000 requires an annual income of nearly \$100,000 to afford, assuming access to an \$80,000 down payment.⁷

Exhibit 38. Skagit County – Residential Housing Values (2000 - 2024)

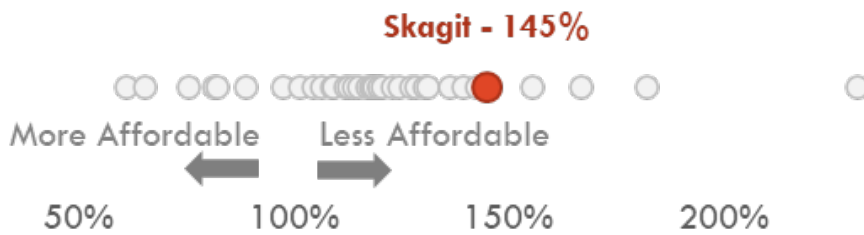


Sources: Zillow, 2024; BERK Consulting, 2024.

As shown in Exhibit 39, which reflects analysis from 2023, a three-person household needed at least 145% of MFI to afford to purchase a typical value home in Skagit County, ranking the county 34th out of the 39 counties in the state of Washington in terms of housing affordability.

⁷ There is some evidence that new manufactured homes within manufactured housing communities (AKA mobile home parks), are providing moderate cost ownership housing opportunities with a much lower downpayment requirement. BERK analysis of list prices and recent home sales finds that these units sell for an average cost of \$195,600. Based on BERK homeownership cost modeling, a household would need an income of about \$93,000 to afford this unit with a downpayment of less than \$7,000. This accounts for a \$750 monthly rent paid to the manufactured home community owner.

Exhibit 39. Skagit County - Percent of MFI Required to Afford to Own a Typical Home (2023)



Note: Each circle represents a county in Washington.

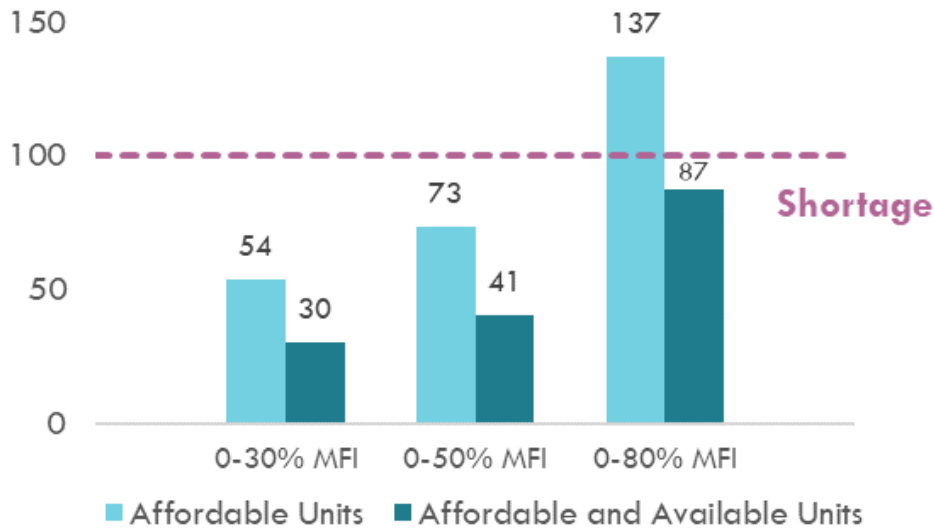
Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023; Washington Center for Real Estate Research, 2023; Washington State Department of Revenue, 2023; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Rental Housing Costs and Trends

In some housing markets, moderate- or higher-income households occupy lower cost rental units, effectively making them unavailable to low-income households. This can happen in units that have no income requirements and when there are few ownership options that are affordable and desirable. Exhibit 40 provides a snapshot of the effective shortage of affordable housing in Skagit County. The light blue bars summarize the number of affordable rental units per 100 renter households at three different income thresholds. The dark blue bars summarize the number of units that are not only affordable but also occupied by a renter household at the specified income level. These units are considered both affordable and available. This concept is helpful for evaluating the effective shortage of housing at a given affordability level after accounting for higher income rental households that may be residing in a unit and effectively removing it from the supply of available units.

In 2019, Skagit County had approximately 30 affordable and available rental units for every 100 renter households at 0-30% MFI, as depicted in Exhibit 40. For households at 0-50% MFI, there were approximately 41 such units per 100 renter households. Although there were 137 affordable units for every 100 households at 0-80% MFI, only 87 of them were occupied by a renter household at that income level. These figures highlight a shortage of rental housing, particularly at the 30% and 50% MFI levels, indicating the need for new rental housing in Skagit County. The data reflects conditions surveyed between 2015 and 2019, and therefore do not reflect recent changes in the housing market.

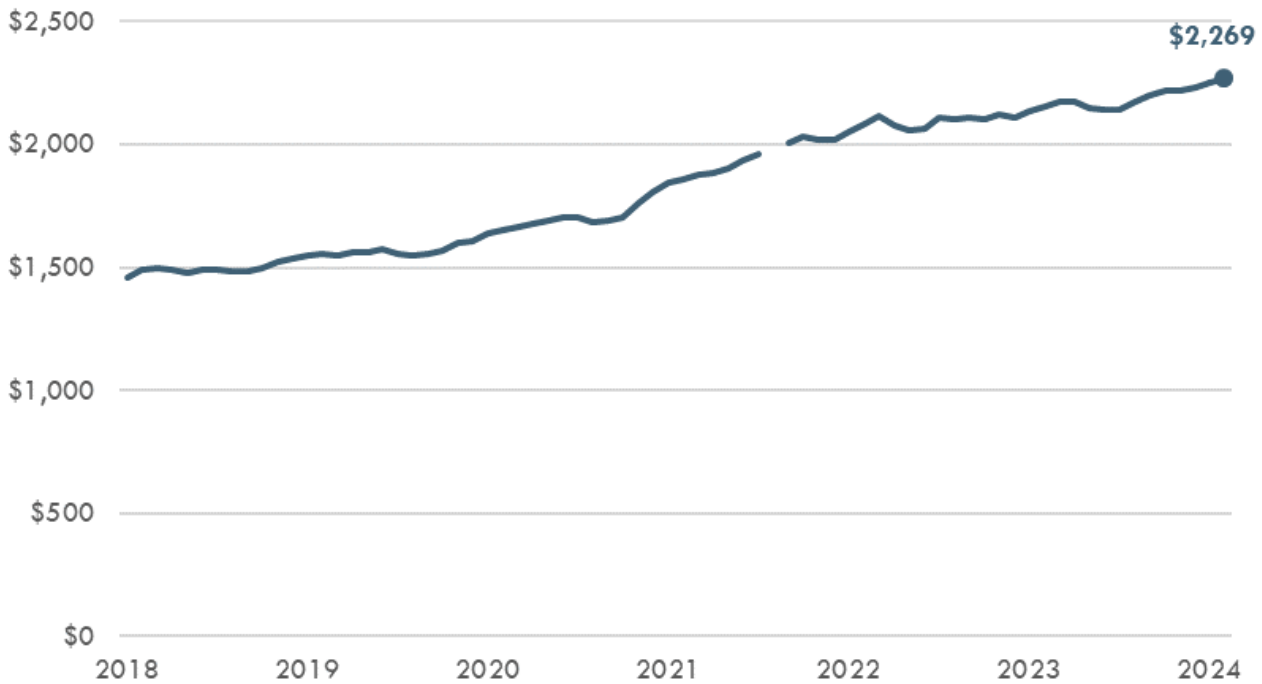
Exhibit 40. Skagit County - Affordable and Available Units Per 100 Households (2019)



