**Readfield Housing Profile**

**The Housing Stock:**

The supply, quality, and availability of housing in Readfield is a factor in the overall growth and health of the town. Although town government has little control over the supply of housing, it is possible that any problems may be addressed at the municipal level. If a large proportion of housing is substandard, for example, or not energy-efficient, there are grants that the Town can use to help. If housing prices rise to the point where new houses are not affordable, that presents a whole new set of problems in getting people to move to town for the wages that are available.

The table below shows the development of housing by type since 1970. (There are some discrepancies, since the census changed its definition of seasonal unit in 1980, and there was no such thing as a mobile home in 1970.) The total number of housing units more than doubled between 1970 and 2010, with the biggest increase in the 80’s when almost 50 new houses per year were built. The 1990’s saw the biggest jump in mobile homes – in fact almost a third of new homes in the 90’s were mobile homes. (Since 1980, a little under 20 percent of all new homes have been mobile homes.) The numbers do not actually add up, with 30 percent of the housing additions being seasonal. There could be some overlap, but the bottom line is that there were not many traditional stick-built homes built in the 1990’s.

**Table 1: Readfield Housing, by Type and Occupancy, 1970-2010**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1970** | **1980** | **1990** | **2000** | **2010** | **2020** |
| Total Housing Units | 554 | 870 | 1,003 | 1,148 | 1,293 | 1,320 |
| Occupied Housing Units | 381 | 646 | 722 | 867 | 998 | 1,034 |
| Vacant Housing Units | 173 | 224 | 277 | 281 | 295 | 286 |
| Seasonal Housing Units | 148 | 201 | 247 | 248 | 260 | n/a |
| Mobile Homes | 26 | 102 | 96 | 55 | 65 | n/a |
| Owner Occupied Housing | 309 | 555 | 649 | 764 | 897 | n/a |
| Renter Occupied Housing | 72 | 91 | 73 | 103 | 101 | n/a |

*Source: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 & 2010 Census*

Readfield has a good percentage of seasonal units compared to many towns due to the lake and lots of lake frontage suitable for camps etc. This may make the seasonal population fluctuation an issue in Readfield. Are there any major numbers of seasonal units being converted to year-round that might be considered to be having any real impact on the community?

The number of vacant units may be a concern, as although it has not increased dramatically in terms of numbers, it has been at around 25% of the total housing stock. The rental vacancy rate is not available in accurate way via census information but appears to be very low.

There is no data directly addressing how many renters live in houses versus apartments, but there is data on how many units there are in a building. 986 are single-family homes (including mobile homes), which means only about 24 are units in a duplex or multifamily building. Some of those may be owner-occupied, leaving a small number of single-family homes rented.

Very little statistical data exists on the *age and condition* of the town’s housing stock. The census does ask questions such as how old a house is and whether it has modern plumbing and heating systems, but this is based on a statistical sample (formerly the “long form,” now called the American Community Survey), and the samples are so small that in a town the size of Readfield, the figure is little more than a guess.

The 2019 ACS indicates that 100% of Readfield’s occupied housing units met the standard criteria for complete plumbing facilities. There were said to be seven units that did not have complete kitchen facilities though these may be more rustic style camps. In 2000, four of the Town’s occupied housing units did not have complete plumbing facilities and eight did not have full kitchens. This is a common identifier used to determine the condition and quality of homes in a given community.

The age of housing structures can often be used as an indicator of housing condition as well. While some old homes are structurally very sound they may have inadequate wiring, inefficient insulation, or contain hazardous materials like lead paint. Homes built in the 1960’s and 1970’s tend to have inadequate insulation, whereas homes built more recently have mostly conformed to modern building code requirements. In Readfield via the 2019 estimates, 243 houses were built prior to the start of World War II (18.9% of all occupied housing stock). In Kennebec County, 23.9% of all homes were built before WWII. 41.8% of Readfield’s occupied housing units (537 homes) were built after 1980; in Kennebec County, that figure is 41.1%.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age of Housing**  **Units in Readfield** | | |
| Year Structure Was Built | # | Percent of total |
| 1939 or earlier | 243 | 18.9% |
| 1940-1949 | 53 | 4.1% |
| 1950-1959 | 51 | 4.0% |
| 1960-1969 | 56 | 4.4% |
| 1970-1979 | 345 | 26.8% |
| 1980-1989 | 141 | 11.0% |
| 1990-1999 | 185 | 14.4% |
| 2000-2009 | 185 | 14.4% |
| 2010-2013 | 21 | 1.6% |
| 2014 or later | 5 | 0.3% |

