

PRESERVATION, PRODUCTION, & POLICY: COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING HOUSING NEEDS IN WINSTON-SALEM & FORSYTH COUNTY

A META ANALYSIS & LITERATURE REVIEW

iri INNOVATIVE RESEARCH
INSIGHTS



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INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive review of housing reports, assessments, and strategic plans from local governments, universities, and philanthropic organizations over the last decade reveals persistent and intensifying need for affordable and workforce housing. Across the breadth of these studies, several cross-cutting themes emerge including a legacy of segregation, persistent spatial and racial disparities in housing access, intensifying cost burdens for renters and homeowners alike, fragmented housing bureaucracies, investor dominance in distressed neighborhoods, intensifying cost burdens for renters and homeowners alike, and the urgent need for more innovative and inclusive development strategies.

When examined chronologically, these studies reflect not only the growing magnitude of the housing crisis but also an evolution in the strategies, policies, and philosophical frameworks guiding local interventions. What emerges is a portrait of a community grappling with long-standing legacies of racial inequity, rapid demographic and economic change, and the escalating costs of inaction.

HISTORICAL LEGACIES & STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Foundational documents, such as the *2017 Assessment of Fair Housing*, underscore the historical roots of current disparities. Racial and ethnic segregation, concentrated poverty, and the continued impact of redlining and exclusionary zoning form the backdrop against which affordable housing challenges play out. Patterns of public and subsidized housing concentration in disinvested neighborhoods reinforce cycles of disadvantage, with Black and Latino residents most affected. Reports consistently highlight how these historical legacies persistently shape access to opportunity, neighborhood amenities, educational opportunities, economic mobility, and housing choice.

PERSISTENT & WORSENING HOUSING NEED

Taken as a whole, the reports make it clear that the need for affordable and workforce housing in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County is not diminishing; rather, it is growing in both scale and complexity. The drivers of this need, population growth, stagnant incomes relative to rising housing costs, exorbitant development costs, aging housing stock, and persistent inequities, have intensified over time. Each successive report documents the increase in the depth and breadth of need.

The *2017 Poverty Thought Force Final Report* and the *2018 Housing Study and Needs Assessment* provide detailed empirical evidence of severe cost burdens among renters and homeowners. Housing cost burdens are mounting, by 2024 nearly half of renter households in Forsyth County spend more than 30% of their income on housing, with severe burdens

prevalent among lower-income groups (Bowen National Research, 2024). The for-sale market is also constrained, with limited inventory and rising prices outpacing wage growth.

Demand for both rental and for-sale housing is fueled by ongoing population growth, immigration of young adults and working families, and the shifting nature of work and lifestyle preferences (Bowen National Research, 2024; Campbell et al., 2025). Over time, the annual *Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plans* (CHCD, 2024–2026) reflect a steady increase in households needing assistance, against a backdrop of declining federal support and rising development costs. Most recently, the *2024 HUD Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis* confirms that rapid population growth, primarily from net immigration, is intensifying market pressures, making both rental and homeownership options less accessible to working-class residents. The “housing gap” is projected to exceed 25,000 units by 2029, signaling that without targeted interventions, affordability crises will intensify (Bowen National Research, 2024).

HOUSING ACCESS, EQUITY, & SPATIAL DISPARITIES

The persistent shortage of affordable and workforce housing is a unifying concern across all reports. Spatial inequities are particularly pronounced: subsidized and affordable housing units are concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods, which limits residents’ access to quality schools, jobs, and amenities (McNeil et al., 2014). The “East of 52” divide in Winston-Salem, a legacy of historic segregation, continues to shape opportunity landscapes, with Black and Hispanic residents facing higher rates of poverty and residential isolation (Brown-Graham et al., 2019; Rose et al., 2023).

A parallel line of inquiry in the CSEM studies examines the built environment’s role in shaping economic mobility. Blizard and Smith (2021) demonstrate that compact, mixed-use, and transit-accessible neighborhoods are positively associated with upward mobility, while sprawling, car-dependent areas hinder economic advancement. These findings align with national research and validate components of Forsyth County’s *Legacy 2030 Comprehensive Plan*, which emphasizes infill development and land-use integration. The presence of bus stops was strongly correlated with mobility gains, highlighting the importance of transportation infrastructure in connecting low-income residents to employment opportunities. In contrast, the prevalence of brownfields, largely concentrated in historically marginalized communities, was negatively associated with economic mobility, reinforcing the legacy of spatial and environmental disinvestment.

Notably, even niche issues like pet-friendly rental policies reinforce these spatial and racial disparities. Rose et al. (2023) demonstrate that pet restrictions and landlord discretion disproportionately limit housing choices for Black renters, compounding residential alienation and signaling how housing policy reproduces social exclusion at multiple levels.

LIMITED ACCESS TO CAPITAL & STIFF COMPETITION WITH INVESTORS

Further complicating efforts to promote homeownership is the so-called “lending hole” in the affordable housing market. Zainulbhai et al. (2021) reveal that small-dollar mortgages, essential for the purchase of low-cost homes, are systematically denied or unavailable due to regulatory, institutional, and market disincentives. As a result, most affordable homes in areas like East Winston are purchased with cash, often by investors rather than prospective owner-occupants. This trend locks out low-income families from homeownership and contributes to neighborhood instability, particularly as investor owners tend not to invest in long-term maintenance or community development. The problem is further compounded by programmatic rules that disqualify older or distressed properties from financing, even when they are structurally sound.

The study of large investor activity (Zainulbhai & Blizard, 2022) offers insight into how institutional capital reshapes local housing markets. Although large investors account for a modest share of total home purchases, their impact is outsized in the small-dollar segment of the market, acquiring nearly 28% of homes in the lowest price tier, particularly in neighborhoods like East Winston. These investors rarely rehabilitate properties for owner-occupancy, instead converting them into rentals, which exacerbates the decline in owner-occupancy rates and further erodes the possibility of neighborhood stability or resident wealth accumulation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY VOICE

Across all reports, robust community engagement was both a process and a value, with a clear recognition that solutions must be locally driven and shaped by those most affected. For example, the *Forsyth Story* report from Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust calls for a shift from top-down interventions to ecosystem approaches that foster collective problem-solving, racial equity, and sustained collaboration (Brown-Graham et al., 2019). This was reflected in the commitment to ongoing public input, stakeholder consultations, and citizen participation, especially in the design and implementation of major initiatives such as land banking, housing trust funds, and the Housing Justice Act (Grounded Solution 2021; Center for Community Progress 2019).

Several reports also highlight the importance of governance reform and cross-sector collaboration. The *Continuum of Care assessment* (Homebase, 2022) underscores that bureaucratic, hierarchical structures can limit innovation and participation, particularly from front-line staff and people with lived experience of homelessness. Systemic change requires more inclusive decision-making, robust orientation and training, and mechanisms for meaningful engagement.

PROMOTING MOBILITY - FORSYTH COUNTY HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM

One of the most compelling and positive findings comes from the evaluation of the Forsyth County Homeownership Program (FCHP). Across several reports, Blizard, Richardson, and colleagues document that FCHP participants accrued substantial equity over time, nearly \$25 million in total net wealth for a sample of 508 homeowners, while contributing more than \$6 million in property taxes to local government (Blizard & Richardson, 2021). Notably, households who participated in the Individual Development Account (IDA) arm of the program achieved nearly 20% higher net wealth than those in the non-IDA track, suggesting that financial coaching and savings discipline meaningfully enhance long-term outcomes. Additionally, the foreclosure rate of 7.9% was relatively low given the financial vulnerability of the participants, and most occurred during the post-recession recovery period (20).

A key theme across the CSEM research is that homeownership not only builds individual wealth but also enables mobility into higher-opportunity neighborhoods. Participants in the FCHP moved to areas with significantly lower crime rates, higher median incomes, fewer single-parent households, and greater homeownership rates (Blizard, Richardson, & Sloop, 2021). These neighborhood changes reflect broader social and environmental improvements, supporting the argument that homeownership programs can serve as mobility-enhancing interventions, especially when paired with place-conscious design.

However, the reports also highlight persistent racial and geographic inequities. Black participants, while achieving slightly higher returns on investment (3.2%) than White and Hispanic participants, were more likely to relocate east of US 52, an area historically associated with racial segregation and underinvestment. Although some FCHP participants entered more racially diverse neighborhoods, spatial sorting patterns remained evident, suggesting that mobility gains are still circumscribed by longstanding patterns of exclusion.

EVOLVING STRATEGIES: FROM PRODUCTION TO PRESERVATION & EQUITY

The post-pandemic office-to-residential conversion trend also offers promise. Winston-Salem's downtown revitalization through adaptive reuse is a case study in the productive use of policy incentives, state and federal historic tax credits, streamlined permitting, and brownfield incentives have all contributed to increased housing supply (Campbell et al., 2025). However, the majority of new units have been market-rate, doing little to ease pressures for low- and moderate-income households. This has further underscored the need for a Housing Trust Fund and additional incentives for affordable development.

A notable evolution in many of the reports and studies is the shift from a primary focus on housing production toward a more nuanced emphasis on preservation, anti-displacement, and racial equity. While early reports call for increased supply, especially of rental units affordable to those earning less than 80% of AMI, more recent studies, such as the *2021 Anti-Displacement and Inclusive Growth Policy Agenda* and the *Land Banking and Lasting*

Affordability Action Plan, foreground the importance of preserving existing affordable units, implementing land banking strategies, and ensuring long-term or even permanent affordability. These reports are also explicit in centering equity as both a goal and a guiding principle, advocating for reparative policies that acknowledge and address past harms.

COMPREHENSIVE & PLACE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Throughout the period 2017-2025, reports stress the need for multifaceted, place-based strategies. The integration of housing with transportation, workforce development, and community revitalization emerges as a best practice, as does the importance of neighborhood-scale interventions. For example, the *Choice Neighborhoods Initiative* and the increasing use of public-private partnerships demonstrate an evolving toolkit for leveraging resources and fostering inclusive growth. The most recent *Forward 2045 Comprehensive Plan* insists on the centrality of reparative planning, recommending not only increased supply and diversity of housing types (including middle-density infill and adaptive reuse) but also proactive investment in neighborhoods harmed by past disinvestment.

ADEQUATE & ACCESSIBLE HOUSING FOR ALL

Neglected in most studies are the unique housing challenges facing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), estimated to be between 6,000-7,500 individuals (Sills et al. 2023). More broadly, 43,235 individuals in Forsyth have one or more types of disabilities which may impact their housing needs. Barriers include not only affordability, but also accessibility, service coordination, and the chronic underfunding of direct support professionals. The inadequacy of group homes and institutional options highlights the need for community-based, integrated, and person-centered housing models as well as incorporation of universal design in affordable housing development.¹

CRITIQUE OF REPORTS

While there have been some hopeful signs in addressing the gap between housing need and supply, there is a clear disjuncture between research and action. As multiple news articles in the *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, *Triad City Beat*, and other local outlets have observed, local governments (and philanthropy) have allocated significant funding over the past decade to affordable housing studies and action plans yet "without substantial progress being made in follow-up, coordination and data gathering, and, most important, increasing the stock of affordable housing."² Elected officials, developers, and community advocates have voiced

¹ <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design>

² Railey, J. (2023, Feb 14). *Mired in research*. Winston-Salem Chronicle. <https://wschronicle.com/mired-in-research/>

frustration over solid recommendations being proposed without clear timelines for implementation.

While reports highlight both preservation and new production, community voices and media accounts point to the slow pace of progress in increasing housing stock, especially in the face of an accelerating crisis. The delays in deploying funds and the time spent on further studies have left the city "missing the window" when construction costs and interest rates were at historic lows. As noted by a local builder, "Taxpayer dollars have paid for several studies with action items that have met with inaction and inattention... Peer cities... are taking the steps proposed in studies and... succeeding. Sadly, Winston-Salem has more aspiration than action and another study will not make a difference."³

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In response to these challenges, the studies recommend several policy strategies. Recommendations converge on the need to diversify housing options, target interventions to high-opportunity areas, reform governance and engagement structures, and pursue innovative models and policy tools. Policy recommendations have grown more sophisticated, moving from reactive, short-term fixes to a holistic, equity-centered agenda that recognizes the interconnectedness of housing with broader questions of justice, mobility, and community well-being. The imperative, underscored in the most recent plans and critiques, is not only to build and preserve more affordable housing, but to do so in a manner that repairs past wrongs, expands opportunity, and builds a more just and resilient future for all residents. The trajectory is one of growing need, but also of growing resolve and capacity to address it. As Forsyth County grows and evolves, these strategies will be vital in ensuring that all residents have access safe, affordable, and dignified housing.