Sources: US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2015–2019; BERK Consulting, 2024.

The Zillow Observed Rent Index (ZORI) measures changes in asking rents over time, controlling for changes in the quality of the available rental stock. Exhibit 41 shows the changes in asking rents between 2018 and 2024 in Skagit County. As of 2024, the typical observed market rate rent was \$2,269. This includes the entire rental housing stock, including both apartments and rented single family homes. To afford this unit, a household would need an annual income of at least \$90,760, or 110% of MFI for a 2-person household. For multifamily residences, the typical observed market rent was \$1,740 in Skagit County.

Exhibit 41. Skagit County - Typical Monthly Rent (2018 – 2024)



Sources: Zillow Observed Rent Index, 2024; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Rental vacancy rates are used to estimate the tightness of a real estate market, with lower rates indicating a more competitive rental market. According to the Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER), the apartment vacancy rate in Skagit County was 2.3% in the second quarter of 2024. This represents a decline of 0.7 percentage points from the previous year. Skagit County is one of 13 counties in Washington State where vacancy rates displayed a year-over-year decrease. In comparison, the statewide vacancy rate remained unchanged at 5% from the previous year.⁸

Subsidized Affordable Housing

The Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER) estimates that Skagit County had a total of 2,504 subsidized affordable housing units as of 2023. This data does not indicate what affordability levels are served by these units, or how many of these units are located in unincorporated areas. However, data from WCRER indicates that 2,162 of these units are located in the cities of Anacortes, Burlington, or Mount Vernon. So, the remaining 342 are likely to be located in unincorporated areas or the smaller cities and towns of Concrete, Hamilton, La Conner, Lyman, or Sedro-Woolley.

⁸ Washington State Apartment Market Report – [Washington Center for Real Estate Research, 2024](#).

Employment

As of 2022, there were an estimated 59,571 employed people in Skagit County. Exhibit 42 provides a breakdown of these jobs by UGA. The majority of employment is located in Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Anacortes. Rural Skagit County had an employment estimate of 8,972.

Exhibit 42. Employment by UGA and Rural Skagit County (2022)

URBAN GROWTH AREA	ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT (2022)
Anacortes	9,503
Burlington	11,640
Mount Vernon	18,781
Sedro-Woolley	4,640
Concrete	391
Hamilton	466
La Conner	1,020
Lyman	56
Bayview Ridge	2,962
Swinomish	1,140
UGAs Subtotal	50,599
Rural (outside UGAs)	8,972
Grand Total	59,571

Sources: Initial 2045 Allocations of Population, Housing and Employment in Skagit County Resolution, Skagit County, 2023; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Exhibit 43 provides a breakdown of jobs located in Skagit County by sector. The predominant sectors are Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Retail Trade.

Exhibit 43. Skagit County – Share of Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector (2021)

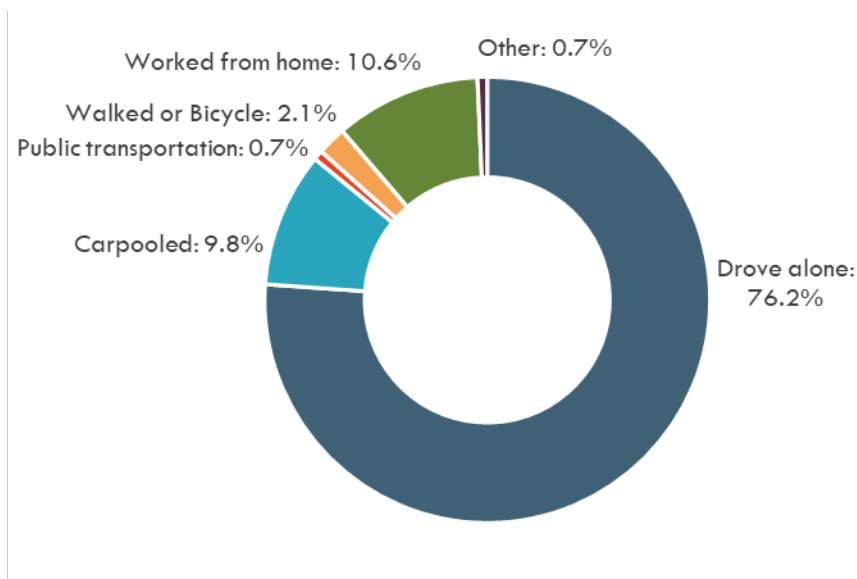
INDUSTRY	SHARE
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	5.1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.1%
Utilities	0.5%
Construction	7.9%
Manufacturing	13.7%

Wholesale Trade	2.4%
Retail Trade	12.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	2.9%
Information	0.6%
Finance and Insurance	2.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3.4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.2%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	2.9%
Educational Services	9.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	16.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	6.7%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	3.3%
Public Administration	5.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2021; BERK Consulting, 2024.