*2019 ACS*

**Price and Affordability:**

The price and affordability of housing is often a significant factor in the economic life of a town. Housing prices are generally set by the open market, but if supply and demand get out of whack it can result in insufficient housing for prospective workers or residents relocating to another town because they cannot afford local housing**.**

The growth management goal for affordable housing states that ten percent of new housing should be affordable to households making less than 80 percent of the median household income. The goal leaves it up to towns to determine whether that ten percent should be as stick-built homes, or mobile homes or rentals or elderly apartments.

The determination of whether housing is affordable begins with a discussion of cost. The census provides very good (though sample-sized) data regarding price of housing in Readfield (see table below). This price is arrived at by owners’ estimates of value, meaning it does not necessarily match up with actual recorded sales prices. According to the census, the median value of owner-occupied housing in 2010 was $98,400. The rise in property values since 2000 was almost 65 percent, a substantial increase even considering the 28 percent inflation rate and the recent dip in home prices. The rise between 1990 and 2000 was not as high at 28 percent increase. What is noticeable is the increase in higher priced properties (over $200k) over the last 10 years, presumably due to more growth and higher valuations of the shore front properties on Readfield Lake and Three Mile Pond.

**Table 5: VALUE\* OF OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS, 2000 and 2010**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2000 | 2010 | change |
| Median Value of Specified2 Housing Units | $104,900 | $202,000 | $97,100  (92.6%) |
| Number of Units Valued at:  Less Than $50,000  $50,000 - $99,999  $100,000 - $149,999  $150,000 - $199,999  $200,000 - $299,999  $300,000 - $499,999  $500,000 - $999,999 | 22  204  141  102  8  0  5 | 24  80  172  150  342  101  0 | 2  -124  31  48  334  101  -5 |
| SOURCE: U.S. Census  *\*/ "Value" is the census respondent's estimate of how much the property would sell for if it were for sale.*  *2/ "Specified" units exclude one-family houses on ten or more acres and units with a commercial establishment on the premises. In 2000, mobile homes were excluded as well, but not in 2010, accounting for the significant rise in housing counts.* | | | |
|  | | | |

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Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) tracks actual sales data, though it is sometimes out of date by the time it is published. According to MSHA, the median price (actual sales) of a home in 2020 was $250,000. This represents a robust recovery from the slump in house prices after the 2008 recession and recent trends due to the pandemic.

The median household income reported by the census in 2019 was $81,042, making the threshold of 80 percent of median $64,834. MSHA calculates an affordable home at various income levels, factoring in interest rates and other variables, and using the rule of thumb that a household should pay no more than 28 percent of its monthly income in housing costs. According to MSHA figures, an income that is at the median level ($81,419 by their stats) should be able to afford a home priced at $285,964. Also the income needed to afford a median priced home is $71,179. That means, in rough terms, anyone making the median income should be able to afford a home in town. However looking at the income distributions, it also shows that more than half of households are unable to afford the median price. Some 585 households or so fall into this category.

**Rentals:**

The table below shows changes over time in the cost and affordability of rental housing in Readfield. The median rent charged increased by only 4.8 percent, a rate much lower than inflation and of the increase in home values. Somewhat oddly perhaps, there are now no rentals available for $300 to $500 a month, where there were available in 2000. Also there are no units costing more than $1000 plus a month whatsoever. More important are the figures on affordability. Affordable rental housing has declined, while the number of renters paying more than 30 percent of their income for rent has increased very significantly.