EXPAND & DIVERSIFY AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY

A foundational recommendation throughout the reports reviewed is to increase both the quantity and diversity of affordable and workforce housing. This entails not just constructing new units but also strategically placing them in high-opportunity neighborhoods, those with strong schools, job access, and amenities, rather than perpetuating patterns of concentrated poverty. Tools such as inclusionary zoning, land banking, and community land trusts are repeatedly proposed to enable lasting affordability and geographic equity. The importance of aligning housing development with demographic trends, especially the needs of older adults and smaller households, further underscores the necessity of "missing middle" and multifamily housing.

³ Railey, J. (2023, Feb 4). *What are taxpayers receiving from the City of Winston-Salem's affordable housing research costing almost \$700,000?* Winston-Salem Chronicle. <https://wschronicle.com/what-are-taxpayers-receiving-from-the-city-of-winston-salems-affordable-housing-research-costing-almost-700000/>

ADVANCE EQUITY, DECONCENTRATE POVERTY, & ADDRESS HISTORIC DISPARITIES

The reports consistently call for the intentional deconcentration of subsidized and affordable housing away from segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods. Recommendations stress the need for reparative, equity-driven planning that confronts the legacies of redlining, exclusionary zoning, and urban renewal. Investment in under-resourced neighborhoods must be paired with protections against displacement as revitalization proceeds. The reports also highlight the need for stronger fair housing enforcement, tenant protections, and proactive measures to prevent evictions and reduce homelessness.

PRESERVE EXISTING HOUSING & IMPROVE QUALITY

Preservation emerges as a central theme, especially the rehabilitation and maintenance of aging housing stock, which is disproportionately located in low-income and Black neighborhoods. Strategies include expanding code enforcement, offering incentives for landlords to upgrade properties, and revitalizing vacant and abandoned homes, often in tandem with broader community development. The formation of municipal land banks is advocated to acquire and repurpose distressed properties for long-term affordable use.

REMOVE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS & PROMOTE ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Several studies examine the structural impediments to homeownership and wealth-building for low- and moderate-income residents. They recommend revising lending standards and creating new financial products to fill the “lending hole” in the small mortgage market, which currently locks many families out of ownership. Financial literacy, expanded down-payment assistance, and post-purchase support are recommended to sustain ownership and build generational wealth.

ENHANCE SUPPORT SYSTEMS & FOSTER INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is an emphasis on embedding housing strategy within broader anti-poverty and community support frameworks. The reports highlight the necessity of investing in supportive housing, wrap-around services, and two-generation strategies that link housing with education, employment, and health. Robust collaboration between public agencies, non-profits, and philanthropy is seen as vital for system-level change.

DATA-DRIVEN GOVERNANCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Finally, the literature calls for transparent, data-driven governance and robust community engagement in decision-making. Recommendations include forming permanent cross-sector task forces, improving data integration (especially for vacant and abandoned properties), and elevating the voices of residents with lived experience in both policy design and implementation.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This annotated bibliography presents a systematic review of major reports, academic articles, and policy documents pertaining to affordable and workforce housing in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County from 2014 to 2025. The sources included were selected based on their relevance to key research questions in local housing policy, their empirical rigor, and their influence on public debate and decision-making in the region. Priority was given to studies produced by reputable research organizations, government agencies, and academic institutions, as well as peer-reviewed journal articles and landmark community needs assessments.

Each document was reviewed using a structured content analysis protocol. Annotations for each source summarize the main research questions, data and methodology, key findings, and explicit recommendations. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which each report addressed themes of equity, historical context, housing development strategies, and implications for policy and practice. Where appropriate, verbatim excerpts are provided to highlight core arguments or data points.

To facilitate comparative analysis and identify cross-cutting themes, a literature review matrix accompanies the bibliography. This matrix categorizes each report or article by year, author, central focus, methodological approach, and main policy recommendations. The matrix serves as a visual and analytical tool for synthesizing findings, tracking the evolution of local housing debates, and informing future research and advocacy efforts.

By documenting both the diversity of perspectives and the emerging consensus in the local housing literature, this annotated bibliography aims to provide a foundational resource for the Humane Housing Network members as they seek to advance housing equity and community well-being in Forsyth County.

TABLE 1 – A MATRIX OF FORSYTH COUNTY HOUSING STUDIES & REPORTS FROM THE LAST DECADE

Year	Report Title	Authors	Main Focus	Key Findings	Recommendations
2014	Piedmont Together Final Housing Plan	McNeil, W. A., Ford, M., & Bates, R.	Regional housing plan for the Piedmont Triad, including Forsyth County	Severe affordable/workforce housing shortage; high-poverty area concentration; rising demand; insufficient options for diverse households.	Expand housing choices, deconcentrate poverty, prioritize walkable sites, revitalize older neighborhoods, address equity, strengthen regional coordination.
2017	Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)	City of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, HAWS (2017)	Barriers to fair housing, racial disparities, and access to opportunity	High racial segregation; lack of affordable housing in opportunity areas; disparities in access to jobs, schools, and transit.	Build in high-opportunity areas; rehabilitate existing stock; expand homeownership; support mobility programs; enhance fair housing.
2017	Winston-Salem Poverty Thought Force Final Report	Poverty Thought Force (2017)	Multi-sectoral strategies to reduce poverty in Winston-Salem	High poverty among women, children, and communities of color; severe housing burden; racial disparities in ownership and access.	Expand affordable housing; improve transportation; develop supportive housing; create landlord incentives; promote financial literacy; small unit construction.
2018	Housing Study and Needs Assessment	Enterprise Community Partners (2018)	Market trends and strategic housing needs	Gap of 16,244 units for <80% AMI; aging stock; mismatch in unit sizes; affordability crisis hitting Black and Latino residents hardest.	Close supply gap; preserve existing units; support missing middle housing; prevent displacement; align housing with jobs and transit.
2019	The Forsyth Story: A Strategy for Creating a More Inclusive Economy	Brown-Graham, A. R., Brown, D., & Gangi, E. W.	Inclusive economic mobility and community investment strategy for Forsyth County	Entrenched poverty, segregation, limited mobility; economic growth not benefitting all; housing crucial for inclusion	Fund ecosystem change, invest in two-generation strategies, support youth employment, maintain robust safety nets and affordable housing.
2019	Vacancy and Abandonment Report	Center for Community Progress	Addressing vacant and abandoned properties through equitable redevelopment	VAD properties concentrated in historically redlined areas; fragmented data and poor coordination.	Establish land bank; create Vacant Properties Task Force; strategic code enforcement; prioritize equity and reuse of distressed properties.
2020	Pet-Friendly Rental Housing: Racial and Spatial Inequalities	Rose, D., McMillian, C., & Carter, O.	Racial and spatial disparities in pet-friendly rental housing	Pet-friendly rentals scarce in Black neighborhoods; restrictions reinforce racial inequity and housing exclusion.	Extend tenant protections for pet owners, ban breed/size restrictions and excessive fees, invest in pet infrastructure.

Meta Analysis & Annotated Bibliography

2021	A Neighborhood Analysis of the Forsyth County Homeownership Program	Blizard, Richardson & Sloop	Neighborhood quality before and after homeownership	Participants moved to safer, wealthier, and more stable neighborhoods; racial and ethnic sorting patterns persist.	Expand assistance; guide moves to high-opportunity areas; monitor integration; conduct follow-up.
2021	Anti-Displacement & Inclusive Growth Policy Agenda	Grounded Solutions Network	Policy roadmap to prevent displacement and promote equity	Affordable housing concentrated in low-income areas; ineffective inclusionary zoning; rising displacement risk near downtown.	Create trust fund; require lasting affordability; support CLTs; reform zoning; strengthen tenant protections.
2021	Does Forsyth County's Affordable Home Ownership Program Build Wealth and Spur Economic Mobility?	Blizard & Richardson	Evaluation of homeownership program outcomes	Participants gained \$49K in average equity; IDA participants had 20% more wealth; \$6.2M in property taxes paid; low foreclosure rates.	Expand financial education; target vulnerable groups; promote racial equity; continue evaluation.
2021	How Did Participants' Home Values Change? A Deep Dive into Market Values	Blizard, Richardson & Sloop	Analysis of home value appreciation among program participants	Average ROI of 2.7%; higher ROI for Black participants; post-recession purchases had higher returns.	Provide market education; offer post-purchase support; track neighborhood trends; sustain equity gains.
2021	Investigating the Relationship Between Urban Form and Economic Mobility in Forsyth County, NC	Blizard & Smith	Link between built environment and economic mobility	Compact development and public transit access increase mobility; brownfields and sprawl hinder it.	Limit sprawl; promote infill development; expand transit; redevelop brownfields; address racial segregation.
2021	Land Banking & Lasting Affordability Action Plan	Grounded Solutions Network	Operational and strategic plan for a municipal land bank	Over 2,000 problem properties; missed opportunities for affordability; need for structured acquisition & reuse.	Form land bank; set lasting affordability rules; hire skilled staff; create advisory committee; secure stable funding.
2021	The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market	Zainulbhai et al.	Barriers to small-dollar mortgages	High denial rates for small loans; FHA restrictions exclude older homes; investor dominance in low-cost areas.	Create new loan products; revise standards; incentivize small loan lending; prioritize owner-occupants.
2022	Assessment Report for the Continuum of Care Winston-	Homebase	Structure and effectiveness of	System has strong policies, but governance is opaque; racial	Reform governance for broader participation, clarify roles, enforce conflict policies, engage lived

Meta Analysis & Annotated Bibliography

	Salem/Forsyth County		homeless response system (CoC)	disparities and bottlenecks persist in homeless services.	experience, streamline processes and data sharing.
2022	Large Investor Activity in Winston Salem, North Carolina	Zainulbhai & Blizard	Impact of institutional investors in low-cost housing	Large investors focus on small homes; crowd out owner-occupants; lower maintenance, raise instability.	Improve data tracking; expand small loan options; monitor investor trends; distinguish investor types in policy.
2023	Forsyth County Housing Needs Assessment for Individuals with IDD	Sills, S. J., Bucknall, C., & Kelley, R.	Housing needs for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD)	Major shortage of affordable/accessible IDD housing; long waiver waitlists; group homes insufficient for need.	Eliminate Innovations Waiver waitlist, expand direct care workforce, invest in community models, develop shared/land trust housing, enforce accountability.
2024	Carolina Core Housing Needs Assessment – Forsyth County Housing Overview	Bowen National Research	Current and projected housing needs, market analysis	Population and household growth; severe housing gap; rising costs; affordable/subsidized units and vacancies critically low.	Develop diverse housing types and price points, prioritize affordable rentals, expand for-sale options, revitalize stock, enhance collaboration.
2024	CHCD Plan: 2024-2025	City of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County	Annual housing and community development strategy	Rising need for rehab, rental, and multifamily housing; funding constraints; aging housing stock.	Invest in rehab and infill; expand IDAs; build new units; align with Choice Neighborhoods; support vulnerable groups.
2024	Forward 2045 Comprehensive Plan	City-County Planning Board	Long-term vision for growth, equity, and land use	Redlining legacy persists; housing supply lags behind population growth; middle density severely underdeveloped.	Reparative planning; enable infill/missing middle; preserve affordability; invest in disinvested areas; integrate housing with mobility and equity goals.
2024	HUD Housing Market Analysis	U.S. HUD	Forecasting housing demand and economic trends	11,450 units needed by 2027; prices up 4%; sales volume down; increased migration driving demand.	Sustain rental and ownership housing production; address affordability pressures; increase supply to meet projected need.
2025	Adapting the Built Environment to an Ever-Changing Economy	Campbell, M. E. et al. (Brookings)	Downtown revitalization and adaptive reuse in Winston-Salem	Office-to-residential conversions succeed but mostly market-rate; more affordable units needed; risk of displacement.	Increase incentives for affordable conversions, streamline permitting, target affordable units, support mixed-use downtown, use data for policy.
2025	CHCD Plan: 2025-2026	City of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County	Annual update on local housing strategy and HUD compliance	Emphasis on multifamily housing and Choice Neighborhoods; need for supportive housing.	Rehab and build housing; support first-time buyers; invest in homeless services; align housing with neighborhood revitalization.

PIEDMONT TOGETHER FINAL HOUSING PLAN (2014)

APA CITATION:

McNeil, W. A., Ford, M., & Bates, R. (2014). *Piedmont Together Final Housing Plan: Housing Element and Recommendations for North Carolina's Piedmont Triad Region*. Piedmont Triad Regional Council.