As shown in Exhibit 44, most of the employed Skagit County population drives to work. Approximately 76.2% drive alone and 9.8% carpool. The second most common practice is to work from home (10.6%). The average travel time to work is 26.6 minutes.

Exhibit 44. Skagit County - Commute to Work (2022)



Farmworkers and Housing

According to the Washington State Department of Commerce's 2022 Washington Farmworker Housing Needs Assessment, Skagit County had 1,041 farms and more than 84,000 acres of agricultural land, primarily located in the western regions. It ranked as Washington's ninth most productive county for agriculture by the value of production and eighth for year-round agricultural employment. Major commodities included flowers, milk, and potatoes.

As of 2018, there were an estimated 1,378 year-round workers and 699 seasonal workers in Skagit County. Covered farmworkers accounted for 4% of the labor force, and agricultural products contributed 3% of the total GDP. This is relatively low compared to many other counties in Washington State, largely due to the prominence of its manufacturing sector. Key employers in the region included Skagit Regional Health, Draper Valley Farms, Mount Vernon School District, and Skagit Horticulture LLC.

In Washington, housing for agricultural workers is categorized by units for year-round employment and by beds for migrant workers, including both covered employment and H-2A workers. Certain organizations offer subsidized housing specifically for farmworkers and their families. These housing providers may include employers, nonprofits, or housing authorities. Outside of these designated units, farmworkers must compete in the ownership and rental markets alongside other residents. Approximately 461 seasonal beds were provided for migrant or H-2A farmworkers, and 240 permanent housing units were allocated for year-round farmworker households. This left up to 1,376 farmworker households searching local markets for both year-round and seasonal housing in Skagit County. Nearly 17% of this need was for migratory workers, who have more specific and potentially temporary housing requirements.⁹

Emergency and Supportive Housing Needs

Emergency housing provides temporary shelter for individuals and families that do not have access to permanent housing. As of 2020, there were 310 emergency beds countywide, all of which were located in the cities of Mount Vernon, Anacortes, Burlington, and Sedro-Wolley.

Permanent supportive housing provides long-term rental assistance with voluntary supportive services. As of 2020, there were 62 permanent supportive housing beds, all of which were located in Mount Vernon.

Homeless Population and Trends

Exhibit 45 displays a snapshot of unstably housed and homeless persons by household type in July 2023 across Skagit County. It is based on combined Medicaid, Economic Service, and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) populations, including service recipients and all associated household members. "Homeless or Unstably Housed" refers to all clients or households experiencing any homelessness or housing instability (e.g., they are literally homeless/unsheltered, receiving housing services that indicate housing instability, residing in transitional housing, or couch surfing). "Homeless Only"

⁹ Washington Farmworker Housing Needs Assessment – [Washington Department of Commerce & BERK Consulting, 2022](#).

is a subset of that population and includes unsheltered clients/households who are literally homeless (i.e., lack a fixed nighttime residence, are living outside or in a shelter not fit for human habitation, or are living in emergency shelter). Adults without minors, and single or two parents with minors, represent the highest share of the population experiencing homelessness or unstable housing in Skagit County.

Exhibit 45. Skagit County - Homeless and Unstably Housed Persons by Household Type, Skagit County (2023)

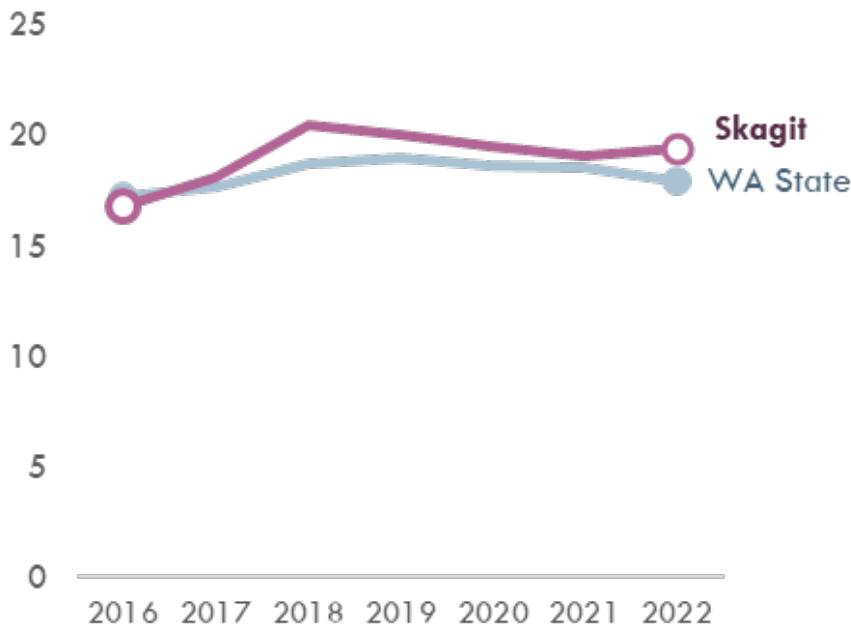
HOUSEHOLD TYPES	HOMELESS	UNSTABLY HOUSED	HOMELESS AND UNSTABLY HOUSED
Minor Only, None under Age 12	18	1	19
Minor Only, at Least One under Age 12	0	0	0
Youth (18-24) w/o Minors	142	27	169
Adults (25+) w/o Minors	1,669	303	1,972
Single Parent with Minors	483	198	681
Two Parents with Minors	314	214	528
Unknown	3	1	4
Total	2,629	744	3,373

Sources: WA Department of Social and Health Services, 2023; BERK Consulting, 2024.

In Skagit County, the count of people experiencing homelessness increased approximately 23% between 2016-2022, although there has been a decrease between 2018 and 2021. Estimates of homelessness per capita have remained relatively stable and above the estimates for Washington State over time, with an increase from 17 to 19 per 1,000 people in the same period (see Exhibit 46).¹⁰

¹⁰ The WA Department of Social and Health Services updates historical estimates on an annual basis. Therefore, this exhibit is not directly comparable to Exhibit 38.

