

Indiana County

# HOUSING PLAN

October 2014





INDIANA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
FILE OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SESSION OF 2014

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY OF INDIANA, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA ADOPTING THE INDIANA COUNTY HOUSING PLAN DATED THIS 29<sup>th</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2014 AS PREPARED BY MULLIN & LONERGAN ASSOCIATES AND FACILITATED BY THE INDIANA COUNTY OFFICE OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III AND ARTICLE IX OF THE PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPALITIES PLANNING CODE.

WHEREAS, the Indiana County Housing Plan, an in depth examination of housing conditions across Indiana County, was identified as a priority in the 2012 adopted Comprehensive Plan, Where We Live... A Comprehensive Plan for Indiana County, Pennsylvania; and,

WHEREAS, a copy of the draft Housing Plan, which includes the text, maps, charts and any other items which form the whole of the Comprehensive Plan, was made available for public review at the County Court House and Office of Planning & Development as well as digitally through the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development's webpage, is attached hereto as Exhibit "A"; and,

WHEREAS, the Indiana County Housing Plan has followed the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requirements for incorporation into the Indiana County Comprehensive Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Indiana County Housing Plan was reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Indiana County Planning Commission to the Indiana County Board of Commissioners on September 10, 2014; and,

WHEREAS, the a memo regarding the draft Indiana County Housing Plan was sent to the 38 municipalities and 11 school districts within Indiana County, and the contiguous 5 counties, 8 school districts, and 25 municipalities on July 30, 2014; and,

WHEREAS, Indiana County has received no substantial comments from the municipalities and school districts within Indiana County or from the contiguous counties, school districts, and municipalities within forty-five (45) days of submission of the Indiana County Housing Plan; and,

WHEREAS, notice of a public hearing to present the final Indiana Housing Plan was forwarded to the Indiana Gazette to be advertised and published on July 31, 2014 and August 8, 2014; and,

WHEREAS, the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development held a public hearing on August 11, 2014 to hear and consider public comments on the final Indiana County Housing

Plan, and that the comments received at the public hearing were noted for future planning consideration; and,

WHEREAS, the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development, after consideration of comments received, has determined that the Indiana County Housing Plan, as set forth in Exhibit "A", should not be substantially revised; and,

WHEREAS, the Indiana County Housing Plan is beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Indiana County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE INDIANA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, AND IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ENACTED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAME:

SECTION I. The Board of Commissioners of Indiana County, by this Resolution, adopts the Indiana County Housing Plan as attached hereto as Exhibit "A", as pursuant to Article II and Article IX of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

SECTION II. The Indiana County Housing Plan is incorporated as a component of the Indiana County Comprehensive Plan, Where We Live... A Comprehensive Plan for Indiana County, Pennsylvania.

Resolved and enacted this 29<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2014.

ATTEST:



Robin Maryai, Chief Clerk

INDIANA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Rodney D. Ruddock, Chairman



Michael A. Baker, Commissioner



Patricia A. Evanko, Commissioner

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
Executive Summary	8
Purpose	10
Process	12
Using this Plan	13
<b>Existing Trends and Conditions</b>	<b>15</b>
Market Typology	17
Economic Profile	21
Population Profile	31
Housing Profile	43
Rental Housing	47
Owner-Occupied Housing	57
Infrastructure Profile	64
<b>Housing Problems</b>	<b>69</b>
Cost Burden	71
Comparison of Incomes and Housing Costs	73
Foreclosure	75
Barriers to Affordable Housing	76
<b>Policy Profile</b>	<b>79</b>
Review of Housing and Community Development Policies	81
Comparative Local Taxes	84
Resources Available for Affordable Housing Development	86
<b>Community Needs</b>	<b>89</b>
Projections	91
Calculation of Net Demand	99
<b>Strategic Plan</b>	<b>103</b>
Policy Goals, Objectives and Proposed Actions	105
Implementation	118



# Introduction



# Executive Summary



## Introduction

Indiana County faces a challenge that will continue to shape the character of its communities and the quality of life for its residents. Increases in housing costs are outpacing increases in household income, a situation that has widened the gap between the number of households with lower incomes and the number of homes that are available, decent and affordable to them.

This Housing Plan lays out a framework for proactively addressing this and other housing problems by identifying and analyzing demographic and economic trends that affect the demand for housing, defining the supply and demand characteristics of Indiana County's housing market and examining projections that will shape local policy in years to come. The Plan examines the County's current approaches to housing policy and recommends a menu of strategies that:

- Are consistent with the Indiana County Comprehensive Plan,
- Are based on the trends, conditions and projected housing needs identified in the Housing Plan,
- Are consistent with the Keystone Principles adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
- Address the housing needs and market implications identified in the Housing Plan, and
- Will form the basis for the County's housing strategy for the next five to 10 years.

The following goals for the Housing Plan were developed as a result of an active public and stakeholder engagement process. Community members were consulted to identify issues for study, to review preliminary research results, and to propose, review and rank goals and objectives. The objectives and action steps proposed in the

Implementation section of the Housing Plan are organized under these goals:

### **Housing Availability**

Ensure that an adequate supply of housing is available to meet the needs, preferences and affordability levels of Indiana County households now and in the future.

### **Housing Quality**

Ensure a safe and healthy built environment, and assist in the preservation of sound existing housing and the improvement of neighborhoods and communities.

### **Sustainable Housing**

Encourage housing that supports sustainable development patterns by promoting the efficient use of land, conservation of natural resources, easier access to public transit, convenient access to parks and services, energy-efficient design and construction, and the use of renewable energy resources.

### **Affordable Housing**

Promote the development and preservation of quality housing that is affordable to households of all income levels.

### **Balanced Community**

Strive for livable and mixed-income neighborhoods throughout Indiana County that collectively reflect the diversity of housing types, tenure and income levels.

### **Housing Continuum**

Ensure that a range of housing from temporary shelters to permanent supportive housing is available with appropriate services for individuals and households who need them.

### **Fair Housing**

Ensure freedom of choice in housing type, tenure and community for all regardless of race, color, religion, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, familial status and disability.

Key findings from this Plan are as follows.

- The median income among Indiana County residents increased 4.9% between 2000 and 2011, even after adjusting for inflation, while it remained stagnant or fell in many other areas of the country. However, housing costs grew more quickly, diminishing households' relative purchase power. The median value of homes in the County climbed 9.2% during the same years, and the median gross rent climbed 14%.
- More than 20,000 workers, 54.8% of the County's labor force, leave the County each day to work in surrounding areas, while 16,846 workers from other counties commute into Indiana County. Commuters from other counties represent households that the County's housing market could position itself to attract.
- Due to national and regional forces, unconventional well drilling in Indiana County has tapered, and the industry's impact on the housing market has been reportedly minimal so far. The cyclical nature of the industry holds promise for its future prospects in the County.
- Population loss in the County has been less severe than in other counties within the region, due in part to stability anchored by the County's higher education institutions. One approach to rebuilding the County's population could be ensuring that suitable housing stock and jobs are available to meet the needs of graduating students and young families.
- A sustained and unmet need for affordable housing accessible to people with disabilities calls for the creation of further housing options.
- The housing market remains soft overall. Homes priced between \$150,000 and \$200,000 sell quickly, but there are few available. Buyer reluctance persists, reflecting recession-related losses in household income and regulatory changes that have made mortgage financing more difficult to obtain.
- The local housing market is primarily renter-driven, favoring students over family and elderly households. Rental housing for non-students is virtually non-existent. The existing supply of apartments for the elderly is small, but intensely popular.
- As families are increasingly priced out of the home-buying market, the rental market has tightened.
- Subsidized housing is geographically concentrated in Indiana Borough and White Township, while Section 8 voucher households are scattered across the County.
- Newly constructed student housing has increased vacancies among single-family homes in Indiana Borough that were converted for use as student rentals. The Borough and the County are interested in returning these structures to single-family use. Three obstacles prevent this from happening: 1) the profitability of the units as student rentals, 2) the cost of a mortgage loan in conjunction with home improvement costs that would be needed to restore such homes, and 3) a UCC requirement that holds rehabilitation of single-family homes to the same standard as new construction.
- The quality of the affordable housing in Indiana County is questionable. Housing in rural areas can consist of uninsulated, poorly constructed and old materials with unreliable and expensive heat sources.
- 52.8% of renters are cost-burdened, and pay more than 30% of their income on housing.
- Almost all County residents are paying more than 45% of their household income on combined housing and transportation costs.
- There is a net need for 12,130 units of affordable housing in Indiana County, combining existing need from those who are cost-burdened or have housing problems with projected future need. The need consists chiefly of existing households who are cost-burdened or living in substandard housing, and are in need of some type of intervention to achieve decent and affordable housing.
- Public subsidy for additional affordable units is expected to become increasingly limited. Addressing the net affordable housing need will require policy solutions that promote the creation of affordable housing options through less direct means. The policy solutions may include land-use regulation changes, the design of incentives or imposition of set-aside requirements.

# Purpose



## Introduction

The **Indiana County Housing Plan** is a joint project of the Indiana County Commissioners, the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development, the Indiana County Department of Human Services, the United Way of Indiana County, and the Redevelopment Authority of Indiana County. The Plan fulfills the recommendation in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan for Indiana County to develop a more detailed Housing Plan by identifying and describing gaps between housing supply and demand, identifying trends that will form a foundation for strategic planning initiatives to address the gaps, and devising a series of recommendations that focus on current issues. This document includes compilation and analysis of demographic and economic data, current housing data, and future housing needs. In addition to establishing a baseline to compare against the existing and projected needs of the local housing market, this document combines available quantitative data with qualitative research to examine the following key issues. The term of the Plan extends for 10 years through 2024.



Source: Mullin and Lonergan

### Quality of the Existing Housing Inventory

Data sources that describe the condition of the existing housing stock are limited. Available data sets are examined in detail and supplemented with stakeholder perspectives to gain a sense of where substandard housing exists across the County, and what should be done to preserve quality and affordable units.



Source: Flickr user SchuminWeb

### Housing Affordability and Supply

Through examination of the housing market, including both public and private sectors, this report describes the supply and location of quality and affordable rental and owner units. The analysis describes the extent to which subsidized housing meets the demand for affordable housing. Policy recommendations will aim to preserve and expand a variety of affordable housing options. This report is designed to help the County anticipate the impacts of changing demographics on the local market.

Source: Flickr user BromfordGroup



### **Projected Housing Need for the Elderly and Persons with Special Needs**

An aging population is expected to spur demand for accessible and low-maintenance housing with a range of amenities. Analysis will describe where the County's elderly are now living and how the housing market should best adapt to meet their needs. Additionally, the report will enumerate and describe the needs of other populations such as persons with disabilities, veterans and the homeless.

Source: www.IUP.edu



### **The Impact of College Students**

A five-year construction project that replaced the majority of student housing on Indiana University of Pennsylvania's campus set into action market forces that changed the geography of student living. Whereas Indiana University of Pennsylvania students were previously concentrated in and within close proximity of campus, many now live in neighborhoods and communities farther away from campus without a history of student housing. The change has raised community character and public safety issues, and it has created vacancies in many Indiana Borough homes that would require substantial rehabilitation to be suitable for family occupancy. Additionally, the rental market in Blairsville has been tightened by growing ranks of WyoTech students who live off-campus.

Source: Flickr user Nicholas\_T



### **The Impact of Marcellus Shale**

Landowners across the County began to lease mineral rights to natural gas extraction companies a few years ago. There is uncertainty as to how this emerging industry would affect the housing market. How many and what type of jobs would the industry bring to the area, and what type of housing would its workers need? What is the impact on the affordable housing market and local hotel/motel occupancies of temporary workers?

# Process



## Introduction

The Indiana County Office of Planning & Development is the lead agency for the Housing Plan. The Office of Planning & Development and the Indiana County Department of Human Services formed a Steering Committee to analyze relevant housing issues and guide the Plan to its completion. Additionally, the Committee provided available information and helped to identify and facilitate the involvement of many key community stakeholders. Mullin & Lonergan Associates, located in Pittsburgh, worked with County staff to write the Housing Plan.

In October 2013, Mullin & Lonergan Associates completed an initial round of stakeholder interviews of focus groups that included representatives from the Housing Consortium, Indiana County Commissioners, the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development, school districts, human service agencies, housing organizations, developers, banks, realtors, and economic development entities. The first public meeting for the project occurred on October 1, 2013, to encourage attendees to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding housing in Indiana County.

Throughout the development of the Indiana County Housing Plan, Mullin & Lonergan Associates and the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development held a number of public input workshops to gather feedback on the Plan's development.

This Housing Needs Document represents the baseline research component of the planning process. It includes an overview of existing trends and conditions based on demographics, the local economy, and the housing market. This phase is designed to provide structure for community discussion and decision-making

prior to planning. Finally, this phase has incorporated the review of previous planning efforts, assessments, and applicable studies.

The next phase will involve the development of shared goals and objectives, and the preparation of a strategic plan. The full Housing Plan will summarize the findings of the assessment phase. The analysis of this phase will provide recommendations for policies, programs and other strategies to serve the County's housing needs. The Plan will incorporate concepts from the Indiana County Housing Consortium's Strategic Plan and outline the approach to address the County's housing needs over the next 10 years. Action strategies will be broken into short-term (up to two years), mid-term (three to five years) and long-term (six to 10 years) time frames.

The **Indiana County Housing Plan** will be used to position the County for future funding opportunities. The value for all of the partners involved in this project is that it will formalize working partnerships and identify mutually beneficial strategies that can be moved forward more quickly through resource pooling.

The data and information collected throughout this process will be provided to the County at the completion of the project, to monitor changes in the County's housing market and the effectiveness of planning efforts. The data will be provided in a digital format that can be updated to reflect future changes. The Plan is organized so that it can be updated annually. Performance measures will allow the County to track the progress of implementation.

# Using this Plan



Interviews with County staff and community stakeholders indicated a need to target County resources and incentives for maximum benefit due to decreases in the federal, state, and local dollars available for development activities. To identify target areas and redevelopment opportunities, Mullin & Lonergan Associates developed a neighborhood typology system for the County. The typology describes differences between neighborhoods and can be used as a tool to identify the types of public investment that would be best suited to each area. The purpose of the typology is to understand the forces driving neighborhood conditions in order to design and site policy interventions that maximize investment. Combined with the existing and projected trends and conditions identified throughout the Plan, the typologies geographically inform where the County can make the most of its investments, which are based on its long-range goals.

This approach provides a general framework for housing investment strategies. It is presented first, so that other data may be described and understood within its context. The document contains the following beyond that initial section:

- **Existing Conditions** includes information on the County's economy, housing stock, land use policies, and demographics.
- **Community Needs** is a discussion of housing needs identified during the public process and data gathering, as well as projections of the number of new units needed to meet future housing demand.
- **Strategic Plan** applies the information gathered in the Existing Conditions section, the needs identified in the Community Needs section, and the data illustrated in the Typologies section to craft practical housing policies.
- **Implementation** focuses on the action steps and identifies the entities responsible for completing those actions, the anticipated funding needed, and the proposed completion timeline.

The Plan includes this core document, which provides a narrative of major findings, future goals and associated housing strategies.

## Introduction

# Existing Conditions



**Existing Conditions**

# Market Typology



Neighborhood typology allows communities to calibrate policy strategies based on the understanding that neighborhoods are places defined by common characteristics and their differences from other areas. An area's vitality can be described as its stage along a continuum of change from stable, transitional, decline to renewal. At each of these stages and according to each neighborhood's defining characteristics, a different form of public intervention or non-intervention could be appropriate. This is based on a comprehensive literature review of existing approaches to neighborhood typology, and an understanding of the demographic, economic and housing market conditions that belong uniquely to Indiana County and its broad spectrum of communities. This analysis was calibrated to provide the most insight and decision-making value possible in consideration of the County's settlement patterns.

The rural nature of the County requires that some adaptations be made to traditional neighborhood typology, which divides geographies on a block or block-group level. While the most local data possible allows for precise delineations between areas of different character, no area of the County is dense enough to require analysis at this level. There are certainly differences within

individual communities that will be addressed in policy recommendations. This analysis carves geographies into municipalities within school districts, in order to capture housing market differences stemming from different local tax rates and locational choice driven by school quality. This approach yields a manageable set of geographies that can help the County to develop targeted and sustainable policy approaches for each area.

This analysis reflects the methodology adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in "Choices in Pennsylvania: Developing a Rational Framework for Housing Investment in Pennsylvania," a statewide housing market study that applied typology to create a comprehensive housing market strategy to incorporate all state resources. The typology focuses on four factors considered to be primary determinants in home-buying decisions, given the principle that such decisions have driven settlement and development patterns. They are schools, taxes, housing costs and proximity to work. The four factors are described by data as follows:

- **School quality:** Average proficiency in reading and mathematics as reported by district from the "Pennsylvania System of School Assessment" in 2011

- **Job proximity:** Estimated number of jobs available within a 10-mile radius according to “Zip Code Business Pattern” data
- **Buying power:** Median income and home value by municipality as reported by the “American Community Survey”
- **Tax impact:** Comparison of homes affordable to households at median income within a given community with a maximum of 30% of income spent on housing costs and with the number of homes that are affordable. Affordability includes taxes, estimated by applying a combined rate (local, school and county) to the median home price in each area. More detail on this statistic appears in the Policy Profile section of this Plan.

Combining these four factors ultimately allows for a classification of communities into clusters of similar characteristics. These clusters become useful units of description in the formulation of policy recommendations later in this Plan.

As they were analyzed for this Plan, communities were clustered into Categories labeled 1 through 5. Communities in Category 1 include Indiana Borough, White Township, Rayne Township, Blacklick Township and Burrell Township. They top other communities in school performance (with an average of 78.8% of high school students proficient or better in reading and math), median home value (\$121,000), median income (\$47,000) and jobs within 10 miles (23,000). Category 1 communities have the lowest relative property tax impact, with tax costs raising the monthly payment on the median-priced home by 44%. Indiana Borough’s low median income of \$21,250 is skewed by its large student population and counterbalanced by its scores in other categories.

Category 2 communities include Shelocta Borough, Armstrong Township and West Wheatfield Township. They tend to rank second by these measures, with relatively high school scores (78% proficient), median home values (\$99,000), median incomes (\$42,000) and jobs within 10 miles (15,000). The relative property tax impact across these communities was 46%, higher than in Category 1 communities but virtually the same as Category 3 and Category 5 communities.

Category 3 communities include Saltsburg Borough, Young Township and Center Township. They have median incomes similar to Category 2, but lower median home values (\$89,000). They are within proximity of fewer jobs within

10 miles (9,900) and have school proficiency averaging 73%.

Category 4 communities include Blairsville Borough, Pine Township, Young Township and Marion Center Borough. In these communities, relative tax burden is the highest, increasing the monthly housing payment for a median-priced home by 46%. The median value for a home in these communities was \$85,000, and median income was \$39,000. School proficiency was lowest in this Category at 72%. Category 4 areas are within 10 miles of an average of 8,200 jobs.

Category 5 communities are found primarily in Indiana County’s northern tier and include Canoe Township, Banks Township, Grant Township and Glen Campbell Borough. As a result of their rural settlement patterns, these areas have access to fewer jobs within 10 miles (4,200). The median home value in these communities is low at \$70,000, and the median income is \$38,000. However, school proficiency among these communities, at an average of 75%, outranks categories 3 and 4.

In general, Category 1 communities could be considered the most advantageous places to live by virtue of their relatively high-quality schools, lower tax burdens and proximity to employment opportunities. The lowest-income areas of more urbanized regions are typically those with the greatest access to jobs in sheer number alone, not necessarily jobs of any particular type or pay. This is not true in Indiana County, where some of the poorest communities are isolated older boroughs. The variety of housing stock and condition across municipalities places communities of all type into every category. This analysis sheds some light on locational decision-making for Indiana County households, and presents implications for creating policy that addresses market demands and community housing goals. The County can take steps to ensure that affordable housing choice is expanded in the most advantageous areas and find ways to improve a household’s return on investment in less advantageous areas. Affordable housing is defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as housing costs that do not exceed 30% of the gross household income. Housing costs include rent or mortgage, insurance, taxes and utilities. These ideas will be further explored in the policy recommendations of this Plan.

**Table 1. Community Typology Classification**

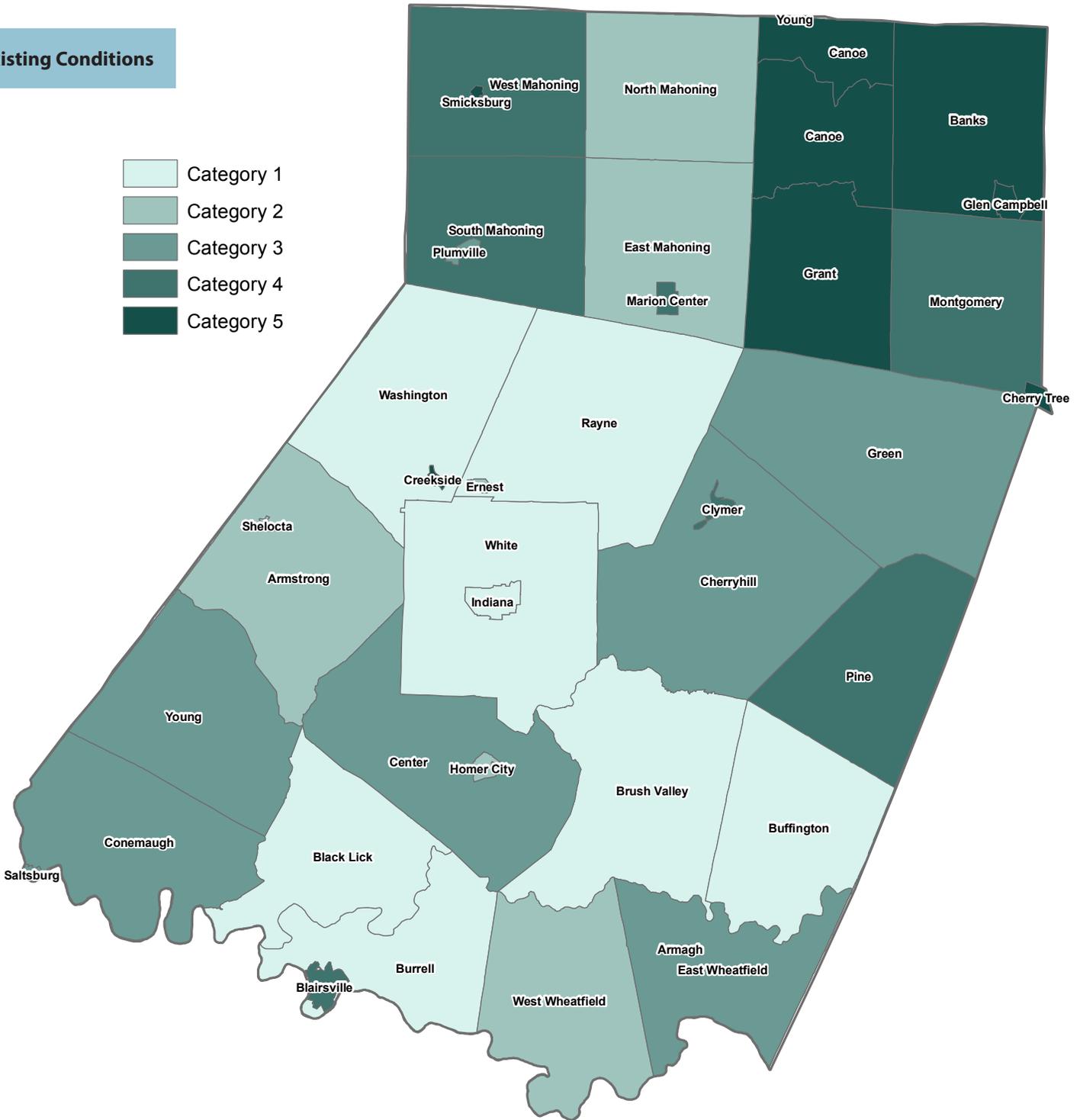
Municipality	School District	School Quality	Buying Power	Tax Burden	Jobs Proximity	Composite Category
Armagh Borough	United School District	1	3	1	4	2
Armstrong Township	Indiana Area School District	1	2	5	1	2
Banks Township	Punxsutawney Area School District	2	3	4	5	5
Blacklick Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	2	1	3	1	1
Blairsville Borough	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	2	3	5	3	4
Brush Valley Township	United School District	1	2	3	1	1
Buffington Township	United School District	1	2	2	3	1
Burrell Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	2	1	4	1	1
Canoe Township	Marion Center Area School District	3	5	1	5	5
Canoe Township	Punxsutawney Area School District	2	5	2	5	5
Center Township	Homer-Center School District	4	3	5	1	3
Cherry Tree Borough	Harmony Area School District	4	5	1	5	5
Cherryhill Township	Penns Manor Area School District	5	2	4	2	3
Clymer Borough	Penns Manor Area School District	5	5	2	2	4
Conemaugh Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	2	4	4	3	3
Creekside Borough	Marion Center Area School District	3	5	5	2	5
East Mahoning Township	Marion Center Area School District	3	2	4	3	2
East Wheatfield Township	United School District	1	4	5	3	3
Ernest Borough	Marion Center Area School District	3	5	2	2	2
Glen Campbell Borough	Purchase Line School District	5	3	2	5	5
Grant Township	Marion Center Area School District	3	4	5	4	5
Green Township	Purchase Line School District	5	3	1	3	3
Homer City Borough	Homer-Center School District	4	3	4	1	2
Indiana Borough	Indiana Area School District	1	4	1	2	1
Marion Center Borough	Marion Center Area School District	3	4	3	4	4
Montgomery Township	Purchase Line School District	5	4	1	4	4
North Mahoning Township	Punxsutawney Area School District	2	2	3	4	2
Pine Township	Penns Manor Area School District	5	2	3	4	4
Plumville Borough	Marion Center Area School District	3	5	1	4	3
Rayne Township	Marion Center Area School District	3	1	3	1	1
Saltsburg Borough	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	2	3	2	5	3
Shelocta Borough	Indiana Area School District	1	4	3	3	2
Smicksburg Borough	Armstrong School District	3	5	4	5	5
South Mahoning Township	Marion Center Area School District	3	2	5	3	4
Washington Township	Marion Center Area School District	3	2	1	2	1
West Mahoning Township	Armstrong School District	3	4	3	4	4
West Wheatfield Township	United School District	1	3	2	2	2
White Township	Indiana Area School District	1	2	4	1	1
Young Township	Apollo-Ridge School District	4	3	5	2	4
Young Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	2	3	2	5	3

Sources: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Indiana County Tax Assessment Department, 2011 American Community Survey, Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates.

**Map 1. Community Typology Classification**

**Existing Conditions**

- Category 1
- Category 2
- Category 3
- Category 4
- Category 5



# Economic Profile



Indiana County's housing market reflects its economy. When prospects for continued employment are high, consumers spend aggressively on housing. Conversely, during periods of economic insecurity, there is a normal contraction in the housing market. Within the regional economy, an area that is adding jobs attracts new households, while an area that is declining as an employment center might lose population. These employment characteristics impact housing demand and supply. The Economic Profile describes trends driving the local housing market.

## Unemployment

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the March 2014 unemployment rate was 5.9% for Indiana County, 6.4% across Pennsylvania and 6.7% nationally. The County's rate in March is lower than the 8.0% high it reached in 2010, but it was higher than its 2007 unemployment rate of 4.6%. Rates also peaked across the state and nation in 2010 at 8.4% and 9.6%, respectively. Between 2007 and 2012,

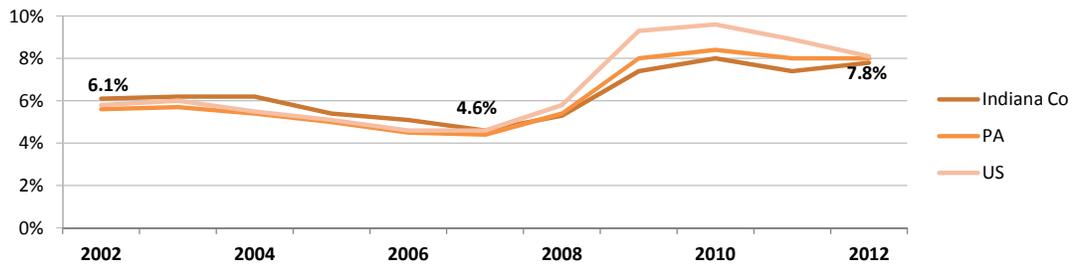
the County's unemployment rate consistently remained below both state and national averages despite remaining significantly higher than rates prior to the recession. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) estimated a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 5.3% for April 2014 in Indiana County and a rate of 5.7% statewide.

Unemployment rates varied widely among municipalities within the County. Among municipalities with at least 500 residents, the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) reported the highest rate of 12.8% in Montgomery Township, and was followed by 12.6% in Indiana Borough. The unemployment rate exceeded 10% in 11 municipalities. Six had at least 500 residents.

Conversely, the 2011 unemployment rate was only 1.7% among the 1,632 Armstrong Township residents in the labor force. Labor force is defined as those employed or seeking work. The Township is along the U.S. Route 422 corridor and functions as a bedroom community for larger job hubs. Rates were below 5% in eight additional municipalities. Six had a population of at least 500. Municipalities with

**Table 2. Trends in Percent Unemployed**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (S2301)



**Existing Conditions**

lower unemployment rates tended to be rural Townships in both the northern and southern tiers of the County. Saltsburg Borough was among the list with a rate of 4.8%.

The Census definition of unemployment excludes anyone not actively seeking work. Therefore, it does not count retirees or many full-time students. Across all municipalities, about two-thirds of the total population was in the labor force. The figure was closer to 55% in Indiana Borough and White Township, which suggests that many students do not seek employment. In those municipalities, 52.5% and 73.9%, respectively, of people age 20-24 were in the labor force, compared to more than 80% in most other municipalities.

Across the County, 18.1% of people age 65 to 74 were in the labor force. This figure was higher in Indiana Borough (24.8%). Though the Borough is known as a walkable, and an amenity-rich area where seniors desire to live, people age 64 and over appear to be under-represented in its population. Of the 13,744 total people in this age group across the County, 92.4% live outside of the Borough. The Borough's comparatively high unemployment rate is not completely attributable to its student or elderly population.

**Key Findings**

- The County's March 2014 unemployment rate was 5.9%, lower than both statewide and national averages.
- Two-thirds of the total population was in the labor force, though participation was lower in Indiana Borough and White Township due to the student population.

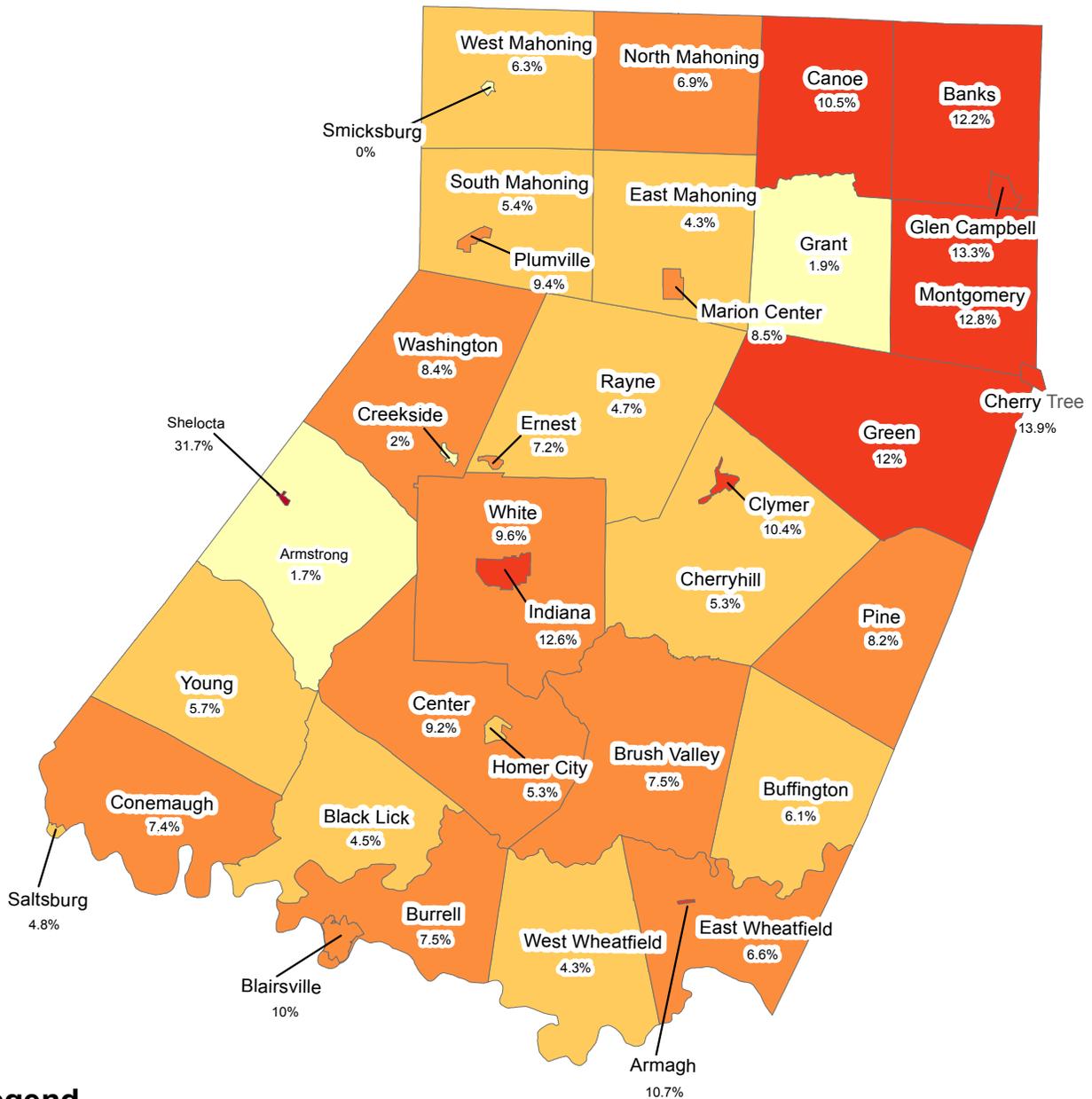
**Employment by Industry**

According to the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), the County's 10 largest employers cover a variety of industries. They range from educational services (Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Indiana Area School District), retail (Wal-Mart and Diamond Drugs), food services (Aramark, which staffs Indiana University of Pennsylvania's dining facilities), health care (Indiana Regional Medical Center), utilities (Genon Energy), mining (Halliburton), construction (Kiewit Power Constructors) to financial services (First Commonwealth Bank).