KEY WORDS:

Piedmont Triad, affordable housing, housing plan, housing development, regional planning, equity, fair housing, workforce housing, cost burden, revitalization, housing trends

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Piedmont Together Final Housing Plan* presents a comprehensive analysis and set of recommendations to address housing needs across the 12-county Piedmont Triad region, including Forsyth County and Winston-Salem. The report, prepared with support from HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative, is both a compliance document and a forward-looking regional strategy. It draws on local consolidated plans, demographic and market trend analyses, an inventory of assisted housing, and fair housing assessments to establish priorities for the next 25 years. The plan is anchored in the federal "Livability Principles," emphasizing transportation choice, equitable housing, economic competitiveness, community support, investment coordination, and neighborhood value.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

Housing development and workforce housing issues are explored in depth. The supply of affordable and workforce housing lags behind demand, and there are significant spatial disparities: assisted housing is disproportionately located in high-poverty neighborhoods, limiting access to quality schools, employment, and amenities. Forsyth County, for instance, has 81% of its subsidized units in high-poverty tracts.

A dominant theme throughout the report is the critical need to expand housing choices for all residents, particularly in light of projected growth, changing demographics, and persistent affordability challenges. By 2040, the region expects 400,000 new residents, requiring 175,000 new homes. Housing options were described as inadequate, particularly for singles, young families, older adults, and low- to moderate-income households. The 2008 housing crisis's aftermath continued to impact homeownership and rental markets, with cost-burdened households representing a significant share of the population. Another core issue is the age and condition of the housing stock. One in three dwellings in the region was built before 1970, raising concerns about lead paint and the need for rehabilitation, especially in high-poverty areas. Rental demand is expected to surge, with renters accounting for 70% of new housing demand between 2010 and 2040.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The plan offers numerous targeted recommendations, including but not limited to:

- 1. Expand Housing Choices and Deconcentrate Poverty:** Encourage the development of affordable and workforce housing in “high-opportunity” areas, those with access to transit, employment, quality schools, and amenities, rather than concentrating new affordable units in already high-poverty neighborhoods.
- 2. Prioritize Location Efficiency:** Public investments should favor sites that are walkable, close to public transit, employment centers, and services, aligning with market demand for mixed-use, compact communities.
- 3. Revitalize Existing Neighborhoods:** Support the rehabilitation of older housing stock, particularly in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and aging infrastructure. Redevelopment of downtowns, historic sites, and mixed-use corridors is prioritized.
- 4. Address Fair Housing and Equity:** Increase fair housing education, enforcement, and outreach, especially in rural areas. Tackle discriminatory practices and “steering,” improve infrastructure for affordable multifamily housing, and pursue regional approaches to fair housing planning.
- 5. Focus on Cost Burden and Housing-Transportation Tradeoffs:** Help households and housing counselors consider both housing and transportation costs in decision-making, and expand affordable housing near job centers and transit.
- 6. Strengthen Regional Coordination:** Form regional bodies or coalitions for fair housing, leverage local and state funding, and coordinate site selection for Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and public investments.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The report is especially relevant to Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, where issues of concentrated poverty, cost-burdened renters, and the need for workforce housing are acute. The city’s more recent emphasis on neighborhood revitalization, downtown development, and public infrastructure is validated and encouraged by this plan from a decade ago. The recommendations called for greater intentionality in siting affordable housing, aligning funding with transit and job access, and fostering inclusive, mixed-income communities. The plan underscored the necessity of local governments adopting more prescriptive, data-informed approaches to federal and state housing investments, maximizing the impact of shrinking resources. For Winston-Salem/Forsyth County, this means focusing on both preserving existing affordable units and incentivizing new construction in diverse neighborhoods.

ASSESSMENT OF FAIR HOUSING FOR WINSTON-SALEM, FORSYTH COUNTY, AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF WINSTON-SALEM (2017)

APA CITATION:

City of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, & Housing Authority of Winston-Salem. (2017). *Assessment of Fair Housing*. Prepared by the City of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, and HAWS.

KEY WORDS:

Fair housing, segregation, affordable housing, racial disparities, housing policy, community participation, access to opportunity, housing discrimination, R/ECAPs, homeownership, public housing.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Assessment of Fair Housing* (AFH) for Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, completed in 2017, is a thorough examination of the barriers and impediments to fair housing choice in the region, in compliance with HUD's requirements for local jurisdictions receiving federal housing funds. The report reviews patterns of segregation and integration, racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty (R/ECAPs), disparities in access to opportunity, disproportionate housing needs by race/ethnicity, the distribution of publicly supported housing, disability and accessibility challenges, and local fair housing enforcement capacity. Community engagement, through workshops, surveys, and stakeholder interviews, was foundational to the AFH's analysis and recommendations, helping to identify not only persistent problems but also local priorities for action.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A central finding of the AFH is that Winston-Salem and Forsyth County continue to experience moderate levels of racial and ethnic segregation, with particularly pronounced disparities for African-American and Latino residents. Segregation has historical roots in practices such as redlining and has been perpetuated by the location of subsidized housing, disinvestment in certain neighborhoods, and ongoing disparities in wealth and opportunity. Notably, the report documents that African-Americans are over seven times more likely, and Latinos over five times more likely, than whites to live in R/ECAPs, which are concentrated almost exclusively in downtown and East Winston.

"Stakeholders and community members repeatedly raised concerns about the concentration of low-income housing, the inadequate condition of many affordable units, and the lack of new affordable housing construction in neighborhoods of opportunity." (p. 21)

The report identifies significant disparities in access to opportunity, such as quality schools, jobs, and transit, with non-Latino whites far more likely to live in neighborhoods with low poverty and high opportunity. Housing need is acute: more than one-third of Winston-Salem households (37%) and one-third of Forsyth County households (33%) experience at least one serious housing problem (cost burden, overcrowding, or substandard housing). These issues disproportionately affect African-American, Latino, and other nonwhite households. Furthermore, Black households constitute 26% of Forsyth County's population but 91% of public housing residents and voucher holders, underscoring the racialized dimension of housing insecurity in the region.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The AFH demonstrates that the supply of affordable housing is insufficient and poorly distributed, both geographically and in relation to local need. Publicly supported housing is heavily concentrated in segregated and high-poverty neighborhoods, further entrenching disadvantage. Stakeholders and community members repeatedly raised concerns about the concentration of low-income housing, the inadequate condition of many affordable units, and the lack of new affordable housing construction in neighborhoods of opportunity. Barriers to fair and affordable housing development include public opposition to multifamily and rental housing, restrictive zoning, limited funding, and persistent discrimination in the rental and sales markets.

Notably, the report highlights the importance of increasing both the quality and geographic diversity of affordable and workforce housing options. Expanding homeownership opportunities, particularly for households of color, is identified as a priority, as is the need to preserve and rehabilitate existing affordable housing stock to prevent further displacement and deterioration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The AFH outlines several goals and actionable strategies, including:

1. **Implement place-based community investment strategies** to increase opportunity in R/ECAPs, combining physical improvements with human capital investments and building on local assets.
2. **Focus new construction of affordable housing** in neighborhoods with greater access to opportunity, ensuring that future developments are better distributed and located in areas that offer residents the amenities, services, and infrastructure needed to thrive.

3. **Improve mobility for low- and moderate-income residents** by developing support programs for households who wish to move to higher-opportunity areas and by improving transportation access.
4. **Expand homeownership opportunities** through down-payment assistance, financial literacy programs, and targeted outreach to households of color.
5. **Protect and rehabilitate existing housing stock** to prevent deterioration and displacement, prioritizing investments in R/ECAPs and neighborhoods at risk.
6. **Improve processes for reasonable accommodation** for persons with disabilities, ensuring that policies are clear, accessible, and consistently applied.
7. **Support fair housing education and enforcement**, including outreach to non-English speakers and undocumented residents.
8. **Implement strategies to decrease homelessness**, recognizing the disproportionate impact of homelessness on people of color.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This report provides a critical lens for understanding how federal, state, and local policies interact with historical and contemporary dynamics of race, class, and place in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. It shows that expanding and diversifying affordable housing supply, especially in high-opportunity neighborhoods, must go hand in hand with anti-discrimination enforcement, community engagement, and targeted investments in underserved communities. The AFH also reflects a growing recognition that housing policy is inseparable from broader questions of equity, access, and social mobility. Its recommendations set a course for local policymakers, housing advocates, and community leaders who are committed to fostering a more inclusive and just city and county.

WINSTON-SALEM POVERTY THOUGHT FORCE FINAL REPORT (2017)

APA CITATION:

Poverty Thought Force. (2017). *Winston-Salem Poverty Thought Force Final Report*. Winston-Salem, NC.

KEY WORDS:

Poverty, housing, affordable housing, community development, workforce, food insecurity, health disparities, education, homelessness

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Winston-Salem Poverty Thought Force Final Report* represents a comprehensive, community-engaged approach to understanding and addressing poverty in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Convened by Mayor Allen Joines in 2015, the Poverty Thought Force (PTF) was tasked with formulating actionable recommendations for reducing poverty through extensive local consultation, empirical research, and synthesis of national best practices. The report is organized into four main sections: an overview of the process and guiding principles, a data-rich analysis of poverty risk factors and outcomes (prepared by Forsyth Futures), detailed recommendations from the PTF across five thematic areas, and suggested next steps for implementation and evaluation.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A central theme in the report is the juxtaposition of Winston-Salem's notable assets, such as higher education institutions, philanthropy, and innovation, with persistent and disproportionate poverty, particularly among women, children, and people of color. The analysis reveals that the city's poverty rate remains higher than national, state, and peer city averages, with significant racial disparities: African-Americans are nearly three times as likely, and Hispanic/Latino residents about four times as likely, to live in poverty compared to White, non-Hispanic residents. Child poverty is also alarmingly high, with approximately one in three children affected. Other interconnected risk factors include higher-than-average unemployment, stagnant incomes among the lowest quintiles, substantial gaps in educational attainment by race, and disparities in health outcomes and insurance coverage. The report highlights that housing instability, food insecurity, and homelessness are both outcomes and drivers of persistent poverty, calling for holistic and multi-sectoral solutions.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The report's section on housing underscores the impact of homeownership, cost burden, and access to safe, affordable housing on poverty outcomes. Homeownership rates in Winston-Salem are significantly lower than national and state averages, with pronounced

racial disparities in ownership. The analysis further notes that affordable housing options are expanding, but at a pace insufficient to meet growing demand. The relationship between housing, employment, and transportation emerges as especially significant, with the report advocating for policies that better link affordable housing development to public transportation routes and economic opportunities.

"Lack of affordable housing can negatively impact the poverty rate. Homeowners and renters who experience a housing burden are at risk of foreclosure or eviction and increased financial instability and hardship." (p. 10)

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The PTF offers 56 specific policy recommendations across five priority areas: education, health, housing, food insecurity, and jobs/workforce.⁴ Notably, the housing recommendations include:

- 1. Improving public transportation** to expand access to housing and jobs;
- 2. Developing supportive housing programs** for vulnerable populations (e.g., homeless, mentally ill, substance users);
- 3. Implementing housing navigators** to help families secure and maintain permanent housing;
- 4. Expanding low-rate, single-room occupancy** options by refurbishing existing buildings;
- 5. Fining landlords** to improve Section 8/affordable housing conditions, and incentivize them with education on the economic benefits of proper maintenance and upgrades
- 6. Adopting “Ban the Box” for housing applications**, removing criminal history questions from initial public housing applications;
- 7. Creating tax and other incentives** for landlords and developers to increase the supply and quality of affordable housing;
- 8. Promoting financial literacy** for public housing residents;
- 9. Revitalizing unused or abandoned homes** for affordable housing use;
- 10. Creating a volunteer-resident weekly support program** pairing volunteers with public housing residents to provide resources and transportation; and

⁴ See <https://www.povertythoughtforce.com/section-iii>

11. Incentivizing construction of smaller affordable units and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

The report also emphasizes the importance of better coordination of anti-poverty initiatives, recommending the appointment of a dedicated “poverty czar” or a central coordinating body, and greater engagement in national anti-poverty networks. The need for comprehensive, neighborhood-focused interventions and continuous evaluation of program outcomes is repeatedly stressed .