Exhibit 46. Skagit County and Washington State - Homeless Residents per 1,000 Population (2016 – 2022)

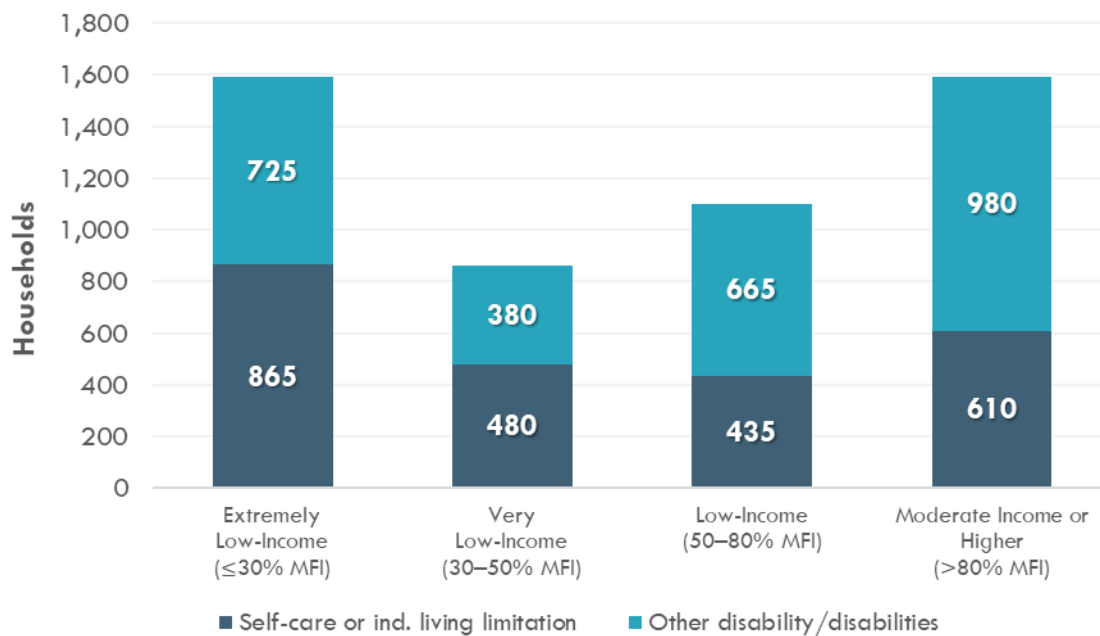


Sources: WA Department of Social and Health Services, 2023; BERK Consulting, 2023.

Special Needs Housing Needs

As shown in Exhibit 47, households across all income brackets include individuals with disabilities that may relate to housing needs. Importantly, many people have multiple disabilities. The exhibits group households into two categories: (1) counts of households with one or more members who have a self-care or independent living limitation, and (2) counts of households with one or more members who do not have a self-care or independent living limitation, but do have another disability, such as a hearing or vision impairment, an ambulatory limitation, or a cognitive limitation.

Exhibit 47. Skagit County - Renter Households by Disability Status and Income Level (2020)



Sources: US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2016–2020; BERK Consulting, 2024.

Displacement Risk and Exclusion (RDI)

Community History

First Peoples of Skagit County

Before the White settlement of what is now known as Skagit County, the Coast Salish people lived in tribal groups throughout the region.¹¹ In 1850, there were 11 different tribal groups in Skagit County in which people fished for salmon, collected clams and mussels, hunted deer, elk, and mountain goat, and grew bracken fern and camas on the natural prairies. In 1855, the Point Elliot Treaty relegated many of these tribal groups to the Swinomish Reservation located on the southeastern end of Fidalgo Island. Today, the County is home to the Swinomish, Upper Skagit, Sauk-Siuattle, and Samish Indian tribes. The relocation of the Coast Salish people has had racially disparate impacts on the health and socioeconomic outcomes of the Coast Salish people connected to Skagit County.

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is a federally recognized tribe that occupies the Swinomish Reservation in the State of Washington. The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community represents the four aboriginal bands of the Swinomish, Samish, Lower Skagit, and Kikiallus.¹²

The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe is a federally recognized tribe composed of eleven predecessor bands, including the Nuwha’ha, Nookachamps, Bsigwigwilts, Bsxwexwehwa’1, Chobahabish, Sabelxu,

¹¹ Janet Oakley – Skagit County: Thumbnail History, 2004; [Historylink.org](https://www.historylink.org)

¹² Swinomish Indian Tribal Community – [Who We Are](https://www.swinomishtribe.com/who-we-are)

Saylayotsid, Shayayotsid, Kwabatsabsh, Sakhumehu, and Skaywih.¹³ All of these bands either had villages or summer fishing locations at saltwater locations such as Skagit Bay, Deception Pass, Whidbey Island, Camano Island, Padilla Bay, Samish Bay, and Chuckanut Bay.

The Sauk-Suiattle Indian people lived as hunters, gatherers, and fishermen in the region of Sauk Prairie near the present-day town of Darrington and the foothills of the North Cascades.¹⁴ Additionally, the early Sauk-Suiattle people were skilled horsemen who traversed the mountains to trade with tribes from Eastern Washington. The Sauk Suiattle Indian Reservation, north of Darrington, is home to many of the surviving descendants of the original people.

The Samish Indian Nation is the successor to the Samish Tribe. The Samish's traditional territory stretches from the western shores of the San Juan Islands to the tops of the Cascades Mountains.¹⁵ The Samish people were respected for their spiritual strength as well as their skillful carving of canoes and construction of longhouses.

County History

Much of the early White settlement of Skagit County happened between the early 1850s and the late 1870s. The diking of the marshy flats near present day La Conner in 1863 made way for settlement on the County's mainland.¹⁶ Additionally, a three-year effort to remove an enormous logjam that blocked the Skagit River was completed in 1879, which opened access to the interior upriver and allowed places like Mount Vernon to grow and develop over time.

Skagit County was originally part of Island County, which in 1853 included present day Snohomish, Island, Whatcom, and San Juan counties. In 1854, a small group of settlers broke away from Island County and formed Whatcom County, which included Skagit County land. Finally, in 1883, local legislators passed a bill to separate from Whatcom County and create Skagit County. The county seat first resided in La Conner but moved to Mount Vernon a year later, where it currently still resides.

Several industries supported Skagit County's early growth. One such industry was the fish cannery, which opened in Anacortes in the late 1890s and remained an economic mainstay through the second half of the twentieth century.