**Table 6: COST OF RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS, 2000 and 2010**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2000 | 2010 | % change |
| Median Monthly Rent  Specified Renter-Occupied Units | $604 | $633 | 4.8 % |
| # of Units With Cash Rent of:  $200 - $299  $300 - $499  $500 - $749  $750 - $999  $1000 - $1499 | 9  17  31  10  0 | 7  0  30  21  0 | -22.2%  -100%  -3.2%  110%  - |
| Rent as a Percentage of Household income:  Less than 20 percent  20 – 30 percent  30 percent or more | 39  18  6 | 31  0  27 | -20.5%  -100%  350% |
| Source: US Census, American Community Survey (2000 / 2010) | | | |

MSHA also tracks rental data. According to MSHA statistics, in 2020, the average two-bedroom rental in Readfield’s market area (Augusta Micropolitan Housing Area) was $941. The income needed to afford that rent was $37,646. By their calculations the renter’s household median income is $34,246 and able to afford a $856 a month rent. That means that the average two-bedroom unit in Readfield area is unaffordable though that data conflicts with the census data and takes into account Augusta itself.

Additionally, MSHA estimates that some 53.7% of renter households are unable to afford the average 2 bedroom rent in the Readfield Area. Finally according to MSHA, the average rent between 2017 and 2020 has increased by 3 percent, while the median income of renters increased by 8.1 percent. Therefore it could be concluded that on the whole, renting is becoming a little easier in recent years.

Compared with surrounding communities and Kennebec County as a whole, Readfield’s housing prices appear to be lower. In 2020, median home values in neighboring communities ranged from $199,900 in Mt Vernon to $282,500 in Belgrade. The median value of homes in Kennebec County was $194,000. The median rental cost in Kennebec County was $985 per month, putting Readfield’s area below the average. The city of Augusta alone for comparison was $982.

Provision of affordable housing options is assisted by MSHA programs. MSHA provides some state and federal options for buyers and renters. There is one known subsidized rent program participating housing complex in Readfield, which is the old motel in off Route 3.

**Housing Location Trends**

Readfield’s character and identity is largely defined by its rural, agricultural countryside and waterbodies that dot the landscape. This character does not currently appear threatened by large-scale development as Readfield has retained much of its undeveloped land.

However, nationally and regionally, development over the past 40 years has been marked by sprawl. Large stores with large parking lots have been built on even larger lots, consuming valuable land and resources. What were once small towns on the urban periphery have blossomed into large centers of commerce. Readfield has avoided commercial sprawl but housing sprawl could become a concern.

**Projections**

Will refer to the population projections in the Community Profile, to anticipate any demand, if any, for housing.

**Current Housing Regulations:**

**Housing**

A. **State Goal / Minimum Policy**

To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

B. **Analyses**

To generate minimum analyses to address state goals, use Conditions and Trends data in Section 3.8(C) to answer the following questions.

(1) How many additional housing units (if any), including rental units, will be necessary to accommodate projected population and demographic changes during the planning period?

(2) Is housing, including rental housing, affordable to those earning the median income in the region? Is housing affordable to those earning 80% of the median income? If not, review local and regional efforts to address issue.

(3) Are seasonal homes being converted to year-round use or vice-versa? What impact does this have on the community?

(4) Will additional low and moderate income family, senior, or assisted living housing be necessary to meet projected needs for the community? Will these needs be met locally or regionally?

(5) Are there other major housing issues in the community, such as substandard housing?

(6) How do existing local regulations encourage or discourage the development of affordable/workforce housing?

C. **Conditions and Trends**

Minimum data required to address Analyses:

(1) The community’s Comprehensive Planning Housing Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Maine State Housing Authority, and the Office, or their designees.

(2) Information on existing local and regional affordable/workforce housing coalitions or similar efforts.

(3) A summary of local regulations that affect the development of affordable/workforce housing.

D. **Policies**

Minimum policies required to address state goals:

(1) To encourage and promote adequate workforce housing to support the community’s and region’s economic development.

(2) To ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.

(3) To encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

E. **Strategies**

Minimum strategies required to address state goals:

(1) Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing.

(2) Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.

(3) Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.

(4) Designate a location(s) in growth areas where mobile home parks are allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(3)(M) and where manufactured housing is allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(2).

(5) Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

(6) Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.