The CWIA reported that there were 33,100 jobs in Indiana County in late 2012. This represents a decline from 33,390 in 2011. The largest employment sector was retail, a category that accounted for 4,935 jobs or 14.9% of total jobs. This was followed by health care and social assistance, which employed 4,420 (13.4%), and mining, which employed 3,090 (9.3%). Federal government employed the fewest, with 194 persons.

The highest annual average wage belonged by far to the utilities sector, in which 919 employees earned an average of \$101,019. No other sector had an average exceeding \$70,000. By contrast, sectors averaging annual wages below \$25,000 included accommodation and food services, arts/entertainment/recreation, administrative and transportation/warehousing. These four sectors in combination employed 8,603, or 26% of all people working in the County. Details appear in Table 3.

Map 2. Unemployment by Municipality, 2011

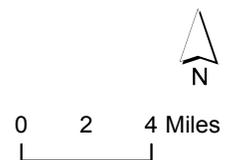


**Legend**

**Unemployment Rate**



Source: ACS 2012  
Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



**Table 3. Annual Wage by Sector, 2011**

Industry Sector	Employers	Employees	Average Wage in 2012
Utilities	13	917	\$101,019
Mining	103	3,090	\$66,741
Professional and technical services	122	731	\$63,048
State government	23	2,541	\$60,795
Management of companies and enterprises	22	712	\$57,214
Construction	174	1,436	\$52,156
Federal government	45	194	\$49,626
Finance and insurance	102	990	\$48,629
Wholesale trade	99	1,023	\$46,286
Information	21	357	\$40,311
Local government	86	2,825	\$39,836
Manufacturing	89	2,352	\$39,738
Educational services	20	294	\$36,805
Health care and social assistance	364	4,420	\$35,467
Other services except public administration	187	1,312	\$34,440
Real estate, rental and leasing	43	227	\$30,952
Transportation and warehousing	55	798	\$28,186
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	26	282	\$25,390
Admin/support, etc	65	733	\$23,821
Retail trade	277	4,935	\$23,557
Arts, entertainment and recreation	22	219	\$13,559
Accommodation and food services	160	2,716	\$11,634
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,116</b>	<b>33,100</b>	<b>\$41,034</b>

Source: Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

**Table 4. Trends in Jobs by Industry, 2001-2011**

Industry	2001	2011	Change	
Educational services	74	436	362	489.2%
Utilities	462	1,225	763	165.2%
Management of companies and enterprises	294	668	374	127.2%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1,309	2,102	793	60.6%
Health care and social assistance	3,345	4,457	1,112	33.2%
Finance and insurance	1,265	1,630	365	28.9%
Construction	1,006	1,157	151	15.0%
Retail trade	4,407	5,066	659	15.0%
Accommodation and food services	2,902	2,907	5	0.2%
Transportation and warehousing	738	738	0	0.0%
Other services (except public administration)	1,140	1,092	-48	-4.2%
Manufacturing	3,117	2,825	-292	-9.4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	268	215	-53	-19.8%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	15	12	-3	-20.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	275	207	-68	-24.7%
Wholesale trade	1,068	726	-342	-32.0%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	1,497	852	-645	-43.1%
Information	1,043	354	-689	-66.1%
Administration, support, etc	2,752	748	-2,004	-72.8%
<b>Total Among Selected Categories</b>	<b>26,977</b>	<b>27,417</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>1.6%</b>

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (C24050)

Table 4 illustrates changes within sectors between 2001 and 2011. It depicts strong gains in utilities, resource extraction, health care and retail balanced by losses in administration, information services and professional, scientific and technical services.

Stakeholders expressed a need to retain and further cultivate jobs that provide a sustainable wage, such as those in manufacturing. The County’s labor force is diverse in skill and experience level. However, it does not always match employer needs. The County’s Technology Center provides vocational courses to address this need. Additionally, Indiana University of Pennsylvania aims to fit the labor market to the job climate through its Sustainable Natural Resources Development Initiative, which has explored how the University can meet the educational and research needs of the energy industry.

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission projects that fewer Indiana County workers will be employed in the retail, manufacturing,

and service sectors by 2040 as additional other types of jobs increase in availability. The state DLI combines statistical data with regional expert input to annually estimate “high-priority occupations”. These occupations are in demand by employers, require higher skill levels and are likely to provide family-sustaining wages. For the workforce investment area including Armstrong County, Butler County and Indiana County, the 2013 high-priority occupations are listed in the following table. Many are in health care or construction/natural resources.

*Key Findings*

- The largest employment sector across Indiana County’s 33,100 jobs was retail with 4,935 positions (14.9% of total employment) and an annual average wage of \$23,557.
- Truck drivers and registered nurses were identified as high-priority occupations in demand for 2013.

**Table 5. High Priority Occupations, 2013**

Occupation	Occupational Group	Annual Average Wage	Annual Openings
Registered nurses	Healthcare Professionals	\$ 65,000	108
Supervisors for construction trades and extraction workers	Construction/Extraction	\$ 63,610	38
Sales representatives	Sales	\$ 62,840	52
Operating engineers, construction equipment operators	Construction/Extraction	\$ 44,280	72
General maintenance and repair workers	Maintenance/Repair	\$ 39,780	43
Service unit operators, oil, gas and mining	Construction/Extraction	\$ 39,020	40
Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers	Transportation	\$ 38,090	111
Customer service representatives	Office & Administrative Sup	\$ 32,900	67
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	Maintenance/Repair	\$ 31,700	44
Nursing aides, orderlies and attendants	Healthcare Support	\$ 26,170	44
Farmworkers and laborers, nursery, greenhouse	Farming/Forestry	N/A	56
Farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers	Management	N/A	46

Source: Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

## Emerging Industries

The Marcellus Shale play underlies much of Pennsylvania and now contributes substantially to the natural gas supply of the United States. Though Indiana County is within this resource-rich area, the County has seen only relatively modest well production. During the last two years, landowners across the County leased mineral rights to drillers in exchange for bonuses and royalty arrangements. However, market forces have stemmed drillers' work on these properties. Natural gas prices are low, the cost of drilling is high, and there is little incentive to drill. As one industry representative said, "If anyone's going to be drilling, it will be where there's a market to sell gas and where wells have above-average production." There is no underground gas pipeline in Indiana County, and it would be difficult to profitably sell the gas given the oversupply. Additionally, the natural gas in the County is considered to be relatively dry, and does not contain other resources that can be sold as a separate product. Therefore, it is currently less profitable to extract than gas in other locations.

The long-range future of the industry overall and within Indiana County depends on the way the country uses natural gas. If demand raises its current low price of about \$3 per 1,000 cubic feet to \$5 or \$6, local activity would rise. Prices peaked above \$10 per unit in June 2008. Drillers claim that Pennsylvania's environmental regulations are generally more stringent than other "friendlier" states, such as Ohio and West Virginia, which represents a competitive disadvantage.

A substantial portion of current drilling and related work is undertaken by crews with experience. They are shipped into Indiana County from Texas, Oklahoma and other locations. These

crews move on after wells are in production. Two main local service companies (Nabors and Halliburton Energy Services) provide related work, such as service rigs and well testing.

Across the workforce investment area that includes Armstrong County, Butler County and Indiana County, the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis reported that six core Marcellus-related industries added nearly 500 jobs since 2008. This represented an increase of 25% in the six core industries between 2008 and 2011. Core industries are described in Table 6. The Center determined that the region's workforce was generally compatible with industry needs. It identified workforce skill gaps in fossil fuel electric power generation, petrochemical manufacturing, industrial gas manufacturing, engineering services, geophysical surveying and mapping, testing laboratories and natural gas distribution.

### Key Findings

- Market forces have limited Marcellus Shale production in Indiana County, where drilling is comparatively less profitable.
- Marcellus-related industries added 500 jobs since 2008 to the three-County workforce investment area.
- A significant portion of drilling-related work employs highly experienced out-of-state crews who become only temporary residents.

**Table 6. Marcellus Core Industries, 2010**

Core industries	% Skilled Workforce	% of Region's Workforce Compatible
Crude petroleum and natural gas extraction	27.1%	23.7%
Natural gas liquid extraction	26.1%	21.5%
Drilling oil and gas wells	16.7%	25.0%
Support activities for oil and gas operations	16.8%	25.0%
Oil and gas pipeline and related structures co	39.3%	20.6%
Pipeline transportation of natural gas	46.4%	18.0%

Source: Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

## Trends in Income

The median household income for residents of Indiana County in 2011 was \$41,424. Mean earnings for workers was \$54,294, including both full-time and part-time workers. The difference between median and mean earnings was widened because of a relatively small number of extremely high earners. For full-time workers, men earned \$41,743 annually, and women earned \$30,112 annually. Across the County, 10,443 households (30.2%) earned less than \$25,000, 9,676 (28%) earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000 and the remaining 41.8% earned more. About 12% of households earned more than \$100,000 per year. The median income across the County skews low due to the prevalence of student households.

Households headed by someone under age 25 accounted for 11.4% of all households in 2011. The median income for this group was only \$12,731. By contrast, the median for households led by a person between the ages of 25 and 44 was \$50,010. It climbed to \$58,869 for householders age 45 to 64. It fell to \$29,505 for senior households, which comprised 24.7% of the total. A weighted average that subtracts under-25 households suggests that the income across non-student Indiana County residents is closer to \$56,600.

Many Indiana County households rely on fixed income sources. In 2011, 11,583 households (33.5%) received Social Security income averaging \$16,756, and 1,409 households (4.1%) received Supplemental Security Income averaging \$9,027. Slightly more than 8,000 households (23.2%) received retirement income averaging \$16,722. Finally, 3,226 households (9.3%) received food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Indiana County's median household income in 2011 (\$49,246) was lower than the Pittsburgh Metro Area (\$51,651) and the nation (\$52,762).

The median household income for Indiana County households climbed substantially between 2006 and 2011, increasing \$5,145 (14.2%) from an inflation-adjusted \$36,279 to \$41,424. However, the County's 2000 median income adjusted to 2011 dollars was \$39,468. This indicates that the figure declined before rising in the latter part of the last decade. Overall, the adjusted median income has increased 5% since 2000.

Among municipalities in Indiana County, the highest median incomes appeared in Rayne Township (\$64,625), Cherryhill Township (\$55,053), and Armstrong Township (\$54,262). This reflects a large commuter presence along well-connected County corridors. The lowest median, \$21,250 was in Indiana Borough, pulled low by the minimal or non-existent incomes of its large full-time student population. Communities with median incomes around the low \$30,000s include West Mahoning Township and Canoe Township, Clymer Borough, Cherry Tree Borough, Creekside Borough, and Ernest Borough.

### Key Findings

- Indiana County's median household income in 2011 was \$41,424, lower than the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, Pennsylvania and the nation.
- More than 30% of all County households earned less than \$25,000; another 28% earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000.
- Median household income increased 14.2% since 2006 after adjusting for inflation.
- The highest median household incomes among municipalities were found in the commuter communities of Rayne Township, Cherryhill Township, and Armstrong Township.

## Workforce Flows

U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) estimated that 36,637 Indiana County residents were in its labor force as of 2011. This is a figure that significantly exceeds the 33,390 jobs within the same boundary. A net outflow of 3,247 workers each day reveals only some of the extent to which commuting characterizes the local housing market.

LEHD reported that daily, 20,093 people leave Indiana County to work, while 16,846 people from other Counties enter Indiana County for work. The most popular destination for Indiana County commuters is Allegheny County, which attracts 2,155 workers, while 804 travel each day to Butler County and 195 travel to Westmoreland County. Indiana County has a combined net gain of 1,444 commuters each day from Armstrong County, Somerset County and Clearfield County.

Despite the high number of cross-County commuters, the average commute for Indiana County residents is 23.1 minutes. It is shorter than the average for Pennsylvania (25.7 minutes) and the United States (25.4 minutes). About half of workers (18,853, or 52%) spend less

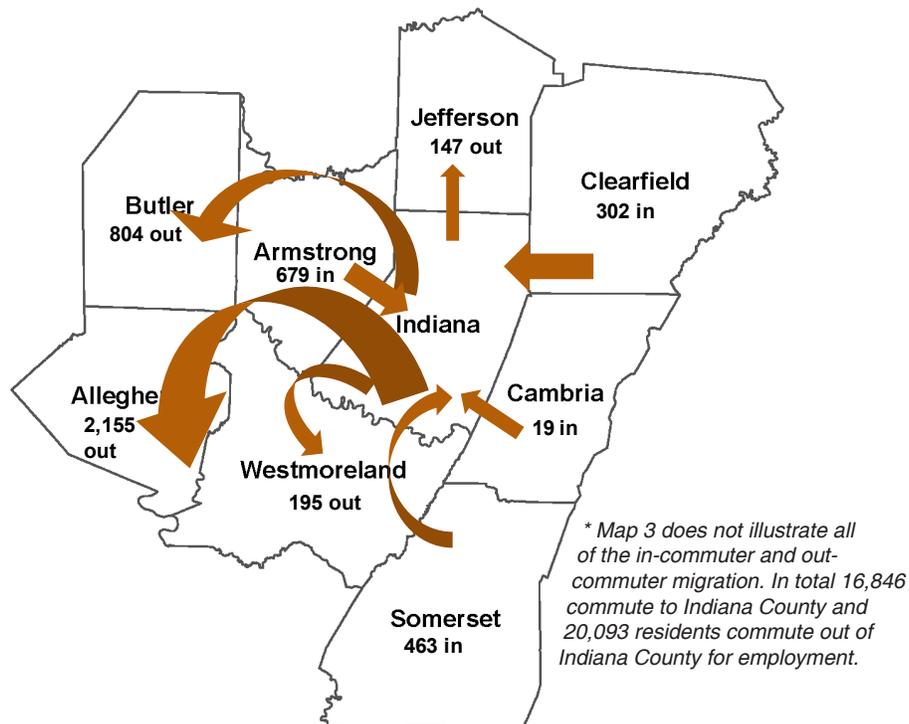
than 20 minutes each day traveling to work. An additional 5,620 (15.5%) spend more than 40 minutes, including 2,778 (7.7%) who travel for more than an hour each way. Driving alone is the predominant means of going to work, used by 79.2% of workers. An additional 9.3% carpooled and 5.7% walked. Only 306 people (0.8%) relied on public transportation, which in Indiana County consists primarily of IndiGO fixed bus routes circulating within Indiana Borough and White Township.

### Key Findings

- Every day, 20,093 people leave Indiana County to work, while 16,846 people from other Counties enter Indiana County for work. This amounts to a net outflow of 3,247 workers each day to other Counties.
- The most popular destination for Indiana County commuters is Allegheny County. The largest net commuter gains come into Indiana County from Armstrong County, Somerset County, and Clearfield County.

### Existing Conditions

**Map 3. Net Commuting Flows, 2011**



Source: Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2011

# Housing Market Implications

- In a trend that defies the norm in many areas of the region, the median income among Indiana County residents increased between 2000 and 2011, even after adjustment for inflation. Median income grew significantly between 2006 and 2011 in spite of the concurrent national recession. However, as explained in a later section of this Plan, housing costs grew even more rapidly, diminishing the relative purchase power of both renters and owners.
- More than 20,000 workers (54.8% of the labor force) leave Indiana County each day to work in surrounding areas, while 16,846 workers from other Counties commute into Indiana County. The County functions as both a relatively attractive place to live for those with jobs elsewhere as well as a job magnet for those living elsewhere. Commuters from other Counties represent households that the County's housing market could position itself to attract.
- Due to national and regional market forces, Marcellus Shale well drilling has tapered in Indiana County. Stakeholders report that the industry currently has little impact on the housing market, affordable or otherwise. However, state figures claim that hundreds of shale-related jobs have been added to the three-County region since 2008, and the cyclical nature of the industry holds promise for its future prospects in Indiana County. Capitalizing on the economic benefits of the industry will require addressing the workforce skill gaps identified in this Plan.

**Existing Conditions**

# Population Profile



## Population Trends

Southwestern Pennsylvania lost residents despite a 3% gain in total population across the state between 2000 and 2011. Indiana County's loss of 0.7% of its population during this period represents a smaller loss than in adjacent Counties, as shown in Table 7. Within Indiana County, Shelocta Borough gained the most population by percentage increasing 34.6%. This was followed by gains in West Mahoning Township (26.1%), Burrell Township (14.8%), and Montgomery Township (1.3%). White Township had the largest numerical gain in population adding 1,564 persons.

Four of Indiana County's nine small Boroughs, with a population under 500, experienced the County's largest population decreases by percentage. Armagh Borough, Glen Campbell Borough, Ernest Borough, and Smicksburg Borough lost between 23.2% and 43.5% of their residents. Indiana County's small Boroughs collectively lost 349 persons (-13.1%), decreasing from 2,673 to 2,324. The County's larger Boroughs, with the exception of Homer City, also lost a significant amount of population. 984 (-4.3%) individuals left these municipalities. Population loss also occurred in the County's northern tier. Population decreased in this area from 11,776 to 11,373 (-3.4%).

**Table 7. Change in Population, 2000-2011**

County	Population Change 2000-2011
Allegheny	-4.5%
Armstrong	-4.4%
Cambria	-5.3%
Clearfield	-1.7%
<b>Indiana</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>
Jefferson	-1.7%
Westmoreland	-1.2%

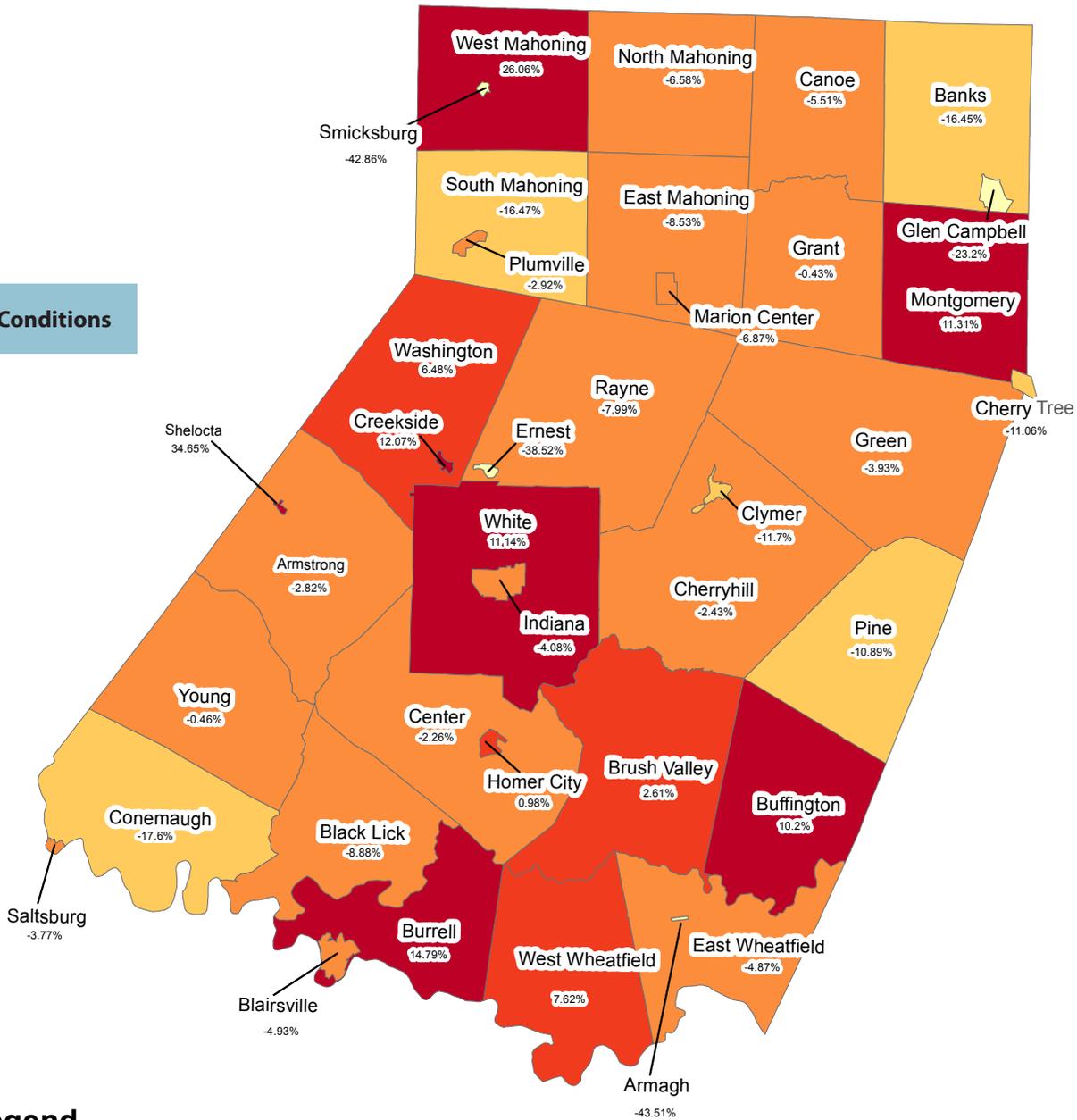
Source: 2000 Census (P001) & ACS 2007-2011 (B01003)

### Key Findings

- Indiana County lost less than 1% of its population between 2000 and 2011. The rate of loss was higher in surrounding Counties.
- Small Boroughs lost 13.1% of their combined population, while large Boroughs lost 4.3%.
- The northern tier municipalities lost 3.4% of their total population.

Map 4. Population change, 2000-2011

Existing Conditions



**Legend**

**Population Change, 2000 - 2012**

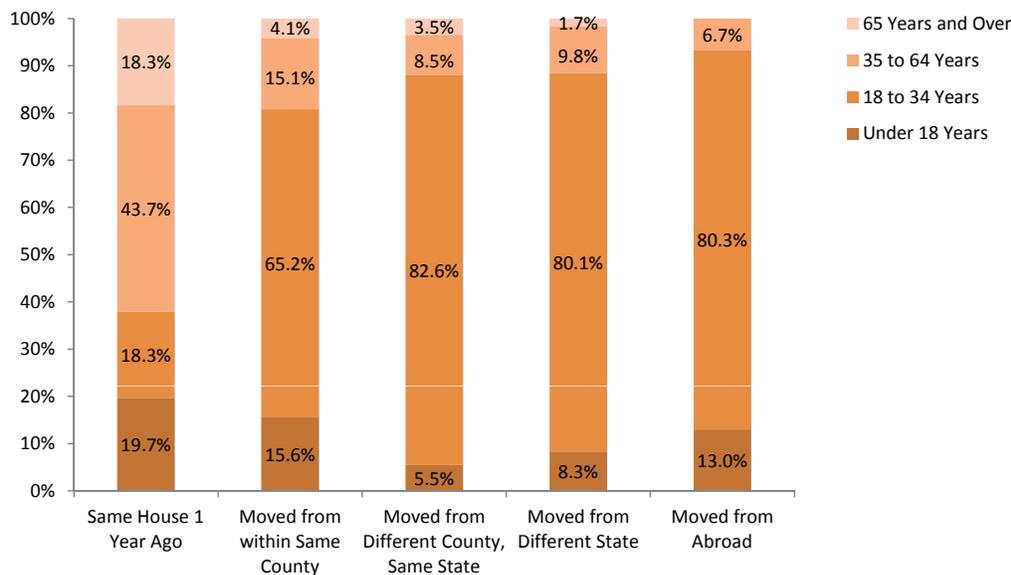
- Loss of More Than 20%
- Loss of 10% to 20%
- Loss of up to 10%
- Gain of up to 10%
- Gain of More Than 10%

Source: ACS 2012  
Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



**Table 8. Migration Patterns by Age, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B07001)



## Migration Trends

In 2011, 81.7% of Indiana County residents resided in the same house as they did in the previous year. Another 9.3% of residents lived in a different dwelling unit within the County. Table 8 and 9 illustrates the percentages of where residents lived a year ago.

Because of Indiana Borough’s large student population, only 47.1% of current residents lived in the same dwelling unit a year ago. This was the lowest percentage among municipalities in Indiana County. Additionally, the Borough had the largest percentage of residents living in another dwelling unit from the previous year within Indiana County, within a different County in Pennsylvania, within another state, and within another country. Again, this is reflective of the Borough’s large transient student population.

Burrell Township was the only other municipality where the percentage of residents living in the same dwelling unit a year ago (74.2%) was below the County average of 81.7%. This is largely the result of many Wyotech students residing in the Township.

Those between 35-64 years of age represented 43.7% of all residents who remained in their homes from a year ago. This was followed by elderly residents (65 or older) representing 18.3%

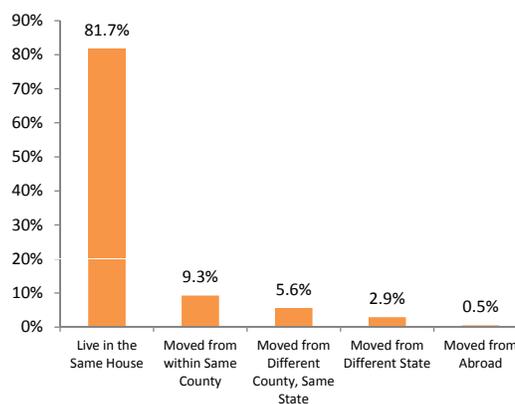
of households that remained in their homes. Young adults between 18-34 years of age were by far the most transient age group. It is clear from these migration patterns that the majority of the County’s newer residents were young adults and students between the ages of 18 and 34.

### Key Findings

- 87.1% of County residents lived in the same house as the previous year.
- The majority of in-migration to the County occurred among young adults between 18-34 years of age, and they were primarily college students.

**Table 9. Migration Patterns, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B07001)



## Trends in Age

The County's large student population between 20-24 years comprised the largest age group at 11.8% of the County's population. This was closely followed by persons between 15-19 years at 10%. However, in terms of impacts on the market, the baby boomer "bulge" continues to have the greatest impact on housing since most baby boomers are aging in place as opposed to the majority of students who are leaving the County after graduation.

In 2000, the baby boomer "bulge" included persons between 35-59 years, and represented 32.4% of the County's population. In 2011, this group included persons between 45-69 years, and represented 30.9% of the population.

Consistent with the "bulge", the largest age increases between 2000 and 2011 occurred among persons between 50 to 69 years. Large increases also occurred among persons 85 years and older. Corresponding decreases occurred among persons 30 to 44 years.

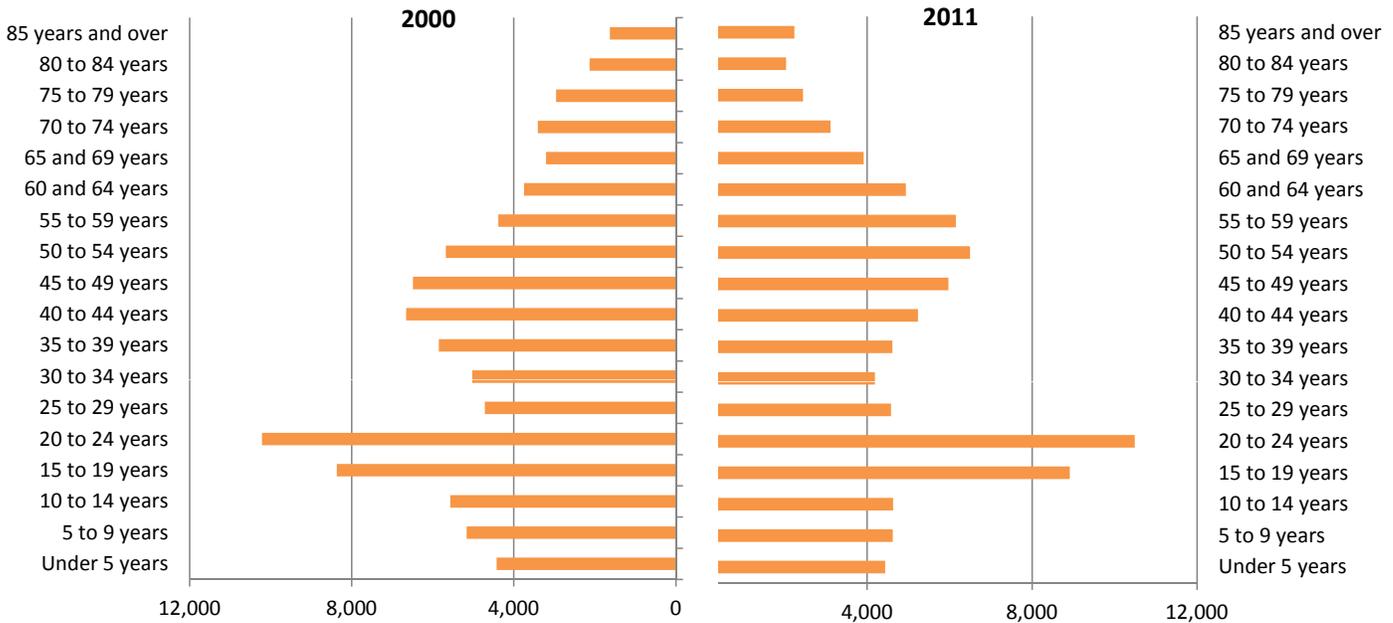
### Key Findings

- Persons between the age of 20-24 years comprise the County's largest age group.
- The baby boomer "bulge" evident in the population pyramid illustrates an aging demographic that will drive demand for certain types of housing products and amenities.

### Existing Conditions

**Table 10. Age Trends, 2000-2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B01003)



## Race/Ethnicity

Indiana County is predominantly racially and ethnically homogenous, as 94.9% of residents in 2011 were White. Recent trends indicate increasing diversity. Between 2000 and 2011, minorities increased from 3.1% to 5.1% of the County's population. Blacks increased 1.6% to 2.6%, Hispanics increased 0.5% to 1.1%, and Asians increased 0.9% to 1.1%. In 2011, Indiana Borough was the only municipality with a minority population (13%) over 10%. White Township had the second highest minority percentage at 8.6%.

The largest Black populations were located in Indiana Borough at 8.1%, White Township at 5%, Burrell Township at 4.3%, and Blairsville Borough at 3%. Indiana Borough and White Township also had the largest Asian populations at 2.4% and 2.2%, respectively. Both Green Township and Ernest Borough had Hispanic populations representing approximately 4% of their totals. Cherry Tree Borough had the highest Hispanic share with 14%.

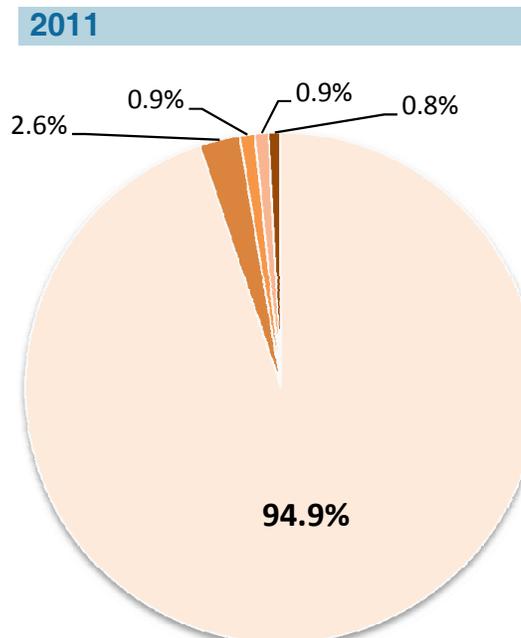
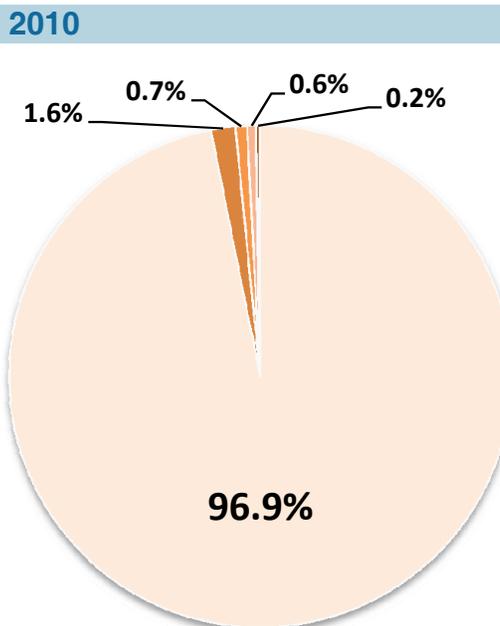
### Key Findings

- Indiana County is 94.9% White, but trends show racial/ethnic diversity increasing.
- Indiana Borough had the largest percentage of minorities of any municipality in the County due to a student population that is more diverse than the total population.