Agriculture is the primary industry that has supported Skagit County in the past and today. Skagit County is known for its growing of seeds, as at one point, Skagit County grew 95% of the cabbage seeds produced in the United States. The County is a major producer of cabbage, table beet, and spinach seeds worldwide. Tulip bulb production started as an extension of the seed production industry. Beginning in the 1920s and expanding after 1945, about 700 acres of land are used for bulb farming today in Skagit County.

Also, in the late 1920s, farmers began growing vegetables commercially for large produce packing companies. Farms mostly grew and packed peas, green beans, and spinach. During World War II, farmworkers from Mexico (Braceros) were brought to Skagit County in large numbers to help harvest hay

¹³ Upper Skagit Indian Tribe & Dr. Bruce Miller – [Upper Skagit Tribal Historical Overview](#)

¹⁴ Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe – [About Us](#)

¹⁵ Samish Indian Nation – [Samish Culture](#)

¹⁶ Janet Oakley – Skagit County: Thumbnail History, 2004; [Historylink.org](#)

and pea crops that supported the Skagit County dairy industry. Today, the production of peas has declined, but potatoes are enjoying the status of the county's number one crop.

Racially Disparate Impacts (RDI)

Unincorporated Skagit County has a population of 53,210 people (OFM, 2024) and a median household income of \$82,029 (see **Exhibit 18**). Households in Skagit County are primarily homeowners, as **Exhibit 13** shows 70% of households are homeowners and 30% are renters. As shown in **Exhibit 3**, 72% of the County identifies as White and 19% identify as Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Although most households in the County own their homes, **Exhibit 17** shows that households of color are primarily renters, with 52% of households of color renting their homes in the County. This is important as it indicates that rising housing prices in the rental market have a racially disparate impact on households of color in the County. This disparate impact in the rental housing market can also be seen in the cost burden data.

Although the percentage of households who are cost burden, or who spend 30% or more of their income on the cost of housing, has decreased in the five years between 2015 and 2020 (see **Exhibit 26**). **Exhibit 31** shows that renter households of color are experiencing higher rates of being cost burden. Asian, Black, and Hispanic renter households are seeing renter household total cost burden percentages of 45%, 50%, and 47%, in comparison to the 41% of White renter households experiencing cost burden.

Vulnerable Populations

Housing affordability is a challenge for farmworkers, with as many as 1,377 farmworker households searching for housing through local market rate options in Skagit County.¹⁷ In 2018, Skagit County had 1,737 year-round agriculture jobs and 1,356 peak months migratory jobs. That same year, only 240 dedicated permanent farmworker housing units and 461 provided beds for migratory workers were available to workers, leaving an estimated gap of 1,138 permanent housing units and 238 beds. A 2022 study of farmworker housing needs found that less than 5% of the housing stock in Skagit County is affordable to farmworkers. As a consequence, many farmworkers experience significant housing cost burden, living in unaffordable housing.

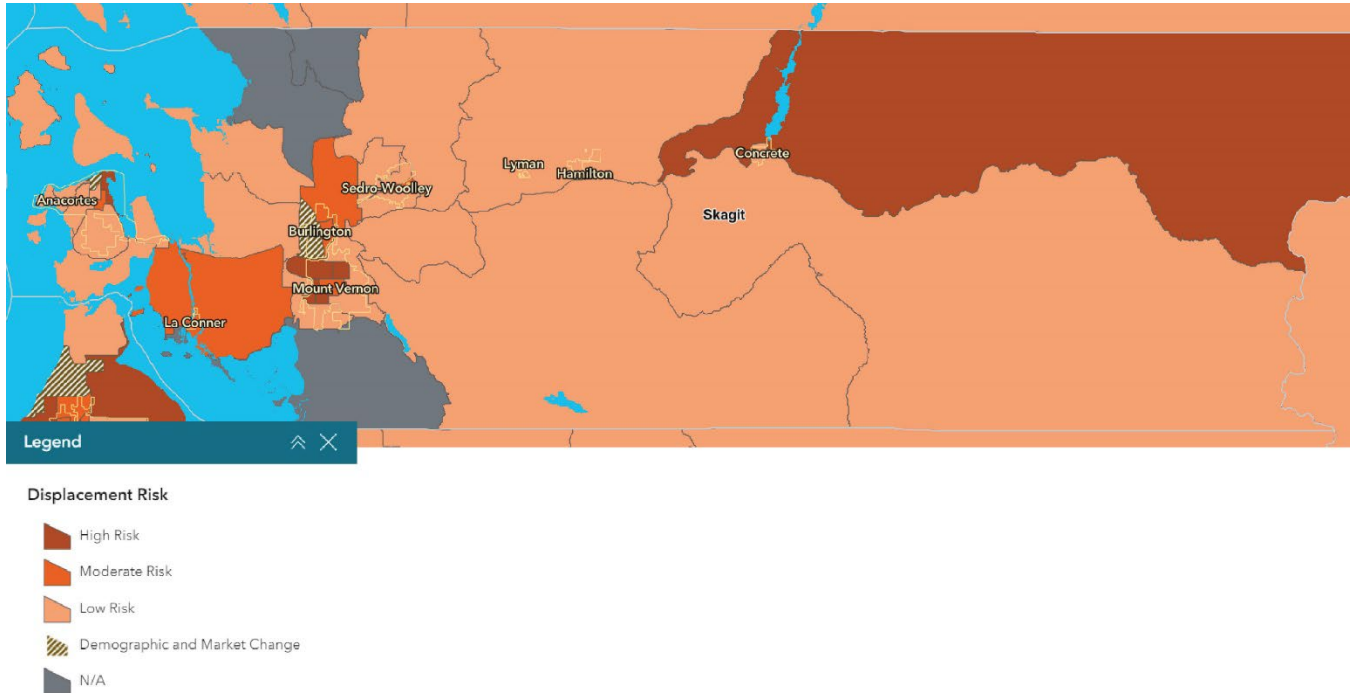
Additionally, as 19% of Skagit County identifies as Hispanic or Latino, and a large percentage of farmworkers also identify as Hispanic or Latino, the lack of housing affordable to farmworkers has racially disparate impacts on Hispanic or Latino people of color.