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The PTF’s process stands out for its deep commitment to community participation, employing “World Café” meetings to gather input from more than 400 local stakeholders, including those with lived experience of poverty. The resulting recommendations are ranked by both impact and feasibility, reflecting an effort to move beyond idealism to pragmatic, actionable steps. The report calls for Winston-Salem and Forsyth County to join national models such as Purpose Built Communities and the Bridges Out of Poverty framework, underscoring the necessity of place-based, system-wide approaches. In sum, the Poverty Thought Force Final Report offers both a clear-eyed assessment of the entrenched nature of poverty in the region and a robust set of strategies to foster greater economic security, health, and opportunity for all residents .

WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY HOUSING STUDY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT (2018)

APA CITATION:

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. (2018). *Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Housing Study and Needs Assessment*. Prepared for the City of Winston-Salem Community Development Department.

KEY WORDS:

Affordable housing, housing needs assessment, workforce housing, housing preservation, housing policy, gentrification, development costs, cost-burden, housing market, housing stock, displacement, demographic trends

SYNOPSIS:

The *Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Housing Study and Needs Assessment* (2018) is a comprehensive mixed-methods evaluation of the city and county's housing market, focusing on both current conditions and future needs for affordable and workforce housing. Prepared by Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., this report is grounded in demographic analysis, housing market trends, policy review, and stakeholder input. It identifies critical gaps, examines the drivers of housing affordability and availability, and proposes a strategic framework to guide policy and investment decisions over the coming decade.

OVERVIEW & CONTENTS:

The report is organized into several key sections, beginning with demographic and market analyses, a review of housing cost burdens, and an inventory of the existing housing stock. It moves on to detailed assessments of housing affordability, special needs populations, development costs, and the impact of government programs. It concludes with strategies and recommendations designed to guide local policy and resource allocation. Community engagement played a significant role in shaping the report's findings, with input from city and county officials, local housing organizations, developers, and residents.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

Population Growth and Demographic Shifts: Winston-Salem and Forsyth County have experienced steady population and household growth since 2010, with a particularly pronounced increase in older adults (65+). There is also a notable racial and socioeconomic concentration of poverty, especially in East Winston, and emerging demographic changes in the downtown core associated with early stages of gentrification.

Housing Affordability Crisis: The shortage of affordable and available rental units for low-income households is a defining challenge. There is a documented gap of 16,244 units affordable to households earning less than 80% of area median income (AMI). Cost burdens

are especially severe for renters and owners with the lowest incomes, with more than 70% of extremely low-income households (below 30% AMI) spending over half their income on housing. Black and Hispanic households are disproportionately affected by housing problems, including poor quality, overcrowding, and lack of basic amenities.

Mismatch in Housing Stock: The current stock is dominated by single-family detached homes (over 60%), with limited “missing middle” options (such as duplexes, triplexes, or small-scale multifamily). There is a notable mismatch between unit size and household composition, especially as the population ages and the number of smaller households grows. Despite some recent growth in downtown housing and an uptick in assessed property values, large portions of the housing stock are aging, with nearly half of all units built between 1960 and 1979, and a significant number in poor condition or vacant.

Development and Preservation Challenges: The study finds that the development environment in Winston-Salem is relatively favorable, with reasonable fees and streamlined entitlement processes, but highlights an acute need for both the production of new affordable units and the preservation of existing ones. Development opportunities are concentrated in the east and southeast of the city, with many small publicly- or privately-owned vacant parcels potentially available for infill. Rising construction costs, regulatory barriers, and the risk of losing subsidized or naturally-occurring affordable housing to market-rate conversion or disrepair are major concerns.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The report defines “workforce housing” as targeting households with annual incomes around \$35,000–\$50,000, including teachers, nurses, first responders, and service workers. Most in this group can afford lower-quartile homes but are increasingly squeezed by rising prices and stagnating incomes. Demand over the next decade is projected to be especially high for both older adults (owner units) and young adults (rental units), further straining an already tight market. The report also quantifies future demand: by 2027, the city will need an estimated 14,663 new housing units, with more than half needed for older adults.

“The greatest need for rental production is for households at 80 percent of AMI and below. Likewise, homeownership also continues to be out of reach for many lower income households in Winston-Salem. The number of severely cost-burdened renter households in the City rose over the period. According to the most recent HUD CHAS tabulation, nearly three quarters (71.0 percent) of extremely low-income households in Winston-Salem with incomes below 30 percent of AMI pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing costs. Without an affordable housing intervention, this income group will continue to be vulnerable to economic shifts, lessening their chances of becoming first-time homebuyers.” (p. 25).

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The report outlines a multifaceted strategic framework with five overarching objectives:

1. **Close the Affordable Housing Supply Gap:** Increase the production of affordable rental units, especially for those earning less than 80% AMI, and target special populations (elderly, disabled, homeless). Use a mix of local, state, and federal resources, and improve coordination between city and county efforts.
2. **Improve Preservation and Housing Quality:** Stabilize existing stock through coordinated code enforcement, incentives for landlords, and targeted investments in maintenance. Consider a municipal land bank, enhanced vacant property strategies, and expanded partnerships with lenders and trade groups.
3. **Align Housing Production with Demographic Needs:** Encourage the development of “missing middle” housing and smaller units to address the mismatch between household size and unit size, especially for aging residents and smaller families. Use zoning reform and financial incentives to increase supply.
4. **Prevent Displacement:** Stabilize low-income households in neighborhoods facing gentrification, especially East Winston and downtown, by increasing homeownership opportunities, supporting renter protections, and using public/private tools to manage change.
5. **Expand Access to Opportunity:** Integrate housing, transportation, and employment strategies to lower overall cost burdens, promote equitable access to jobs, schools, and services, and reduce spatial disparities.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This report provides a detailed backdrop for understanding the evolution of Winston-Salem’s housing market and the policy responses needed to ensure inclusive growth. It highlights the challenges posed by both legacy issues, such as redlining and segregation, concentrated poverty, and an aging housing stock, and emerging threats, like gentrification and rising construction costs.

EXPLORING EQUITABLE, EFFECTIVE, AND EFFICIENT SOLUTIONS TO VACANCY AND ABANDONMENT IN WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA (2019)

APA CITATION:

Center for Community Progress. (2019). *Exploring equitable, effective, and efficient solutions to vacancy and abandonment in Winston-Salem, North Carolina: A technical assistance report*. Center for Community Progress.

KEY WORDS:

Vacancy, abandonment, equitable development, code enforcement, land banking, affordable housing, community revitalization

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

This technical assistance report, produced by the Center for Community Progress in partnership with the UNC School of Government, investigates the systemic causes and solutions for vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated (VAD) properties in Winston-Salem. Drawing from interviews with local officials, a review of data systems and enforcement practices, and a contextual analysis of the city's housing and land use history, the report provides a critical assessment and a menu of recommendations. The focus is on improving data systems, code enforcement, tax policy, and capacity for land stewardship as core strategies to revitalize neighborhoods and foster equitable outcomes.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A central theme is the historical legacy of racialized housing and land use policy in Winston-Salem. The report underscores how past zoning, redlining, and urban renewal initiatives have produced persistent neighborhood inequities, particularly in core areas with high poverty and low homeownership rates. The technical team advocates for equity as both a foundational principle and a desired outcome, arguing that addressing vacancy and abandonment must be done in direct partnership with communities most affected. Equity-centered approaches are seen not only as reparative but as pragmatic, since lasting neighborhood stability depends on rebuilding trust and shared ownership of solutions.

A second key theme is the importance of interdepartmental coordination and robust data systems. The report notes that VAD properties are a cross-cutting issue, implicating housing, code enforcement, tax collection, planning, and community development. Fragmented data and siloed interventions have limited impact. A coordinated Vacant Properties Task Force, underpinned by shared data, is recommended as a foundational reform. Further, the report highlights the need for proactive and strategic code enforcement, shifting from a reactive, complaint-based system to one that targets limited resources for

greatest impact and is sensitive to both neighborhood market conditions and the needs of vulnerable property owners.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The report draws a strong link between tackling vacancy and expanding affordable housing. With a significant stock of aging and vacant units, it recommends that Winston-Salem prioritize rehabilitation and reuse, especially in neighborhoods at risk of decline or gentrification. Tools such as land banking and community partnerships are highlighted for their potential to aggregate and steward distressed properties, enabling their redevelopment as long-term affordable or workforce housing. The study also underscores the importance of supporting mission-driven developers and community land trusts, giving them first access to publicly-owned or tax-foreclosed properties to catalyze inclusive revitalization.

“While this level of public investment might be met with skepticism, it’s clear from findings and stated priorities in the 2018 Housing Study, the City’s CDBG Annual Action Plan, recent Analyses of Impediments to Fair Housing, and feedback from local and community stakeholders, that a significant portion of residential structures are aging, in decline, and losing value. Either these structures can be left to slowly spiral into further decline, or focused and strategic investments of public dollars and partner resources, in exchange for long-term community benefits and equitable outcomes, can help to reverse these trends and strengthen neighborhood markets sufficiently such that the private market again sees promise and opportunity.” (p. 33)

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

Major recommendations include:

- 1. Make Equity a Foundational Principle:** The city should explicitly acknowledge the historic harms of past policy, center racial equity, and ensure communities most affected are engaged as partners in decision-making.
- 2. Establish a Permanent Vacant Properties Task Force:** This multi-departmental group would centralize efforts, foster transparency, and coordinate data-driven strategies.
- 3. Improve Data Collection, Integration, and Mapping:** Develop shared systems and routines to track VAD properties and neighborhood market data, supporting more strategic interventions.
- 4. Move to Strategic Code Enforcement:** Shift resources to focus on neighborhood-wide campaigns, rather than isolated interventions, and design enforcement tools (“Fix it Up, Pay it Up, Give it Up”) to be both effective and equitable.

5. **Partner with County on Tax Enforcement:** Collaborate to optimize property tax enforcement, with reforms that align city and county interests for neighborhood stabilization.
6. **Build Capacity for Land Stewardship:** Explore the formation of a land bank or similar entity to acquire, maintain, and ultimately redevelop VAD properties as community assets, particularly affordable housing.
7. **Seize the Window of Opportunity:** Given current leadership and momentum, act with urgency to avoid the escalating costs of vacancy and abandonment and to leverage current public attention and resources.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The report situates its recommendations within ongoing local initiatives, such as the 2018 Housing Needs Assessment, bond-funded neighborhood revitalization, and emerging partnerships with national intermediaries like Grounded Solutions Network. It acknowledges the unique growth dynamics of Winston-Salem, which, unlike many “Rust Belt” cities, faces challenges from both population increase and persistent core neighborhood decline. The report stresses that no single intervention is sufficient; instead, a comprehensive and equity-focused approach is needed to turn vacant and abandoned properties from sources of blight into engines of inclusive community development and affordable housing production.

THE FORSYTH STORY: A STRATEGY FOR CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE ECONOMY (2019)

APA CITATION:

Brown-Graham, A. R., Brown, D., & Gangi, E. W. (2019). *The Forsyth Story: A Strategy for Creating a More Inclusive Economy*. A Report to the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. School of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

KEY WORDS:

Inclusive economy, economic mobility, poverty, residential segregation, workforce development, racial equity, disconnected youth, safety net, affordable housing, community engagement.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

This report, commissioned by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and prepared by the UNC Chapel Hill School of Government's ncIMPACT Initiative, provides a thorough assessment of Forsyth County's socioeconomic challenges and proposes a strategic framework for building a more inclusive local economy. Drawing on demographic data, resident and worker surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the report identifies deep-rooted barriers to economic mobility and offers a plan for targeted philanthropy and community investment. The central thrust is to align the Trust's Local Impact Funding with the goal of fostering shared prosperity, particularly for populations historically excluded from economic advancement.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

Several interlocking themes are surfaced as central challenges to Forsyth County's future. The report finds persistent barriers to living-wage employment, significant residential and school segregation along racial and economic lines, and deeply entrenched poverty, particularly among Black and Hispanic populations. The social fabric is marked by limited cross-group interaction, a sense of disconnectedness, and a legacy of "company town" leadership that has hindered collective problem-solving. The region's public transportation is identified as inefficient, exacerbating physical and social mobility barriers. Additional themes include under-resourced support systems for mental health and substance abuse, and a community "weariness" with outside interventions that do not meaningfully involve affected residents.