**Table 11. Race & Ethnicity, 2000 and 2011**

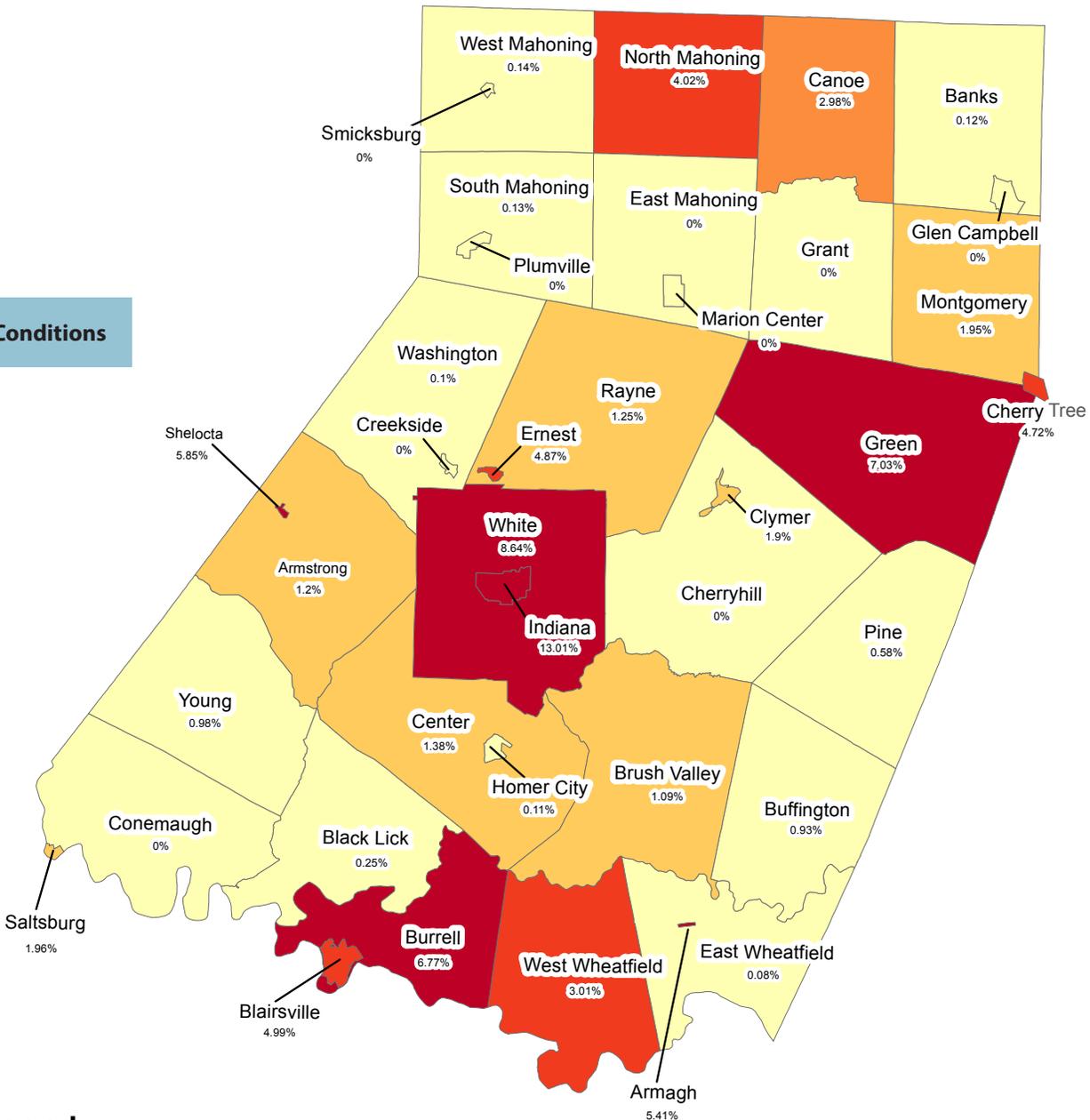
Sources: 2000 Census QT-P3, ACS 2007-2011 (B02001 & B03003)

- White
- Asian
- Some other race
- Black or African American
- Two or more races



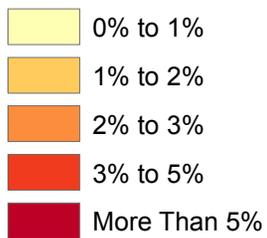
Map 5. Non-White Population, 2011

Existing Conditions



Legend

Percent Non-White



Source: ACS 2012  
Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



## Household Type and Size

Slightly more than half of all households (52.3%) in Indiana County are married couples. 33.3% of all married-couple households have children. Non-family households represent 35.7% of the County's households and were the second largest group. The average household size in the County is 2.41 persons. With the exception of two municipalities, household size is between 2.13 and 2.85 persons. The two outliers include West Mahoning Township (3.85), mostly due to its large Amish population, and Smicksburg Borough (1.65). These household characteristics coincide with respective age characteristics for these two municipalities. 49.3% of West Mahoning Township's population is under 20 years of age, and 64.3% of Smicksburg Borough's population is older than 65 years of age.

### Key Findings

- Just over half the households in Indiana County are married couples.
- The average household size is 2.41.

## Educational Attainment

Of County residents over 25 years of age, 45.1% completed their education with a high school or general equivalency degree. Compared to statewide averages, Indiana County had a lower rate of residents having completed some college or an associate/bachelor's degree. This is related to the large number of students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania working on degrees. The County had a higher rate of residents with a masters, professional, or doctorate degree. This is likely related to its higher education institutions.

### Key Findings

- Educational attainment is low in Indiana County compared to statewide averages, with the exception of post-secondary degrees among Indiana University of Pennsylvania and WyoTech professors and instructors.

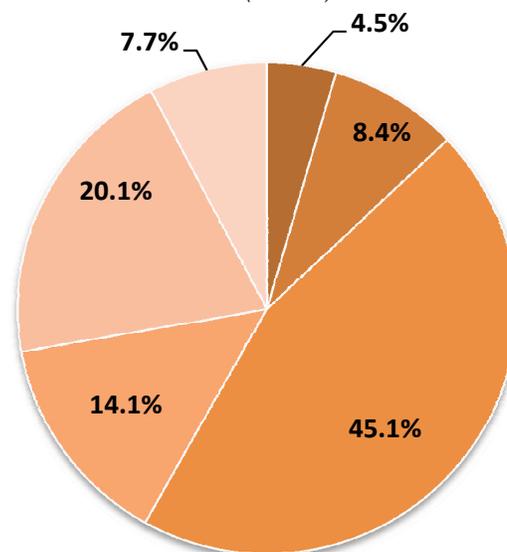
**Table 12. Household Type, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (S1101)

	Number	Percent of Total
Total	34558	100.0%
With Own Children under 18 Years	8173	23.7%
Married-couple family household	18071	52.3%
With Own Children under 18 Years	6017	17.4%
Male householder, no wife present, family household	1209	3.5%
With Own Children under 18 Years	547	1.6%
Female householder, no husband present, family household	2943	8.5%
With Own Children under 18 Years	1609	4.7%
Nonfamily household	12335	35.7%

**Table 13. Educational Attainment, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B15002)



- Less than 9th Grade
- 9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma
- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- Some College, No Degree
- Associate's or Bachelor's Degree
- Master's, Professional, or Doctorate Degree

## Special Needs Populations

The provision of services to special needs populations across Indiana County is highly fragmented, according to stakeholders. Sufficient coordination is often missing among the multiple non-profit, governmental and private agencies involved in the provision of such services. Recent efforts highlight a will to better coordinate. For example, eight agencies and churches shared a spreadsheet in Fall 2013 to streamline and document the provision of housing, clothing, and food to those in need. The goals were to avoid fraud and duplication of services and improve communication and service efficiencies among human service providers. In addition to coordinating service delivery, another Countywide challenge is the provision of special needs services to those residing in rural areas. Transportation options and volunteers available to reach these areas are limited. The following section describes priority special needs populations in the County, their particular housing issues and related services available.

### Elderly

Public and stakeholder outreach revealed the most pressing needs for Indiana County's elderly households to be helping seniors remain in their homes, providing more affordable senior housing options, and constructing more senior-appropriate housing for elderly households without special needs.

Multiple sources identified the need for more services that help keep seniors within their homes. For instance, many 211 referral service calls requested such services. The Livable Communities Assessment Survey completed in April 2013 by the Indiana County Aging Services Incorporated surveyed seniors in Indiana Borough and White Township. The survey identified the most important neighborhood services for seniors to include home repair, senior centers, and housekeeping.

The Survey also found the need to create a senior housing counseling program to help older adults evaluate their needs for home repair, modification, and weatherization. Providing accommodations that allow seniors to age in place can cater to their preferences, and can also prove cost-effective in the long term, as

the alternative of institutionalization is far more expensive.

Various programs across the County address this need. A collaboration between the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development (ICOPD) and Aging Services Incorporated created the Senior Repair Pilot Program for furnace and roof repair. The Program began in October 2013 and has allocated \$120,000 to date, including \$95,000 from Aging Services Inc. and \$25,000 in Act 137 funds from the ICOPD. Aging Services Inc. also provides home-care services, and the Indiana County Housing Authority reserves units for low-income seniors. The need to assist lower-income seniors to independently age in place persists, according to both stakeholders and secondary data such as surveys and the 211 records. It is likely to grow in accordance with the aging of the County's baby boomer generation.

According to the "Speak Up" survey conducted in 2012 by United Way to document human service needs in Indiana County, 64% of 963 respondents considered the provision of affordable housing to be a high priority. The need holds especially true for fixed-income households, which includes many senior households. Demand exists for more affordable housing options for seniors, as demonstrated by waiting lists at subsidized housing developments targeting this population. The lists are longest at sites with proximity to amenities such as grocery stores and medical care. Realtors interviewed for this report described the type of housing unit demanded by senior citizens. It is one that is close to amenities, modest in size, and easy to manage. Housing with limited maintenance, such as patio homes and single-floor condominiums, are particularly desirable. Local examples of this type of product include the Restin development and senior housing developments completed by Lazor Brothers, Inc.

### Homeless

According to the 2012 Housing Inventory Chart for Indiana County, 19 beds were available for rapid rehousing, 31 beds for transitional housing (19 reserved for individuals and 12 for families), 22 beds for emergency shelter (12 reserved for individuals and 10 for families), and five beds for permanent supportive housing. An additional with five are to be built. For the period of

July through September 2013, the Homeless Assistance Program for the County reported that 85 individuals received rental assistance, 58 received case management services, and 42 received emergency housing assistance. 101 unduplicated adults and 44 children in total received assistance. This data source was determined to be more reliable than the Point in Time survey, which covers several counties that belong to the Southwest Regional Housing Advisory Board (SW RHAB). Human service stakeholders reported there are approximately 200 homeless persons across the County. Many are “nearly homeless”. They are individuals who do not have any housing of their own and instead rely on friends and family for temporary housing. The number of homeless persons has remained steady across the County in recent years, though enumeration is made difficult by the extent to which homelessness is hidden by people finding temporary options.

Human service stakeholders described the greatest needs related to homelessness not as more shelters or services. They are permanent housing for those with criminal backgrounds and services to individuals “aging out” of foster care. It is very difficult for those with criminal backgrounds to obtain housing because criminal history is not a protected class. Landlords and the Housing Authority of Indiana County (HAIC) may legally deny such persons housing. In such cases, these people often rely on “friendly” landlords, Oxford Homes, and the Armstrong/Indiana County Behavioral and Developmental Health Program to provide permanent housing. These helpful channels lack the capacity to meet the full demand. Many foster care children who “age out” of the foster care system are in need of basic skills to function and thrive outside of the foster care system. Many do not receive these skills and as a result become homeless.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

12,128 (13.8%) of County residents reported a disability in 2011, compared to 13.1% of residents in Pennsylvania and 12% nationwide. For County residents over 65 years of age, 40.1% reported a disability, compared to 35.6% in Pennsylvania and 36.8% nationwide. Persons over five years of age with mobility disabilities included 7.7% of the County population and 25.8% of those over 65 years of age. Those over five years of age with cognitive disabilities

included 5.4% of the County population and 9% of those over 65 years of age. The rates of persons with cognitive and mobility disabilities within Indiana County were generally higher than in Pennsylvania and the United States across age categories. The County’s median age of 38.2 in 2012 was younger than the State median, 40.1, though it was greater than the national median, 37.2. Therefore, the relative prevalence of people with disabilities is not solely related to the age of the County’s population. It could also be correlated with the density and quality of services and amenities offered in and around Indiana Borough, where people with disabilities are geographically concentrated.

Not everyone with a physical or cognitive disability requires supportive housing. Physical accessibility modifications or other adaptations are required in some cases to meet individual needs. The age of the County’s housing stock and the area’s generally hilly topography combine to leave few homes readily accessible to people with mobility disabilities. Census data has demonstrated that the incomes of people with disabilities are often substantially lower than those without disabilities. To improve suitable housing options available for lower-income households, the County has invested federal grant awards to provide accessibility modifications to homeowners. County staff members have had no trouble finding eligible households to assist, as the demand for this program is great.

There is also a need for accessible features among people who are older and have trouble with steps, although they may not be necessarily disabled.

Overall, the need for affordable, accessible options persists. One stakeholder reported that some nursing home residents stay only because they cannot find other accessible accommodations. Another cited waiting lists for “all the programs I know of” serving people with disabilities.

Preliminary talks have explored the possibility of forming a lead agency to participate in HUD’s Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program. The Program could provide funding to develop and subsidize rental housing with the availability of supportive services for very low-income and extremely low-income adults with disabilities. The specific benefit of this approach is its provision of operating support as well as bricks and mortar.

**Veterans**

Approximately 8,000 veterans live in Indiana County. Stakeholders indicated that their housing needs are being largely met through current systems. The exception is an outstanding need for shelter and longer-term housing for homeless female veterans, and especially those with children.

**Victims of Domestic Violence**

The Alice Paul House and Family Promise provide housing options for victims of domestic violence in Indiana County. The Alice Paul House is an emergency shelter for women that can also house families. Family Promise provides transitional housing. There were vacancies in both of these houses in 2013. This could suggest that capacity exists to meet current needs. The 2012 “Speak Up” survey placed a very high priority on services for domestic violence/abuse victims.

*Key Findings*

- The provision of services to special needs populations is highly fragmented across the County.
- The need most commonly cited for the County’s elderly population is services that would assist people to age in place.
- Stakeholders report a strong continued demand for accessible and affordable housing options for people with disabilities. These range from minor modifications to homeowner dwellings to accessible rental housing with a supportive services component.
- Though the number of homeless people identified across the County has remained substantially unchanged in recent years, enumeration has been made difficult by homeless people who turn to “invisible” temporary options such as doubling-up or couch-surfing with others.
- There is a need for permanent housing for foster children “aging-out” of the foster care system, and for those with criminal backgrounds.

## Housing Market Implications

- Population loss in the County has been less severe than in adjacent Counties, which speaks to stability currently anchored by higher education institutions. In a related trend, the majority of out-migration from Indiana County comprises young adults age 18 to 34 years. Rebuilding the County's population could be approached through efforts to retain graduating students, which would require ensuring that housing stock is available to meet the preferences of young families and the creation of jobs.
- The aging of the County's population will impact its workforce, school enrollment patterns, and housing needs. The baby boomer "bulge," loosely capturing persons now ages 45 to 69, represented 30.9% of the total population in 2011. As this generation enters retirement, the demand for maintenance-light housing options, home care services and home repairs will increase.
- A sustained unmet need for accessible affordable housing among County residents with disabilities calls for the creation of further housing options.

**Existing Conditions**

# Housing Profile



## Inventory

The number of housing units overall in Indiana County expanded from 37,250 to 38,222 units between 2000 and 2011, an increase of 2.6%. Gains and losses varied significantly among municipalities across the County, revealing the following patterns that reflect the housing market factors discussed later in this section:

- The largest numerical housing unit gains occurred in White Township and Indiana Borough. Gains in these combined municipalities added 788 units to the County's total, and comprised 42.7% of all housing units added in the County.
- Many of the municipalities in the southwestern section of the County experienced increases in housing units.
- With the exception of Indiana Borough and Saltsburg Borough, larger Boroughs (populated by at least 500 people) lost housing units.

Overall, 15 of the County's 38 municipalities experienced housing unit gains at a rate that outpaced the Countywide rate of 2.6%. The largest growth by percentage occurred in Shelocta Borough, where total housing units grew 30.9%. This represented a change from only 55 units to 72. Relatively rapid growth also occurred in Burrell Township and West Mahoning Township, where total housing units rose 21.8% and 21.7%, respectively. Additionally, units increased 9% in Montgomery Township and 8.5% in Indiana Borough.

White Township and Indiana Borough experienced the largest numerical increases through adding 493 and 433 housing units, respectively. This reflects an uptick in student housing construction largely in response to plans of Indiana University of Pennsylvania to overhaul its on-campus housing. White Township is absent zoning regulations and property taxes, and became comparatively attractive for builders of student apartments and townhouses. In efforts to attract student renters, developers often included recreational and other amenities that are not

available to renters of aging off-campus homes in Indiana Borough. Other relatively strong gains between 2000 and 2011 occurred in Burrell Township, where 355 housing units were added, and were largely due to student increases at WyoTech, and in West Wheatfield Township and West Mahoning Township, where 82 and 74 units were added, respectively.

Vacancy rates are an important indicator of housing supply and demand. A low rate of vacant for-sale units can show a lack of supply that may make homes less affordable. Indiana County's homeowner vacancy rate of 0.6% in 2011 represented a decrease from 0.9% in 2008. As of 2011, Indiana County's homeowner vacancy rate was significantly lower than rates within the Pittsburgh Metro (2.1%) and across Pennsylvania (1.8%). However, even given the relatively tight market indicated by a low vacancy rate, home prices remain relatively low throughout the County.

The County's rental vacancy rate was 5.4% in 2011. This was also lower than rental vacancy across the Pittsburgh Metro and Pennsylvania, both of which were 6.5%. Since 2008, vacancy rates have decreased by 3%. This shows an

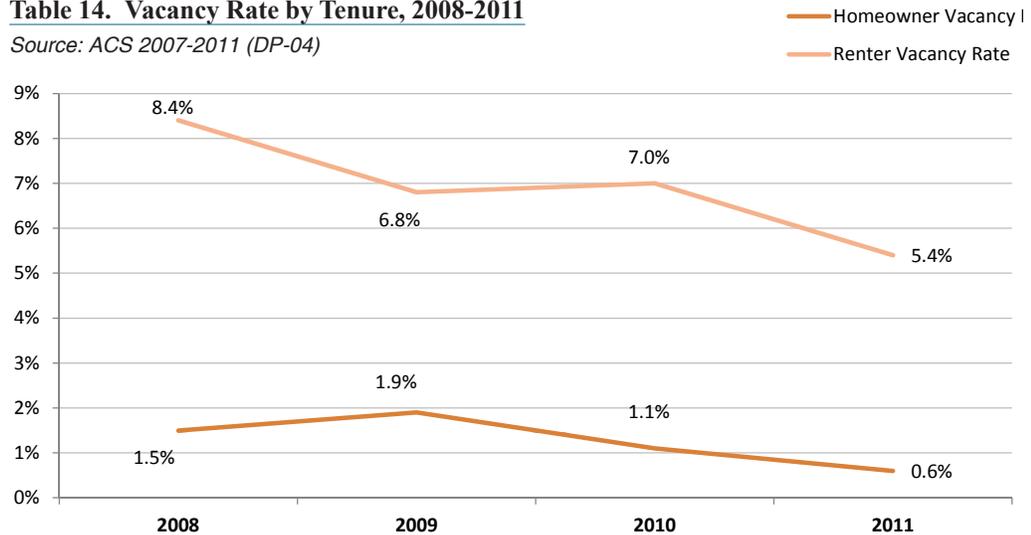
increasingly competitive rental market, a fact supported later in this section by increased rental prices and demonstrated in the market by new rental construction.

*Key Findings*

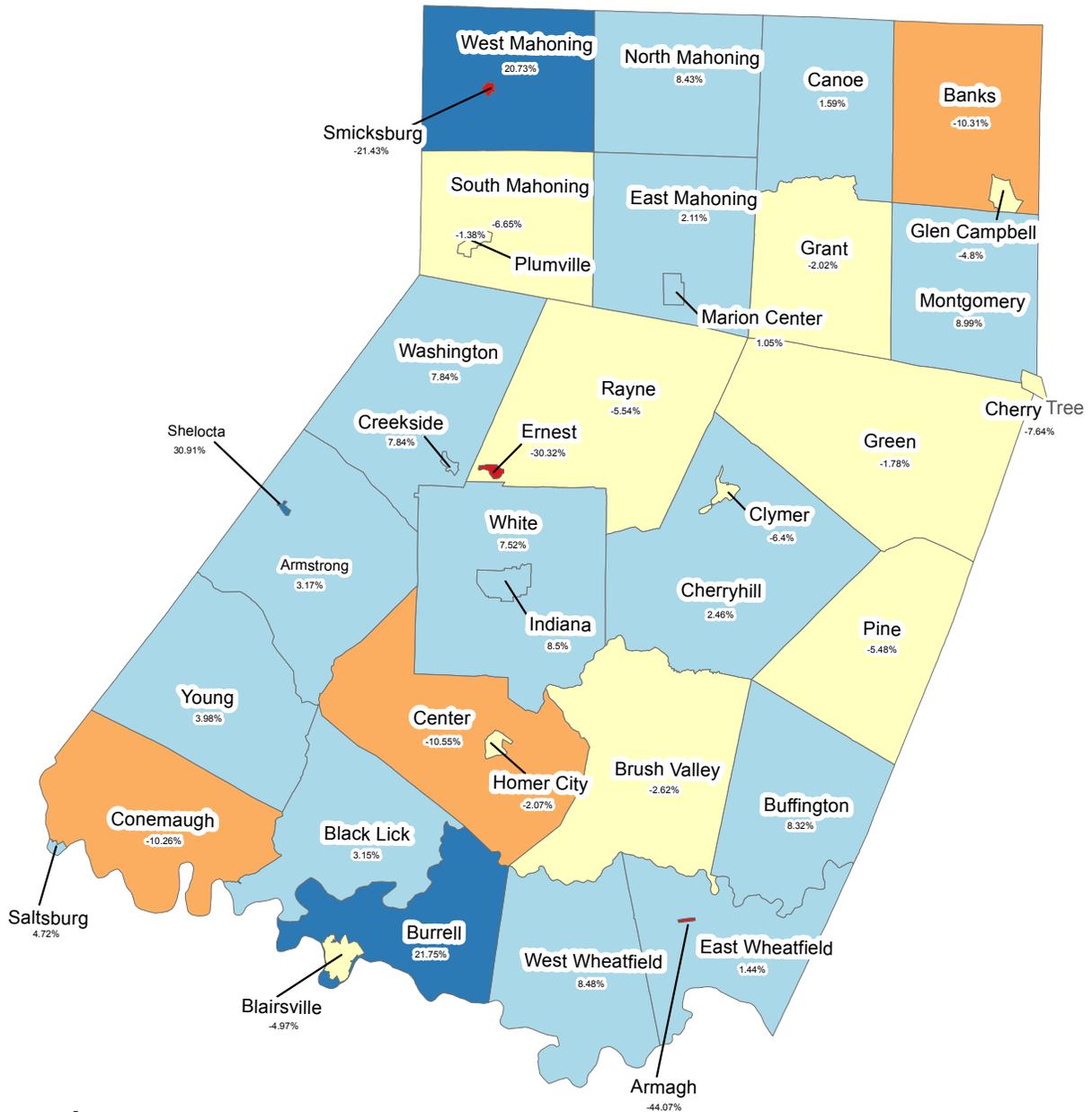
- Though the County experienced population loss between 2000 and 2011, total housing units grew 2.6%, a phenomenon consistent with urban sprawl.
- The largest numerical gains in housing units occurred in White Township and Indiana Borough, and were in developments related to student rental housing.
- The vacancy rate among owner units was only 0.6% in 2011, which indicates a tight market. However, realtors did not see a translation of this market pressure in home prices, which remain comparatively low.
- The 5.4% vacancy rate among rentals in 2011, especially in comparison to higher rates in 2008, indicates a tightening market also seen in rising prices.

**Table 14. Vacancy Rate by Tenure, 2008-2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (DP-04)



**Map 6. Changes in Housing Units, 2000-2011**



**Legend**

**Change in Housing Units, 2000 - 2012**

- Loss of More Than 20%
- Loss of 10% to 20%
- Loss of Up to 10%
- Gain of Up to 10%
- Gain of More than 10%

Source: ACS 2012  
 Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



## Housing Units by Tenure

The majority of housing units in 2011 across Indiana County (69.2%) were single-family detached units, and only 2.4% were single-family attached units. Multi-family units comprised 16.1% of all units, and mobile homes comprised 12.5%.

The high percentage of single-family detached units and mobile homes reflects the rural character of the County. Multi-family units were concentrated in the more urban sections of the County. They were in Indiana Borough, White Township, Blairsville Borough, Burrell Township and Saltsburg Borough. Some smaller Boroughs also had high percentages of multi-family units. Multi-family percentages were above 10% in Cherry Tree Borough, Shelocta Borough, Creekside Borough, and Marion Center Borough. Mobile homes were predominantly located in rural Townships and comprised a large percentage of all housing units in some areas. For instance, 26.9% of all housing units in Armstrong Township and 26.6% of all units in West Wheatfield Township were mobile homes.

### Existing Conditions

Between 2000 and 2011, the number of renter-occupied housing units across the County increased by 644 (6.7%), while owner-occupied units decreased by 209 (-0.9%). As a percentage of total housing units, owner-occupied comprised 70.2% and rentals occupied 29.8% in 2011.

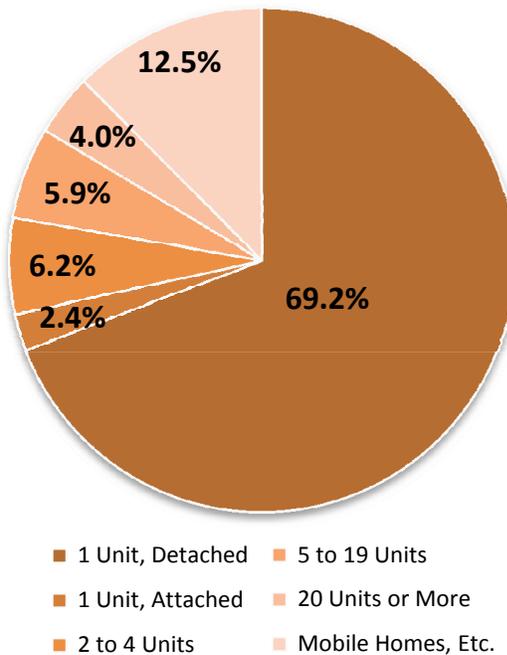
Aside from rental construction, the increase in renter-occupied units reflects the conversion of previously owner-occupied housing for use as rental property. Between 2002 and 2012 1,812 housing units were constructed including 979 single-family units and 833 multi-family units. Of the total single-family construction 71.5% occurred between 2002 and 2007 while 55% of all multi-family construction occurred after 2007. This trend indicates increasing demand for multi-family and rental units, and a decreasing demand for single-family units.

### Key Findings

- 69.2% of all housing units in the County were single-family detached units.
- Multi-family units were concentrated in the more urban municipalities of Indiana Borough, White Township and Blairsville Borough.

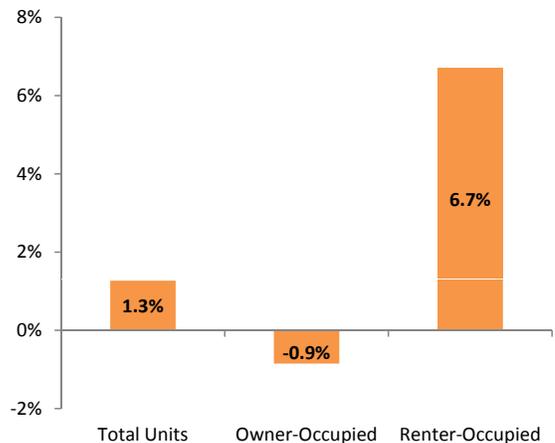
**Table 15. Units in Structure, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B25024)



**Table 16. Changes in Occupied Units, 2000-2011**

Source: 2000 Census (DP-1) & ACS 2007-2011 (DP04)



# Rental Housing

## Trends in Market-Rate Prices and Units

Rental housing became less affordable in Indiana County between 2000 and 2011, as increases in housing costs outpaced increases in median household income (MHI). The inflation-adjusted MHI across the County climbed 4.9%, while the median housing value rose 9.2% and median rent rose even more steeply, by 14%. Additionally, the number of units renting below \$500 per month decreased by 3,119 (54.4%), and the number renting above \$1,000 increased by 1,067 units (506%).

White Township and Indiana Borough lost the greatest number of units renting below \$500 per month, and gained the greatest number of units renting for more than \$1,000 per month. This is due to increasing demand for rental properties. The communities lost almost 2,000 units renting at the lower end and gained 636 units renting at the upper end. The number of sub-\$500 rentals in Armstrong Township fell from 106 to 14. In 2000, there were only five rental units in Burrell Township priced above \$1,000 per month, compared to 212 in 2011.

In response to an influx of supply in the rental market, rental vacancies declined from 6.8% to

5.4% between 2009 and 2011. The tightening rental market and added competitive pressure of desirable features and amenities in newly constructed units drove the increase in rent prices during the last decade.

All County municipalities where rental units accounted for at least 25% of all housing were Boroughs. Municipalities where rental housing constituted less than 25% of the market were rural Townships and small Boroughs. Indiana Borough had the largest number of rental units (3,044) of any municipality, with rentals comprising 67.2% of its total stock. As of 2011, 2,437 rentals constituted 36.5% of the stock in White Township, including the addition of 317 units between 2000 and 2011. The 15% growth in rental units in White Township exceeded rental market growth in all other municipalities.

Increases in rental units also occurred in many of the northern tier communities. Numbers were greater in West Mahoning Township, Montgomery Township, and Canoe Township. Overall, 64 rental units were added in these areas between 2000 and 2011, though the total number of rentals remains limited. West Wheatfield Township, East Mahoning Township, and Banks Township were among communities with the lowest rental share of total housing. The share was between 7% and 10%.

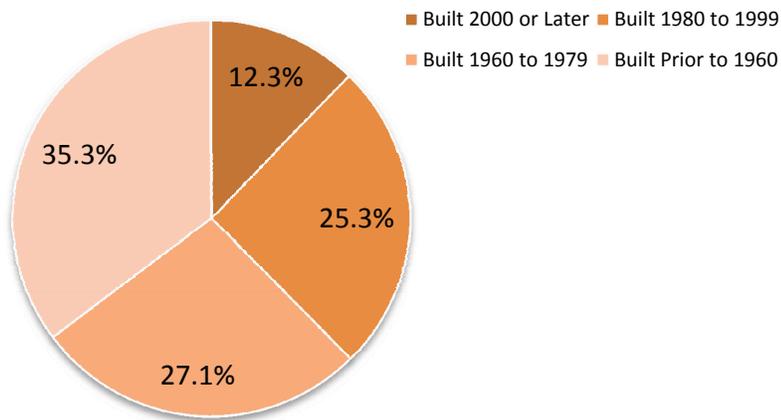
**Table 17. Changes in Housing Prices and Median Household Income, 2000-2011**

*Sources: 2000 Census (Sf-3, H76, H63, P53), ACS 2007-2011 (B25077, B25061, B19013)*

	2000	2011	Change
Median Gross Rent	\$557	\$635	14.0%
Median Housing Value	\$94,966	\$103,700	9.2%
Median Household Income	\$39,492	\$41,424	4.9%

**Table 18. Age of Rental Units, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B25036)



**Existing Conditions**

Indiana County’s rental housing stock is relatively new, compared to Statewide figures, as only 35.3% of rental units in the County were constructed prior to 1960, compared to 63.6% Statewide. This translates to a rental housing stock that requires less repairs and maintenance.

Only 7% and 7.9% of rental units in White Township and Burrell Township, respectively, were built before 1960. On the other hand, the rental stock in a number of smaller Boroughs, such as Armagh Borough and Smicksburg Borough, were built almost entirely prior to 1960. Approximately 60% of rental units in some of the County’s larger municipalities, including Center Township, East Wheatfield Township, Pine Township, and Young Township, were constructed more than 53 years ago.

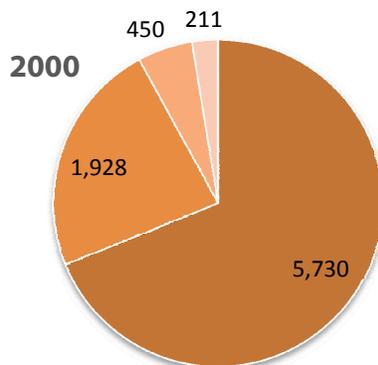
**Key Findings**

- Total rental units increased by 644 (6.7%) across the County between 2000 and 2011.
- Rental housing became less affordable as rent prices handily outpaced gains in median household income between 2000 and 2011. More than 3,000 units renting below \$500 per month were lost from the inventory, while more than 1,000 units priced above \$1,000 per month were added.
- Only 35.3% of the County’s rental housing stock was constructed before 1960, compared to 63.6% Statewide.