Skagit County Displacement Risk

According to Washington Department of Commerce's Displacement Risk Map, most of unincorporated Skagit County scores as low risk for displacement (see **Exhibit 48**). A couple of census tracts showed moderate displacement risk, with one census tract including the Swinomish Village and Reservation land. Another census tract showed high displacement risk. This census tract started around the City of Concrete and stretches into land through the Cascades Mountain Range.

¹⁷ Washington Farmworker Housing Needs Assessment – [Washington Department of Commerce & BERK Consulting, 2022](#).

Exhibit 48. Skagit County – Displacement Risk Map



Source: Washington Department of Commerce, 2023

Land Use and Housing Elements RDI Policy Review

The Land Use and Housing elements of the Comprehensive Plan were evaluated as part of the Racially Disparate Impact analysis. The following questions were used to review and analyze the goals and policies in each element:

- Does this policy contribute to racially disparate impacts or exclusion in housing?
- Is the policy effective in accommodating more housing?
- Does the policy increase displacement risk?
- Does the policy language include vague terms that could be used to marginalize communities of color?

Additionally, the goals and policies were given an evaluation score based on the following criteria:

- **(S) Supportive** - The policy is valid and supports meeting the identified housing needs. The policy is needed and addresses identified racially disparate impacts, displacement and exclusion in housing.
- **(A) Approaching** - The policy can support meeting the identified housing needs but may be insufficient or does not address racially disparate impacts, displacement and exclusion in housing.
- **(C) Challenging** - The policy may challenge the jurisdiction's ability to meet the identified housing needs. The policy's benefits and burdens should be reviewed to optimize the ability to meet the policy's objectives while improving the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens imposed by the policy.

- **(NA) Not Applicable** - The policy does not impact the jurisdiction’s ability to meet the identified housing needs and has no influence or impact on racially disparate impacts, displacement or exclusion.

Findings for the flagged Land Use and Housing element goals and policies can be found below in **Exhibit 49.**

Exhibit 49. Skagit County – Land Use and Housing RDI Policy Review

Original Goal or Policy	Evaluation	Rationale
Land Use		
Goal 2A - Guide most future development into concentrated urban growth areas where adequate public facilities, utilities, and services can be provided consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies.	S	Future development like housing being guided into urban areas where higher densities are allowed supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 2A-1.1 - Work with local jurisdictions to designate and maintain Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) of sufficient size to accommodate the County’s 20-year urban population and employment allocations. Areas proposed for UGA designation shall meet the following criteria:	S	Planning to accommodate 20-year population and employment allocations supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 2A-1.2 - Proposals for Urban Growth Area expansions shall be evaluated for their consistency with the Urban Growth Area Modification Criteria developed and approved by the Growth Management Act Steering Committee. These criteria address issues including: land capacity analysis; ability to provide urban services; impacts on critical areas, natural resource lands, and hazard areas; and compliance with related Countywide Planning Policies.	NA	
Policy 2A-1.3 - In designating Urban Growth Areas, consider GMA requirements to provide for recreational lands, critical areas, open space corridors, greenbelts, and view sheds, and to avoid natural hazard areas prone to flooding or other risks to public safety.	NA	

<p>Policy 2A-1.4 - The following Urban Growth Areas are designated within Skagit County:</p> <p>Non-Municipal UGAs</p> <p>Bayview Ridge</p> <p>Swinomish</p> <p>Municipal UGAs</p> <p>Anacortes</p> <p>Burlington</p> <p>Concrete</p> <p>Hamilton</p> <p>La Conner</p> <p>Lyman</p> <p>Mount Vernon</p> <p>Sedro-Woolley</p>	NA	
<p>Policy 2A-1.5 - Overall residential densities within Urban Growth Areas shall be a minimum of four (4) dwelling units per net acre, when urban services are provided.</p>	A	<p>The allowance of at least 2 ADUs on residential lots in UGAs and possible allowances of duplexes and other middle housing increase the minimum allowed units on a lot to effectively 3 units per lot. This creates an opportunity for the minimum densities to be set higher if desired, which would help increase housing supply and options, reducing impacts on non-white households and vulnerable communities.</p>
<p>Goal 2A-3 - Within the designated Urban Growth Areas, coordinate with the respective local jurisdictions and other service providers within the Urban Growth Areas to ensure that growth and development are timed, phased, and consistent with adopted urban level of service standards.</p>	NA	
<p>Goal 2A-4 - Conduct joint planning between the County and local jurisdictions for future annexation areas within the Urban Growth Areas in accordance with the Framework Agreement and the Countywide Planning Policies.</p>	NA	
<p>Goal 2A-5 - Encourage commercial and industrial development to locate in well-defined centers within the Urban Growth Areas. Prohibit new zoning that furthers the continuation of strip commercial development.</p>	NA	

<p>Policy 2A-6.1 - Foster development within Urban Growth Areas that creates and maintains safe, healthy and diverse communities. These communities should contain a range of affordable housing and employment opportunities, and school and recreational facilities, and be designed to protect the natural environment and significant cultural resources.</p>	S	<p>Policy language includes affordable housing, jobs, and other amenities for diverse communities.</p>
<p>Policy 2A-6.2 - Adopt plans, policies, codes, and development standards that promote public health by increasing opportunities for residents to be more physically active. Such actions include: concentrating growth into Urban Growth Areas, promoting more compact urban development, allowing mixed-use developments, and adding pedestrian and non-motorized linkages where appropriate.</p>	S	<p>Mixed-use development with more opportunities to reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles (SOV) and increasing active transportation would have positive benefits for people’s health, especially communities of color who tend to have worst health outcomes than their white peers.</p>
<p>Policy 2A-6.3 - Concentrate facilities and services within Urban Growth Areas, using urban design principles, to make them desirable places to live, work, and play; increase the opportunities for walking and biking within the community; use existing infrastructure capacity more efficiently; and reduce the long-term costs of infrastructure maintenance.</p>	S	<p>The appropriate infrastructure and facilities is needed to provide space for people to actively transport themselves safely, comfortably, and reliably.</p>
<p>Goal 2A-7 - Provide for the orderly transition from rural to urban development patterns within the unincorporated portions of the municipal Urban Growth Areas.</p>	NA	
<p>Goal 2A-8 - Work with local jurisdictions to simplify the permitting process for landowners and developers within the unincorporated portions of the Urban Growth Areas.</p>	S	<p>Long and costly permitting processes increase the cost of housing for households. Long permit periods also discourage the amount of new housing built over a period of time leading to unmet housing supply that would have been built if permitting was faster and less complicated. Simplifying the permit process supports meeting housing need and making housing more affordable.</p>
<p>Policy 2A-8.1 - Maintain, in consultation with local jurisdictions, a common set of municipal Urban Growth Area zoning districts and</p>	C	<p>The language here is fine, but the County doesn’t currently have any base urban density zones applied in UGAs.</p>