A major finding is that Forsyth County's economic growth and job creation are not translating into broad-based upward mobility, due in part to a mismatch between workforce skills and available jobs, inadequate compensation, and persistent inequities. Disconnected youth, those aged 16–24 who are neither in school nor employed, are

highlighted as an urgent concern, as is the lack of coordinated support for families experiencing intergenerational poverty.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

While the report's central focus is economic inclusion, it strongly connects affordable housing and supportive housing with economic well-being. The Trust's funding priorities have included capital projects related to land use and mixed-use housing, and ongoing support for affordable and supportive housing paired with wrap-around services such as job training and case management. The need for affordable housing is positioned as part of the broader safety net, essential for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness and for those facing severe economic distress. The report explicitly calls for continued investment in affordable, durable housing as a metric of economic sustainability and recommends tracking indicators such as eviction rates and the availability of supportive housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The report outlines four interrelated funding approaches for building a more inclusive Forsyth County economy:

- **Building the Will for Ecosystem Change:** Support collaborative, multi-stakeholder efforts that foster systems change, engage diverse community members, and shift away from top-down, prescriptive interventions.
- **Maximizing Two-Generation Strategies:** Invest in both children and their parents, particularly through the "Great Expectations" initiative, to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.
- **Launching the Next Generation of Leaders:** Target disconnected youth with pathways to living-wage jobs through training, education, and entrepreneurial support.
- **Maintaining the Safety Net:** Continue robust support for emergency assistance, mental health and substance abuse services, and supportive housing to ensure community resilience.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This report is a comprehensive effort to reposition local philanthropy and public policy toward systemic change, drawing from best practices in social innovation and inclusive economic development. It acknowledges both historical legacies and contemporary challenges unique to Forsyth County, such as the enduring "East of 52" divide and the cultural impacts of a formerly dominant manufacturing economy. Importantly, it foregrounds racial equity and inclusive participation as preconditions for community-wide progress, setting measurable indicators for future evaluation.

PET-FRIENDLY RENTAL HOUSING: RACIAL AND SPATIAL INEQUALITIES (2020)

APA CITATION:

Rose, D., McMillian, C., & Carter, O. (2023). *Pet-friendly rental housing: Racial and spatial inequalities*. *Space and Culture*, 26(1), 116–129.

KEY WORDS:

Housing, racial segregation, companion animals, residential alienation, spatial inequality, Forsyth County, landlord policy, rental housing discrimination, pet-friendly housing, gentrification.

OVERVIEW:

This article, by Winston-Salem State University researchers Rose, McMillian, and Carter (2023), investigates how access to pet-friendly rental housing is shaped by racial and spatial inequalities in Forsyth County. The authors collected data from 266 rental listings on Craigslist and Zillow and mapped them against the racial composition of neighborhoods using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). They assessed not only the willingness of landlords to accept pets but also the types of restrictions imposed (breed, size, fees) and analyzed whether these patterns correlated with neighborhood racial demographics. Statistical tests, mapping, and qualitative policy review undergird their analysis.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

The study reveals that renters in predominantly white neighborhoods have significantly greater access to pet-friendly housing compared to those in African-American neighborhoods. While over three-quarters of rental listings in white-majority areas allowed pets, less than half did so in African-American neighborhoods, a statistically significant disparity. The authors frame this as an example of "residential alienation," compounding the well-documented effects of housing discrimination and segregation. These pet restrictions, along with breed and size limitations, additional fees, and higher rents for pet-owners, are another axis along which Black renters experience exclusion and diminished autonomy in their housing choices.

The authors note that breed and size restrictions, as well as ambiguous landlord policies, further exacerbate racial inequalities. Not only are landlords less likely to allow pets in Black neighborhoods, but the presence of restrictive and discretionary rules in white neighborhoods could also act as proxies for selective tenant screening. Gentrifying neighborhoods downtown and in Washington Park show an uptick in pet-friendly housing, often accompanying the arrival of wealthier (and whiter) residents. This pattern of pet commodification, spatially clustered with boutique services and parks, marks both an outcome and a driver of neighborhood change.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The article situates these findings within a broader context of racialized housing policy in Winston-Salem. The authors trace a history of institutional racism, from early 20th-century segregation ordinances to mid-century urban renewal and persistent east-west divides in the city. They connect the scarcity of pet-friendly rentals in African-American neighborhoods to a wider pattern of resource deprivation, including fewer dog parks, veterinary services, and pet supply stores, and suggest that this dimension of residential life has important implications for community well-being, social capital, and public health.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The article calls for several policy interventions:

- **Tenant protections:** Extend legal protections to tenants with companion animals, paralleling current protections for families with children.
- **Outlaw breed/size restrictions:** Prohibit discriminatory breed and size policies in rental housing, which can function as covert mechanisms for racial exclusion.
- **Limit pet fees:** Ban non-refundable pet fees and monthly pet rents, which disproportionately burden lower-income renters.
- **Neighborhood investment:** Expand access to pet infrastructure (parks, services) in marginalized areas to promote equity.
- **Further research:** Investigate the experiences of African-American renters with pets and conduct audit studies on how landlord discretion operates across race and breed.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This research adds an important but often overlooked dimension to the analysis of housing inequity in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. It demonstrates that even seemingly minor landlord policies, such as pet restrictions, participate in the reproduction of spatial and racial inequality, affecting who can feel at home and fully participate in community life. For advocates and policymakers, the findings underscore the need for comprehensive fair housing enforcement that attends to all facets of tenant autonomy. As the region grapples with broader challenges of affordability, displacement, and neighborhood change, integrating these insights into housing policy could foster more just and inclusive communities.

WINSTON-SALEM ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH POLICY AGENDA (2021)

APA CITATION:

Grounded Solutions Network. (2021). *Winston-Salem Anti-Displacement and Inclusive Growth Policy Agenda*. ForEveryoneHome Initiative.

KEY WORDS:

Anti-displacement, inclusive growth, affordable housing, land banking, community land trust, housing trust fund, housing equity, eviction prevention, zoning reform, policy recommendations.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENTS OF THE REPORT:

The Winston-Salem Anti-Displacement and Inclusive Growth Policy Agenda presents the findings and recommendations of a two-year collaborative effort (the ForEveryoneHome Initiative) designed to help Winston-Salem anticipate and respond to growing pressures of displacement amid demographic and economic change. The report is based on a thorough needs assessment, extensive data analysis, and broad-based community engagement, and it offers a policy roadmap for promoting lasting affordability, housing equity, and inclusive growth. The agenda is structured around five central policy challenges: (1) growing displacement pressures, (2) the need to build a more inclusive community, (3) the ongoing loss of affordable housing, (4) concerns regarding housing quality, and (5) Winston-Salem's high eviction rate.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A central theme in the report is the relationship between historical patterns of segregation, contemporary racial inequity, and housing instability in Winston-Salem. The analysis documents how racial divides, exacerbated by government action, such as redlining, restrictive covenants, and urban renewal, continue to shape disparities in wealth, income, opportunity, and housing conditions. Place matters deeply: neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of residents of color remain the most economically disadvantaged and least able to access quality schools, jobs, and amenities. The report draws on the Opportunity Atlas to show that a child's prospects for economic mobility are closely tied to the neighborhood in which they grow up, underscoring the importance of addressing spatial inequality as part of any anti-displacement strategy.

The needs assessment also makes clear that the affordability crisis in Winston-Salem is as much a function of stagnating incomes as rising housing costs. Since 2000, inflation-adjusted median renter incomes have declined by more than 20%, while rents have increased modestly, eroding housing affordability for low-income and working-class residents. This affordability gap is particularly acute in fast-changing neighborhoods near

downtown, where both rents and home prices are increasing rapidly. These trends disproportionately threaten Black and Hispanic residents with economic and cultural displacement.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The report's approach to housing development focuses on both the preservation of existing affordable units and the creation of new, permanently affordable housing, especially in high-opportunity neighborhoods. The analysis calls for a shift away from short-term affordability and toward models such as community land trusts and land banking, which can ensure that public investments yield lasting benefits.

"The vast majority of Winston-Salem's dedicated affordable housing is located in low-income neighborhoods in which the majority of residents are black or brown. Higher-cost neighborhoods tend to be majority white. The city needs to do more to open-up these neighborhoods to a diversity of residents at all income levels." (p. 21)

Notably, the report draws attention to the limited effectiveness of the city's voluntary inclusionary housing ordinance, which has failed to incentivize private developers to create affordable units, and the concentration of subsidized units in already low-income neighborhoods. There is a clear call to recalibrate policies and incentives to both increase the supply and improve the geographic distribution of affordable and workforce housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The policy agenda is action-oriented, laying out a suite of specific and interlocking recommendations, including:

- 1. Establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund:** To provide the city with flexible, dedicated resources for both the preservation and production of affordable housing. Trust funds can be capitalized through bonds, taxes, or developer fees, and have a proven record of scaling up affordable housing production in peer cities.
- 2. Require Lasting Affordability:** Ensure that all housing supported with city subsidy, whether through direct funding, sale of public land, or other incentives, remains affordable for at least 30, and preferably 50 or more, years. This breaks the cycle of temporary affordability and prevents the loss of affordable stock as markets strengthen.
- 3. Support the Creation of a Community Land Trust (CLT):** CLTs acquire and steward land to provide permanently affordable homeownership and rental opportunities, particularly in gentrifying neighborhoods. The city is encouraged to support CLTs with funding, technical assistance, and a pipeline of properties.

- 4. Establish a Land Banking Program:** Leverage the city’s inventory of vacant, abandoned, or tax-delinquent properties for inclusive development. Land banks can acquire, hold, and transfer land for affordable housing, while preventing speculation and displacement.
- 5. Reform Inclusionary Zoning Policies:** Better calibrate density bonuses and other incentives to actually induce affordable development, and consider mandatory inclusionary requirements for for-sale housing. Zoning reforms should also open up high-opportunity neighborhoods to more diverse housing types (duplexes, triplexes, etc.).
- 6. Preservation Focus:** Prioritize the preservation of both subsidized and naturally-occurring affordable housing, and expand local funding and technical support for rehabilitation and weatherization programs.
- 7. Strengthen Tenant Protections and Reduce Evictions:** Increase rental assistance resources, develop a model eviction prevention plan, support tenant organizing, establish a landlord academy, and consider a specialized housing court to address the city’s high eviction rate.
- 8. Advance Housing Mobility:** Provide more support for voucher holders seeking housing in low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods, including enhanced landlord outreach and potentially lobbying for source-of-income anti-discrimination protections at the state level.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This policy agenda is deeply rooted in equity and racial justice, explicitly addressing the ways in which past policies created present disparities and insisting on a reparative, inclusive approach to future growth. The report acknowledges the constraints imposed by state law, such as the prohibition on rent control and restrictions on landlord registries, but argues that meaningful progress can still be made within the current legal framework. By centering community engagement and lasting affordability, the recommendations offer both a technical and moral blueprint for advancing housing justice in Winston-Salem. This document stands as both a critique of past practices and a call to action, providing essential context for anyone working on affordable housing policy in the region.

DOES FORSYTH COUNTY’S AFFORDABLE HOME OWNERSHIP PROGRAM BUILD WEALTH AND SPUR ECONOMIC MOBILITY? OUTCOMES FOR A SAMPLE OF 508 PARTICIPANTS (2021)

APA CITATION:

Blizard, Z., & Richardson, C. (2021). *Does Forsyth County’s Affordable Home Ownership Program Build Wealth and Spur Economic Mobility? Outcomes for a Sample Of 508 Participants*. Center for the Study of Economic Mobility, Winston-Salem State University.

KEY WORDS:

Affordable housing, homeownership, wealth accumulation, Individual Development Account (IDA), foreclosure, equity, racial disparities, program evaluation

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

This report presents an empirical analysis of the Forsyth County Homeownership Program (FCHP), focusing on its efficacy in promoting wealth accumulation, neighborhood stability, and intergenerational mobility for low- and moderate-income households in Forsyth County, North Carolina. Drawing upon a sample of 508 program participants between 2004 and 2018, the authors examine both the Individual Development Account (IDA) and non-IDA branches of the program. The IDA branch requires intensive financial education and savings discipline, while the non-IDA route provides down payment support without mandatory financial training. The analysis integrates administrative records, housing market data, and participant financial information to assess outcomes such as net wealth accumulation, home value appreciation, property tax contributions, and foreclosure rates.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A central theme is the program’s impact on participants’ ability to accumulate wealth through homeownership. The report finds that, on average, every dollar of county government investment generated \$5.49 in homeowner equity. Total net equity created was nearly \$25 million, with an average net equity per household of approximately \$49,000 after nine years of homeownership. Importantly, outcomes were similar across racial groups, and IDA participants accumulated nearly 20% more net wealth than non-IDA participants, underscoring the value of intensive financial coaching.