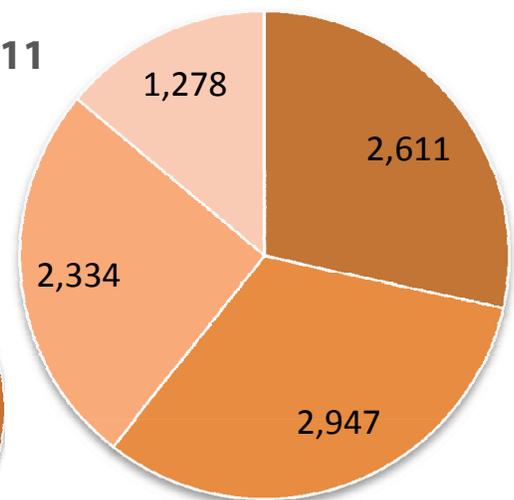
**Table 19. Gross Rent, 2000 and 2011**

Sources: 2000 Census (H062), ACS 2007-2011 (B25063)

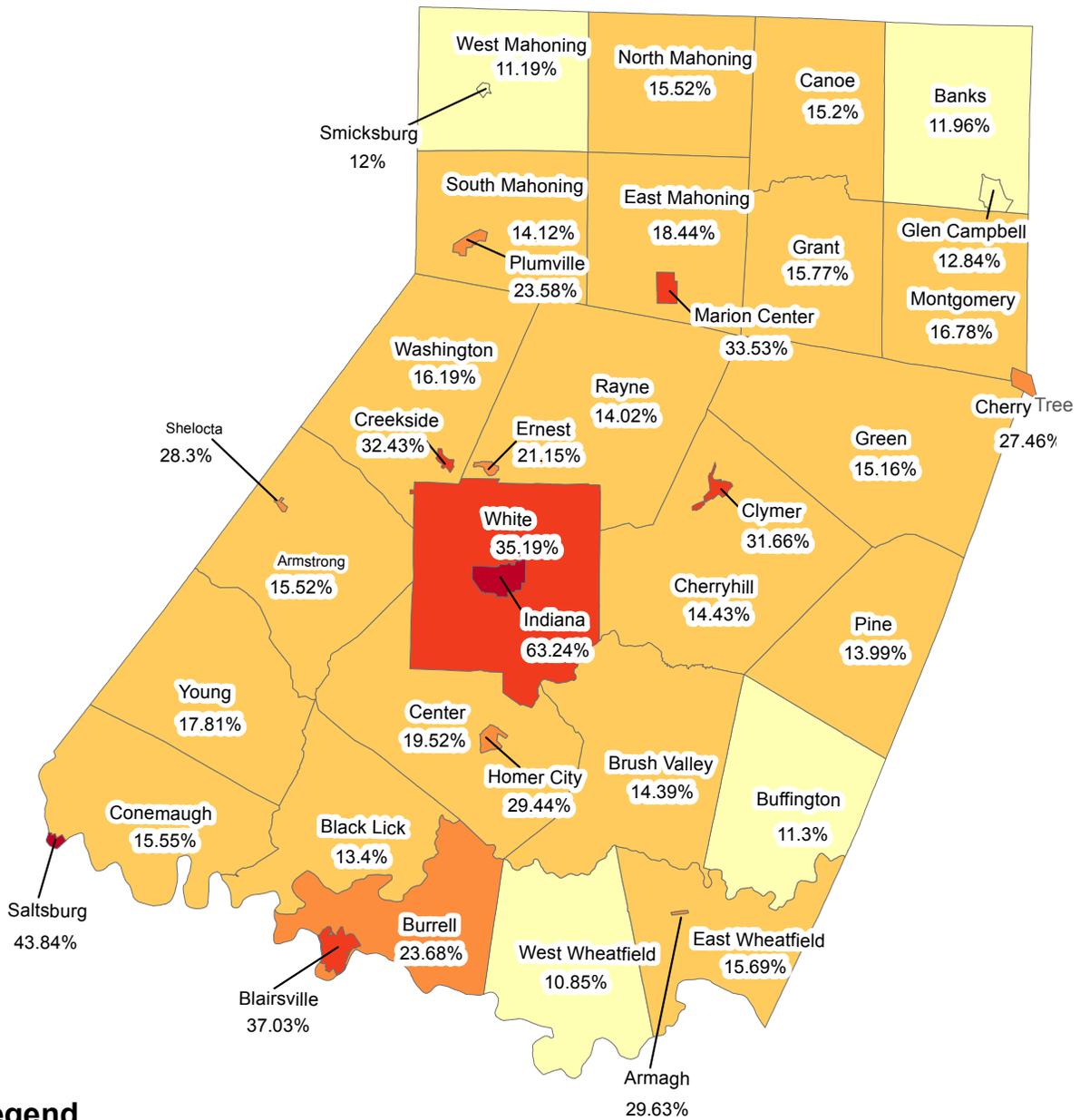
- Less than \$500
- \$700 to \$999
- \$500 to \$699
- \$1,000 and Above



**2011**



Map 7. Percent Renter-Occupied, 2011



**Legend**

**Percent of Units Renter-Occupied**

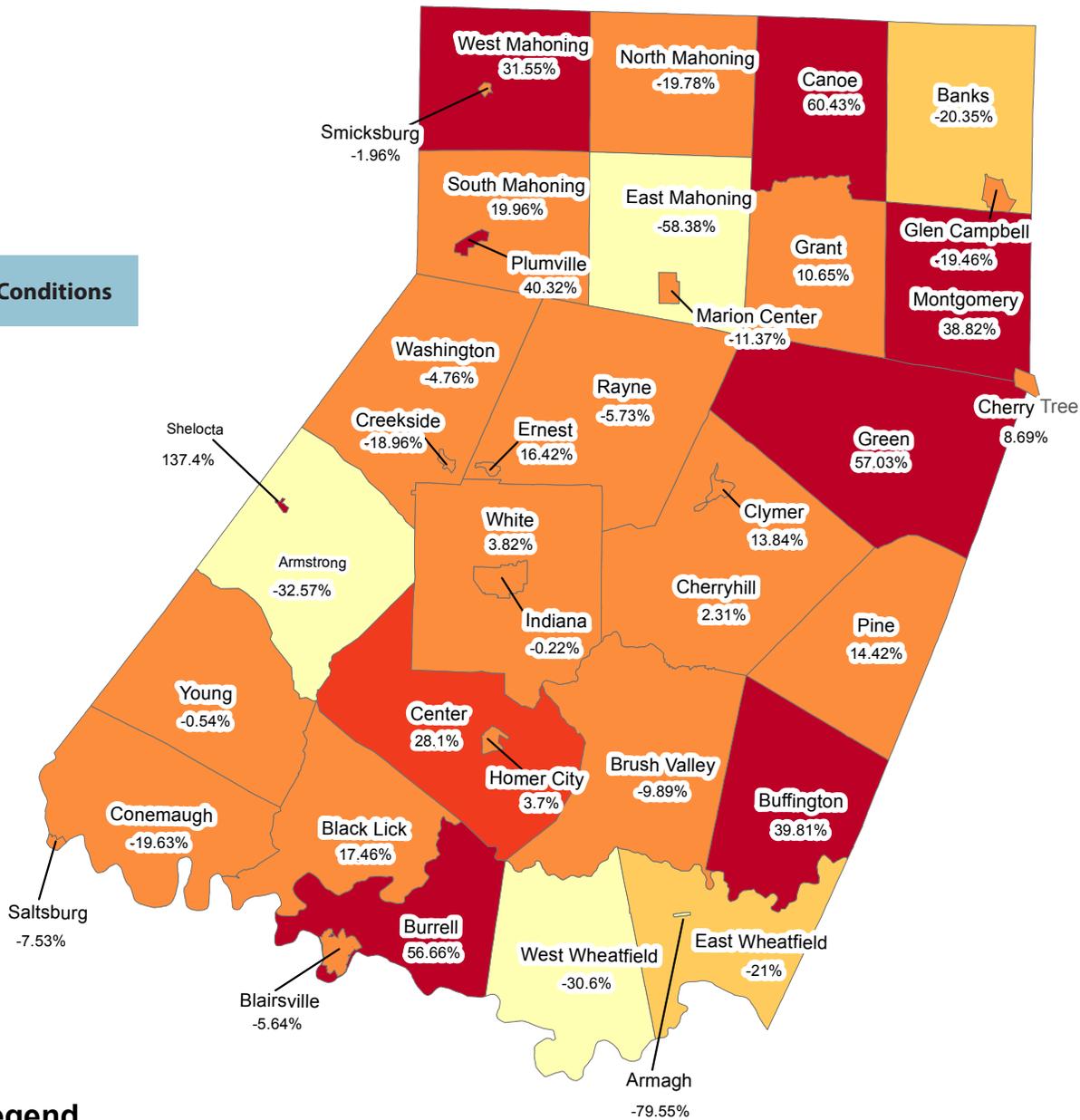
- 0% to 13%
- 13% to 20%
- 20% to 30%
- 30% to 40%
- More Than 40%

Source: ACS 2012  
 Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



Map 8. Shifts in Rental Occupancy, 2000-2011

Existing Conditions



**Legend**

**Change in Proportion of Renter Units**

- Over 30% Reduction
- 20% to 30% Reduction
- 20% Reduction to 20% Growth
- 20% to 30% Growth
- Over 30% Growth

Source: ACS 2012  
 Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



## Subsidized Rentals

---

The Housing Authority of Indiana County (HAIC) in Fall 2013 managed 564 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), of which the Authority has the budget to administer only 490, and 471 public housing units. The HCV waiting list included 463 households. The majority of subsidized housing units are located in the County's more densely developed municipalities. They include Clymer Borough, Blairsville Borough, Homer City, Indiana Borough, and White Township. A sizable number of units are located in rural parts of the County. A following table lists all public housing in the HAIC inventory.

Stakeholders reported that subsidized housing residents generally desire units close to amenities and services. This translates to a primary preference for Indiana Borough and White Township. This is illustrated in occupancy differences between Poet's Village, a 104-unit site within White Township that maintains a waiting list, and public housing projects in more rural areas that experience ongoing vacancy. Comparatively high land costs in service-rich areas present an obstacle to the development of affordable housing. Another identified need is more subsidized elderly housing in Indiana County. Currently, the majority of such sites are fully occupied with extensive waiting lists.

Demand for HCVs remains high in the County while demand for public housing units is comparatively low. The voucher preference is due to the flexibility to locate wherever vouchers are accepted and the modern amenities with which many private units are equipped. Additionally, stakeholders reported prevalent negative attitudes toward public housing. The public stock is older, as each of HAIC's communities is at least 20 years in age. Funding to improve amenities in public housing is largely

unavailable, as capital funds can only cover essential maintenance needs.

The preference is so strong for HCVs that nearly 500 households are willing to wait six to 12 months to receive a HCV, whereas they could immediately move into a public housing unit. Once a HCV is received, voucher holders rarely have difficulty finding a unit as many landlords across the County accept vouchers.

According to address data from HAIC plotted in Map 10, voucher households are scattered across many of the County's municipalities. This suggests that landlord participation in the Section 8 program is not an impediment to voucher families locating suitable affordable housing.

Subsidized units that are not managed by HAIC are limited. Seventeen low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) projects exist across the County. Four of these are run by HAIC and listed in Table 20. LIHTC projects will become increasingly difficult to develop in the County as the HAIC is approaching its limit for the number of project-based vouchers permitted by HUD. Indiana County and Indiana Borough can encourage new tax credit development by providing HAIC and developers with planning assistance and financial incentives. Other subsidized units across the County include six U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rural projects, and four U.S. Department of Housing (HUD) multi-family projects.

As Map 10 demonstrates, the location of public and other subsidized housing coincides with the County's population hub and is focused in Indiana Borough and White Township. Public housing is the most diverse in location, though units within proximity of amenities are the most consistently in demand.

**Table 20. HAIC Public Housing Inventory, 2013**

Property	Street	City & Zip	Vacancies	Type of Housing
Morewood Towers	101 Morewood Avenue,	Blairsville, PA 15717	Yes	50 & Over
Green Valley	171, 195, 221, 245 Douglas Street	Commodore, PA 15729	Yes	Family Housing
Saltsburg Heights	400 Hemlock Way; 400 Point Street; 524 Salt Street	Saltsburg, PA 15681	Yes	Family Housing
Chestnut Ridge	68, 88, 134, 136 Susan Drive	Blairsville, PA 15717	Yes	Family Housing
Tate Terrace	460, 470, 480, 490 Hancock Street	Clymer, PA 15728	Yes	Family Housing
Courtyard	1705 Warren Road	Indiana, PA 15701	Yes	55 & Over
Garfield Court*	187 Spring Street	Robinson, PA 15949	Yes	Family Housing
Orchard Hill*	Thundercloud Lane	Indiana, PA 15701	Yes	Family Housing
Homestead*	74 Gompers Avenue	Indiana, PA 15701	Yes	Family Housing
School House Square	416 Market Street	Saltsburg, PA 15681	Yes	55 & Over
The Square on Phily	160-162 Philadelphia Street 161-163 Gompers Avenue	Indiana, PA 15701	No	50 & Over
Parkway	East Wiley Street	Homer City Pa 15748	No	55 & Over
Fieldcrest	220 Mary Street	Robinson, PA 15949	No	55 & Over
Glen Oaks	Whippoorwill Street	Indiana, PA 15701	No	55 & Over
Black Lick Manor	Main Street	Blairsville, PA 15717	No	General Public Housing
McGregor Manor	117 Washington Street 407 Old Canal Way	Saltsburg, PA 15681	No	General Public Housing
Tall Pines Terrace	574, 576, 578, 580 Adams Street	Clymer, PA 15728	No	General Public Housing
Grandview Point*	Grandview Avenue	Blairsville, PA 15717	No	Family Housing

\*Indicates project was financed with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits  
Source: HAIC

**Existing Conditions**

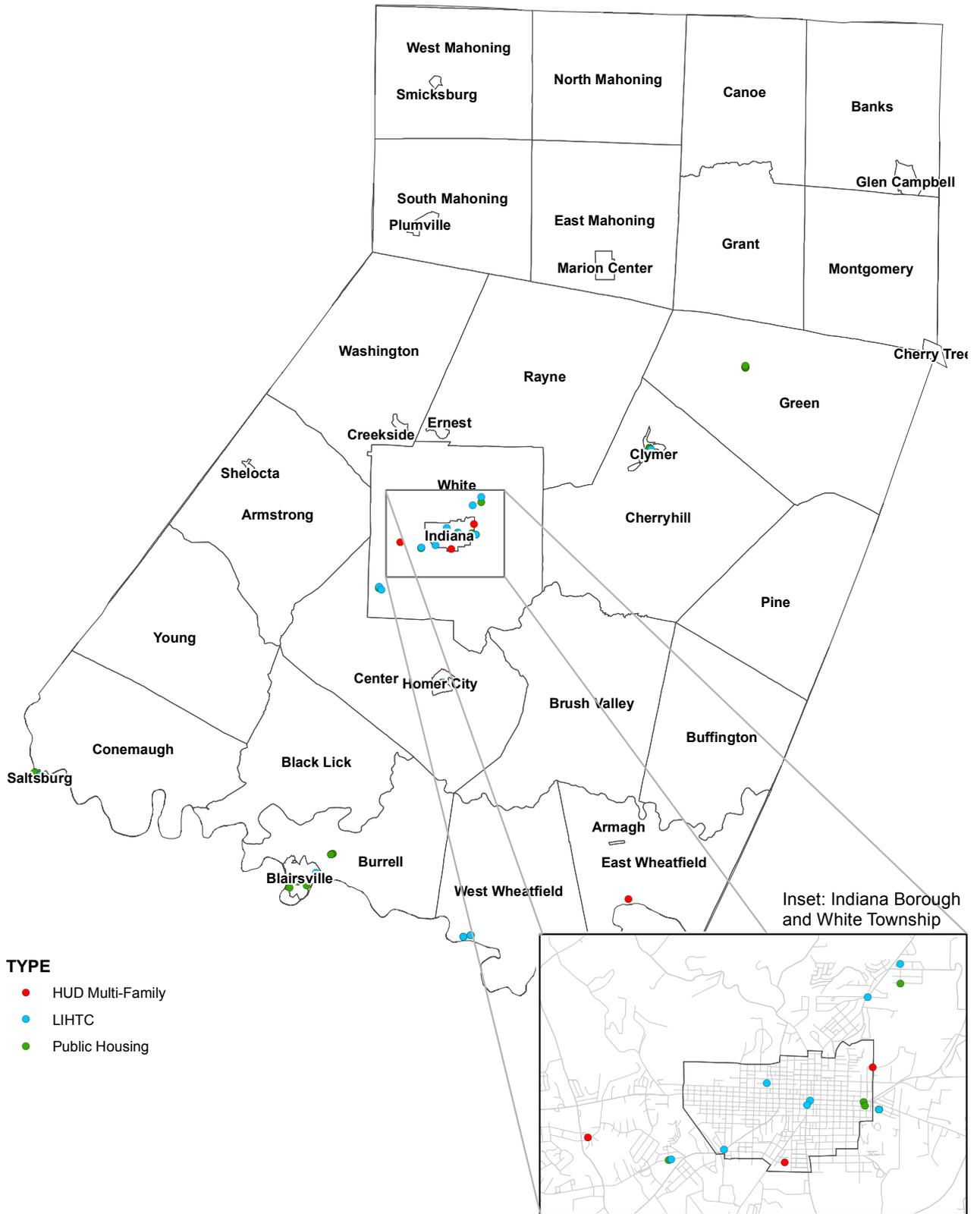
As the County receives only Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds on a State entitlement basis, it must compete for limited Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME) funding at the State level. The County’s ability to develop affordable housing even when this resource is available is limited by the rising costs of rehabilitation and construction.

The County’s most recent tax credit project is underway at the intersection of Oak Street and 5th Street in Indiana Borough. This is a collaborative effort between the County and Northern Cambria County Development Corporation (NCCDC). In 2011, the County allocated \$251,000 to the Indiana County Homeless Veterans Housing Project, which was part of \$1.2 million in total investments to the project. In 2010, the County invested \$187,000 in renovating the Park Hill Apartments in Burrell Township that are affordable rentals. In 2009, \$500,000 in CDBG funded accessibility modifications, and \$500,000 in HOME funded a traditional housing rehabilitation program focused in the northeast section of the County. A portion of the grant also went toward the County’s homeownership program. Further details on County investment policies appear in a subsequent section of this Plan.

**Key Findings**

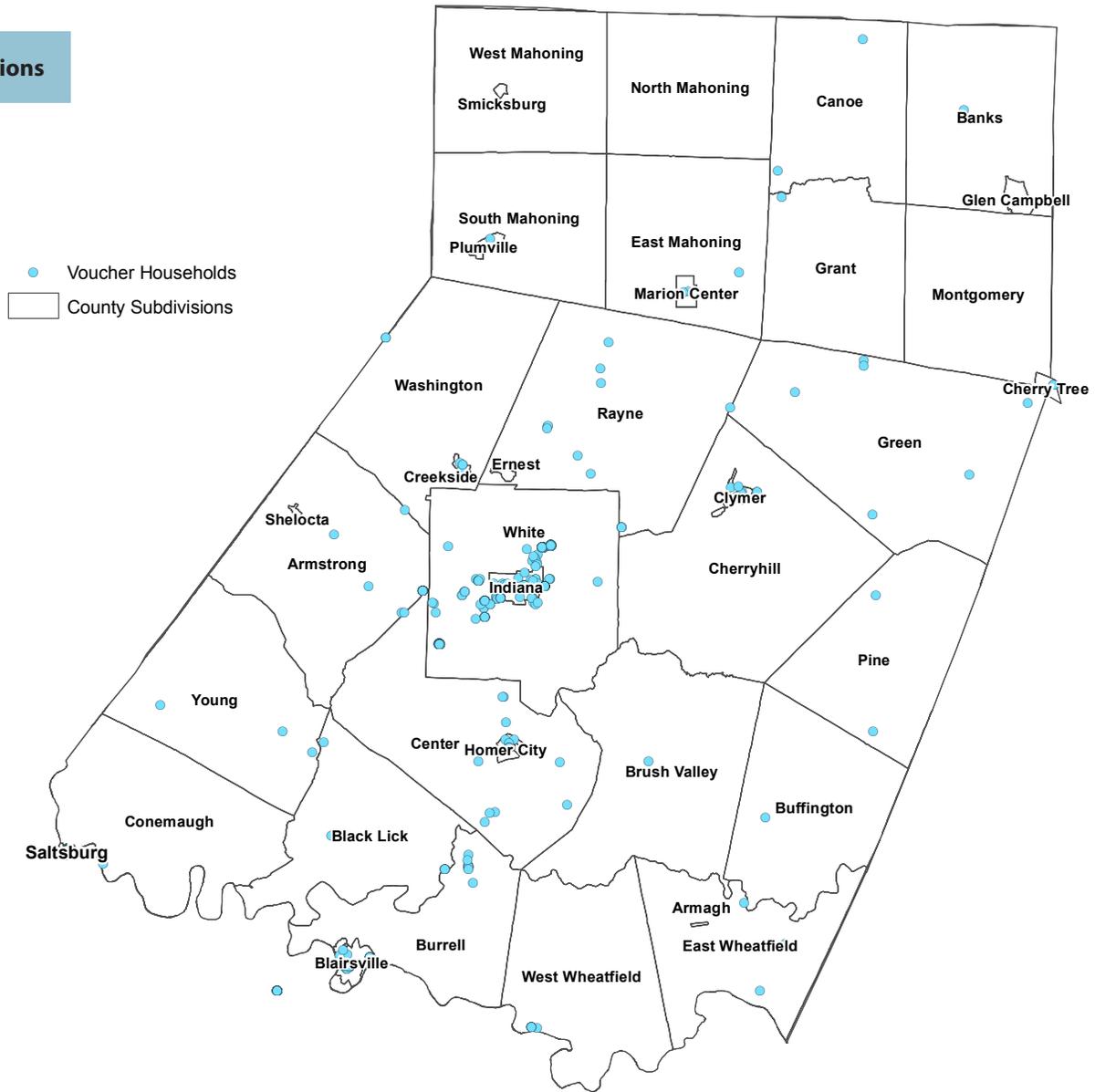
- Residents seeking affordable housing tend to prefer areas with amenities and access to public transit, which are primarily within Indiana Borough and White Township.
- The County’s ability to develop affordable housing is limited due to rising costs for rehabilitation and new construction and limited funding options.
- HAIC stated a need for additional subsidized units in Indiana Borough and White Township to accommodate low-income seniors.
- HCVs are in high demand, while many public housing units in relatively isolated rural areas of the County remain vacant.

Map 9. Subsidized Housing Inventory, 2000-2011

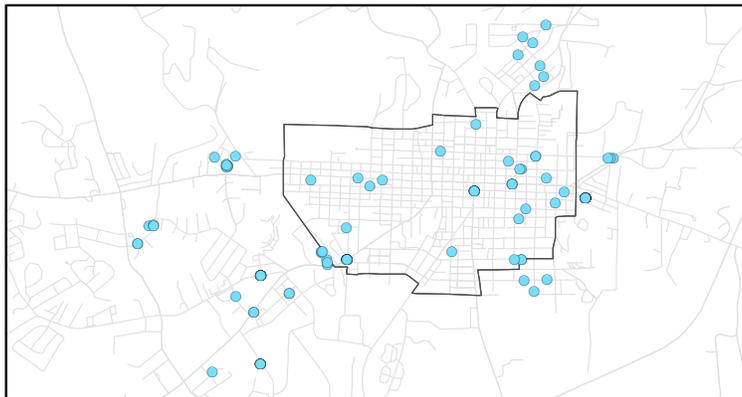


Map 10. Voucher Household Locations, 2013

Existing Conditions



Inset: Indiana Borough and White Township



## Student Housing

---

Two educational institutions within the County significantly impact their surrounding housing markets. They are Indiana University of Pennsylvania, located in Indiana Borough and White Township, and WyoTech, located in Burrell Township. Indiana University of Pennsylvania enrolled 14,158 students in the fall of 2013, and WyoTech currently enrolls approximately 600 students. Students of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania who do not commute may elect to live either on campus or in surrounding private housing. WyoTech does not provide student housing.

Stakeholders reported that WyoTech enrollment has decreased recently from a peak of 1,600 students a couple years ago. During the 2000s, the rental market was tightened in Blairsville by the student population, resulting in high prices and low vacancy. More recently, demand for rental housing has been somewhat absorbed by the 2007 construction of student apartments (Indy Park) in Burrell Township and declining enrollment. In June 2014, Wyotech's parent company, Corinthian Colleges, Inc., reached a settlement with the U.S. Department of Education that called for all of Corinthian's schools to be sold or closed. While Wyotech officials speculated in June 2014 that the school could remain open in some form, its closure was a possibility that would affect 114 staff members and hundreds of students who rent in the borough.

Enrollment increases at Indiana University of Pennsylvania during the 2000s and its Residential Revival Project led to a spike in private-market housing construction for students. In 2005, the University acknowledged that remaining competitive with other universities would require a drastic update to its housing stock. The resulting demolition of all but four dormitories, and construction of new suite-style housing resulted in the replacement of 3,500 beds over five years at a total cost exceeding \$230 million. This effort was financed via a public-private partnership. There are currently 4,150 beds in on-campus housing, which is a decrease in total units from the previous configuration. The University has estimated that it could house up to 7,000 students on campus. It chooses to allow the private market to meet demand beyond its 4,150 beds.

That was accomplished in previous years largely in the form of large and older homes in the vicinity of campus that had been converted to multi-family rentals from single-family residences. The profit margin is high for student rentals, and stakeholders reported that professors and other professionals who had previously occupied those structures had moved in order to collect rental income. Additionally, out-of-town investors purchased such homes to rent to students. Many homes near campus experienced deterioration which was accelerated by student occupancy.

Developers recognized an opportunity to capitalize on a perceived gap between supply and demand for student rentals. They intended to attract students by providing amenities, such as swimming pools and basketball courts, that were not offered in the Borough's deteriorating single-family homes or their multi-family converted incarnations. The higher quality of on-campus suites had set expectations higher among students in the rental market.

Much of the resulting construction occurred in White Township. This was made comparatively attractive by the absence of zoning regulations and property taxes. Township leaders have expressed a desire to halt the growth of student housing, as issues have materialized regarding student behavior and the alteration of community character. The Township is contemplating the implementation of a zoning code in order to better regulate developments entering the community.

The settlement of students in neighborhoods without a history of student housing has various impacts for Indiana Borough. It has primarily resulted in vacancy among the housing units within the vicinity of campus. Most would require substantial rehabilitation to be suitable as single-family homes. The Borough has acknowledged that returning these units to the market is a desirable aim, but the funds available to facilitate this work are extremely limited. Additionally, new construction has threatened the character of some neighborhoods within the Borough.

Indiana Borough responded to these trends in two ways. They are the creation of the Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay (TND) and the design of a program that would offer packaged incentives (down payment assistance, rehabilitation loans, bank partnership and tax abatement) to prospective homebuyers to purchase and occupy homes in areas that are

currently considered campus neighborhoods. The purpose of the TND was to re-concentrate student housing into a three-block area adjacent to campus, and open housing opportunities in traditional residential neighborhoods throughout the Borough to families. The TND permitted and incentivized higher densities.

The TND was repealed by Indiana Borough Council in the summer of 2013 because it permitted higher densities in R-2 residential zones near campus. This triggered conflicts between students living in new structures and neighbors living in single-family homes. Residents felt that the Overlay District was contrary to the Zoning Ordinance’s stated intention for R-2. This is to “foster traditional family values and permit one- and two-family homes.” Borough Council also felt the TND was not resulting in projects with appropriate design and aesthetics as envisioned by the Council.

The program designed to incentivize the purchase of homes near campus for single-family uses was not fully implemented due to a lack of funding. The Indiana County Office of Planning and Development augmented the effort to convert previous student housing into single-family homes through its housing rehabilitation program. Three units were converted and an additional 15 owner-occupied units were rehabilitated in the Borough’s Elm Street neighborhood near campus.

There is momentum to develop sustainable incentives to encourage the conversion of student housing near campus into single-family units. If left to market forces, many of these units will continue to deteriorate beyond the point of rehabilitation. The Borough is contemplating intervention via subsidies and tools for neighborhood redevelopment. Due to limited funding availability, this will require creative and cost-effective tools.

The County is developing a planning document to set the framework for a revised University District surrounding Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s campus. This document brings together a variety of stakeholders, including Indiana University of Pennsylvania, White Township, Indiana Borough, and the County to create a District reflecting the needs, challenges and resources of each participant. The main deliverable of the document will be actionable items for each stakeholder to implement in the creation of the University District. The specifics of the new University District are left to the discretion of these parties.

*Key Findings*

- Student enrollment increased significantly in both Indiana University of Pennsylvania and WyoTech since 2000, spurring construction of new student housing units. However, in recent years, enrollment has decreased, creating an oversupply of student housing. This could be exacerbated by the potential closure of Wyotech.
- Many efforts have been made in Indiana Borough to redevelop the concentrated student housing area adjacent to Indiana University of Pennsylvania. However, significant incentives will be required to overcome market conditions, significant acquisition and rehabilitation costs, and stricter loan underwriting criteria.
- Large increases of student housing have occurred in White Township since 2000. This is the result of student demand for amenity-rich housing and a lack of zoning in the Township. This has led to vacancies of older student housing units located near campus in Indiana Borough.
- The lack of zoning in White Township has encouraged construction of new student housing that has begun to create neighborhood conflicts similar to the student/ resident issues in Indiana Borough.

# Owner-Occupied Housing

## Real Estate Trends

Local realtors reported that home sales prices in Indiana County were not drastically impacted by the national housing downturn. Housing sales across the County have recovered since the 2007 recession. According to data from Boxwood Means, a national real estate research firm, the total number of home sales Countywide has exceeded pre-recession numbers. The total number of sales dipped to 666 in 2009 and rebounded to 939 in 2012.

In another trend suggesting recovery, the average number of days a home spends on the market has decreased. Homes priced between \$150,000 and \$200,000 sell relatively quickly, particularly those with three or more bedrooms and an attached garage. This type of product is typically a resale, as builders reported that it is nearly impossible to build a quality home of that size at that price today. Existing homes with such features are highly in demand.

Realtors reported that homes priced above \$200,000 have been difficult to sell. Among all buyers, and particularly among those who would buy up into larger and more expensive homes, realtors speculate that reluctance is due to concerns about job security in the current economy, the higher cost of buying including fees and mortgage insurance, shaken faith in the market or suspicion that it is impossible to recoup cost of rehabilitation/improvements undertaken today.

Flood and related insurance issues have substantial implications for the County's housing market, particularly for Indiana Borough. Recent expansion of the 100-year floodplain in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps and regulatory reform to the flood insurance program portends insurance rate increases of 40% to 50%. They translate to higher costs for homeowners already in a floodplain and an expansion of homes within that area. This translates to decreased housing demand for affected properties. The USDA will not originate loans in the floodplain. In Indiana Borough, Marsh Run adjoins a large percentage of properties and presents problems

for many homeowners, including flooding and sinkholes. Indiana Borough has plans to mitigate the associated flood issues, but faces a lack of funding available to implement them. Reducing the number of properties in the flood-plain would make housing more marketable.

Lending issues in Indiana County are largely the result of federal and bank policy, which is largely outside of the direct control of the County. Additional provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act took effect January 10, 2014. Under these revisions, a "qualified mortgage" (QM) must meet very specific standards such as a 43% debt/income ratio. A mortgage that is qualified falls into safe harbor, which provides some protection to the lender in the event of foreclosure. Lenders will all need to decide whether they will transition their portfolio to hold only safe-harbor loans, or whether they will continue to make loans outside of this threshold that they determine meet community needs. As a result, the options for lower-income buyers may be limited. For example, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) will exclusively limit loans to QMs. This policy, along with other recent restrictive federal lending policies, have severely limited who can receive loans. Many potential homebuyers are not aware of less expensive alternative options, including loans offered by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) and community banks.

### Key Findings

- The County's housing market was insulated from the 2007 recession. Sales trends suggest recovery since then.
- Homes priced between \$150,000 and \$200,000 sell quickly.
- Recent 100-year flood-plain expansion and increased insurance rates set by FEMA have significantly impacted the ability to sell housing units in floodplain areas across the County.
- Because of recent underwriting restrictions, mortgage loans are much more difficult to obtain. This change is expected to disproportionately impact lower-income households.

## Trends in Prices and Units

The total number of owner-occupied housing units declined 0.9% across Indiana County between 2000 and 2011. Rental conversions are reflected in this number, as the demand for owner-occupied housing fell in recent years. This is a result of tighter lending regulations, decreased income, and rising unemployment.

By age, a majority of householders in every age group is homeowners, with the exception of those aged 15-24 as the youngest group for which information is available, of which 90.8% are renters. A slight majority exists for those aged 25 to 34, as 52.5% are homeowners. The homeownership rate increases with each successive age group until age 60, when the homeownership rate begins to decrease as elderly householders turn to rental units. The homeownership rate for households 85 years and older increase again and is 69.1%.