development regulations for residential, commercial, industrial, and other land uses in the Urban Growth Areas.		
Policy 2A-8.2 - Maintain development regulations that allow development in the Urban Growth Areas at lower-than-urban densities and/or intensities, prior to annexation, provided that future urban development is not precluded. Development shall follow standards generally consistent with those applied in the rural portions of the County.	C	This policy likely limits the ability to meet housing needs. However, since the cities are unwilling to extend capital facilities at this point, recommend leaving the policy as is.
Policy 2A-8.3 - Maintain zoning maps for each of the Urban Growth Areas showing the zoning of all lands within the unincorporated portions of the Urban Growth Areas.	S	Good to let developers, home providers, and others know where certain developments are allowed.
Policy 2A-8.4 - Development at urban densities and/or intensities may be allowed prior to annexation. However, such development shall only be allowed if urban infrastructure is provided, and shall be subject to the standards of the future annexing jurisdiction.	S	Ensuring urban densities have the infrastructure to support people who may move there.
Policy 2A-8.5 - Any subdivision of land under these regulations shall include measures to ensure the accommodation of future rights-of-way for urban transportation infrastructure and utilities that will be required when the property is further subdivided and developed at urban densities and land uses.	S	Ensuring urban densities have the infrastructure to support people who may move there.
Housing		
Goal 7A - Ensure that the supply of housing and sufficient land capacity keep pace with population growth in the County.	S	Planning to accommodate 20-year population and employment allocations supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 7A-1.1 - Work with housing producers and stakeholders in urban and rural areas to apply creative solutions to infill and development using techniques such as attached dwelling units, co-housing, home-sharing, accessory dwelling units, clustering, planned unit developments and lot size averaging, consistent with the	S	Policy language supporting a variety of housing types supports meeting housing needs.

community's vision for urban growth areas and rural character.		
Policy 7A-1.2 - Develop explanatory materials, offer pre-application conferences, and employ other measures to facilitate the review and approval of building permit and land use applications.	S	Policy language the supports faster and smoother movement through the permitting process supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 7A-1.3 - Support, when financially feasible, low income housing programs, with tools such as multifamily tax exemptions, public bond issues, grants, and low interest loan programs.	A	The policy expresses support using financial tools to help develop more low-income housing. However, the policy qualifies with “when financially feasible.” Additionally, MFTE programs may not be an available tool for Skagit County as RCW 84.14.010(4) refers to counties with an unincorporated population of at least 170,000 people.
Policy 7A-1.4 - Ensure zoning and subdivision regulations provide for the efficient use of lands for residential development where appropriate to increase available land supply and opportunities for affordable housing to match the demographic and economic housing needs of the County's current and projected population.	S	Policy language supporting processes to increase housing supply supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 7A-1.5 - Develop procedures to reduce impact fees and utility fees for low income housing projects, when such fees are required.	S	Dedicated policy language to remove costs from low-income housing projects.
Policy 7A-1.6 - Maintain an ongoing monitoring and evaluation program to improve the process of permit review and approval, save time, and decrease costs.	S	Policy language the supports faster and smoother movement through the permitting process supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 7A-1.7 - Work with the Skagit Council of Governments to establish a program for regular updating of the Housing Needs Assessment, including provisions to monitor and assist in providing affordable housing opportunities. The Assessment should be updated on a regular basis, several years in advance of each periodic GMA required Comprehensive Plan update.	S	Policy language that supports the monitoring and tracking of housing need over the years supports meeting housing needs.
Policy 7A-1.8 - Develop growth strategies and housing and human service programs to plan for affordable housing within the regional context. In collaboration with the cities and housing providers, address the	A	Policy language indicates support and planning for housing below 80% MFI and 50% AMI, but does not have language to geared towards actualizing development at those levels.

<p>countywide need for ownership and rental housing affordable to households with moderate, low and very-low incomes. Work towards a common goal of having 40 percent of the countywide housing stock affordable at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI), with an intentional focus on expanding the supply of housing affordable at or below 50 percent of the AMI. Develop objectives for housing affordable to different income ranges and special needs populations.</p>		
<p>Policy 7B-1.1 - Facilitate the rehabilitation and reuse of existing structures for housing by allowing reduced permitting fees and “grandfathered” development standards.</p>	S	<p>Direct policy to reduce barriers to current nonconforming uses being able to survive over time and stay in high enough quality appropriate for people to live in.</p>
<p>Policy 7B-1.2 - Allow reuse of formerly non-residential structures for housing in mixed use developments in Rural Village Commercial Districts and Urban Growth Areas.</p>	S	<p>Direct policy to reduce barriers to current nonconforming uses being able to survive over time and stay in high enough quality appropriate for people to live in.</p>
<p>Policy 7B-1.3 - Establish development standards and design guidelines for Urban Growth Areas, Rural Villages, and large CaRD developments, to promote efficient, pedestrian friendly, and attractive communities.</p>	A	<p>Most of the policy language is fine. Flagging that “attractive” can be subjective and design guidelines geared towards residential housing that have the rational of increasing attractiveness has increased housing costs in other jurisdictions, while also not universally being agreed as attractive. Design guidelines geared towards pedestrian/active transportation are designed for more objective goals than attractiveness. Recommend removing the word “attractive”.</p>
<p>Policy 7B-1.4 - Manage regulatory, administrative, funding and information programs that contribute to the development and maintenance of high quality housing and strong communities throughout the County.</p>	A	<p>The first half of the policy connects to housing clearly. The “and strong communities...” is a little more vague and could be left off the policy if desired.</p>
<p>Policy 7C-1.1 - Allow mixed residential and commercial uses in Urban Growth Areas and Rural Village commercial districts to promote housing affordability and availability.</p>	S	<p>Policy language supporting processes to increase housing supply and a mix of services supports meeting housing needs.</p>
<p>Policy 7C-1.2 - Consider allowing reduced minimum lot sizes in exchange for community facilities and amenities</p>	A	<p>A stronger policy would be to reduce minimum lot sizes by right as minimum lot sizes were historically one of the zoning tools used to segregate wealthier white</p>