Participants collectively paid \$6.2 million in property taxes during the period studied, translating to an average of \$12,255 per participant. This highlights the broader community

benefits of increased homeownership, as participants contributed significantly to the local tax base and, by extension, to public services and infrastructure.⁵

The foreclosure rate among FCHP participants was relatively low (7.9%), with most foreclosures concentrated around the years following the Great Recession. Notably, single heads of household, those with lower credit scores, higher debt ratios, and part-time employment status were more vulnerable to foreclosure. The analysis suggests that purchasing after the Great Recession is associated with lower foreclosure risks, likely due to stabilized lending practices and housing markets.

Between 2005 and 2020, FCHP homes appreciated by an average of 32.2%. Homes built between 1970 and 1989 saw the highest appreciation rates. Higher credit scores were associated with the purchase of homes that retained greater value, while higher debt ratios correlated with less valuable properties over time.

From the perspective of public investment, the program is highly efficient. The total government expenditure on gifted funds, lost interest, and unrecoverable loans from foreclosure was \$4.5 million, while net equity created for recipients was \$24.9 million. This results in a strong return on investment for the county, suggesting that the program is both fiscally responsible and socially beneficial.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The FCHP represents a public-private partnership model for affordable housing development. It addresses barriers to homeownership, particularly down payment costs and access to mortgage credit for smaller loans, by providing a mix of grant and loan support. The program not only facilitates individual wealth-building but also promotes neighborhood stability and asset growth, which can have spillover effects for the wider community. It is noteworthy that over 800 households have achieved first-time homeownership through the program since its inception, with the majority purchasing homes in Winston-Salem and surrounding municipalities.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

While the report is mainly analytical, it provides several implicit recommendations for enhancing program effectiveness:

⁵ Note that renters pay property taxes indirectly through monthly rent to landlords. Both contribute to the local tax base. However, while homeowners may elect to deduct property taxes from income tax, renters are unable to do so. Note also that in some studies show the effective tax rate for multifamily is higher than that of single family homes. See <https://www.truehold.com/post/do-renters-pay-property-tax> and <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/w05-2.pdf>

- 1. Expand Financial Education:** Given the outcomes for IDA participants, greater emphasis on financial training for all participants is advised.
- 2. Target Vulnerable Groups:** Extra support should be directed to single-parent households, those with lower credit scores, and part-time workers to reduce foreclosure risks.
- 3. Promote Equitable Access:** Maintaining racial equity in program outcomes and targeting outreach to underserved groups will help address longstanding wealth gaps.
- 4. Ongoing Program Evaluation:** Continued data collection and analysis, including surveys on participant well-being and neighborhood outcomes, will strengthen program impact and inform future adjustments.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

Forsyth County's homeownership initiative is situated within national debates about the role of asset-building in alleviating poverty and promoting intergenerational mobility. The FCHP provides a compelling case study of how well-designed, locally administered programs can yield significant financial and social benefits for low-income households, with minimal public outlay and substantial returns for both participants and the broader community. As housing affordability challenges persist, the FCHP model, combining direct financial support, financial literacy training, and careful program evaluation, offers a promising template for other jurisdictions seeking to promote inclusive economic mobility through homeownership

HOW DID PARTICIPANTS' HOME VALUES CHANGE? A DEEP DIVE INTO MARKET VALUES (2021)

APA CITATION:

Blizard, Z., Richardson, C., & Sloop, J. (2021). *How Did Participants' Home Values Change? A Deep Dive into Market Values*. Center for the Study of Economic Mobility, Winston-Salem State University.

KEY WORDS:

Homeownership, affordable housing, market value, asset appreciation, ROI, housing equity, race, down payment assistance, IDA, Great Recession, municipalities

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

This report analyzes the Forsyth County Homeownership Program (FCHP), an initiative designed to promote homeownership among low-income residents through down payment assistance and homebuyer education. The study provides a detailed assessment of the appreciation or depreciation of homes purchased by program participants from 2005 to 2020, exploring how returns on investment (ROI) varied by geography, race, program participation (e.g., IDA status), and timing relative to the Great Recession. The analysis is based on a robust dataset that merges program participant data, Forsyth County tax records, and Zillow market value estimates, focusing on 508 homeowners who participated in the FCHP after 2004.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

The report finds that, on average, FCHP participants successfully acquired homes that appreciated in value, achieving an average annualized ROI of 2.7%. Excluding foreclosures, this figure rises to 3.5%, indicating substantial asset growth for most low-income homeowners. However, ROI varied considerably across municipalities: participants in Walkertown achieved the highest returns (7.6%), while those in Belews Creek realized the lowest (0.7%). Notably, the majority of participants bought homes in Winston-Salem, where the average annualized ROI was 2.7%. A significant finding is the higher ROI for Black participants (3.2%) compared to White (2.2%) and Hispanic (2.3%) participants, suggesting that the program may have contributed meaningfully to wealth building in Black households. In contrast, participants involved in the Individual Development Account (IDA) portion of the program experienced lower average ROIs (2.0%) compared to non-IDA participants (3.1%).

The analysis demonstrates the importance of market timing. Home purchases made prior to or during the Great Recession fared differently from those made after the recession, highlighting the volatility and unpredictability of local housing markets. Furthermore, while there were substantial increases in home values countywide (+32.3% for relevant properties from 2005–2020), rates of appreciation varied significantly between municipalities and

neighborhoods. For example, properties in Kernersville appreciated by over 55%, while those in Germanton saw only a 9.6% increase.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The report underscores the complexity of affordable and workforce housing development in Forsyth County. By providing down payment assistance and flexibility in location choice, the FCHP enabled participants to access homeownership across a range of neighborhoods. However, the findings suggest that not all neighborhoods offered equal opportunities for wealth building, with outer suburban areas generally yielding higher appreciation rates. The risk of foreclosure, forty participants lost their homes, remains a notable concern, underscoring that homeownership alone does not guarantee asset growth or housing stability for low-income families.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

Although explicit recommendations are not separately itemized, the report strongly implies several actionable points for housing policy and program design:

- 1. Targeted Homebuyer Education:** The county should better educate participants on the historical appreciation rates and market dynamics of different neighborhoods to maximize the long-term benefits of homeownership.
- 2. Post-Purchase Support:** Given the risk of foreclosure and variations in appreciation, ongoing support for homeowners may be warranted to promote housing stability and asset retention.
- 3. Focus on Timing and Place:** Program administrators should track and communicate local market trends, helping prospective buyers make informed decisions about when and where to purchase.
- 4. Equity in Asset Building:** The higher ROI among Black participants suggests the FCHP may help address racial wealth gaps, but further study is needed to ensure equity is sustained over time.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This study situates the FCHP within broader trends in affordable housing development. The nuanced findings on asset appreciation, foreclosure, and racial equity provide important lessons for policymakers seeking to expand homeownership opportunities while promoting wealth building for low-income residents. The report highlights the necessity of context-sensitive, data-driven approaches to program design and evaluation. By focusing on both individual and neighborhood-level outcomes, the research adds to our understanding of the possibilities and limits of homeownership as an anti-poverty strategy in mid-sized Southern cities like Winston-Salem.

A NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS OF THE FORSYTH COUNTY HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM: WHERE DO RECIPIENTS MOVE AND WHY? (2021)

APA CITATION:

Blizard, Z., Richardson, C., & Sloop, J. (2021). *A Neighborhood Analysis of the Forsyth County Homeownership Program: Where Do Recipients Move and Why?* Center for the Study of Economic Mobility, Winston-Salem State University.

KEY WORDS:

Homeownership, affordable housing, neighborhood mobility, economic mobility, crime, education, social capital, demographic change, program evaluation

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

This report presents a comprehensive neighborhood analysis of the Forsyth County Homeownership Program (FCHP), a local initiative designed to increase homeownership rates among low-income residents through down payment assistance. The study investigates a critical question: not only whether the program facilitates homeownership, but also whether it enables participants to move into neighborhoods that are more conducive to upward economic mobility. Drawing on a sample of 508 FCHP participants between 2005 and 2020, the report compares characteristics of participants' neighborhoods before and after their home purchase. The analysis draws on participant address data, neighborhood-level socioeconomic indicators from the Census, and local crime statistics to evaluate how residential moves relate to broader patterns of opportunity and exclusion in Forsyth County.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A central theme of the report is that “our environments affect us,” shaping life trajectories through exposure to crime, school quality, family structures, and social networks. Building on national research, such as the Moving to Opportunity experiment,⁶ the report contends that place matters profoundly for economic mobility. The findings indicate that FCHP participants generally moved from neighborhoods characterized by concentrated disadvantage to areas with stronger “economic ladders”, measured by lower crime rates, higher homeownership, lower shares of single-parent households, and greater median household income. For example, participants' new neighborhoods exhibited, on average, a 90% reduction in annual crime rates, an 8 percentage point drop in single-parent households, and a 21-percentage point drop in the share of renters compared to their previous neighborhoods.

⁶ <https://www.nber.org/programs-projects/projects-and-centers/moving-opportunity>

The study finds that FCHP participants relocated to neighborhoods with notably higher median household incomes (increases averaging \$4,000–\$6,400) and slightly lower unemployment rates (drops of 0.4–0.7 percentage points). The neighborhoods they moved into were also becoming more educated over time, with a growing share of highly educated residents, while the neighborhoods they left were seeing stagnation or decline in educational attainment. These patterns suggest that the FCHP is not only an asset-building tool, but also a mechanism for reducing exposure to neighborhood-level risk factors that constrain mobility.

The report highlights complex patterns of racial and ethnic mobility. On average, participants moved to more racially diverse neighborhoods, with lower concentrations of Black and Hispanic residents and higher shares of White residents. Black participants, in particular, tended to move east of US 52, while White participants gravitated south of US 421 and Hispanic participants concentrated near Stanleyville. The neighborhoods receiving FCHP participants are generally becoming more diverse over time, although some evidence suggests persistent racial and economic segregation at finer geographic scales.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

From a housing development perspective, the FCHP enables low-income buyers to access homeownership in a broader array of neighborhoods, supporting de-concentration of poverty. The report documents that participants' new neighborhoods also had fewer vacant homes (a 1.8 percentage point drop), suggesting positive impacts on neighborhood stability and housing market health. The program thus advances not only the individual goal of homeownership, but also community-level aims of neighborhood revitalization and stabilization, key concerns in affordable housing and urban policy debates.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

Although the report is primarily analytic rather than prescriptive, several recommendations are implied:

- 1. Expand Down Payment Assistance:** The evidence that FCHP participants relocate to areas with stronger economic ladders supports the expansion of such programs as vehicles for economic mobility.
- 2. Focus on Neighborhood Opportunity:** Program administrators should continue to emphasize the importance of neighborhood context, perhaps by incorporating guidance or incentives for moves to areas with better long-term prospects (e.g., lower crime, better schools).
- 3. Monitor Racial Equity and Integration:** Ongoing monitoring of racial and socioeconomic integration is warranted to ensure that program benefits are

equitably distributed and that patterns of segregation are not inadvertently reinforced.

- 4. Longitudinal Follow-up:** The report suggests the value of surveying past FCHP participants to assess changes in quality of life, health, access to jobs, and satisfaction with local schools, in order to strengthen program evaluation and design.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This analysis is situated within a broader research agenda examining the interplay of place, race, and economic opportunity in Forsyth County. The report's focus on neighborhood change and mobility is especially relevant given the ongoing challenges of spatial inequality in Winston-Salem. As affordable housing policy in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County evolves, this research underscores the importance of linking homeownership programs to broader efforts aimed at promoting neighborhood opportunity and dismantling barriers to mobility for low-income and minority households.

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN FORM AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY IN FORSYTH COUNTY, NC (2021)

APA CITATION:

Blizard, Z. D., & Smith, R. M. (2021). Investigating the relationship between urban form and economic mobility in Forsyth County, NC. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 44(1), 359–374.

KEY WORDS:

Sprawl, economic mobility, urban form, spatial regression, affordable housing, brownfields, public transportation, racial segregation, compact development

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

Blizard and Smith’s study critically examines the relationship between urban form, specifically the distinction between sprawling and compact development patterns, and economic mobility in Forsyth County. Utilizing spatial regression analysis at the census tract level, the authors seek to determine whether built environment characteristics such as density, land-use mixture, transportation infrastructure (especially bus stops), and the presence of brownfields (abandoned or underutilized industrial sites) have measurable effects on upward economic mobility for low-income residents. The study is motivated by Forsyth County’s notoriously low national ranking for upward mobility, despite its economic and institutional assets, and is situated within ongoing policy efforts encapsulated in the *Legacy 2030 Comprehensive Plan*, which seeks to promote denser, more mixed-use, and transit-oriented development.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

Echoing national research, the study finds that less sprawling (i.e., more compact) census tracts are associated with higher rates of upward mobility. This relationship persists even at the tract level, underscoring the critical role of local geography in shaping opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. In practical terms, sprawling areas, characterized by low-density, single-use zoning and automobile dependence, tend to limit access to jobs, social capital, and upward mobility, particularly for low-income and minority residents.