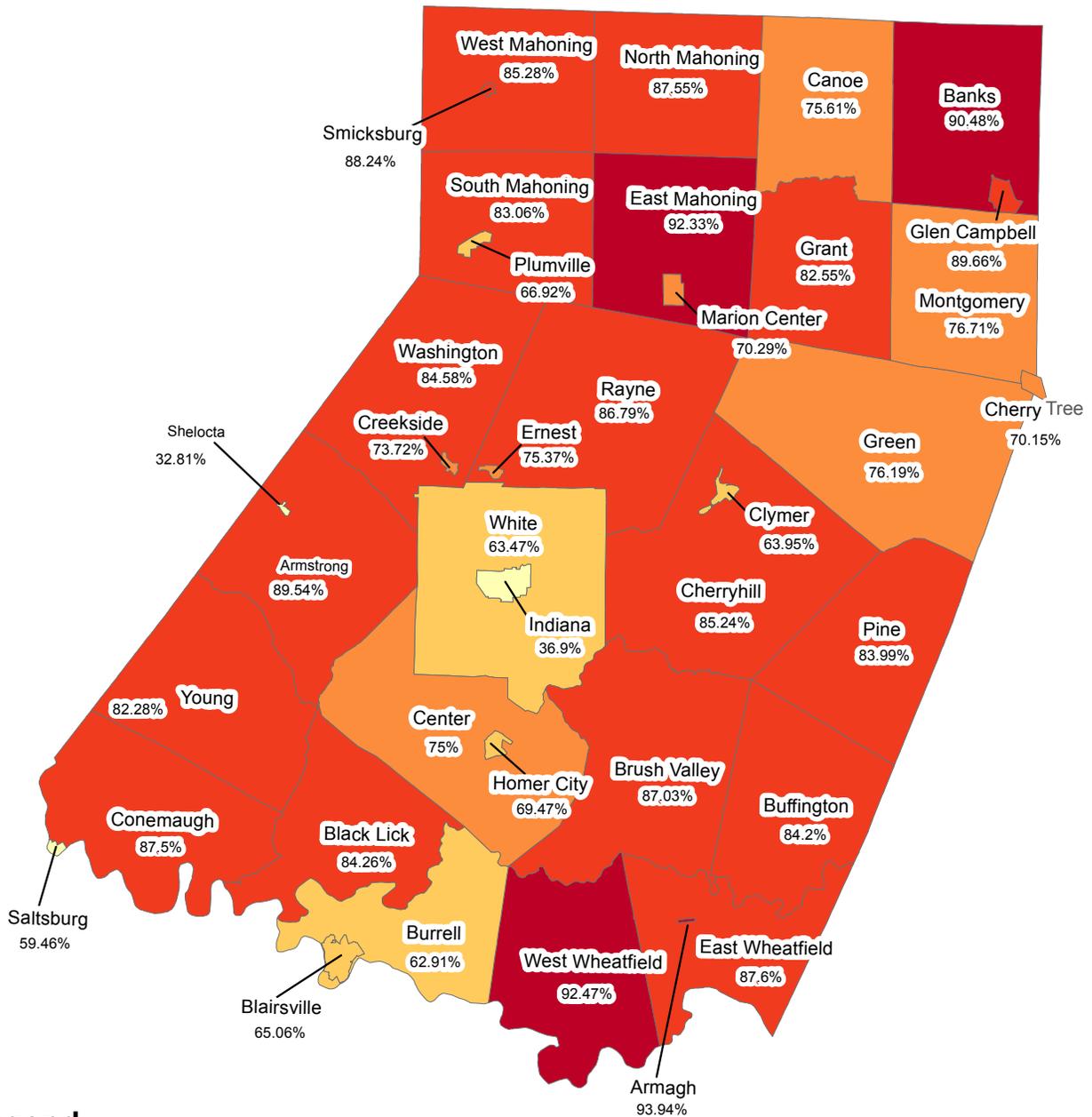
Owner-occupied units comprised a much higher percentage of the total housing stock in rural areas and small Boroughs than the County's more highly developed areas. In Banks Township, East Mahoning Township, and West Wheatfield Township, more than 90% of homes were owner-occupied. The highest rate among more developed areas was 69.5% in Homer City Borough. The lowest rates occurred in Indiana Borough and Shelocta Borough, where 36.9% and 32.8% of homes, respectively, were owner-occupied. White Township saw the largest rise in total owner-occupied units, adding 329 units between 2000 and 2011 and reflecting overall strength in its housing market during those years.

### Key Findings

- The total number of owner-occupied units declined 0.9% between 2000 and 2011 in the County.
- A majority of householders in every age group are homeowners, with the exception of those aged 15-24.
- Owner-occupied units comprised a much higher percentage of the total housing stock in rural Townships and small Boroughs than the more densely developed areas.

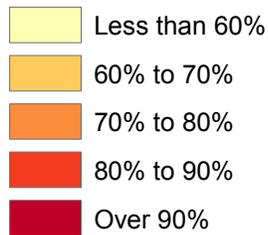
### Existing Conditions

Map 11. Percent Owner-Occupied, 2011



**Legend**

**Percent of Units Owner-Occupied**

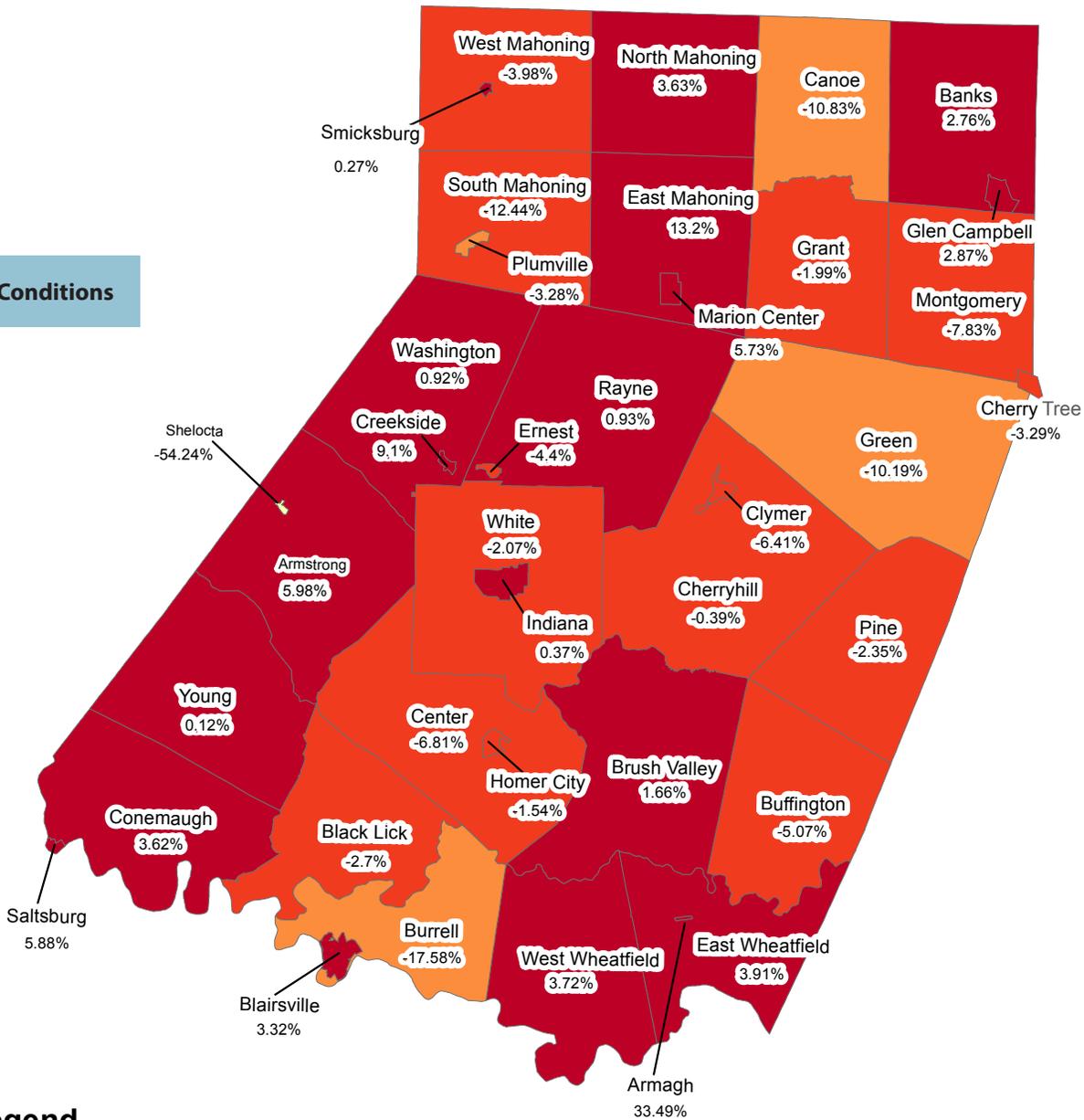


Source: ACS 2012  
 Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



Map 12. Change in Percent Owner-Occupied, 2000 to 2011

Existing Conditions



**Legend**

**Change in Proportion of Owner Households**

- Over 30% Loss
- 20% to 30% Loss
- 10% to 20% Loss
- 10% Loss to 0% Change
- Positive (Over 0%) Growth

Source: ACS 2012  
Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



## Age/Condition

Indiana County's owner-occupied housing stock is relatively new compared to housing statewide. 41.8% of the County's housing was constructed before 1960, compared to 48.4% statewide. Communities with the newest owner-occupied housing stock included Washington Township, West Mahoning Township, and Buffington Township, where between 14% and 20% of all owner-occupied units were constructed after 2000. In White Township, 434 owner-occupied units were constructed since 2000, which was the most of any municipality in the County. More than 75% of the stock in many smaller Boroughs was constructed before 1960. Additionally, between 75% and 81% of the owner-occupied housing in Indiana Borough, Homer City Borough, and Clymer Borough was built prior to 1960.

Issues of substandard housing were most prevalent in rural areas, especially in the County's northern tier. All municipalities lacking complete plumbing facilities in over 10% of the housing stock were located in the County's northern tier. Additionally, many homes in the County's rural areas lacked adequate insulation.

Alternative heating sources were also most prevalent in rural areas and in the northern tier. Alternative heating sources include wood,

coal/coke, and other undisclosed heating sources. 7.6% of all housing units Countywide use alternative heating sources. In many rural Townships this rate was above 15% and it was 34.1% in West Mahoning Township.

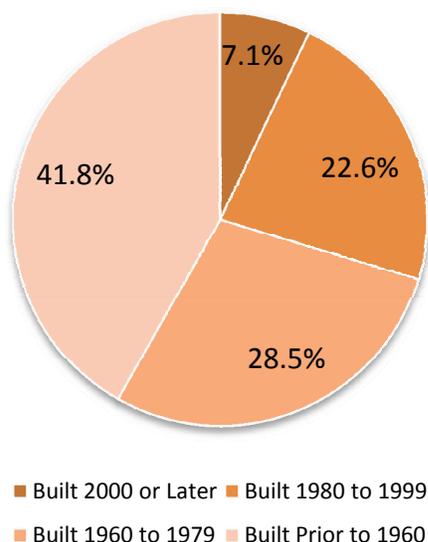
According to HUD standards, overcrowding includes housing units with over 1.01 occupants per room, without including kitchens and bathrooms. Overcrowding occurred in 1.4% of all units across the County, including 0.7% of owner-occupied units and 2.8% of rental-occupied units. West Mahoning Township had the largest incidence of overcrowding for all units at 8.6%. In Center Township, 14.5% of all rental units were overcrowded. Overcrowding reached close to zero percent in Indiana Borough and Blairsville Borough, and 2.0% of all units in White Township.

### Key Findings

- 41.8% of the County's owner-occupied housing stock was constructed before 1960, compared to 48.4% statewide.
- White Township added the most owner-occupied units since 2000 of any Indiana County municipality.
- A high percentage of owner-occupied units built before 1960 exists in many of the County's smaller Boroughs.

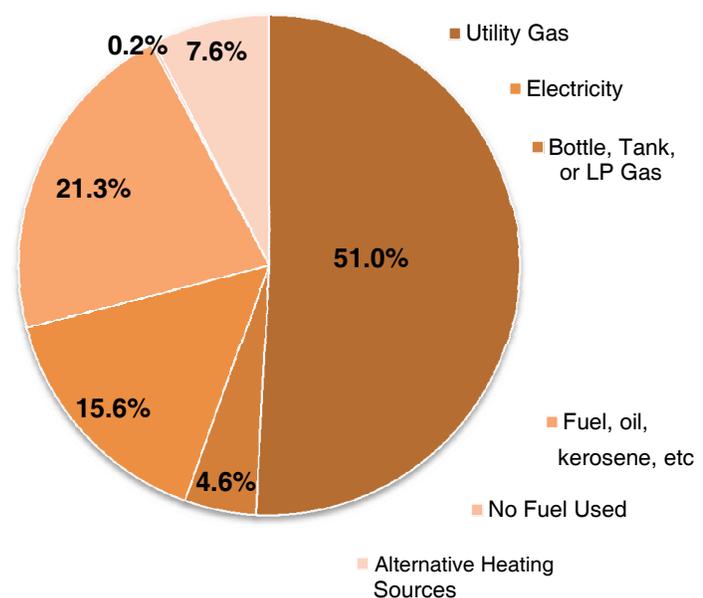
**Table 21. Age of Owner-Occupied Units, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B25036)



**Table 22. Heating Source, 2011**

Source: ACS 2007-2011 (B25040)



## Housing Market Implications

- Overall, the housing market remains soft. Within the sales market, homes priced between \$150,000 and \$200,000 sell quickly, but there is not a significant supply of them. Sales have rebounded slightly since 2007, but there remains a perceived buyer reluctance reflecting recession-related losses in household income and regulatory changes such as stricter mortgage underwriting that have made mortgage financing more difficult to obtain.
- The local housing market is primarily renter-driven and favors students over family and elderly households. Rental housing for non-students is virtually non-existent primarily due to a lower rate of profitability than student rentals. Rental housing of any type is particularly non-existent for elderly households who might consider downsizing. The existing elderly rental supply is relatively small. It is accommodating and popular, with long waiting lists.
- Trends in rental vacancy correspond with families increasingly being priced out of the sales market. In 2011, the rate of rental vacancy was 5.4%. Ideally, vacancies should range between 5% and 7%. Anything below 5% represents a tight rental market. While the vacancy rate was still within the ideal range in 2011, trends indicate a rapid vacancy decrease as the vacancy rate in 2009 was 6.8% .
- Subsidized housing is geographically centered in Indiana Borough and White Township. This is a fact likely related to the concentration of amenities within easy access in these locations. By contrast, Section 8 voucher households are scattered across the County.
- New student housing recently added to the inventory has caused increased vacancies among single-family dwelling units that had been previously converted to multi-family student rentals and located within close proximity to campus in Indiana Borough. Both the Borough and the County are interested in seeing these conversions returned to their original single-family floor plans. At least three obstacles prevent this from happening: 1) the profitability of the units as rentals, 2) the cost of a mortgage in conjunction with a home improvement loan to acquire and substantially rehabilitate a unit for single-family ownership, and 3) the UCC requirement that rehabilitating single-family dwelling units requires following the same code as new construction.
- The quality of the affordable housing inventory in Indiana County is questionable. Many of the inquiries to the 211 directory regard assistance to make home repairs that would allow elderly residents to age in place. Housing in rural areas can consist of uninsulated, poorly constructed and old materials with unreliable and expensive heat sources.

### Existing Conditions



## Infrastructure Profile



Indiana County's Comprehensive Plan describes in detail the systems of infrastructure across the County, including utilities such as water and sewer, communications networks, energy transmission, and transportation facilities. The location and capacity of infrastructure has a substantial impact on the housing market. Local policy regarding related investments can affect patterns and costs of land use and development.

More than half of Indiana County residents receive water via one of 20 public systems provided by 13 public and private operators. The systems cover in the aggregate only a small portion of the County's land area, but cover the majority of areas with relatively dense development. The County has undertaken mapping of water systems to better plan maintenance of existing distribution systems and ways to meet future need. Map 13 illustrates the location of water and sewer coverage across the County.

The majority of land identified as appropriate for development by the County's growth strategy is already served by public water. All communities along corridors in these areas are connected to public water systems, which the Plan estimates

have the capacity to serve current needs and anticipated local growth for 20 years. The County's Boroughs are adequately served by existing systems, with the exceptions of Marion Center Borough and Smicksburg Borough.

With regard to public sewer, 11 authorities operating 25 systems serve more than half of County residents. Public water and sewer areas generally overlap. The Comprehensive Plan reported that all systems were operating within their designed capacity. On-lot sewage disposal is prevalent in areas not served by a public system.

Principal arterial roads in Indiana County include US 22, US 119 and US 422, which are highlighted on the following map. Additionally, minor arterials include PA 56, PA 85, PA 156, PA 210, PA 217, PA 286, PA 259 and PA 954. The Comprehensive Plan notes that major upgrades to US 22 and US 119 have enhanced mobility and stimulated economic development activities in the southern tier of the County. These are areas south of Washington Township, Rayne Township, and Green Township. Additionally, this road work altered traffic and development

plans in Indiana Borough and White Township. Road conditions are less of an asset in the County's northern tier, where residents have expressed concern about deferred maintenance.

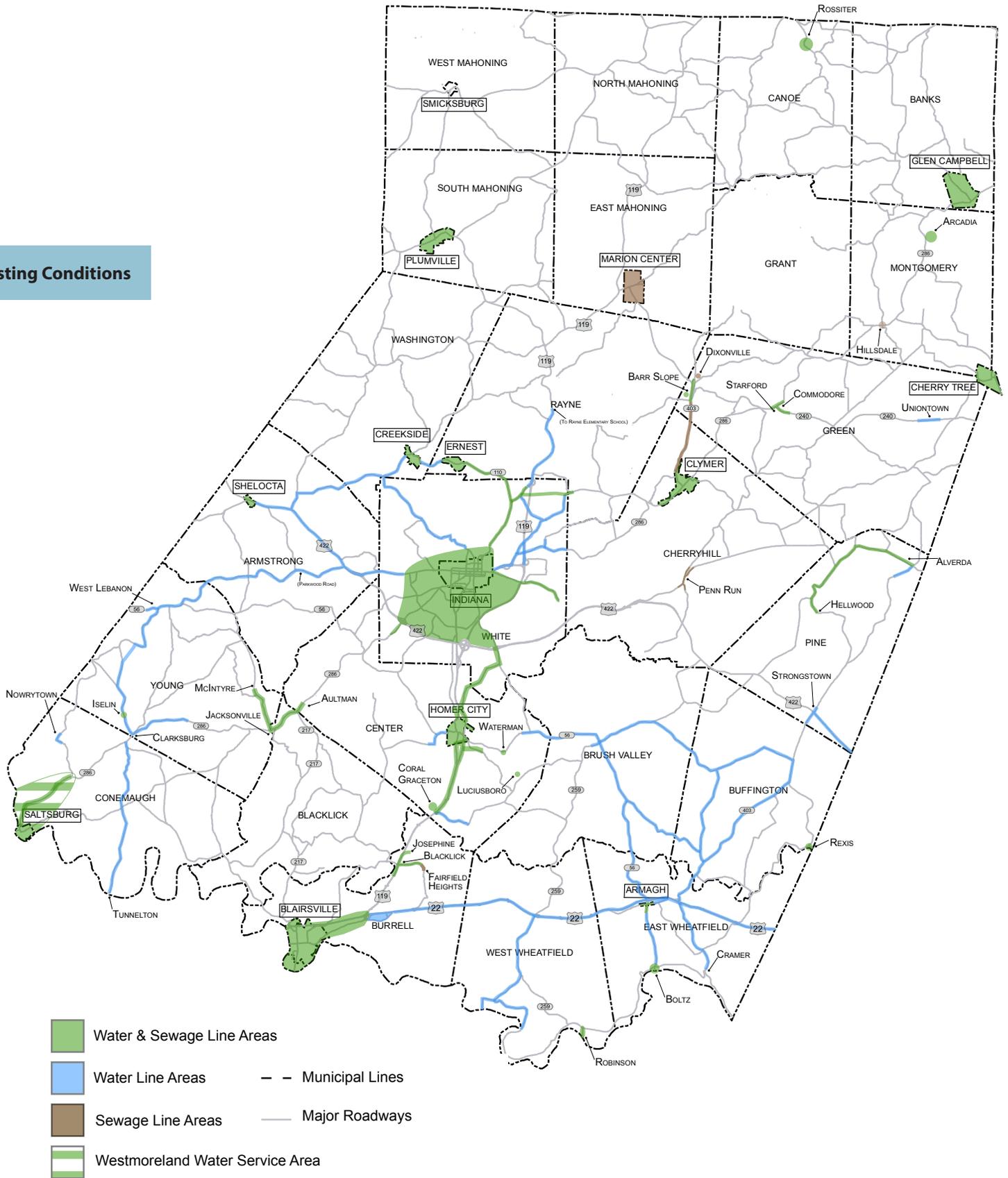
In order to promote compact development patterns, prioritize use of the existing transportation network and achieve the economic location of people and jobs, the County has explored a locational strategy built upon focusing investments and redevelopment on corridors that connect the County's most densely populated areas. This prospect, illustrated in Map 13, will be explored further in the policy analysis section of this Plan. The radii surrounding the County's natural hub, Indiana Borough, at 3, 10 and 15 miles delineate rings within which particular development strategies would serve heavily-trafficked and well-connected areas.

#### *Key Findings*

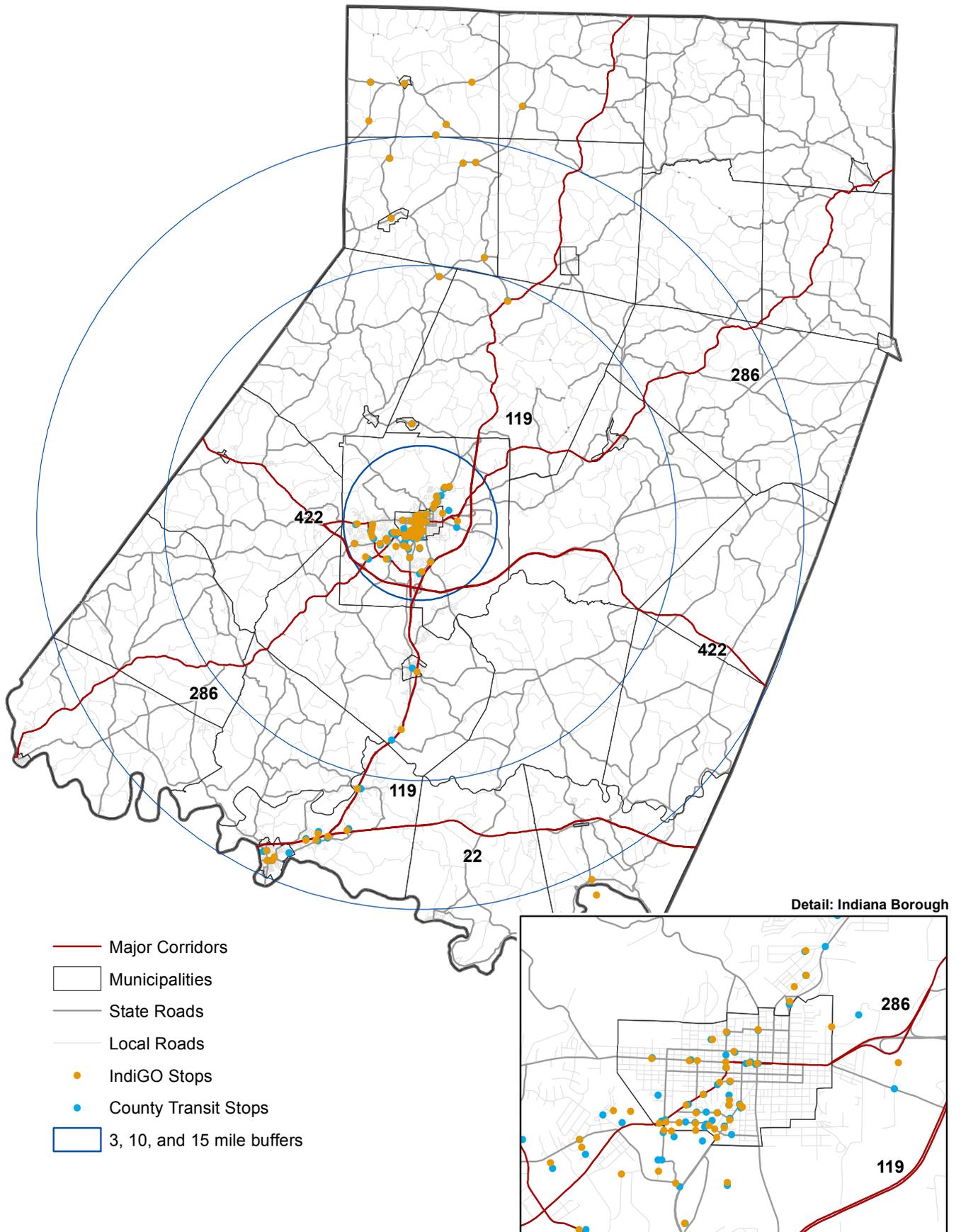
- Though the geographic reach of the public water systems within the County appears relatively small, most Indiana County residents receive service.
- Most areas identified as appropriate for development are already served by public water.
- The County has explored a locational policy strategy built upon focusing investments and redevelopment on corridors connected to the County's most densely populated areas.

Map 13. Water and Sewer Infrastructure, 2013

Existing Conditions



Map 14. Transportation, 2013



# Housing Market Implications

## Existing Conditions

- The layout and capacity of the systems that connect and sustain development, such as public water and sewer, communications networks, energy transmission and transportation facilities, strongly influence land use and housing market patterns. Through strategic policy and investment prioritization, the County can influence the direction, extent and nature of growth.
- Development historically follows infrastructure, which is why most of the housing and population are found in the central and southwest areas of the County. These include Indiana Borough, White Township, Shelocta Borough, Armstrong Township and along Route 119 south through Homer City Borough and into Blairsville Borough.
- The location of small and rural population centers throughout the County creates obstacles for connecting people with jobs and amenities via public transportation. Low population densities are insufficient to attract commercial development and cannot sustain expensive transit route extensions.
- To maintain efficiency in the distribution of housing and jobs, the County can prioritize system preservation by focusing maintenance and capacity upgrades on the existing transportation network.
- Prioritizing infill and redevelopment within existing developed areas and the County's designated growth areas will reduce the need for additional infrastructure investments.
- The current capacity of water systems can handle growth for more than 20 years.
- The predominantly rural nature of land outside of Indiana Borough, coupled with limited infrastructure in these areas, makes new systems and the expansion of existing ones extremely costly.
- Connectivity between workers and jobs is facilitated when development occurs in areas already served by existing infrastructure. Discouraging the development of outlying areas will reduce longer commutes and help to ensure that the lower-income labor force has adequate access to entry-level employment opportunities.

# Housing Problems



## Housing Problems

# Housing Problems



## Cost Burden

---

Housing cost-burden is traditionally measured by whether a household is paying 30% or more of its income on housing costs. In 2011, 26.9% of all Indiana County households were cost-burdened, compared to 28% of households in the Pittsburgh Metro and 32.2% of households Statewide. Rental households are much more likely to be cost-burdened than owner-occupied households. 52.8% of rental households were cost-burdened, compared to 18.2% of owner-occupied households. The large gap can be attributed to incomes among renter households, soaring rental costs, and the County's large student population.

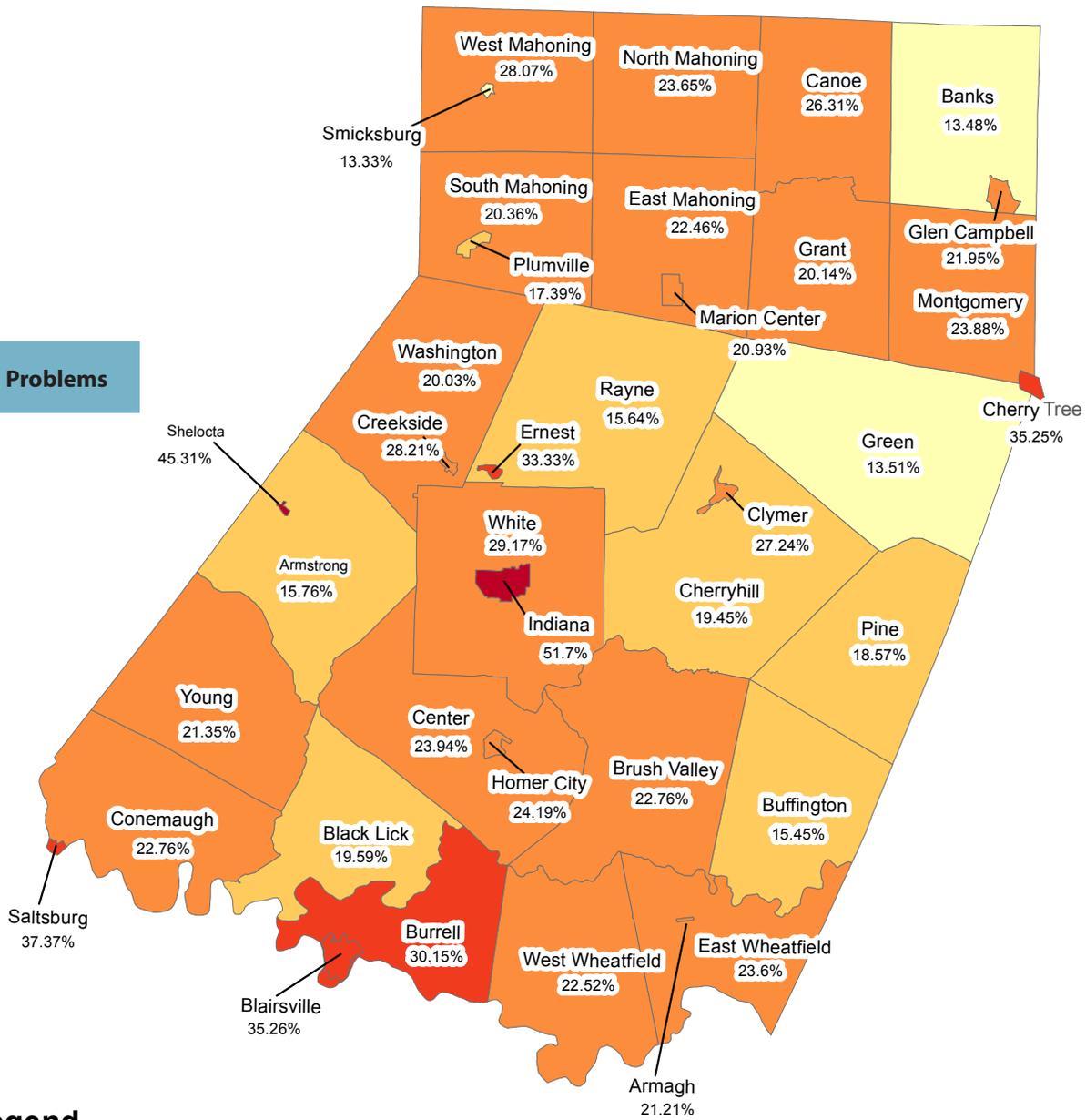
Indiana Borough had the highest percentage of cost-burdened households at 49%, driven by a high number of cost-burdened rental households (71%) comprised mostly of low-income students. Blairsville Borough also had a high percentage of cost-burdened households (33.9%), similarly attributable to a large student population. Green Township, Banks Township, and Smicksburg Borough all had low percentages of cost-burdened households, which comprised

approximately 12% to 13% of total households in each municipality.

Affordability is even more of an issue when housing costs are considered to include transportation. The Housing + Transportation Affordability Index was created by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), and recently adopted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for this purpose. Housing + Transportation Affordability Index, is a tool that combines transportation costs with housing costs to analyze affordability. This method identifies unaffordable as exceeding 40% of the gross household income. Based on this data, nearly all of Indiana County residents pay more than 45% of income on housing and transportation costs. In the Pittsburgh Metro, 76.5% of households are cost-burdened according to this standard. The percentage of cost-burdened households in the County surpasses the number in the Pittsburgh Metro due to automobile reliance in the County.

Map 15. Cost Burden by Municipality, 2011

Housing Problems



Legend

Percent Cost-Burdened

- Less Than 15%
- 15% to 20%
- 20% to 30%
- 30% to 40%
- More Than 40%

Source: ACS 2012  
Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



### Key Findings

- As of 2011, 26.9% of all households in the County were cost burdened.
- Areas with high student populations had the highest percentages of cost-burdened households.
- According to the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index, nearly all County residents pay more than 45% of income on housing and transportation.

## Comparing Income and Housing Costs

The 2011 median household income (MHI) for Indiana County was \$41,424. The highest median incomes were located in Rayne Township (\$64,625), Cherryhill Township (\$55,053), and Armstrong Township (\$54,262). When only viewing owner-occupied households, White Township and Indiana Borough also had very high MHIs. Both municipalities have a high percentage of students, which reduce their overall MHI. In Indiana Borough, the proportion of students is so great that the Borough had the lowest MHI in the County at \$21,250, though MHI for owner-occupied households was \$60,982.

The difference of income between renters and owners was drastic Countywide. Renters had a \$20,749 MHI. The MHI among owners was \$52,845. Indiana County's overall MHI is significantly lowered by its large proportion of students. MHIs in the Pittsburgh Metro and Statewide are higher than in Indiana County for both renters and owners. These figures represent greater proportions of non-student renters. In the Pittsburgh Metro, MHI for rental households was \$26,050 and \$49,246 for owners. Statewide, the MHI for rental households was \$28,782 and \$63,860 for owners.

With a median rent of \$635 in 2011, the average Indiana County renter pays 37% of his income on housing costs and is cost-burdened. The majority of homeowners, on the other hand, are not cost-burdened. The median housing value was \$103,700, meaning that owners across the County with a MHI of \$52,845 could afford to purchase a home priced at the County's median

housing value. The average owner could afford a mortgage of up to \$128,700 at this income level. The MHI across all households, owners and renters, can only afford a mortgage of up to \$84,100. This is below the median housing value.

The calculation used to determine the maximum affordable mortgage by income is based upon a 30-year fixed rate loan at 4.6%; a 10% down payment on the sales price; principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI) equal to no more than 30% of gross monthly income; and an average County real estate tax of 159.57 mills.