such as parks, open space, recreational facilities, and community centers.		households from less wealthy people of color. If a trade is desired, then dropping the “consider” and making that the policy is stronger.
Policy 7C-1.3 - Allow duplexes in zoning districts permitting single-family residences, as an alternative to accessory dwelling units or the ability to further subdivide. A duplex extinguishes two development rights.	A	Stronger policy language would be “Allow duplexes in zoning districts permitting single-family residences.”
Policy 7D-1.1 - Allow specialized housing facilities such as senior housing, group homes for children and adults with special needs, in appropriate zoning districts.	S	Policy language that allows specialized housing supports meeting housing needs.
<p>Policy 7E-1.1 - Work in partnership with other public agencies and the private sector to ensure an adequate supply of farmworker housing.</p> <p>(a) Support strategic actions of the Skagit Valley Farmworker Housing Trust Advisory Council to develop new farmworker housing.</p> <p>(b) Recognize farmworker housing would occur primarily in urban areas where services are available and secondarily in rural areas when sensitively designed to minimize loss of agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.</p> <p>(c) Consider the seasonal nature of farming and potential options to accommodate seasonal housing that does not permanently convert agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.</p>	C	There is tension and conflict within the policy language of “b” and other land use and housing policies due to Skagit County not having appropriate urban zoning and urban densities in UGA areas near farms that can accommodate the housing types needed to provide housing affordable to farmworkers.
Policy 7E-1.2 - Review permit applications for farm-worker housing developments in consideration of proximity to job locations and necessary public facilities and services consistent with the Washington State Temporary Worker Housing Health and Safety Regulations (RCW 70.114A).	S	Policy language making sure farmworker housing is in proximity to farms supports meeting housing needs.
Goal 7F - Recognize the value of manufactured housing as an affordable housing solution.	A	Opportunity for language change, as “recognizing the value,” doesn’t necessarily lead or mean there is actionable support towards the cause.

Policy 7F-1.1 - Ensure that regulations regarding manufactured housing are consistent with federal and state laws.

S

Supports meeting housing needs.

Source: MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design, 2024.

RDI Recommendations

The Hispanic or Latino population is the second highest racial demographic group in the County. Farmworkers, a majority of which identify as Hispanic or Latino, have a hard time finding housing affordable to them and their families. Addressing the housing gap for farmworkers would significantly increase equitable housing outcomes for Hispanic or Latino residents in the County. Additionally, agriculture is one of the largest contributors to Skagit County's economy and productivity is limited when a significant part of the workforce cannot attain quality affordable housing.

The results of the RDI analysis highlighted some overall adjustments that could increase inclusion and reduce disparate impacts. These adjustments include:

- Whether it is in UGAs or special areas in rural land, Skagit County should create zoning that allows for the appropriate densities needed to provide more affordable housing options. This goes beyond ADUs and duplexes, and is likely geared towards garden apartments, single room occupancies, and congregate housing.
- Consider specifically committing more affordable housing resources to farmworker housing, rather than resources for general or all affordable housing.
- There is a small opportunity to update LAMIRD standards that may allow for more housing types and housing types that would be more affordable to farmworkers and others that earn less than the area median income.

Gap Analysis

Projected Housing Needs by Income Level

In 2023, the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) conducted analysis to forecast future countywide population and housing needs in the year 2045. This work is documented in the Skagit County Population, Housing and Employment Growth Allocations Methodology (2023) and adopted in SCOG Resolution 20023-01. It reports that the county, inclusive of all jurisdictions, will need to add 17,450 net new housing units between 2020 and 2045 to address all current and projected housing needs countywide.

Exhibit 50 shows how these countywide housing needs were allocated to individual UGAs and rural county areas, with breakdowns by income level served.¹⁸

Exhibit 50. Initial 2045 Housing Need Allocations for Skagit County

Urban Growth Areas	Initial Allocation of Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045)						Total
	0-30% AMI*	31-50% AMI	51-80% AMI	81-100% AMI	101-120% AMI	Above 120% AMI	
Anacortes	924	592	422	226	201	577	2,942
Burlington	893	572	408	218	194	558	2,843
Mount Vernon	1,627	1,043	743	398	353	1,016	5,180
Sedro-Woolley	831	533	380	203	180	519	2,646
Concrete	34	22	15	8	7	21	107
Hamilton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
La Conner	39	25	18	10	8	24	124
Lyman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bayview Ridge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swinomish	37	24	17	9	8	23	118
UGAs Subtotal	4,385	2,811	2,003	1,072	951	2,738	13,960
Rural (outside UGAs)	89	57	501	268	238	2,337	3,490
Grand Total	4,474	2,868	2,504	1,340	1,189	5,075	17,450

* 0-30% AMI includes permanent supportive housing and non-permanent supportive housing
 Source: Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) RESOLUTION 2023-01

Exhibit 51 presents net housing needs by income level and housing type for just rural Skagit County. See the Housing Land Capacity Memo for an assessment of land capacity in rural Skagit County to accommodate the production of new housing in types appropriate to meet these housing needs.

Exhibit 51. Housing Needs by Income Level and Housing Type for Rural Skagit County (2020-2045)

Housing Type / Income Level Served	Net Units Needed 2020-2045
Emergency Housing*	57
0-30% Permanent Supportive Housing	32
0-30% Other	57
31-50%	57
51-80%	501
81-100%	268
101-120%	238

¹⁸ Note, following the adoption of these allocations, the Swinomish Tribe determined it would be infeasible to accommodate the allocation for the Swinomish UGA due to trust land.

Above 120%

2,337

Sources: Department of Commerce, 2023; Office of Financial Management, 2023; SCOG GMATAC Committee, 2023; Community Attributes, 2023.

Note: * Emergency Housing Needs are expressed as beds rather than housing units like Non-PSH and PSH housing need. Additionally, Emergency Housing Needs are not adjusted based on the GMATAC member recommendation and reflects the results of the HAPT Method A alone.