The study finds that census tracts with more bus stops are significantly associated with higher rates of upward mobility. Access to public transportation, particularly in communities with lower rates of automobile ownership, facilitates connections to employment centers and economic opportunities. Conversely, the presence of brownfields (environmentally contaminated and underutilized properties) is negatively correlated with upward mobility. Brownfields serve as markers of economic disinvestment and present

obstacles to community revitalization, particularly near urban cores where infill development could have the greatest impact.

The analysis confirms that census tracts with higher shares of minority (non-white) residents exhibit significantly lower rates of upward mobility, independent of urban form. This finding underscores the profound and persistent effects of racial segregation and wealth inequality, outcomes of decades of both de facto and de jure discriminatory policies, on mobility. The study notes that while urban form, transportation, and redevelopment policies are critical, they must be coupled with deliberate efforts to address racial segregation if economic mobility is to be meaningfully improved in Forsyth County.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

Affordable and workforce housing development in Forsyth County is intricately linked to the spatial organization of the built environment. The study suggests that compact, higher-density, and mixed-use development, preferably near the urban core, are associated with improved economic mobility outcomes. These forms of development are more likely to support transit access, social capital formation, and efficient public service delivery. Importantly, the study highlights that efforts to redevelop brownfields and encourage infill housing can have dual benefits: revitalizing underutilized areas and mitigating the negative effects of sprawl.

However, the authors caution that redevelopment and densification, if not carefully planned, can trigger gentrification and displacement. They recommend strategies such as including affordable housing in redevelopment projects, supporting community land trusts, and promoting mixed-income developments to ensure that existing residents benefit from urban transformation rather than being priced out of revitalizing neighborhoods.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

Based on their findings, Blizzard and Smith propose several recommendations:

- 1. Limit Sprawling Development:** The City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County should actively pursue policies that discourage single-use, low-density, and auto-dependent growth. This aligns with existing comprehensive planning goals and is justified by the study's findings on mobility.
- 2. Promote Compact, Infill, and Mixed-Use Development:** Increasing residential and population densities, particularly through infill development in previously denser, now declining, neighborhoods, is recommended to promote economic mobility.
- 3. Expand Public Transportation:** Expanding the coverage and frequency of public transportation, including the addition of bus stops in low-mobility areas, is identified

as a means of improving access to employment and services for low-income residents.

- 4. Redevelop Brownfields:** Proactive identification and redevelopment of brownfields, coupled with financial and regulatory incentives, can stimulate economic activity and improve neighborhood conditions. However, care must be taken to prevent displacement of existing low-income residents.
- 5. Address Racial Segregation:** All of the above policy strategies, while important, are insufficient without also addressing racial and income segregation. Deliberate steps must be taken to create more equitable and inclusive communities.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

Forsyth County's struggle with upward mobility is notable given its size, institutional assets, and economic history. The report provides a useful reminder that spatial and institutional arrangements, shaped by both past and present policies, are central determinants of housing outcomes and life chances. As Winston-Salem and Forsyth County continue to grapple with the challenges of affordable and workforce housing, the evidence presented here supports an integrated approach, combining land use reform, transportation investment, brownfield redevelopment, and explicit attention to racial equity as essential elements of any effective housing strategy

THE LENDING HOLE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HOMEOWNERSHIP MARKET: WHY MILLIONS OF FAMILIES CAN'T GET SMALL DOLLAR LOANS (2021)

APA CITATION:

Zainulbhai, S., Blizard, Z. D., Richardson, C. J., & Panfil, Y. (2021, November). *The Lending Hole at the Bottom of the Homeownership Market: Why Millions of Families Can't Get Small Dollar Loans*. New America & Center for the Study of Economic Mobility.

KEY WORDS:

Small dollar mortgages, affordable housing, homeownership, racial equity, mortgage denial, housing policy, lending practices, neighborhood segregation

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

This report investigates a critical but often overlooked structural barrier to homeownership in the United States: the shrinking availability of “small dollar” mortgages which are essential for low- and moderate-income households seeking to buy affordable homes. Through a blend of national data and a focused case study of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, North Carolina, the authors illuminate how regulatory, institutional, and market forces combine to systematically lock out creditworthy families from the first rung of the wealth-building ladder. Drawing on Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data, local interviews, and real estate market analyses, the report details both the mechanics and consequences of the “lending hole,” situating it within broader patterns of segregation, neighborhood decline, and racial inequity.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

The central finding is that lenders have increasingly withdrawn from originating small mortgages due to the fixed costs of loan processing, regulatory changes post-Dodd-Frank, and commission-based incentives that favor larger loans. Banks deny small mortgage applications at rates three to four times higher than larger loans, even when applicants' credit profiles are comparable. The result is that fewer than a quarter of low-cost homes are purchased with a mortgage; the rest are bought with cash, typically by investors, locking out low- and moderate-income would-be owner-occupants.

Programs like FHA loans, designed for first-time and lower-income buyers, impose strict home condition requirements that many affordable properties fail to meet. This creates a catch-22: homes that are affordable for low-income families are often ineligible for the very financing intended to help them. In Forsyth County, this is compounded by local and state assistance programs whose inspection requirements and age cutoffs eliminate most of the existing housing stock from eligibility, particularly in predominantly Black neighborhoods such as East Winston.

The prevalence of cash buyers, especially investors, has also led to the conversion of affordable homes into rental properties, which contributes to neighborhood instability, reduces homeownership rates, and accelerates property value decline. In Winston-Salem, the east side (East Winston) has been particularly hard hit: from 1996 to 2021, home values dropped by nearly 60% in these neighborhoods,⁷ while investor ownership soared and owner-occupancy plummeted. This shift is rooted in both the legacy of segregation and the contemporary withdrawal of mortgage credit from low-value neighborhoods.

The lending hole disproportionately affects Black and Latino families and neighborhoods. In Forsyth County, small dollar loan denial rates cluster around 30-40% in East Winston, compared to a countywide average of 20%. The inability to access mortgage credit both perpetuates racial homeownership and wealth gaps and contributes to the “locking in” of neighborhood poverty and segregation.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

From a development perspective, the report illustrates that affordable homeownership in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County is not just a matter of increasing housing supply. It is fundamentally a question of aligning lending standards, program requirements, and market realities to ensure that affordable homes can actually be purchased by those who need them. With only 7.3% of the county’s homes built since 2010 and most affordable stock in need of repairs, current program and lending restrictions create a severe mismatch between supply and access. Furthermore, high investor ownership rates, especially in affordable and historically Black neighborhoods, threaten long-term neighborhood stability and the generational wealth-building prospects that homeownership is supposed to offer.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

The authors recommend a multifaceted policy approach to close the lending hole:

- 1. Develop New Loan Products:** Create flexible, low-cost small dollar mortgage products that are accessible to low- and moderate-income buyers, with more reasonable minimum loan amounts and streamlined processes.
- 2. Revise Program Standards:** Adjust state and local assistance programs’ inspection and age requirements to better reflect the realities of the affordable housing stock, and allow for rehabilitation or repair financing in conjunction with home purchase.
- 3. Leverage CRA and Regulatory Reform:** Use the Community Reinvestment Act and regulatory incentives to encourage banks and credit unions to offer small dollar

⁷ While these homes have experienced recent and rapid increase in value, they are still dominated by investors and cash buyers looking to rent or flip these homes.

loans, and reconsider aspects of Dodd-Frank and the Qualified Mortgage Rule that disincentivize such lending.

4. **Support “High Touch” Lending:** Fund or incentivize counseling and administrative support for lenders serving small dollar loan applicants, recognizing they are often more complex financial circumstances.
5. **Address Investor Dominance:** Consider local policies to prioritize owner-occupant buyers, limit speculative cash purchases, or otherwise foster a greater share of affordable homes going to families rather than investors.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The lending hole in Forsyth County is symptomatic of national trends but is sharpened by the region’s specific history of racialized disinvestment, concentrated poverty, and persistent segregation. The report’s granular analysis of East Winston reveals how cumulative disadvantage is reinforced not only by historic policy choices but by present-day gaps in the housing finance system. The result is a community where affordable housing exists in name only, functionally unavailable to those most in need due to a breakdown in the lending ecosystem. As Winston-Salem and Forsyth County grapple with persistent inequity and stagnation, addressing the lending hole is a prerequisite to advancing both affordable homeownership and broader economic mobility.

WINSTON-SALEM LAND BANKING AND LASTING AFFORDABILITY ACTION PLAN (2021)

APA CITATION:

Grounded Solutions Network. (2021). *Winston-Salem Land Banking and Lasting Affordability Action Plan*. ForEveryoneHome Initiative.

KEY WORDS:

Land banking, affordable housing, anti-displacement, lasting affordability, vacant properties, housing equity, inclusive growth, housing policy.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Winston-Salem Land Banking and Lasting Affordability Action Plan* represents the culmination of Grounded Solutions Network's ForEveryoneHome Initiative in Winston-Salem. The report builds on prior analyses documenting the urgent need for tenant protection, the production of affordable units, and the preservation of existing housing. A particular emphasis of this report is the establishment of a municipal land bank, an institution designed to strategically acquire, hold, and redevelop vacant and abandoned properties, specifically with the aim of creating and maintaining affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents. The document provides both the policy rationale and operational framework for a Winston-Salem land bank, offering comparative insights through a detailed case study of Eugene, Oregon's Land Acquisition for Affordable Housing Program. The plan concludes with a step-by-step action plan to guide the City toward effective land bank implementation.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

A dominant theme in the report is that Winston-Salem, as a "mixed market" city, faces simultaneous pressures of housing market escalation in some neighborhoods and persistent disinvestment and abandonment in others. The city currently contends with nearly a thousand properties delinquent on taxes for over five years, nearly a thousand condemned residential properties, and hundreds more classified as chronic violators. The City is already absorbing substantial costs to manage these parcels without recapturing their value for the community. The report argues that a land bank can transform these liabilities into assets by bringing strategic intent and lasting affordability requirements to property acquisition and reuse. The plan also recognizes the racialized history of urban renewal and calls for community accountability and equity as central guiding principles.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The plan positions land banking as a key strategy to both stabilize neighborhoods facing decline and capture valuable parcels in rising markets before they are lost to speculative development. By acquiring tax-delinquent, abandoned, or underutilized properties, a land

bank can ensure these sites are used for affordable housing, especially in areas where private actors are unlikely to invest.

“By attaching lasting affordability requirements to these properties, land banks can ensure that the neighborhoods in which they are investing will remain accessible to low- and moderate-income residents even as the housing markets in the area strengthen.” (p. 2)

The report highlights the lessons of Eugene, Oregon, where land banking enabled the city to place affordable housing in opportunity-rich neighborhoods, ensure geographic dispersion of units, and foster a robust network of non-profit and for-profit affordable housing developers. Land banks can attach long-term (sometimes permanent) affordability covenants to properties, breaking the “housing hamster wheel” of temporary affordability typical of federal subsidy programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The action plan recommends the following steps for Winston-Salem:

1. **Establish an Advisory Committee:** Engage local officials, city staff, housing developers, and community representatives, especially trusted voices from communities of color, to guide the formation, structure, and mission of the land bank.
2. **Determine Administrative Placement:** Locate the land bank within local government, ideally as a department or program in the Community Development or Real Estate office, to maximize efficiency, accountability, and access to city resources.
3. **Secure Funding:** Ensure a predictable, recurring funding stream, possibly through housing bond appropriations or a portion of collected tax-delinquent funds, recognizing that land banks are rarely self-sustaining in their early years.
4. **Hire or Assign Skilled Staff:** Staff should possess expertise in real estate, tax foreclosure, community development, affordable housing finance, property assessment, and community engagement.
5. **Develop Operational Policies with Lasting Affordability:** Establish acquisition, holding, and disposition policies that include strict affordability requirements (often 50+ years) to guarantee that new affordable housing stock remains a community asset over generations.
6. **Learn from Best Practices:** Draw from successful models, like Eugene, Oregon, to guide site selection, community partnership, and transparent, equity-focused governance.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The report acknowledges that many of the legal and administrative capacities required for land banking already exist within Winston-Salem but lack strategic alignment and mission clarity. Importantly, the plan calls for land banking to be explicitly anti-displacement and racially equitable, serving as a tool for reparative policy in neighborhoods historically harmed by neglect or exclusion. The case study of Eugene, Oregon, demonstrates that systematic land banking can not only increase the affordable housing supply but also promote inclusive neighborhood revitalization and prevent the concentration of poverty.