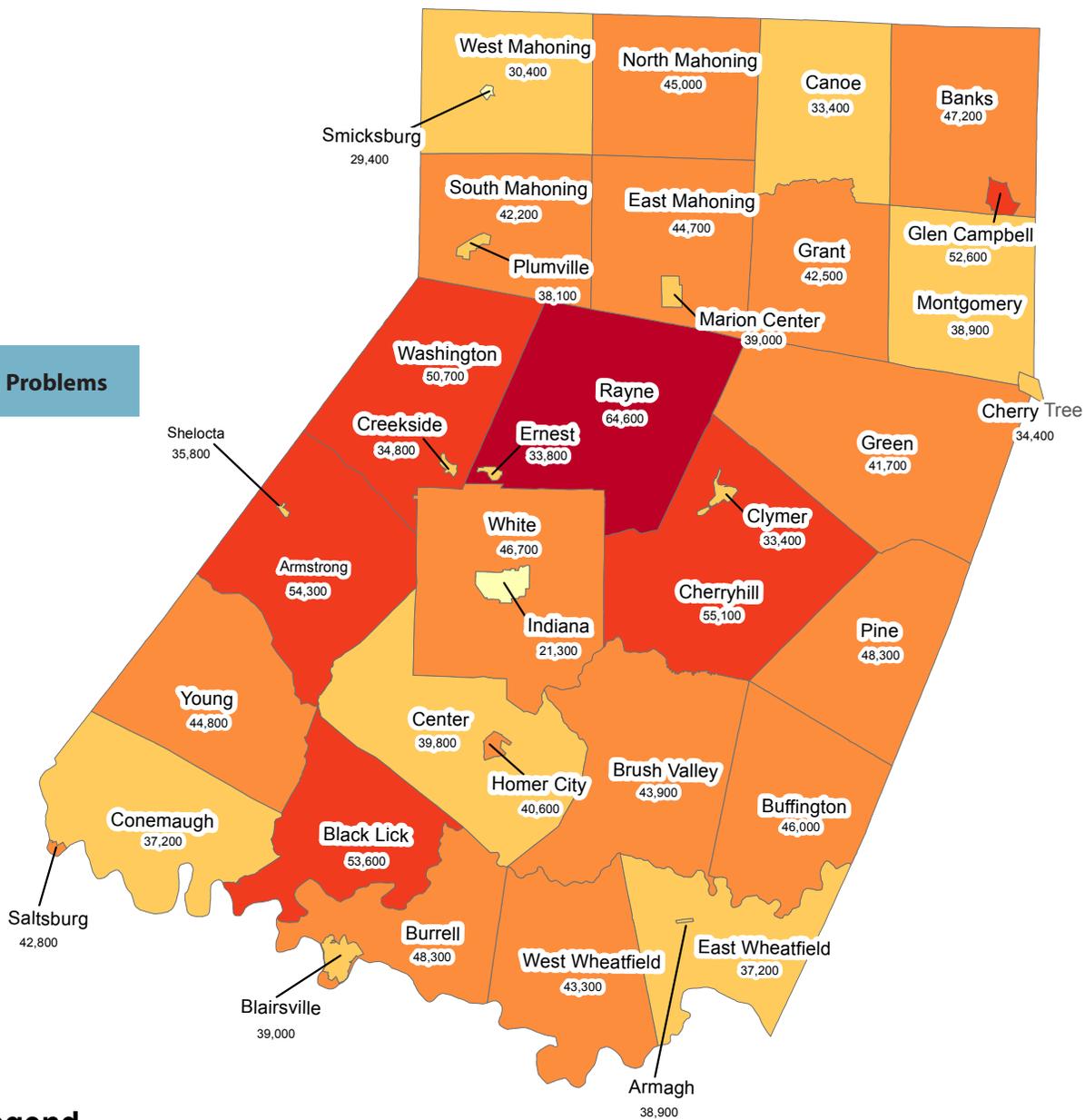
Millage rate is the method used to assess real estate tax. One mill represents one dollar of real estate tax on every \$1,000 of assessed value. In the case of Indiana County, an average millage rate of 159.57 translates into \$159.57 of real estate taxes for every \$1,000 of assessed value. Many Counties across Pennsylvania have not been assessed for decades. An annual equalization ratio is given to each County to accurately reflect the assessed value in the present day. In Indiana County the ratio is 19.8%, which adjusts the average County millage rate to 31.59. Applying this rate to a home assessed at \$100,000 translates to a real estate tax of \$3,159.

As presented in a previous section of this Plan, increases in MHI between 2000 and 2011 lagged significantly behind both increases in median rent and median home value. This further demonstrates a decreasing ability of households to afford housing, and especially rental housing.

### Key Findings

- The MHI in 2011 was \$41,424, which is lower than the MHI in both the Pittsburgh Metro and Statewide.
- The County's 2011 homeowner MHI of \$52,845 would be adequate to affordably purchase the median housing value of \$103,000. The median income among renters makes it difficult to afford the median gross rent or a home purchase.
- Cost burden impacts renters much more significantly than homeowners in Indiana County.

Map 16. Median Household Income by Municipality, 2011



Housing Problems

Legend

Median Household Income

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$40,000
- \$40,000 to \$50,000
- \$50,000 to \$60,000
- More than \$60,000

Source: ACS 2012  
 Calculations by Mullin & Lonergan Associates



## Comparison of Rent Levels across the County

In 2011, market rate rental prices were slightly above prices set by the Pennsylvania Finance Housing Agency (PFHA) for Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects and by HUD for HOME-assisted projects. The LIHTC rental limit for a two-bedroom unit occupied by a household making 60% of the median household income was \$629. The equivalent median market rate for a two-bedroom unit in Indiana County was approximately \$635. The low HOME rent and high HOME rent limits for a two-bedroom unit were \$626 and \$629, respectively.

Financing for HOME and LIHTC projects near the median market rate generally can be achieved. It is difficult to lease units at rates near or above the median market rate. At a minimum, HOME and LIHTC rental limits should be 10% less than the median market rate in order to facilitate demand. If the County chooses to develop rental units using HOME and/or LIHTC funding, measures should be taken to set rental limits slightly below rates set by PFHA and HOME. The median market rates for efficiencies, one-bedroom, and three or more bedrooms were approximately \$507, \$545, and \$832, respectively.

## Foreclosure

According to RealtyTrac, foreclosures in Indiana County as of December 2013 numbered one out of every 6,992 (0.01%) homes in the County. In Pennsylvania and Nationwide, foreclosures represented 0.08% and 0.09% of the housing stock, respectively. As the foreclosure rate is significantly lower in the County than across the State and the Nation, this data coincides with stakeholder comments that the foreclosure crisis did not substantially impact the County. The highest foreclosure rates across the County occurred in Saltsburg Borough, Homer City Borough, and Blairsville Borough, where foreclosure rates were 0.06%, 0.03%, and 0.02%, respectively. These rates were still lower than foreclosure rates within Pennsylvania and the United States.

### Key Findings

- Market rental prices are slightly above LIHTC and HOME standards.
- Affordable housing projects should be set at least 10% below market prices in order to facilitate demand.

### Key Findings

- Foreclosures number only one out of 6,992 (0.01%) homes in the County, which is significantly lower than across the Pittsburgh Metro and Statewide.

## Barriers to Affordability

Stakeholders identified problems that impede the development or maintenance of affordable housing. Due to dwindling resources for already limited funding streams, the County does not receive sufficient funding to develop a substantial number of affordable housing units. As mentioned in the Subsidized Housing Section, the County receives CDBG entitlement funding but not HOME entitlement funding. Typically, CDBG funding is used for projects not related to housing, though the County has supported some housing undertakings. All other affordable housing funding must be obtained on a competitive basis, usually from the State. These competitive funds continue to become less available. When the County does receive competitive funding via State grants for affordable housing construction/renovation, the number of units that can be created is limited by the cost of compliance with extensive HUD requirements and procedures.

New construction and renovation costs have also increased due to new Pennsylvania Building Codes. The Codes are geared toward new construction but apply toward many renovations, as homes without an occupancy permit are treated as new construction. According to stakeholders, approximately 96% of existing homes do not have an occupancy permit issued under the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code because they were constructed prior to the adoption of the code in 2004. The new codes require the investment of thousands of dollars to provide lighting efficiencies, sprinkler systems, vacuum tight buildings, and building permits. Small Boroughs and rural areas have the most difficulty complying with the new regulations because rental/sale prices for residential and commercial properties are too low to recoup the additional costs required by the new codes, and these communities do not have sufficient water reservoirs to supply required sprinkler systems.

Indiana Borough and White Township have particular barriers to affordability. Student housing prices are driven upward by the fact that many students receive housing subsidy from their parents or can defer paying housing costs by taking out loans, and they increasingly demand housing with lots of amenities. The County does not consider this to be a primary housing concern, though it represents a concern for the long-term implications of debt students undertake to afford student housing.

Low-income tenants have difficulty locating in Indiana Borough or White Township because land costs are high compared to the rest of the County. In addition, these municipalities do not have agreements with HAIC that would allow the Authority to construct public housing within their borders. Many of the services and amenities most needed by low-income households are located in these areas, which makes the inability of supply to serve demand more serious. As a result, many lower-income households must find affordable housing in other areas of the County, often in more isolated rural areas. Another affordability issue in these municipalities is the supply of single-family structures for rent, which can command a higher price for students than for families. Landlords in the area described the difference. A three-bedroom single-family home can be rented to students for \$18,000 a year, compared to \$12,000 to a family.

The perceived unattractiveness of public housing units is reportedly turning potential low-income renters away from safe and affordable housing options or leading them to wait six to 12 months for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV). During this waiting period, many are likely paying for unaffordable or substandard housing. The public housing units with the highest vacancies in the HAIC are located in rural areas far from services. HAIC is also approaching a limit on the number of project-based vouchers it can provide, which represents another barrier to affordability. Without project-based vouchers, tax-credit projects are significantly more difficult to develop.

### Key Findings

- Dwindling grant resources and increasing compliance requirements hamper the County's ability to develop subsidized housing.
- New Pennsylvania building codes have significantly increased new construction and renovation costs.
- Low-income tenants have difficulty locating in Indiana Borough or White Township because land costs are higher than the rest of the County, HAIC has been discouraged from developing public housing in these locations.
- Low-income households reportedly find public housing units in more rural areas to be an undesirable housing choice.

# Housing Market Implications

- As 52.8% of renters are cost burdened, significant demand exists for more affordable rentals. This high percentage of cost-burdened rental households is strongly driven by the large student population in the County. This population is more willing than other age groups to temporarily incur high housing costs because they can be paid later when student loans mature.
- With transportation costs factored in, almost all County residents are paying more than 45% of income on housing and transportation. This suggests that walkable neighborhoods that do not demand reliance on personal vehicles are limited in the County, which places a financial burden on households.
- Median household income is increasing at a slower rate than rental and owner housing costs. As a result, households will be pay more in housing costs or seek less expensive housing options.
- As affordable housing is becoming more and more difficult to develop by government entities within the County, more creative and collaborative efforts will be required.
- New Pennsylvania building codes will increase housing construction and renovations due to additional requirements. This will make new housing constuction and renovations more difficult Countywide, particularly Boroughs and Townships with smaller populations where housing demand is comparatively low.

**Policy Profile**

# Policy Profile



**Policy Profile**

# Policy Profile



## Review of Housing and Community Development Policies

---

Indiana County's ability to affect the supply of affordable housing within its borders is limited primarily by a lack of land use authority, which lies primarily with local municipalities. It is additionally limited by a lack of funding streams offering resources to be tapped for development, conversion, tenant-based assistance and other means of creating subsidized units. The County may exercise policies that influence the private market, and it may align its planning and development efforts to promote a specific set of housing goals. This Housing Plan will ultimately explore such tools and assist the County to formulate very specific housing policy priorities and investment strategies within the context of reduced purchase power caused by rising costs and declining resources available for investment.

The County's broad and overall housing goals are expressed in its 2012 Comprehensive Plan. The housing findings it summarizes are from a Housing Plan that the County did not ultimately

adopt. The Comprehensive Plan builds upon these data points to suggest a variety of strategies to broaden the range of affordable and diverse housing choices available and promote sustainable development.

The Plan recommended the following to broaden housing supply:

- **Preserving the existing housing stock** by conducting a detailed inventory, continuing to administer rehabilitation and home-ownership programs, targeting rehabilitation assistance to certain communities, and investigating demolition options.
- **Increasing options** by amending existing land use regulations to address provisions that discourage affordable housing. Additionally, it recommends alternatives that encourage a mix of housing types for all income levels, providing incentives to include affordable units in developments, expediting the approval process for affordable projects, and prioritizing and funding human service programs that assist with housing needs.

- **Improving the balance between jobs and housing** by encouraging municipalities to reduce restrictions and provide incentives for mixed-use development, coordinate housing and economic development strategies, conduct a Livable Communities Assessment, and develop and encourage private development of employer-assisted housing programs.
- **Encouraging development of housing that meets the needs of an aging population** by providing incentives to encourage age-in-place opportunities, ensuring that land-use regulations allow for the development of accessory units, and encouraging developers and builders to incorporate Universal Design features.
- **Encouraging development of housing that meets current preferences** by ensuring that developments incorporate open space and recreation, pedestrian accommodation, proximity to public transportation, encouraging developers and builders to offer smaller homes and lots, and developing an Energy Plan that includes energy-efficient housing standards.

With regard to balancing new development with conservation objectives, the Plan recommended:

- **Encouraging infill development** by providing incentives in designated growth areas, encouraging municipalities to allow for residential adaptive reuse in non-residential areas, encouraging the redevelopment of underutilized retail space into multi-family housing and identifying opportunities to deconcentrate public housing by replacement with mixed-income housing in designated growth areas.
- **Utilizing conservation design in new residential developments** by ensuring that it is incorporated in local ordinances and developing and enacting a Transfer of Development Rights Program.

The Future Land Use Map included in the Comprehensive Plan is consistent with these principles and with the general framework of Smart Growth which designates areas for growth that surround population centers already served by infrastructure. Attempting to focus development in designated appropriate areas represents an effort to stem urban sprawl, in which land consumption outpaces population growth, and new infrastructure and housing

are built along the fringes at the expense of structures that already exist. Controlling sprawl would preserve investment and diversity in more densely developed areas and slow geographic and economic stratification.

The influence that Indiana County can exert in ensuring that development is focused within these growth areas is limited. However, the County can encourage projects in these areas through public investment decisions such as transportation initiatives in which state or federal funds are channeled through the County. Another similar activity would be redevelopment activities, such as acquisition, demolition or remediation, that lead to economic development projects that create jobs.

The County's primary activities to provide decent and affordable opportunities for home ownership have included rehabilitation programs, accessibility modifications and down payment assistance. The County also supports the creation of affordable rental housing, especially tax credit developments.

As noted earlier in this Plan, rehabilitation is difficult to make cost-effective due to increased regulatory requirements and higher subsidies needed for developers to balance rising construction costs. Additionally, the local lending market does not seem to offer a low-interest product for rehabilitation that would suit the needs of moderate-income and lower-income families. The lack of grant options available for rehabilitation translates to deferred maintenance, particularly among fixed-income owners living in the older structures in the County's boroughs. Stimulating housing demand in areas well served by existing infrastructure will require the maintenance of stock that meets the needs of homebuyers.

Though rehabilitation has become an increasingly expensive and complicated undertaking, it remains nonetheless a priority need. According to stakeholders, many of the calls to the County's 2-1-1 hotline regard home repairs that are needed to help elderly residents age in place. Housing in the rural areas can consist of uninsulated, and poorly constructed structures with unreliable and expensive heat sources. Rehabilitation is also needed to return vacant homes in Indiana

Borough from student rental use to suitability for ownership by families.

In order to match the housing stock in Indiana Borough to household preferences, the Inhabit Indiana Program has focused on the Borough's Elm Street project area. The Program offers packaged incentives including down payment assistance, rehabilitation loans, bank partnership and tax abatement to prospective homebuyers to purchase and occupy Borough homes in areas that are currently considered campus neighborhoods. The Program, which administered \$70,000 in such improvements, is currently stalled due to a lack of capacity and funding.

One means of re-energizing that initiative might be to incorporate a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Act (LERTA) component. Commonly referred to as Act 76 of 1977, LERTA is a tool designed to lessen the tax burden on new development in order to bolster the economic and business climate of certain residential and commercial districts. It is particularly useful in already developed areas where a community desires that property owners drive revitalization. Under a LERTA, a community designates a specific geographic area in which it grants owners a tax abatement to improve their properties. The state enabling legislation allows municipalities to exempt the value of all improvements from local taxes for a certain period of time up to 10 years. It starts at a 100% abatement that decreases by 10% annually. In essence, the municipality incentivizes rehabilitation, which in an area with a strong school district could help to spur market demand.

The most direct impact County government has on the local housing market is in the form of programs it administers to broaden the availability of affordable, decent and accessible units. In 2009, the County received \$2.6 million from PA DCED in Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding for the development of 15 units. The units include a 12-unit rental property in Indiana Borough which would be rehabilitated and donated to a local community housing development organization for rental to income-eligible households. The goal for the program was to identify neighborhoods and housing units that required minimum rehabilitation and would sell quickly within the market. Additionally, the funding source allowed the County to serve households up to 120% of median income, a segment of the market that the County typically

cannot address using other federal and state funding sources.

The County has more flexibility in the use of its Act 137 fund. The fund allows the County to raise additional revenues to be used for affordable housing needs by increasing fees for recording mortgages and deeds. Since the County's creation of an Act 137 fund, the fee it charges has remained at \$10 per transaction.

As detailed in the Subsidized Housing section of this Plan, the County has allocated a portion of its entitlement Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and all of its competitive HOME program awards for the maintenance or expansion of affordable housing opportunities. They include \$251,000 toward the \$1.2 million Homeless Veterans Housing Project in 2011 and \$187,000 toward renovating the Park Hill Apartments in Burrell Township. Additionally, the County allocated \$500,000 in 2009 CDBG funds to provide accessibility modifications for eligible households and \$500,000 in HOME funds for a transitional housing rehabilitation program focused in the northeast section of the County. A portion of the grant also went toward the County's Home Ownership Program. The County applied in December 2013 for \$500,000 to provide further accessibility modifications and homebuyer assistance. A Keystone Grant application requesting \$300,000 for accessibility assistance is also pending.

The County can continue to advance its housing goals through ensuring that all public investment initiatives, particularly those regarding transportation and economic development, are consistent. The County can continue to address barriers to affordable housing within its borders through changes to existing land use regulations, including its own Subdivision Ordinance, and through promoting updates to municipal ordinances as needed. Incentivizing the maintenance and creation of affordable housing to meet current and projected community demand will likely require creative collaborative work with municipal officials.

#### *Key Finding*

- Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, implementation of the County's goals has taken the form of investment choices more than adjustments to local land use policy documents.

## Comparative Local Taxes

Tax burden represents one component of housing affordability, as land values and municipal tax efforts vary across the County. School districts and municipalities assign rates for various classes of property to balance the community's unique set of resources and needs. A millage rate typically represents tenths of a cent that are multiplied by each property's assessed value to determine a tax bill. In Indiana County, a state-determined equalization ratio is applied to tax rates to address the difference between the real market value of properties and the assessed values they received from the County decades ago.

In Indiana County, older boroughs are typically among those with the highest millage rates. This is due to the higher tax effort necessary for the municipalities to draw a level of funds sufficient to provide the level of services demanded by residents. To some extent it reflects the proportion of older and lower-valued housing in these communities that serves as a drag on the local tax base. This is the case for Indiana Borough, where the municipal levy is the highest in the County at 28.45 mills, and in Blairsville Borough which levied 24 mills in 2013. By comparison, in areas that have benefited from extensive economic development, those where residential property values are high and those with lower demand for public services, less tax effort is necessary. The County's lowest municipal millages in 2013 were zero in White Township, which is one of the few Pennsylvania governments that imposes no property tax, and 3.2 in East Mahoning Township.

For taxpayers in Indiana County and elsewhere across Pennsylvania, the single largest factor in the total millage rate is the school district in which their property is located. Millages ranged from 86.04 for those living within the Purchase Line School District to 160.82 for those within the Armstrong School District. The highest total millage in 2013, combining County, municipal and school levies, was 208.1 for households within the Apollo-Ridge School District in Young Township.

A jurisdiction's relative housing affordability and the feasibility of creating new housing options within its borders can be described using tax rates. A straight comparison of tax rates to determine whether a property is affordable or unaffordable gives an incomplete and unrealistic picture of property taxes. Local governments with higher property tax rates may have higher rates because the assessed values of properties in the community are low, resulting in a fairly low tax bill for any given property.

A true picture of comparative tax burden must take into account both millage rate and the properties being taxed. The following table presents a calculation of the income that would be required in each municipality within a school district to purchase a home at the 2011 Census median value. This assumes that a household would not be paying more than 30% of gross income on mortgage principal, interest and insurance. Additionally, it assumes a 30-year fixed rate loan with a rate of 4.6% and a down payment of 10%.

Taxes are then added into housing costs. The table further shows how much income would be required in each community to afford mortgage principal, interest, insurance *and* property taxes. The final column shows the difference between housing costs minus taxes and when taxes are factored in. Taxes make an extremely substantial difference in a household's monthly payment. Increases of more than 60% occur in communities where school levies are high, such as Young Township in the Apollo-Ridge district and West Mahoning Township and Smicksburg Borough, both in the Armstrong District.

In a similar analysis conducted statewide, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Commission found that the most extreme increases occurred in areas with the lowest median home values, which suggests a disproportionate burden that may have exacerbated foreclosure in poorer communities. This does not appear to hold true as a rule in Indiana County, as higher-value areas have some of the greatest tax burden, and vice versa.

**Table 23. Comparative Property Tax Burden**

Municipality	School District	Total Millage	Equalized	Census 2011 Median Value	Income Needed to Afford Principal, Interest and Insurance	Income Needed to Afford Principal, Interest and Insurance with Taxes	Difference
Armagh Borough	United School District	143.35	28.4	\$123,200	\$25,937	\$37,593	44.9%
Armstrong Township	Indiana Area School District	150.19	29.7	\$110,500	\$23,593	\$34,546	46.4%
Banks Township	Punxsutawney Area School District	129.93	25.7	\$82,500	\$18,426	\$25,500	38.4%
Blacklick Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	167.22	33.1	\$112,700	\$23,999	\$36,437	51.8%
Blairsville Borough	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	187.74	37.2	\$91,500	\$20,087	\$31,424	56.4%
Brush Valley Township	United School District	141.1	27.9	\$102,500	\$22,117	\$31,662	43.2%
Buffington Township	United School District	139.85	27.7	\$122,400	\$25,789	\$37,087	43.8%
Burrell Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	173.34	34.3	\$123,800	\$26,048	\$40,211	54.4%
Canoe Township	Marion Center Area School District	150.88	29.9	\$71,700	\$16,432	\$23,572	43.5%
Canoe Township	Punxsutawney Area School District	135.33	26.8	\$71,700	\$16,432	\$22,836	39.0%
Center Township	Homer-Center School District	171.4	33.9	\$99,900	\$21,637	\$32,938	52.2%
Cherry Tree Borough	Harmony Area School District	120.62	23.9	\$67,100	\$15,583	\$20,925	34.3%
Cherryhill Township	Penns Manor Area School District	149.96	29.7	\$108,200	\$23,169	\$33,877	46.2%
Clymer Borough	Penns Manor Area School District	175.96	34.8	\$59,100	\$14,107	\$20,971	48.7%
Conemaugh Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	169.24	33.5	\$89,600	\$19,736	\$29,744	50.7%
Creekside Borough	Marion Center Area School District	150.98	29.9	\$70,200	\$16,156	\$23,151	43.3%
East Mahoning Township	Marion Center Area School District	145.08	28.7	\$106,600	\$22,873	\$33,080	44.6%
East Wheatfield Township	United School District	146.15	28.9	\$94,200	\$20,585	\$29,671	44.1%
Ernest Borough	Marion Center Area School District	158.48	31.4	\$65,000	\$15,196	\$21,995	44.7%
Glen Campbell Borough	Purchase Line School District	137.44	27.2	\$38,300	\$10,268	\$13,743	33.8%
Grant Township	Marion Center Area School District	151.38	30.0	\$84,900	\$18,868	\$27,351	45.0%
Green Township	Purchase Line School District	132.94	26.3	\$89,700	\$19,754	\$27,625	39.8%
Homer City Borough	Homer-Center School District	185.82	36.8	\$93,000	\$20,363	\$31,769	56.0%
Indiana Borough	Indiana Area School District	171.44	33.9	\$100,400	\$21,729	\$33,089	52.3%
Marion Center Borough	Marion Center Area School District	157.78	31.2	\$75,500	\$17,134	\$24,996	45.9%
Montgomery Township	Purchase Line School District	128.83	25.5	\$76,900	\$17,392	\$23,931	37.6%
North Mahoning Township	Punxsutawney Area School District	133.33	26.4	\$120,700	\$25,475	\$36,097	41.7%
Pine Township	Penns Manor Area School District	148.56	29.4	\$97,600	\$21,212	\$30,782	45.1%
Plumville Borough	Marion Center Area School District	150.88	29.9	\$70,800	\$16,266	\$23,317	43.3%
Rayne Township	Marion Center Area School District	146.75	29.1	\$143,500	\$29,683	\$43,582	46.8%
Saltsburg Borough	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	174.94	34.6	\$88,600	\$19,551	\$29,781	52.3%
Shelocta Borough	Indiana Area School District	145.78	28.9	\$81,300	\$18,204	\$26,026	43.0%
Smicksburg Borough	Armstrong School District	207.22	41.0	\$73,800	\$16,820	\$26,913	60.0%
South Mahoning Township	Marion Center Area School District	147.93	29.3	\$113,800	\$24,202	\$35,313	45.9%
Washington Township	Marion Center Area School District	147.48	29.2	\$104,100	\$22,412	\$32,545	45.2%
West Mahoning Township	Armstrong School District	202.58	40.1	\$87,100	\$19,274	\$30,920	60.4%
West Wheatfield Township	United School District	146.15	28.9	\$93,800	\$20,511	\$29,559	44.1%
White Township	Indiana Area School District	142.99	28.3	\$158,500	\$32,451	\$47,410	46.1%
Young Township	Apollo-Ridge School District	208.1	41.2	\$75,900	\$17,207	\$27,632	60.6%
Young Township	Blairsville-Saltsburg School District	173.04	34.3	\$75,900	\$17,207	\$25,876	50.4%

Source: Indiana County Department of Tax Assessment, Calculations by M&L Associates, Inc.

## Resources for Affordable Housing Development

The following public funding sources are available to address many of the County's housing goals. This list is not comprehensive and particularly does not include programs that are specific to other topic areas that affect housing, such as job creation and transportation improvements. The County has leveraged a multitude of these sources to support its housing and community development efforts in recent years.

**Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), HUD:** The objective of the Community Development Block Grant Program is to carry out a wide range of community development activities directed to neighborhood revitalization, economic development, public services, provisions of improved community facilities, and prevention and elimination of slums and blight activities aiding low- and moderate-income families. Indiana County is eligible for these funds via Act 179, which authorized the State Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to distribute competitive CDBG grants for smaller communities and rural areas of the Commonwealth. Municipalities that meet certain minimum standards of physical and economic distress and have a population of at least 4,000 may apply. The County may apply on behalf of the remaining communities.

Indiana County's average annual grant through DCED's CDBG program is about \$350,000. These funds are typically applied to a variety of needs, such as infrastructure and accessibility. The requirements of the CDBG program, particularly relating to prevailing wage and lead-based paint abatement, make it difficult in general for the County to fund affordable housing initiatives using this source.

**Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), HUD:** HOME provides flexible grant funds to expand affordable housing for very low- and low-income families with emphasis on rental housing, substantial rehabilitation, new construction, acquisition, homebuyers assistance, homeowners' rehabilitation and tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA). HOME funds are

available to municipalities such as Indiana County through a competitive grant program administered at the State level by DCED. Two years ago, the County applied \$500,000 in HOME funds toward affordable housing rehabilitation. Finding eligible households to participate proved to be easy as need was great, and especially among people with disabilities. The County reported that the larger difficulty was bringing homes up to HUD minimum standards given increasing rehabilitation costs.

**Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG), HUD:** Local service providers receive ESG funds to improve the quality of existing shelters and provide supportive services. Funds can be used for renovation, conversion of buildings, rehabilitation, essential social services and operating costs. As of 2011, funds may also be used for expanded prevention services, which has this program more similar to the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program. Through the ESG Program, Indiana County supported the Pathway Homeless Shelter administered by Indiana County Community Action Program.

**Public Housing Capital and Operating Funds, Housing Choice Voucher Program Funds:** These sources provide the Housing Authority of Indiana County with the means to administer its low-income housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Programs.

**McKinney Continuum of Care Grant:** This source supports administrative oversight in the development and provision of housing for the homeless and supportive services.

**Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program (HOPWA):** The HOPWA Program provides tenant-based rental assistance, short-term rental, mortgage and utility assistance, resource identification and other services to people living with AIDS. The City of Pittsburgh is the grantee for HOPWA funds for the larger metropolitan area, which includes seven counties. Indiana County is excluded. Therefore, any agency in Indiana County that aims to provide supportive services via the HOPWA program would be required to tap into the State funding stream for this purpose. Stakeholders were not aware of a large need for these services within the County, as the relatively small

affected population has been known to travel into Pittsburgh to access services. From 2011 to 2012, only one Indiana County household received services funded through HOPWA, compared to 55 in Allegheny County.

**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG):** Funds are used for a wide range of services and activities to support self-sufficiency. Funds are targeted to persons whose income does not exceed 125% of the federal poverty threshold. Indiana County's Department of Human Services administers these funds to help cover the weatherization assistance program, eviction prevention, rapid re-housing or emergency rental and mortgage help, job training, utility help, financial counseling, tax preparation, car repairs, back-to-school supplies, prescription assistance and more services.

**Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC):** The County is willing to issue Certifications of Consistency to support any LIHTC projects that meet local objectives and land use requirements. Currently, the County has no tax credit properties in the development pipeline, with the last being a general occupancy rental site in Blairsville Borough.

Other federal funds that may be used in support of housing and community development include loans through the HUD Section 108 Loan Program, Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grants, HUD Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, and HUD Section 811 Housing for the Disabled.

At the State level, Indiana County has received funding to support affordable housing and community development through the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE), and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) grant programs. The 2012 PHARE grant of \$155,000 was associated with the Indiana County Homeless Veterans Housing Project, which provided six units of permanent housing in White Township. The project involved multiple funding sources, including CDBG, HUD Supportive Housing Program, HOME and local funds from the Northern Cambria Community Development Corporation. The County has received multiple RACP awards administered by

the Office of the Budget for a variety of projects, including the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational or historical improvement projects.

The State of Pennsylvania authorizes counties to create dedicated funds to support various affordable housing activities outlined in the Pennsylvania Optional County Affordable Housing Act of 1992, known commonly as Act 137. Indiana County created such a funding pool in 1993 to support local affordable housing efforts by increasing the recording fees of deeds and mortgages. The County typically uses these funds as matching funds for other programs.

More recently, Act 13 of 2012 authorized local governments in the State of Pennsylvania to adopt an impact fee related to unconventional gas development. According to the Pennsylvania Utilities Commission, Indiana County received \$357,825 in 2011 and \$292,302 in 2012. This funding source is somewhat flexible, as counties across the state have applied it to public infrastructure, recreation facilities, tax reduction, affordable housing, social services and planning initiatives, among other uses. Indiana County divided its 2012 share among human services programs, the County Fire Academy, sewage enforcement, housing pre-development costs, capital reserves for future Act 13-eligible projects, economic development and planning for recreational improvements in Saltsburg Borough.

#### *Key Findings*

- Indiana County generally takes advantage of the federal and state opportunities available to fund housing and community development, including competitive awards such as HOME and PHARE.
- Finding ways to facilitate the County's housing goals in light of the declining funds available from federal and state sources will require cross-leveraged and combined resource streams, as well as creativity. Ideas currently under consideration include forming a lead agency to develop HUD Section 811 housing with a supportive services component for people with disabilities and re-invigorating the Inhabit Indiana effort, possibly with a LERTA component.

## Housing Market Implications

- Maintaining affordability restrictions for subsidized units is an effective means of preserving high-quality rental housing for lower-income families. With the exception of affordable housing units provided by the Housing Authority of Indiana County, the County has limited resources to create affordable housing options.
- The County's ability to affect the supply of affordable housing within its borders is limited primarily by a lack of land use authority, and a lack of funding streams for development, conversion, tenant-based assistance, and other means of creating subsidized units. The County's policy approach must be calibrated to influence the private market in ways that advance the County's goals.

# Community Needs



**Community Needs**

# Projections



Population projections are based on extrapolations of past trends. If those trends are consistent, it can be reasonably assumed that they will continue. Major regional events can alter those calculations dramatically. These projections are starting points for future considerations. As economic changes occur, these projections should be updated.

For the Housing Plan, a Countywide projection was completed to show general trends in population and housing across the County. In order to provide more meaningful data on where major population or housing changes will take place within the County, additional projections were calculated by school district. As school districts are often a major locational factor in selecting a new home, these geographies were used to project population changes.

## Methodology

---

After a 16.1% increase between 1970 and 1980, Indiana County's population has been slowly declining. It lost 2.5% of its population from 1980 to 1990, 0.4% between 1990 and 2000, and 0.7% between 2000 and 2011. However, between 2006 and 2011, the County's population increased by 0.9% according to the American Community Survey (ACS). This difference between 11-year and six-year projections suggests two possible population tracks, either a slight decrease or slight increase in population.

To highlight the two tracks, two linear projections of population were used to forecast future population trends. Both tracks assume no change in the average annual decrease/increase in population and extrapolate that decrease/increase into the future. The first track assumes the slow population decline that has been ongoing in the County since 1980. Because the decrease has been relatively steady since 1990 (0.4% and 0.7%), this projection assumes similar changes into the future and only requires projections data from 2000 to 2011 for extrapolation. The second

track assumes a small population increase. This is based upon population data from 2006 to 2011, during which the County’s population increased by 0.9%. To accurately portray this second track, projection data from 2006 to 2011 was used for extrapolation. The first track is the preferred alternative since it covers a lengthier period of time, includes more population estimates, and as a result, is more likely to be accurate. This projection period from 2000 to 2011 will be used for all other projected data.

To calculate school district projections, similar methods were used. Instead of using Census-provided school district data, municipalities were aggregated into their appropriate school districts. This was done because, with the exception of Canoe Township, all municipalities within Indiana County fit neatly into one school district. Canoe Township is located within both the Punxsutawney Area School District, and the Marion Center Area School District and was portioned appropriately. ACS began providing five-year data for sample sizes as small as Indiana County municipalities starting in 2009. Using the change from 2009 to 2011 is not ideal, as quick changes in such short periods can skew growth estimates in an area. To improve projections, Census data from 2000 was incorporated into the linear projection, creating a linear projection spanning from 2000 to 2011. Linear projections were then used to project out a single five-year increment.

## Population

Using the first track, Indiana County lost 0.7% of its total population between 2000 and 2011 with an average annualized loss of 0.06%. Assuming this trend continues, Indiana County’s population in 2016 would be 88,730 and 88,464 in 2021. According to the second track, Indiana County gained 0.9% of its total population between 2006 and 2011 with an average annualized increase of 0.17%. Assuming this trend continues, Indiana County’s population in 2016 would be 89,772 and 90,547 in 2021.

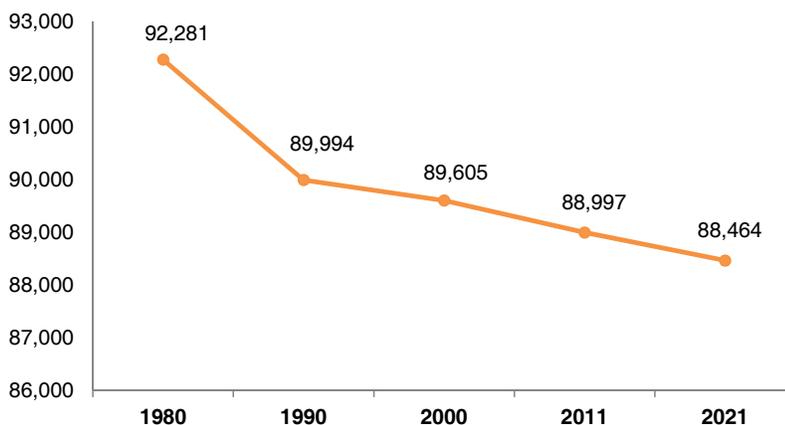
Within Indiana County, rapid growth is projected in the extreme northwestern portion of the County in West Mahoning Township and Smicksburg Borough, and areas adjacent to Cambria County to the east. This includes the Armstrong School District, Penns Manor School District, Purchase Line School District, and the United School District. All are projected to increase in population by at least 1%. The Indiana Area School District is also projected to grow significantly (1.3%). The largest decreases in population are projected to occur within the Marion Center School District (-3.3%) and Punxsutawney Area School District (-4%). The remaining school districts are projected to decrease by less than 1%.

### Key Findings

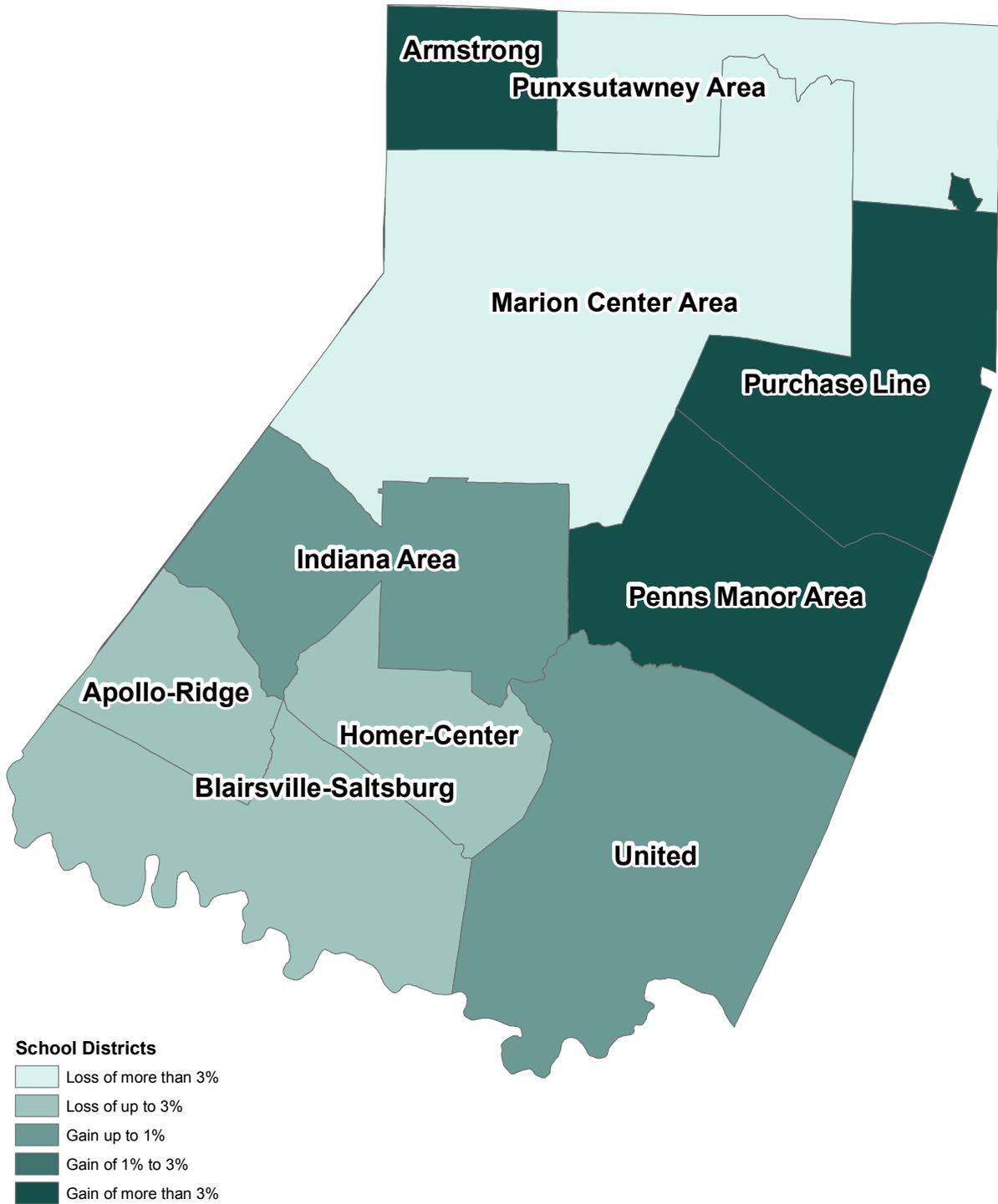
- Indiana County has been losing population since 1980. Recent ACS data since 2006, however, suggest slight population gains.
- Growth is projected to occur in the County’s northwestern section, Indiana Borough and surrounding area, and the County’s eastern section.

**Table 24. Population Forecast, 1980-2021**

Source: 1980, 1990, 2000 Census (P001), 2007-2011 ACS (B01003)



Map 17. Projected Total Population Change by School District, 2011 to 2016



## Households

While population change can have a significant affect on a community, the number of households can have an even greater affect on an area's housing market. As the average number of persons per household shrinks, the result can be an increase in the number of households requiring a unit. This can mean an increase in the number of households even while population declines. These households may require different unit types than previously available, such as smaller, more energy-efficient structures.

Despite the predicted losses in total population, the number of households in the County will continue to grow because the average number of persons per household is falling. Projections indicate the total number of households will climb from 34,591 in 2011 to 34,771 in 2021. These new households will be smaller on average, with an average household size of 2.36 persons in 2021 compared to 2.41 in 2011.

Within Indiana County, municipalities with the fastest household growth also have the fastest population growth. This includes the same school districts listed in the previous population projections. With the exception of the Homer-Center School District, Districts with population decline are either projected to gain a modest number of households or to lose households at a slower rate of population decline. This confirms the trend that households are proportionally increasing even in areas of population decline.

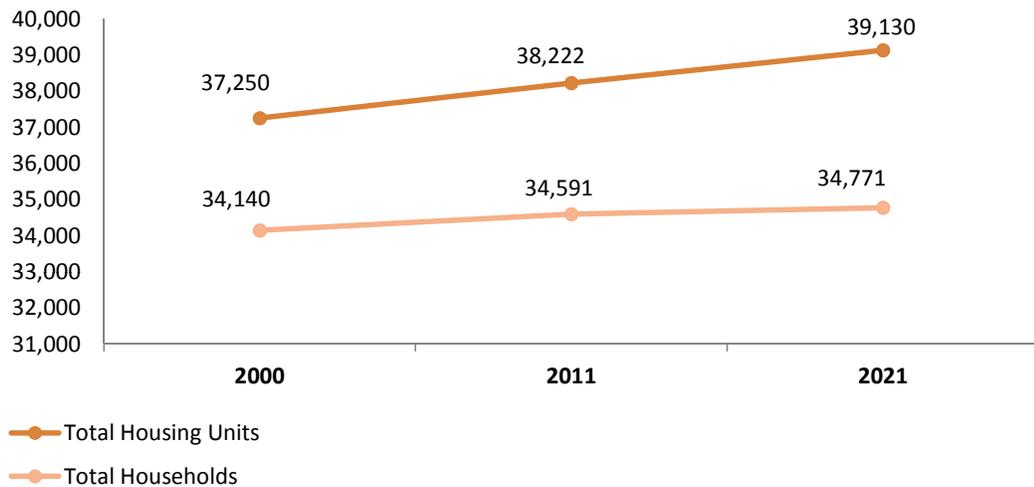
The one exception to this trend, the Homer-Center School District, is projected to lose households at a faster rate than population because of increasing household size. It is the only school district in the County forecasting increases in number of persons per household.

### Key Finding

- Despite population loss, the total number of households in the County is expected to climb as smaller and less traditional households increase.

**Table 25. Housing Units & Household Forecast 2000-2021**

Source: 2000 Census (QT-P10, H001), 2007-2011 ACS (DP-04, S1101)



## Housing Units

If past trends continue, new housing units will continue to be added to the County's housing stock. The total number of housing units is projected to increase by approximately 900 units for a total of 39,130 housing units in the County by 2021. Of these housing units in 2021, 34,960 will be occupied, which represents a difference of 249 from the total projected households. These 249 units can be accounted for by second homes and is consistent with current housing characteristics.

In 2000, owner-occupied units accounted for 72% of occupied housing units in Indiana County. By 2011, that percent had fallen to 70.2%, and it is projected to fall to 68.3% by 2021. The majority of housing units will continue to be owner-occupied, though renter-occupied units have become an increasingly larger share of the units in the County. This trend is projected to increase and is supported by the dramatically declining rental vacancy rates and the changing lending atmosphere for owner-occupied homes.

While both homeowner and rental vacancy rates have fallen in recent years, these numbers account only for vacant-for-sale or for-rent units. Total vacancy rates, which include abandoned homes

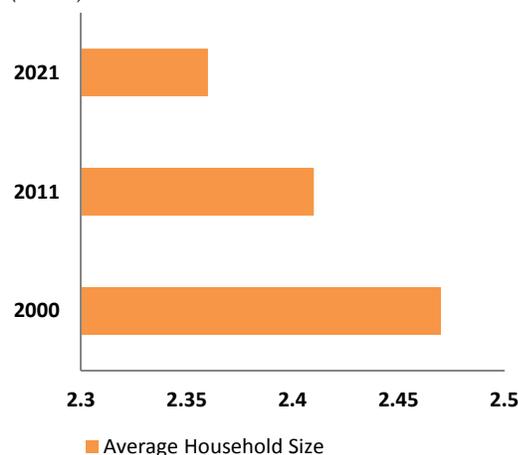
and vacation homes, have slightly climbed since 2000. This trend is expected to continue as home construction continues to outpace new household creation. A modest number of new housing units is expected to be added to the market at a growth rate of 0.24% while households are expected to grow at a rate of 0.12%. This trend will push vacancy rates higher, climbing to 10.71% by 2021. These vacant units are expected to number 4,170 by 2021. They are projected to concentrate in areas with higher rates of poverty and lower neighborhood stability indicating residents will choose to move to new homes in other areas of the County. This indicates that rehabilitation and demolition of abandoned structures will be an important component of housing policy for the County.

### Key Findings

- Total housing units are projected to increase by approximately 900 units in 2021.
- In 2000 owner-occupied units accounted for 72% of all housing units. In 2021 they are projected to account for 68.3%.
- As home construction is anticipated to outpace household creation, vacancy rates are projected to increase to 10.71% by 2021.

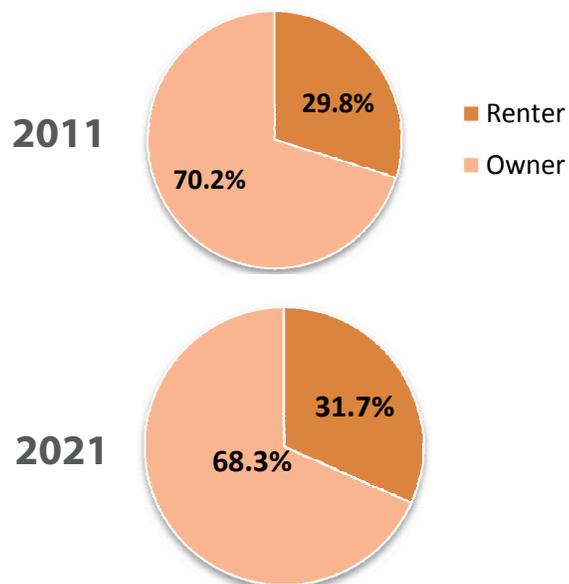
**Table 26. Average Household Size Forecast 2000-2021**

Source: 2000 Census (DP-01), 2007-2011 ACS (DP-04)



**Table 27. Owner/Renter Share, 2011 and 2021**

Source: 2007-2011 ACS (B23003)



## Income and Tenure

Projections of owner households show declining numbers of low-income households owning their homes in the County. In 2000, 47.9% of owner households earned less than \$35,000. By 2011 that number had fallen to 31%, and by 2021 the share of owner households earning less than \$35,000 will be only 17.2%. In 2000, 79.9% of renter households earned less than \$35,000, then 70.4% in 2011, and by 2021 the share is projected to be 58.1%.

While inflation can account for some of the decrease in the number of low-income owner households, it cannot account for the 45.7% projected decrease between 2000 and 2021 of all households earning less than \$35,000. This can largely be attributed to a decrease in the number of low-income households living in the County. However, other factors are contributing to a decrease in low-income homeownership. As the percentage of low-income rental households is projected to decrease by 21.8% between 2000 and 2021, factors such as increased demand for rentals across all incomes and a tightening

regulatory environment are also leading to decreases in the number of low-income homeowners. The decrease may also be related to the expected death of senior homeowners on fixed incomes as the larger Baby Boomer generation moves into this age category.

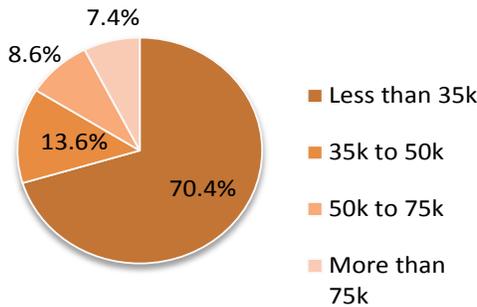
Projections of renter households show the rental housing market will continue to be dominated by those with incomes below \$50,000 per household. An increasing number of high-income households are choosing to rent. The share of renter households with an income above \$75,000 is projected to increase from 3.4% in 2000 to 14.2% in 2021. Overall, the number of renter households will continue to increase, growing to just over 31% by 2021.

### Key Findings

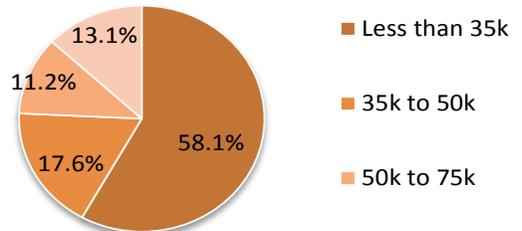
- The percentage of owner households earning less than \$35,000 is projected to fall to 17.2% by 2021.
- By 2021 75.7% of the rental market is projected to include incomes below \$50,000.

**Table 28. Renter Share, 2011**

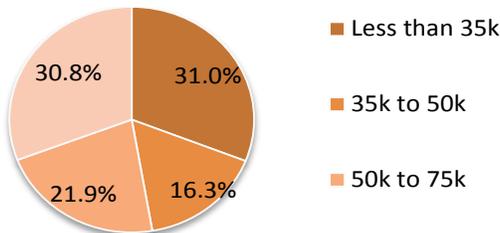
Source: 2007-2011 ACS (B25118)



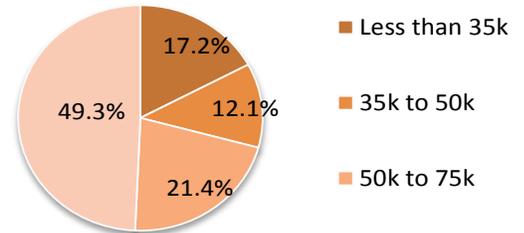
**Table 30. Rental Share Forecast, 2011-2021**



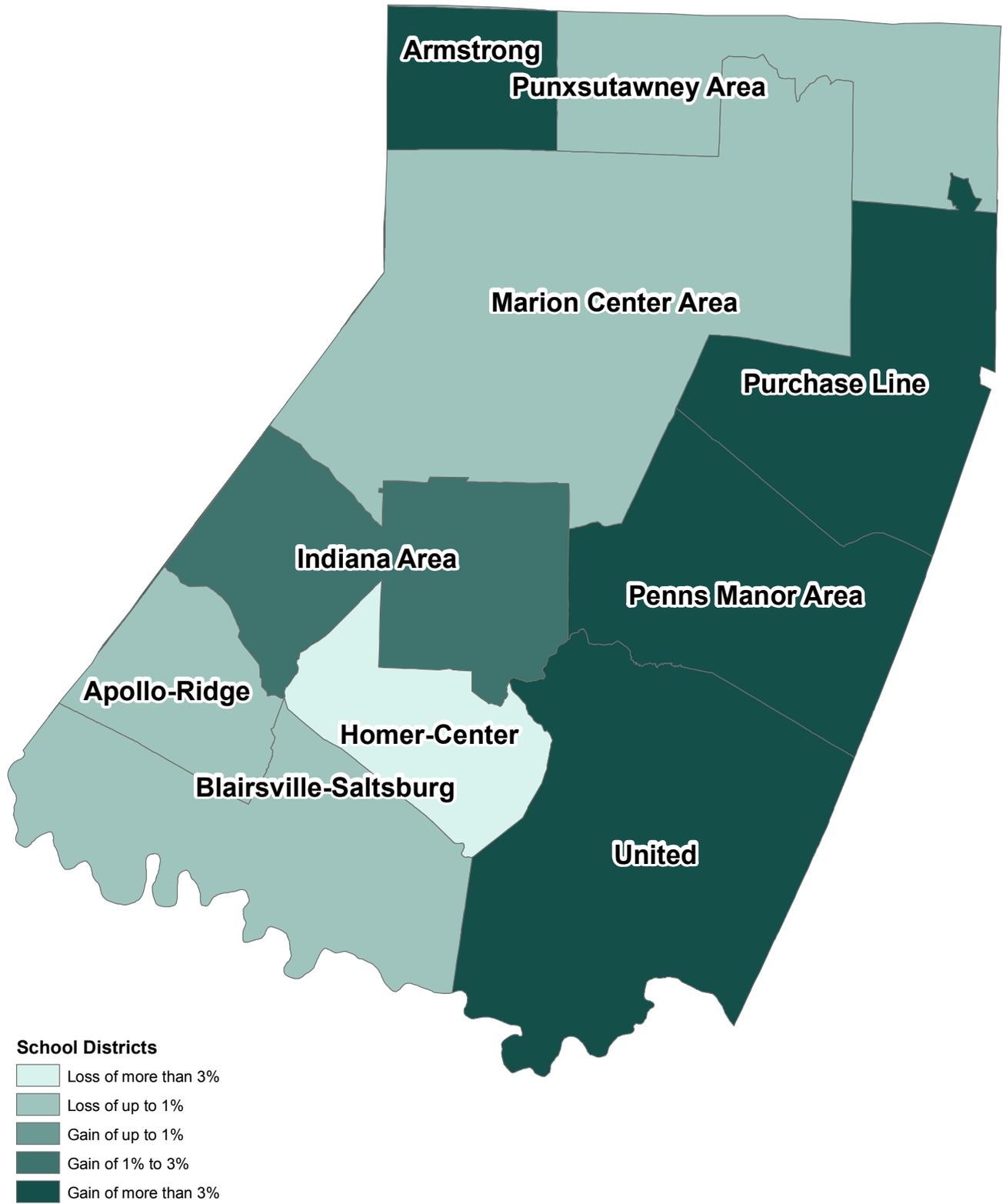
**Table 29. Owner Share, 2011**



**Table 31. Owner Share Forecast 2011-2021**



Map 18. Projected Total Household Change by School District, 2011 to 2016



**Community Needs**

# Calculation of Net Demand



## Affordable Housing Need and Demand

---

The demand for affordable housing includes two components. They are existing need and projected demand. Existing need is based on the number of households living in inadequate housing and the number of cost-burdened households. Projected demand is based on the expected change in the number of lower-income households.

To determine existing need, the number of low-income households that paid more than 30% of their income for housing costs (cost-burdened households) was combined with the number of housing units that were overcrowded or lacked complete plumbing facilities. Low-income households are those making less than 80% of the County's median income.

In Indiana County in 2000, 28,925 households were low-income and cost-burdened. An additional 1,320 households lived in either overcrowded conditions or in units lacking complete plumbing facilities. Research in other metropolitan areas has shown that 44.3% of those

living in overcrowded or insufficient housing units are also counted in low-income and cost-burdened households. Using this figure, 735 households living in overcrowded conditions or in units lacking plumbing facilities are not cost-burdened. Together, this means approximately 29,660 households in the County are in need of some type of intervention to make their living situation habitable and/or affordable.

Indiana County has the special circumstance of housing a large number of student households who would be considered by the Census Bureau to be cost-burdened and/or living in substandard housing. Despite the generally low incomes of students, such households are not considered to be in need of policy intervention. Therefore, this analysis subtracts out 3,954 County households with a head of household under the age of 25, with the expectation that most are students. Only 17% of these households had incomes in 2011 exceeding the County median of \$41,424. Without counting these households, the existing demand for affordable housing falls to 25,706.

Future affordable housing demand is determined by the number of new low-income households

expected to move into the County. According to past trends and existing population decline, the number of low-income households expected to reside in the County in 2021 is projected to decrease. According to projections, the County will lose 843 low-income renter households and 12,733 low-income owner households by 2021. This is a total loss of 13,576 low-income households by 2021.

Even with the projected decline in the number of low-income households, existing need combined with projected demand reveal a need for intervention in 16,083 households to create affordable and decent living environments for residents. The construction or rehabilitation of this many units would require a consistent investment by the County that could only be completed over the course of decades, given current funding streams.

According to analysis of records available regarding projects in progress, no units are currently planned, and expected to add to the inventory of assisted housing in Indiana County in the next few years. Given the County's aggressive pursuit of options to expand affordable housing choice, it is likely that the inventory will minimally increase. This will be balanced against the loss of any public housing units from the inventory due to obsolescence and/or demolition, and the loss of Housing Choice Vouchers available for those on the waiting list.

## Factors Affecting Change

While past trends have been relatively consistent with regard to housing units and population, a variety of new developments in Indiana County could alter its future. Below are some factors that could affect population changes.

The recent influx of Marcellus Shale-related activities could bring new jobs and residents to the County. Data from other communities have shown that such changes can vary widely based on the number and location of wells, and corporate headquarters. According to a study completed by Lycoming College's Center for the Study of Community and the Economy, only communities that attract natural gas headquarters or offices experience long-term residential growth, compared to those Counties that experience mostly pipeline and drilling activity.

Secondly, the Census Bureau has released data indicating a reversal of population decline in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. This change is an important indicator that the economic health of the region is improving and population decline in Indiana County could be slowing. Enrollments at both Indiana University of Pennsylvania and WyoTech are projected to increase in a few years as a result of a natural increase in the 19 to 24 age cohort. Stakeholders anticipate enrollment increases of approximately 600 students at WyoTech in two years, and up to 2,000 at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in the next five years\*.

*\* Data regarding WyoTech was collected prior to May 2014 and requires additional analysis beyond the scope and timeline of this Plan to determine the impacts of WyoTech's current situation.*

## Total Housing Demand

In addition to affordable housing demand, projections indicate changing demand for all types of housing. Trends project that the total number of households will increase by approximately 180 between 2011 and 2021. If past trends continue, rental households will continue to increase as a share of total households in the County, surpassing 31% of all households by 2021.

### Key Findings

- Existing housing demand consists of approximately 25,706 households in the County that are in need of some type of intervention to make their living situation habitable and/or affordable.
- The County is projected to lose 843 low-income renter households and 12,733 low-income owner households by 2021. This is a total loss of 13,576 low-income households by 2021.
- Combined, existing and projected demand call for a net affordable housing need among 12,130 lower-income households across Indiana County.

## Housing Market Implications

- The net affordable housing need among 12,130 Indiana County households consists chiefly of existing households who are cost-burdened or living in substandard housing, and are in need of some type of intervention to achieve decent and affordable housing.
- The projected loss of lower-income renters and owners from the County is more likely a function of continued population decline than it is a reflection of these households making income gains.
- Public subsidy for additional affordable units is expected to become increasingly limited, and addressing the net affordable housing need will require policy solutions that promote the creation of affordable housing options through less direct means, such as land use regulation changes, the design of incentives or imposition of set-aside requirements.

**Action Plan**



# Strategic Plan



# Strategic Plan



The following goals, objectives and action steps were developed as the means by which the Indiana County Housing Plan can be implemented. These items:

- Are consistent with the Indiana County Comprehensive Plan
- Are based on the trends, conditions and projected housing needs identified in the Housing Plan
- Are consistent with the Keystone Principles adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Address the housing needs and market implications identified in the Housing Plan
- Form the basis for the County's housing strategy for the next 10 years.

The goals and objectives will be incorporated into the Indiana County Housing Plan along with a series of specific strategies for implementation. This Strategic Plan will guide the County's investment decisions and policy implementation for the next 10 years. The Strategic Plan includes a timeline for implementation and baseline benchmarks from which the County can annually

assess its progress thereafter. Performance measurements can help the County to evaluate the impact of its investment strategies. Examples of performance measurements might include:

- Decrease in the number of cost-burdened households
- Increase in the amount of additional taxable parcels
- Decrease in the number of homeless and near-homeless households
- Decrease in unemployment
- Increase in homeownership
- Increase in the affordable accessible housing inventory

The Strategic Plan also suggests possible potential funding sources.

The following list of housing goals is presented by major category. Following each goal is a series of objectives that will assist the County in making progress toward achieving the goal if implemented.

## Housing Availability

*Goal: Ensure that an adequate supply of housing is available to meet the needs, preferences and affordability levels of Indiana County households now and in the future.*

### Objective 1:

Encourage the efficient use of infrastructure by focusing new and redeveloped housing on vacant, infill or under-developed land with adequate existing infrastructure or where new infrastructure is most cost-effective.

- a) Create, maintain and publish an online map illustrating the extent of existing public water and sewer system service.
- b) Offer incentives, such as property tax relief and expedited permitting, for infill development in areas where public infrastructure already exists. For instance, the county could freeze tax assessments on land with existing infrastructure that is subdivided for new housing construction until the homes are built and sold.
- c) Advocate for the focus of retail, restaurant and entertainment development in existing built-up areas, while reserving undeveloped sites farther afield (such as Windy Ridge, at the Route 422 and Route 286 interchange in White Township) for uses less compatible with residential neighborhoods.

### Objective 2:

Encourage higher residential densities along major corridors and transit routes, and where existing infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve the growth in households.

- a) Connect with local large employers to advocate for the creation of employer-assisted housing programs designed to allow employees to purchase homes near their workplaces. Employers could benefit from a more stable workforce by funding forgivable down-payment assistance as well as other housing-related services, such as counseling. PHFA offers an Employer-Assisted Housing Program that provides additional financial advantages to employees at no cost to participating employers.
- b) Cultivate housing demand along the corridor connecting Indiana Borough, Homer City Borough and Blairsville Borough, where stakeholders report that land and housing costs are still relatively low, school quality is relatively high and public infrastructure already exists.
- c) Work with municipal officials to offer density bonuses to developers of desired housing types in desired locations.
- d) Consider the use of tax increment financing (TIF) to spur private investment in areas in which it would otherwise not occur. TIF programs allow public or private agencies to borrow funds to purchase property, install infrastructure and prepare for construction. Funds are repaid out of a portion of property tax revenue generated by new development. In the case of Indiana County, a TIF could be established to commit increased tax revenues of an area targeted for desired housing types to fund improvements and incentives for development.

**Objective 3:**

Continue to support the preservation and maintenance of the existing housing inventory, particularly for households with lower incomes.

- a) Seek a means to continue implementation of the Inhabit Indiana Program. It offers packaged incentives (down payment assistance, rehabilitation loads, bank partnership and tax abatement) to prospective homebuyers to purchase and occupy Borough homes in areas that are currently considered campus neighborhoods. Explore the feasibility of partnership with the University or Foundations to continue Program delivery. (See the UniverCity Neighborhood Partnership in Iowa City as a best practice for providing incentives to preserve and maintain single-family homes in designated residential neighborhoods adjacent to a university.)
- b) Continue aggressive enforcement of the Uniform Construction Code for the 32 of 38 municipalities in the County for which ICOPD has this jurisdiction.
- c) Continue implementation of the Community Program for Restoration, which provides loans or grants to income-eligible homeowners in certain locations to undertake rehabilitation to meet code standards.
- d) Consider options such as Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP), a Section 108 loan guarantee, the new mixed-use provisions of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program or bond financing to facilitate or capitalize rehabilitation.
- e) Evaluate the possibility of designing a 203(k) program to connect buyers with an FHA loan product that packages mortgage financing with rehabilitation funds. Because appraisals are a concern, this strategy would be most appropriate in stable neighborhoods where the value of the finished home would exceed the cost of purchase and rehab, or for properties acquired at little or no cost through a land bank or lender donation.

**Objective 4:**

Encourage the development of housing opportunities for residents to age-in-place.

- a) Develop mechanisms to solicit and facilitate the participation of older residents in local planning processes. This will involve consideration of meeting times, the accessibility of meeting locations and transportation options in order to consult older residents on proposed plans. Planners need this input to anticipate the shift in housing demand that will accompany coming demographic change: What housing options are most desirable for aging adults, and if they plan to move, what will happen to the housing they leave behind?
- b) Prioritize affordable housing development opportunities that are within proximity of amenities and transportation connections. Across the County's inventory of subsidized housing, the units most in demand are those in more densely developed neighborhoods, while the most isolated developments experience high vacancy rates. The higher cost of land in and around Indiana Borough should be weighed against the locational advantages a site in this area would provide.
- c) Continue to invest CDBG funds in accessibility improvements for people with disabilities.
- d) Strive to maintain the existing housing stock through direct financial assistance through loan and grant programs, mortgage default avoidance education, home maintenance assistance and weatherization assistance.
- e) Initiate and maintain liaison with developers of senior housing to identify opportunities for such development.
- f) Determine the extent to which local zoning ordinances permit the construction of secondary dwelling units on residential lots. Flexibility to allow this type of development would expand affordable housing options and increase density.

**Objective 5:**

Encourage the development of housing opportunities in upper story floors above commercial spaces in downtown areas and through the reuse and adaption of vacant structures appropriate for this land use.

- a) Examine municipal zoning ordinances to determine the extent to which regulatory barriers to this type of development exist. Work with municipal leaders and planners to amend unnecessarily restrictive provisions, and build in necessary flexibilities, such as lower or no minimum off-street parking requirements.
- b) Advocate for form-based approaches to zoning that intentionally create a built environment that integrates housing into neighborhoods with amenities and transportation connections.
- c) Provide financial incentives for business district property owners to convert vacant or underutilized upper floors to residential uses.

**Objective 6:**

Collaborate with local higher education institutions to accommodate growth in enrollment in a manner that respects and preserves a good quality of life in single-family residential neighborhoods in close proximity to the campus.

- a) Participate in an expected update to IUP’s long-range facilities master plan, ensuring that any proposed off-campus developments, investments or dispositions are consistent with the ICUD’s vision for surrounding neighborhoods.
- b) Solicit long-range enrollment projections for both IUP and Wyotech through Enrollment Services or Registrar offices to determine the nature of future student housing demand.
- c) Use the ICUD initiative as a forum to ensure that Indiana Borough’s Zoning Ordinance remains responsive to anticipated changes in student housing demand.

**Objective 7:**

Support and encourage municipal efforts to restore the integrity and stability of previously single-family residential neighborhoods in close proximity to Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

- a) Advocate for the adoption of a zoning ordinance in White Township that would control the proliferation of student-oriented rental development, thereby controlling the sprawl of student housing. The shift among many students from living in the Borough to living in the Township has engendered transportation and neighborhood stability problems in the Borough, and public safety problems in the Township.
- b) Continue to advance the Indiana Community University District (ICUD), a collaborative land-use planning initiative that would establish a vision and strategy for the neighborhoods immediately surrounding IUP’s campus. The ICUD should plan to create a natural transect between campus and neighborhoods of other character.
- c) Provide incentive for residential rehabilitation via targeted use of the Residential Local Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA). The Act authorizes local taxing authorities to provide for tax exemption for certain improvements to deteriorated dwellings and for the improvement of blighted areas through the construction of new units. LERTA provides for 10-year phased out exemptions, such that 100% of tax liability is exempted in year one, 90% in year two, and so forth until a 10% abatement is granted in the year 10 value of new construction and rehabilitation projects.
- d) Work with local lenders and the Redevelopment Authority to develop rehabilitation loan products that would facilitate conversion of previously single-family homes back to single-family use.

## Housing Quality

*Goal: Ensure a safe and healthy built environment and assist in the preservation of sound existing housing and the improvement of neighborhoods and communities.*

### Objective 1:

Create a mechanism by which municipalities can acquire and demolish dilapidated properties for the specific intent of infill residential development.

a) Examine the feasibility of establishing and funding a countywide land bank as enabled by Act 153 of 2012 to acquire, demolish, clear title and transfer the ownership of vacant and deteriorated properties to new owners. These can include neighbors residing adjacent to the newly cleared lot. The lot can be subdivided and sold to one or both side neighbors to increase their existing lots, thus placing the vacant lot back on the property tax rolls. This option would also enable the County to provide targeted properties to organizations or individuals with specific plans to redevelop the cleared lots into viable residential opportunities.

A County land bank could stimulate investment by reintroducing problem properties to the market and serving as a clearinghouse for prospective owners and developers. It could have the authority to borrow and invest funds; to extinguish delinquent taxes; and to own, design, develop, construct, demolish, rehabilitate, lease or otherwise dispose of real estate. Funding for property acquisition, maintenance, insurance and staff could involve issuance of bonds; government, public or private grants or loans or generated revenue, such as a tax recapture component or revenue from real estate sales or rent. Additionally, partnerships with existing agencies (the Office of Planning and Development, the Housing Authority, and the Redevelopment Authority) could provide initial staffing. The business plan of the land bank should be designed specifically to serve Indiana

County's policy priorities, whether they are to eliminate blight, to provide affordable housing, to provide sustainable neighborhood stabilization, to make the land bank self-sustaining, or any of a number of other aims. Most importantly, a proposed land bank would require meaningful buy-in by not only taxing agencies (local governments, County government and school districts) but by a variety of stakeholders. One preliminary step would be determining which municipalities would be eligible to participate.

### Objective 2:

Provide educational opportunities to municipal leaders on property maintenance codes.

a) Offer annual workshops at which code enforcement officials present information to elected officials and staff on property maintenance and building code regulations. These workshops would represent an opportunity for multi-municipal or community stakeholder partnerships.

### Objective 3:

Continue to support the rehabilitation and upgrade of the existing housing inventory, when feasible, throughout Indiana County.

a) Determine the feasibility of fortifying the County's Act 137 Affordable Housing Trust Fund by increasing the levy tied to the transfer tax. This source is a flexible and stable means of financing various affordable housing undertakings.

b) Continue implementation of the Community Program for Restoration. This program provides traditional housing rehabilitation to meet minimum housing quality standards as determined by HUD.

**Objective 4:**

Encourage strict code enforcement of rental housing units, particularly in areas with higher rates of rental housing units.

- a) Continue to support Indiana Borough's rental inspection program and work with other municipalities to design and advocate for adoption of robust rental registration programs that are self-funded via fees, and require owners of all residential rental property except fully subsidized units to register their property. Such programs should intend to proactively identify blighted and deteriorating housing stock, and build mutually beneficial relationships with owners, improving the likelihood that code violations or other deficiencies would be promptly rectified.
- b) In communities where ICOPD enforces the UCC, identify code enforcement target areas where staff resources should be more heavily focused.

**Objective 5:**

Support local municipal efforts to advance historic preservation as a means of maintaining housing as a physical asset that contributes to an area's character.

- a) Assess the potential for assigning historic designation statuses to neighborhoods where it does not already exist.
- b) Seek resources from the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Office.
- c) Educate owners of multi-family housing about the availability of state and federal historic tax credit programs to facilitate substantial rehabilitation projects. Owners may qualify for a 20% federal credit by achieving conformity to the Secretary's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation, and a 10% credit is available for eligible projects that meet a lower standard. Nonprofits may take advantage of credits by transferring them to a corporate investor or individual who can offset their own tax liability.

**Objective 6:**

Support the Housing Authority of Indiana County in its efforts to preserve and enhance viable public housing units at rent levels affordable to lower income households, and in desirable locations in close proximity to community assets and public transit.

- a) Provide letters of support with local planning efforts to support Housing Authority development efforts and competitive funding applications.

**Objective 7:**

Support the Housing Authority of Indiana County in its efforts to demolish chronically vacant public housing units and develop new units, including mixed-income developments, in more desirable locations in closer proximity to community assets and public transit.

- a) If applicable, support the Housing Authority's efforts to apply for demolition funds and construction replacement funds from HUD in their efforts to create subsidized housing in desirable neighborhoods with community assets such as public transit and commercial amenities.
- b) Compile a database of rental units governed by affordability requirements of the Section 8 program and the contract expiration dates, in order to foresee and address upcoming expirations. The Housing Authority is a potential partner in preserving the affordability and availability of these rental units through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program administered by PHFA.

**Objective 8:**

Encourage the return of abandoned housing to useful and safe occupancy.

- a) Assess the potential for abandoned housing to be rehabilitated and provide interested investors with a list of actions needed to bring it into code compliance.
- b) Identify concentrations of abandoned housing where rehabilitation would produce a maximum impact.

**Objective 9:**

Promote the development of linkages between neighborhoods, subdivisions, community assets and employment centers.

- a) Continue to promote the development of multi-modal connections such as sidewalks, walking trails and bicycle trails between neighborhoods and community assets.
- b) Work with ICDC to influence the siting of employment centers within the County, orienting them in well-connected areas with proximity to amenities and employees.

## **Sustainable Housing**

*Goal: Encourage housing that supports sustainable development patterns by promoting the efficient use of land, conservation of natural resources, easier access to public transit, convenient access to parks and services, energy-efficient design and construction, and the use of renewable energy resources.*

**Objective 1:**

Foster flexibility in the subdivision and development of land to reduce the impact of new development on environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes and floodplain areas.

- a) Develop conservation land development regulations that allow for clustered and smaller lot sizes in exchange for more open space for the purposes of stormwater management and preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.
- b) Consider the use of overlay zoning in environmentally sensitive areas to protect the land as well as property and people from flood plains where development does not currently exist.

**Objective 2:**

Encourage higher density residential development in Designated Growth Areas and Future Growth Areas, especially where parks and schools are located, to ensure that the benefits of public investments are available to as many households as possible.

- a) Zone for higher residential densities in municipalities where school capacity exists, water and sewer capacities are available and public transportation is available.
- b) Focus County financial incentives in these areas to guide growth where it is most appropriate.

**Objective 3:**

Prioritize transportation improvements for all modes of transportation that connect Designated Growth Areas and Future Growth Areas with employment centers.

- a) Ensure that Indiana County’s representatives to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission advocate for the prioritization of projects in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and direct growth toward areas that the Plan has determined are most appropriate.
- b) Prioritize the County’s TIP projects that could elevate the development potential of land, particularly for job-generating purposes.
- c) Engage IndiGo and any other public transit providers as stakeholders early in the planning process for new multi-family housing development. The process must consider not only practical transportation concerns (i.e. curb and turn-around specifications), but also the feasibility of service provision to a given location.
- d) Continue to promote the development of multi-modal connections (sidewalks, walking trails and bicycle trails) between neighborhoods and community assets.

**Objective 4:**

Utilize conservation and energy-energy efficient elements and technology in publicly funded housing rehabilitation initiatives undertaken by Indiana County.

- a) Require energy-efficient appliances and mechanical equipment, particularly in rehabilitation initiatives financed with County resources.
- b) Require use of energy-efficient materials and construction techniques/standards in rehabilitation initiatives financed with County resources.
- c) Require best practices regarding landscaping, storm water management, etc. as part of the land development process for all non-single family development.

## Housing Affordability

*Goal: Promote the development and preservation of quality housing that is affordable to households of all income levels.*

### **Objective 1:**

Narrow the gap between housing costs and household income through employment retention and creation initiatives.

- a) Continue employer retention and attraction initiatives to expand local job opportunities and increase household income.

### **Objective 2:**

Incentivize the creation of cost-appropriate rental housing for non-student households.

- a) Continue to explore financing options for the development of affordable rental housing, such as tax credits, HUD multi-family programs, USDA rural rental housing loans (sections 515 and 521) and the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program.

### **Objective 3:**

Promote mixed-income residential development in both single-family and multi-family communities.

- a) Develop zoning provisions that encourage mixed-income development by requiring a variety of dwelling unit types such as duplexes, townhomes, and smaller floor plans, within the same subdivision rather than single-family development exclusively.

### **Objective 4:**

Expand opportunities for first-time homebuyers.

- a) Continue to administer the Affordable Home Ownership Program to provide subsidy, loan guarantees, closing cost assistance and counseling to income-eligible buyers.

### **Objective 5:**

Promote the development of accessory dwelling units and single-room occupancy units for non-students.

- a) Educate municipal officials and local developers on the need for non-student housing in Indiana Borough and White Township. Provide model flexible zoning and land development regulatory language to allow this type of development, which would expand affordable housing options and increase density.

### **Objective 6:**

Encourage the provision of technical training required for employment in the oil and gas industry to benefit local residents.

- a) Encourage IUP to continue its current initiatives and collaborate with Tri-County Workforce Investment Board and Indiana County Center for Economic Operations to ensure that locally generated jobs are available to qualified local residents.

## Balanced Community

*Goal: Strive for livable mixed-income neighborhoods throughout Indiana County that collectively reflect the diversity of housing types, tenure and income levels.*

### Objective 1:

Promote the development of mixed-income housing that may also include a mix of housing types.

- a) Develop zoning provisions that encourage mixed-income development by requiring a variety of dwelling unit types such as duplexes, townhomes, and smaller floor plans, within the same subdivision rather than single-family development exclusively.

### Objective 2:

Support the private sector in developing affordable housing for special needs populations such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, veterans and the homeless.

- a) Pursue the development of affordable rental housing for persons with disabilities through HUD's Section 811 program, which provides access to appropriate supportive services in addition to interest-free capital advances to finance development.
- b) Additionally, a new Project Rental Assistance Program was authorized by the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010 and first implemented through a demonstration program in FY 2012. Under this Program, housing agencies that have entered into partnerships with health and human services and Medicaid agencies can apply for Section 811 Project Rental Assistance for new or existing affordable housing developments funded by LIHTC, HOME or other sources of funds.

### Objective 3:

Encourage housing opportunities for lower income households (below 80% of median income) in all neighborhoods and municipalities to avoid their concentration in any one area.

- a) Promote affordable housing development projects in lower-poverty, stable neighborhoods, recognizing that the generally higher land cost in such areas can translate to neighborhood amenities and connections that should be afforded as options to lower-income households.
- b) Continue work with local officials to provide education and outreach to combat "not in my backyard" attitudes among residents of lower-poverty neighborhoods who may object to the siting of affordable housing nearby.

### Objective 4:

Encourage the development and preservation of housing that serves a range of income levels at locations near public transit and employment centers.

- a) As mentioned previously, work with area economic development agencies to anticipate and influence the geography of employer demand for workers.
- b) Stimulate market activity in such areas by designing incentives or programs to incentivize the type of development desired (e.g. tax increment financing, etc).

### Objective 5:

Encourage homeownership initiatives in areas with higher rental rates.

- a) Consider identifying neighborhoods where the County's Affordable Home Ownership Program should be focused to achieve this aim.

**Objective 6:**

Support regulations and incentives that encourage the production and preservation of housing that is affordable at all income levels throughout Indiana County.

- a) Partner with municipalities to communicate and gain support for the County's housing priorities.
- b) Provide technical assistance to municipalities or coordination among stakeholders as needed to facilitate the adoption of regulations or incentives that would advance this aim.

## Housing Continuum

*Goal: Ensure that a range of housing from temporary shelters to permanent supportive housing is available with appropriate services for individuals and households who need them.*

**Objective 1:**

Continue to plan and coordinate the provision of housing opportunities for households whose needs are not met by the private sector.

- a) Formalize efforts among human service agencies to centrally track benefit and service provision.
- b) Clarify program priorities (transitional vs. permanent housing) across the Human Services Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and collaborate to determine the extent to which current program delivery meets known needs of the veteran population.
- c) Work with the Indiana County Community Action Program to ensure that the prioritization of funding requests to the Southwest Regional Homeless Advisory Board Continuum of Care are consistent with the County's housing goals.

**Objective 2:**

Promote the preservation and development of a sufficient supply of permanent housing affordable to extremely low income individuals and families with children in order to reduce or prevent homelessness.

- a) Continue to explore financing options for the development of housing affordable to households with extremely low incomes. Some options include tax credits, HUD multi-family programs, USDA rural rental housing loans (sections 515 and 521) and the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program.

**Objective 3:**

Encourage the production of new and the preservation of existing housing units that are affordable to the needs of lower income households.

- a) Continue to explore financing options for the development of housing affordable to households with extremely low incomes. Some options include tax credits, HUD multi-family programs, USDA rural rental housing loans (sections 515 and 521) and the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program.

## Fair Housing

*Goal: Ensure freedom of choice in housing type, tenure and community for all regardless of race, color, religion, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, familial status and disability.*

### Objective 1:

Support programs that increase opportunities for members of the protected classes to gain access to housing of their choice throughout Indiana County.

- a) Ensure that Community Reinvestment Act coordinators at local banks are actively engaged in planning processes that identify housing needs in low-income census tracts and devise strategies to address them. Local banks have CRA funding available to invest in their communities for such purposes.
- b) Promote fair housing education to alert all involved parties to provisions and protections under the Fair Housing Act. This can be achieved through a partnership with Southwest PA Legal Services.
- c) Host fair housing events and workshops to provide education, outreach and training to County and municipal staff, private landlords, lending institutions, Realtors, and the general public.

### Objective 2:

Ensure the development of housing accessible to persons with disabilities and the adaptation of existing homes to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

- a) Pursue the development of affordable rental housing for persons with disabilities through HUD's Section 811 program.
- b) Continue to invest CDBG funds in accessibility improvements for people with disabilities.

### Objective 3:

Reduce barriers to the siting of housing for the elderly, persons with disabilities, families with children and other members of the protected classes throughout Indiana County.

- a) Review municipal zoning ordinances to determine the extent to which regulations isolate and limit the development of group homes for people with disabilities. To a suitable scale up to eight residents, these facilities should be permitted by right anywhere single-family housing is allowed. In cases where a local ordinance would unduly restrict creation of such a group home in a residential area, work with municipal leaders or planners to amend the ordinance.
- b) Review municipal zoning ordinances to determine whether opportunities exist for the new or infill development of housing for seniors within proximity of local amenities, particularly multi-family housing. In cases where a local ordinance isolates such multi-family housing or leaves no undeveloped land available for this use, work with municipal leaders or planners to amend the ordinance.
- c) Generally, in order to comply with the Fair Housing Act, real estate advertising should describe the property for rent or sale, not the type of person who should live there. Review real estate advertising to determine whether landlords and/or real estate agents discourage families with children from selecting any particular site, specifically those marketed toward students. In cases where this occurs, send the advertiser a letter advising on fair housing responsibilities or file a discrimination complaint with HUD.

**Objective 4:**

Encourage production of a range of housing types for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

- a) Amend zoning ordinances as needed to facilitate the development of housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- b) Initiate and maintain liaison with developers of housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- c) Pursue financing for affordable housing development for seniors and persons with disabilities through HUD's Section 202 and 811 programs.

## Housing Availability

*Goal: Ensure that an adequate supply of housing is available to meet the needs, preferences and affordability levels of Indiana County households now and in the future.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Focus housing on vacant, infill or underdeveloped land with adequate existing infrastructure or where new infrastructure would be cost-effective, pg. 106				
Publish online map illustrating existing water and sewer service	Staff time		2014	Completion, publication of map
Offer incentives for infill development	Staff time	N/A - policy change	2014-2016	Develop, advance, adopt policy, gauge increase in infill dev't
Advocate for the focus of retail, restaurant and entertainment development in existing built-up areas	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	Ongoing	Monitor rates of greenfield land consumption over time compared to pop. growth
Encourage higher residential densities along major corridors and transit routes, and where existing infrastructure has adequate capacity to serve household growth, pg. 106				
Advance employer-assisted housing programs	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	Ongoing	Creation of such agreements, number of employees assisted
Cultivate demand along the corridor connecting Indiana Borough, Homer City and Blairsville Borough	Staff time			
Encourage municipalities to offer density bonuses in targeted locations	Staff time			
Consider use of TIF to spur development in area in which it would not otherwise occur	Staff time			
Continue to support the preservation and maintenance of the existing housing inventory, particularly for those with lower incomes, pg. 107				
Explore local partnerships to implement the Inhabit Indiana program	\$50,000 - \$100,000/unit	University, foundation	2015-2018	Implementation of program, number of buyers assisted
Continue aggressive code enforcement	Staff time		Ongoing	Number of units tagged, monitor outcomes
Continue implementation of the Community Program for Restoration	TBD		Ongoing	Number of households assisted
Consider options for facilitating or capitalizing rehabilitation projects	TBD	NAP, Section 108, RACP, bond	2015	Feasibility determination, possible program design, application
Evaluate possibility of designing a program to connect buyers to FHA's 203(k) loan product	Staff time		2015	Feasibility determination, possible program design, implementation
Encourage the development of housing opportunities for residents to age in place, pg. 107				
Involve older residents in local planning processes	Staff time	N/A - policy	Ongoing	
Prioritize affordable housing development within proximity of amenities and transit	Staff time	N/A - policy	Ongoing	
Continue to invest CDBG funds in accessibility improvements for people with disabilities	\$100,000/year	HUD	Ongoing	Number of projects completed or households assisted
Strive to maintain the existing housing stock	Up to \$20,000/unit			
Initiate and maintain liaison with developers of senior housing to identify opportunities	Staff time			
Determine whether flexibility exists in local zoning for secondary dwellings	Staff time		2015	Review of ordinances, contact with municipal leaders

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Encourage development of housing in upper-story floors above commercial spaces in downtown areas and through reuse and adaptation of vacant structures appropriate for this land use, pg. 108				
Examine local ordinances, work with leaders and planners to amend unnecessarily restrictive provisions and build in flexibility	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	2015-2016	Monitor expansion of areas in which this use is permitted
Advocate for form-based zoning approaches	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	2015-2016	
Provide financial incentives for business district property owners to convert vacant/under-utilized upper floors to residential use	Up to \$5,000/structure		2016-2018	
Collaborate with local higher-education institutions to accommodate enrollment growth in a manner that respects/preserves a good quality of life in single-family neighborhoods in close proximity to campus, pg. 108				
Ensure that an expected update to IUP's long-range master facilities plan is consistent with ICUD's vision for surrounding neighborhoods	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	2014-2015	Participation in plan meetings, determination of consistency
Solicit long-range enrollment projections from IUP and Wyotech to determine the nature of future student housing demand	Staff time		2014	Analysis of enrollment projections within context of this Housing Plan
Use ICUD initiative as a forum to ensure that Indiana Borough's zoning ordinance remains responsive to anticipated changes in student housing demand	Staff time			
Support and encourage municipal efforts to restore the integrity/stability of previously single-family residential neighborhoods in close proximity to Indiana University of Pennsylvania				
Advocate for the adoption of a zoning ordinance in White Township	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	Ongoing	Township's adoption of zoning regulations
Continue to advance ICUD	Staff time	N/A - policy advocacy	Ongoing	Participation in process, local adoption of district
Provide incentive for residential rehabilitation via targeted use of LERTA	Varies		2015-2018	
Work with local lenders and the Redevelopment Authority to develop rehab loan products that would facilitate conversion of homes back to single-family use	Staff time		2015-2018	

## Housing Quality

*Goal: Ensure a safe and healthy built environment and assist in the preservation of sound existing housing and the improvement of neighborhoods and communities.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Create a mechanism by which municipalities can acquire and demolish dilapidated properties for the specific intent of infill residential development, pg. 109				
Examine the feasibility of establishing and funding a countywide land bank as enabled by Act 153 of 2012	Up to \$25,000/year		2014-2017	Assemble stakeholders and initiate discussion, research implementation in other counties
Provide educational opportunities to municipal leaders on property maintenance codes, pg. 109				
Offer annual workshops on property maintenance and building code regulations	Staff time		2015, ongoing	Number of attendees
Continue to support the rehabilitation and upgrade of the existing housing inventory, when feasible, pg. 109				
Determine the feasibility of fortifying the county's Act 137 Affordable Housing Trust Fund by increasing the levy tied to the transfer tax	Staff time	N/A - Policy change	2015	Changes in funds available
Continue implementation of the Community Program for Restoration	TBD		Ongoing	Number of households assisted
Encourage strict code enforcement of rental housing units, particularly in areas with higher rates of rental housing, pg. 110				
Continue to support Indiana Borough's rental inspection program and work with other municipalities to design and advocate for robust registration programs	Staff time	Inspection fees	Ongoing	Number/percentage of units registered in programs countywide
In communities where ICOPD enforces the UCC, identify code enforcement target areas	Staff time	N/A - policy	2015, ongoing	Gauge change in conditions, neighborhood outcomes
Support local municipal efforts to advance historic preservation as a means of maintaining housing as a physical asset that contributes to an area's character, pg. 110				
Assess the potential for assigning historic designation status in eligible neighborhoods where it does not already exist	Up to \$10,000/district	PA SHPO		
Educate owners of multi-family housing about the availability of state and federal historic tax credit programs to facilitate substantial rehab projects	Staff time	PHFA		
Support the Housing Authority of Indiana County to preserve and enhance viable public housing units at rent levels affordable to lower income households and in desirable locations in close proximity to community assets and public transit, pg. 110				
Provide letters of support with local planning efforts to support HAIC development efforts and competitive funding applications	Staff time	N/A	Ongoing	Number of projects supported
Support the Housing Authority of Indiana County in its efforts to demolish chronically vacant public housing units and develop new units, including mixed-income developments, in desirable locations in closer proximity to community assets and transit, pg. 110				
If applicable, support HAIC's efforts to apply for demolition funds and construction replacement funds from HUD	Staff time	N/A	Ongoing	Number of projects supported
Compile a database of rental units governed by affordability requirements of the Section 8 program and contract expiration dates to foresee and address upcoming expirations	Staff time	N/A	2014	Analysis of units expected to be lost from the inventory, strategy development to retain units if possible

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Encourage the return of abandoned housing to useful and safe occupancy, where feasible, pg. 110 (Land bank, mentioned previously)				
Assess the potential for abandoned housing to be rehabilitated and provide interested investors with a list of actions needed to bring it into code compliance	Staff time			
Identify concentrations of abandoned housing where rehabilitation would produce a maximum impact	Staff time	N/A - policy	2014-2015	
Promote the development of linkages between neighborhoods, subdivisions, community assets and employment centers, pg. 111				
Continue to promote the development of multi-modal connections	Staff time	PennDOT, DCNR, local capital funds	Ongoing	
Work with ICDC to influence the siting of employment centers in well-connected areas with proximity to amenities and employees	Staff time	N/A - policy	Ongoing	

## Sustainable Housing

*Goal: Encourage housing that supports sustainable development patterns by promoting the efficient use of land, conservation of natural resources, easier access to public transit, convenient access to parks and services, energy-efficient design and construction, and the use of renewable energy resources.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Foster flexibility in the subdivision and development of land to reduce the impact of new development on environmentally sensitive areas such as steep slopes and flood plains, pg. 111				
Develop conservation-focused land development regulations	Staff time		2015-2018	
Consider the use of overlay zoning in environmentally sensitive areas	Staff time		2015-2018	
Encourage higher-density residential development in Designated Growth Areas and Future Growth Areas, especially where parks and schools are located, to ensure that benefits of public investments are available to as many households as possible, pg. 111				
Encourage zoning for higher residential densities in municipalities where school capacity exists, water/sewer capacity is available and public transportation is available	Staff time	N/A - policy	Ongoing	Amount of suitable land zoned for higher-density residential use
Focus county financial incentives in such areas to guide growth where it is most appropriate	Staff time	N/A - policy	Ongoing	Map and evaluate public investment patterns
Prioritize transportation improvements for all modes that connect Designated Growth Areas and Future Growth Areas with employment centers, pg. 112				
Ensure that Indiana County's representatives to SPC advocate for the prioritization of projects in the TIP in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan	-	N/A - Policy	Ongoing	List of local transportation improvement priorities
Prioritize TIP projects that could elevate the development potential of land, particularly for job-generating purposes	Staff time	N/A - Policy	Ongoing	List of local transportation improvement priorities
Engage IndiGo and any other transit providers as stakeholders early in the planning process (Multi-modal connections, mentioned previously)	Staff time	N/A	Ongoing	Meaningful transit agency input in development projects

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Utilize conservation and energy-efficient elements and technology in publicly funded housing rehabilitation initiatives undertaken by Indiana County, pg. 112				
Require energy-efficient appliances and mechanical equipment	-	N/A - policy	2015, ongoing	Amended requirements, proof of compliance
Require use of energy-efficient materials and construction techniques/standards	-	N/A - policy	2015, ongoing	Amended requirements, proof of compliance
Require best practices regarding landscaping, storm water management, etc. as part of the land development process for all non-single-family development	-	N/A - policy	2015, ongoing	Amended requirements, proof of compliance

## Housing Affordability

*Goal: Promote the development and preservation of quality housing that is affordable to households of all income levels.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Narrow the gap between housing costs and household income through employment retention and creation initiatives, pg. 113				
Continue employer retention and attraction initiatives to expand local job opportunities and increase household income	TBD		Ongoing	Number of jobs in county
Incentivize the creation of cost-appropriate rental housing for non-student households, pg. 113				
Continue to explore financing options for the development of affordable housing	Up to \$150,000/unit	tax credits, HUD, USDA, FHLB, others	Ongoing	
Promote mixed-income residential development in both single-family and multi-family communities, pg. 113				
Develop zoning provisions that encourage mixed-income development by requiring a variety of dwelling unit types	Staff time	N/A - Policy		
Expand opportunities for first-time homebuyers, pg. 113				
Continue to administer the Affordable Home Ownership Program to provide subsidy, loan guarantees, closing cost assistance and counseling to income-eligible buyers	Up to \$20,000/unit		Ongoing	Number of buyers assisted
Encourage the provision of technical training required for employment in the oil and gas industry to benefit local residents, pg. 113				
Encourage IUP to continue its current initiatives and collaborate with Tri-County WIB and Indiana County Center for Economic Operations to ensure that locally generated jobs are available to qualified local residents	-	N/A	Ongoing	Number of jobs in county

## Balanced Community

*Goal: Strive for livable mixed-income neighborhoods throughout Indiana County that collectively reflect the diversity of housing types, tenure and income levels.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Promote the development of mixed-income housing that may also include a mix of housing types, pg. 114				
Encourage adoption of zoning provisions that encourage mixed-income developments by requiring a variety of dwelling unit types	Staff time		Ongoing	
Support the private sector in developing affordable housing for special needs populations such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, veterans and the homeless, pg. 114				
Pursue development of affordable rental housing for persons with disabilities through HUD's Section 811 program	Up to \$150,000/unit		2015-2019	Assemble stakeholders, establish plan, advance 811 proposal
Evaluate applicability of Project Rental Assistance Program established by Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010	TBD		2015-2018	
Encourage housing opportunities for lower-income households in all areas to avoid concentration, pg. 114				
Promote affordable housing development projects in lower-poverty, stable neighborhoods	-	N/A - Policy change	Ongoing	Map and monitor distribution of assisted housing sites
Continue work with local officials to provide education and outreach to combat "not in my backyard" attitudes	-		Ongoing	
Encourage the development and preservation of housing that serves a range of income levels at locations near public transit and employment centers, pg. 114				
Work with area economic development agencies to anticipate and influence the geography of employer demand for workers	-		Ongoing	
Stimulate market activity in such areas by designing incentives or programs to incentivize the type of development required	Varies		Ongoing	
Encourage homeownership initiatives in areas with higher rental rates, pg. 114				
Consider identifying neighborhoods where the Affordable Home Ownership Program should be focused to achieve this aim	Staff time	N/A - Policy	2015, ongoing	Monitor tenure by CT
Support regulations and incentives that encourage the production and preservation of housing that is affordable at all income levels throughout Indiana County, pg. 115				
Partner with municipalities to communicate and gain buy-in for the county's housing priorities	Staff time		Ongoing	

## Housing Continuum

*Goal: Ensure that a range of housing from temporary shelters to permanent supportive housing is available with appropriate services for individuals and households who need them.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Continue to plan and coordinate the provision of housing opportunities for households whose needs are not met by the private sector, pg. 115				
Formalize efforts among human service providers to centrally track benefit and service provision	Staff time		2014-2015	Creation and adoption of system to track needs and service provision
Clarify program priorities across the Human Services Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs, collaborate to determine how program delivery meets known needs of veterans	Staff time		2014-2015	
Work with Indiana County Community Action to ensure that the prioritization of funding requests to the Southwest Regional Homeless Advisory Board Continuum of Care are consistent with the county's housing goals	Staff time		Ongoing	
Promote the preservation and development of a sufficient supply of permanent housing affordable to extremely low income individuals and families with children to reduce or prevent homelessness, pg. 115				
Continue to explore financing options for the development of affordable housing for households with extremely low incomes	Up to \$150,000/unit	tax credits, HUD, USDA, FHLB, others	Ongoing	Number of assisted housing units in county
Encourage the production of new and the preservation of existing housing units that are affordable to lower income households, pg. 115				
Continue to explore financing options for the development of affordable housing for households with extremely low incomes	Up to \$150,000/unit	tax credits, HUD, USDA, FHLB, others	Ongoing	Number of assisted housing units in county

## Fair Housing

*Goal: Ensure freedom of choice in housing type, tenure and community for all regardless of race, color, religion, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, familial status and disability.*

Objective/Actions	Relative Cost	Funding Sources	Timeline	Benchmarks
Support programs that increase opportunities for members of the protected classes to gain access to housing of their choice throughout Indiana County, pg. 116				
Ensure that Community Reinvestment Act coordinators at local banks are actively engaged in planning processes that identify housing needs in low-income tracts and devise strategies to address them	Staff time	Local lenders	Ongoing	Communicate with banks to gain information about and analyze CRA spending patterns
Promote fair housing education to alert all involved parties to provisions and protections under the Fair Housing Act, possibly through partnership with Southwest PA Legal Services	Up to \$5,000/year	CDBG, Act 137	2015, ongoing	Fair housing services provided
Host fair housing events to provide education, outreach and training to county and municipal staff, private landlords, lending institutions, Realtors and the general public	Up to \$5,000/year	CDBG, Act 137	2015, ongoing	Fair housing sessions conducted, number and type of attendees
Ensure the development of housing accessible to persons with disabilities and the adaptation of existing homes to improve accessibility for this population, pg. 116				
(Pursue the development of affordable rental housing for persons with disabilities through HUD's Section 811 program, already mentioned)				
(Continue to invest CDBG funds in accessibility improvements for people with disabilities, already mentioned)				
Reduce barriers to the siting of housing for the elderly, persons with disabilities, families with children and other members of the protected classes throughout Indiana County, pg. 116				
Review municipal zoning ordinances to determine the extent to which regulations isolate and limit the development of group homes for people with disabilities	Staff time	N/A - Policy	2014-2016	Identify problematic language, work with municipal staff and leaders to address
Review municipal zoning ordinances to determine whether opportunities exist for the new or infill development of housing for seniors within proximity of amenities, particularly multi-family housing	Staff time	N/A - Policy	2014-2016	Identify problematic language, work with municipal staff and leaders to address
Review real estate advertising to determine whether landlords and/or real estate agents discourage families with children from selecting any particular site, specifically those marketed toward students	Staff time	N/A	2014	Review advertising regularly, submit letter to advertiser or complaint to HUD upon finding language that violates the Fair Housing Act
Encourage production of a range of housing types for the elderly and persons with disabilities				
Work with municipalities to amend zoning ordinances as needed to facilitate the development of housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities	Staff time	N/A	2014-2016	Addition of flexibility, removal of barriers in zoning language
Initiate and maintain liaison with developers of housing for the elderly and people with disabilities	Staff time	N/A	Ongoing	
Pursue financing for affordable housing development through HUD's Section 202 and 811 programs	Up to \$150,000/unit	HUD	2015-2019	Assemble stakeholders, establish plan, advance proposal



**Indiana County Office of  
Planning & Development**  
801 Water Street  
Indiana, PA 15701-1705



**Mullin & Lonergan Associates**  
**800 Vinial Street**  
Suite B414  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212