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE CONTINUUM OF CARE WINSTON-SALEM / FORSYTH COUNTY (2022)

APA CITATION:

Homebase. (2022). *Assessment Report for the Continuum of Care Winston-Salem / Forsyth County*. City of Winston-Salem.

KEY WORDS:

Continuum of Care, homelessness, affordable housing, racial disparities, coordinated entry, system assessment, governance, community engagement, supportive services, housing development.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Assessment Report for the Continuum of Care* authored by Homebase, provides a comprehensive evaluation of the structure, processes, and outcomes of the region's federally mandated Continuum of Care (CoC). The report is grounded in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including analysis of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, surveys, and document reviews. Its central aim is to identify the strengths and challenges of the local homeless response system and offer actionable recommendations to improve system performance and governance.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

A central finding of the assessment is that the CoC brings together a diverse array of stakeholders, ranging from nonprofit housing and service providers to local government, law enforcement, hospitals, and individuals with lived experience of homelessness, under a single governance and planning framework. The CoC's strengths include the existence of robust written policies and procedures, the capacity for rapid response as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the facilitation of networking among seasoned service providers.

However, the report surfaces critical challenges that impede the system's effectiveness. Chief among these are issues of governance and participation: the CoC's structure is described as overly bureaucratic and hierarchical, with decision-making power concentrated within a small number of entities (primarily the United Way of Forsyth County and the City of Winston-Salem). This results in perceptions of exclusion, lack of transparency, and insufficient opportunities for new or diverse voices, especially those of front-line staff and people with lived experience of homelessness, to participate meaningfully in planning and decision-making. The assessment identifies persistent racial disparities within the homeless population, with Black individuals comprising a

disproportionate share of those experiencing homelessness, likely reflecting broader patterns of structural inequality.

Another recurring theme is the need for improved coordination, transparency, and efficiency in the coordinated entry process. While intake and assessment have become more standardized, the system is still beset by duplicative processes, inconsistent scoring, and long wait times, all of which hinder timely access to housing resources for those most in need. Communication gaps and a lack of consistent training and orientation for new CoC members further limit engagement and the effectiveness of collaborative work.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

Although the primary focus of the assessment is on homelessness and service coordination rather than new housing production *per se*, the report underscores the need for expanding permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and affordable housing opportunities in Forsyth County. The CoC's role in identifying gaps in the housing continuum and in advocating for the development and preservation of affordable units is emphasized, particularly in light of increased unsheltered homelessness during the pandemic and rising housing cost burdens across the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The report issues a detailed set of recommendations intended to restructure and invigorate the CoC's governance and operations. Key recommendations include:

- **Governance Reform:** Revise the CoC's structure to increase participation and decision-making power among a broader base of stakeholders, recasting the Commission on Ending Homelessness in an advisory role and empowering the Operating Cabinet as the primary decision-making body.
- **Committee Structure:** Clarify the roles and purposes of committees and workgroups, ensure they are action-oriented, and evaluate their effectiveness annually.
- **Conflict of Interest Policies:** Establish and enforce clear policies to guard against real or perceived conflicts of interest, especially given the dual funding and leadership roles of certain agencies.
- **Member Engagement:** Create robust orientation and training programs for new and existing members; establish mechanisms for regular feedback and information-sharing; and bring back collaborative forums such as the "Action Camps."
- **Lived Experience Integration:** Expand and compensate the participation of people with lived experience in planning, policy-making, and governance structures.

- **Process Improvements:** Streamline coordinated entry and referral processes, improve data sharing and transparency, and develop regular schedules for training and engagement that accommodate front-line staff.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The assessment situates its findings within the broader context of Forsyth County's housing and homelessness landscape, noting the increasing complexity and acuity of needs during and following the pandemic, persistent racial disparities, and the growing challenge of unsheltered homelessness. It also points to the necessity of greater collaboration between the CoC, affordable housing developers, and local government, if the systemic causes of homelessness, including the shortage of affordable and supportive housing, are to be addressed.

LARGE INVESTOR ACTIVITY IN WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA (2022)

APA CITATION:

Zainulbhai, S., & Blizard, Z. D. (2022). *Large investor activity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina*. New America, Future of Land & Housing Blog.

KEY WORDS:

Large investors, institutional investment, affordable housing, small-dollar homes, housing finance, housing equity

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE:

Zainulbhai (New America) and Blizard (WSSU) analyze patterns of large-scale investor purchases within Winston-Salem and broader Forsyth County, illuminating how institutional capital shapes the availability and condition of affordable housing. The authors offer a nuanced methodology for distinguishing “large investors”, entities acquiring five or more properties in a single year or twenty across two decades, from smaller, often local, investors. Employing property transaction data from 2001 to 2020, the study details the share of purchases dominated by large investors, unpacks their price-tier focus, and examines spatial trends, especially their activity in low-cost, small-dollar housing markets like East Winston.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A primary insight is that large investor activity, while visible, constitutes a minority of market transactions: averaging 9.7 % of purchases annually from 2001–2020, and declining to 5.1 % by 2020. In contrast, small investors, defined as individual buyers or entities owning fewer properties, account for roughly 21 % of annual purchases, while owner-occupants retain the largest share. Large investors preferentially target small-home markets, acquiring 28 % of homes in that price tier but commanding less than 10 % in more expensive segments, rather than competing directly with middle-class homebuyers using mortgages, institutional investors primarily crowd out other investors, leveraging cash transactions and access to capital that outpace typical buyers. The study also reveals a spatial concentration of large investor activity near East Winston, representing 17 % of purchases in that historically underserved, lower-cost area. This aligns with national trends where institutional capital follows lower-value housing, often exacerbating rental market pressures.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

Although the article does not directly discuss development strategies, its findings carry important implications for housing policy and community stability. First, institutional investment in small-dollar homes may diminish the supply of affordable, owner-occupied housing, thereby limiting opportunities for wealth creation through homeownership.

Second, large investors often prioritize short-term returns over long-term stewardship, making them less likely to invest in the rehabilitation of properties. This neglect can lead to deferred maintenance, contributing to neighborhood decline and broader destabilization.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

The authors suggest several avenues for policy intervention:

1. **Improve data transparency** on investor types, transaction methods, and cash purchases to inform housing policy and community response.
2. **Support the expansion of flexible financing tools**, such as small-dollar mortgages and weatherization/rehab lending, to make affordable homes more accessible to owner-occupants.
3. **Monitor institutional purchasing trends** within lower-cost neighborhoods to assess their impact on displacement, affordability, and housing quality.
4. **Acknowledge distinctions** between large and small investors when crafting equitable housing strategies, recognizing that each play different roles in community equity and property access.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This analysis builds on prior New America and CSEM research illustrating systemic barriers to small-dollar loans, investor dominance in distressed housing markets, and persistent racial and spatial inequities. In Winston-Salem, affordable housing historically clustered in neighborhoods like East Winston are already subject to subprime lending hurdles, foreclosure risks, and high investor concentration, all undermining community stability. Moreover, with investor-backed conversions of small homes into rentals, owner-occupancy rates diminish, complicating strategies for workforce housing and limiting access to wealth-building through homeownership. Zainulbhai and Blizard (2022) provide compelling evidence that while large investors presently command a modest share of property purchases,⁸ their focused activity in low-price housing markets, and the broader structural environment lacking owner-focused financing, positions them as a significant force influencing the future of affordable and workforce housing in Forsyth County.

⁸ Note that the share of investor-owned homes has grown since this 2022 research with Blackstone and Landmark Partners acquiring 100s of homes in Forsyth County. See <https://www.fastcompany.com/91020630/housing-market-blackstone-single-family-portfolio-tricon-purchase> and https://pestakeholder.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/PESP_Report_NC-Housing-Crisis_Nov2022-v5.pdf

FORSYTH COUNTY HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (2023)

APA CITATION:

Sills, S. J., Bucknall, C., & Kelley, R. (2023). *Forsyth County Housing Needs Assessment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)*. National Institute of Minority Economic Development. Report submitted to the Piedmont Triad Regional Council.

KEY WORDS:

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD); Forsyth County; affordable housing; independent living; barriers; ADA; Olmstead decision; Innovations Waiver; Registry of Unmet Needs; community-based services; group homes; direct support professionals

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS:

This 2023 assessment, commissioned by the Piedmont Triad Regional Council, provides a thorough examination of the housing needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Forsyth County, NC. The report draws on primary and secondary data sources, including administrative data, key informant interviews, and a countywide survey of individuals with IDD and their caregivers. It analyzes the broader policy landscape, such as ADA, IDEA, and the Olmstead decision, while detailing local context, available resources, the estimated size of the IDD population, housing preferences, service needs, and structural barriers to independent and integrated community living. The document also offers recommendations and innovative models for addressing housing and support gaps.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

Several critical themes emerge from the report. First, it underscores that people with IDD face a complex array of barriers to independent living, including the scarcity of affordable and accessible housing, limited transportation options, long waits for Medicaid waiver slots, and systemic discrimination or stigma. The report details how the Registry of Unmet Needs (RUN) for the Innovations Waiver in NC is severely backlogged, with thousands waiting for over a decade. As a result, many individuals are forced to live with family or in institutional settings rather than in preferred community-based arrangements.

A significant portion of the assessment is devoted to federal and state-level policy analysis, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the landmark Olmstead decision, which mandates that individuals with disabilities have the right to receive services in the most integrated settings appropriate.

Despite incremental progress, the state has struggled to fulfill these obligations, as evidenced by ongoing litigation (e.g., *Samantha R. v. North Carolina*) and federal monitoring.

The Forsyth County context is explored in detail, highlighting demographic patterns, poverty and cost-burdened housing rates, and the array of services currently available. Yet, the authors find that even with a relatively robust service provider network, the availability of accessible and affordable housing units is insufficient relative to need. Direct support staffing shortages and funding caps further exacerbate the gap between needs and resources.

The assessment carefully reviews the supply and characteristics of housing options for individuals with IDD, noting that group homes, assisted living, and other residential care facilities exist but do not fully satisfy the demand for integrated, independent housing. The authors point out that “affordable housing is one of the most significant barriers for individuals with IDD” and that the lack of accessible units further compounds the problem (p. 3). Data are presented on cost-burdened renters, and the report underscores the limited stock of units compliant with accessibility standards, despite requirements under the ADA and Fair Housing Act. The analysis also recognizes innovative models such as community land trusts, accessory dwelling units, shared housing, and mixed-income developments as potential pathways to increase affordable and accessible housing options.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The report advances a set of actionable recommendations, including:

- **Eliminating the Innovations Waiver waiting list** within ten years, as mandated by recent court orders.
- **Expanding the direct support workforce** through professionalization and competitive compensation.
- **Increasing investment in integrated, community-based housing models** (e.g., reclaiming vacant homes, incentivizing accessible design, and promoting accessory dwelling units).
- **Developing and supporting shared housing/cooperative models** and community land trusts tailored to IDD populations.
- **Coordinating housing policy** with health, employment, and transportation services to holistically address the barriers faced by people with IDD.
- **Implementing ongoing, rigorous monitoring and accountability mechanisms** as required by recent litigation outcomes (see: *Samantha R. v. NC*).

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This assessment contributes important context to broader affordable housing discussions in the county. It highlights the intersectional challenges of disability, poverty, and housing insecurity and connects local experiences to state and federal legal mandates. Furthermore, the assessment provides a template for integrating disability inclusion into mainstream affordable housing and workforce housing policy in Forsyth County. It is clear from the report that any serious strategy for affordable housing development in the county must explicitly address the unique needs of individuals with IDD (and other disabilities) and must move beyond group homes toward true integration, autonomy, and person-centered support.

WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY CONSOLIDATED HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2024-2025 ANNUAL PLAN (2024)

APA CITATION:

City of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County. (2024). *Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan: 2024-2025 Annual Plan*. Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Housing Consortium.

KEY WORDS:

Affordable housing, community development, CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, ESG, public housing, neighborhood revitalization, housing production, homelessness

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan: 2024-2025 Annual Plan* (CHCD) serves as the central strategic framework for the allocation of federal, state, and local resources to address housing and community development needs in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Aligned with HUD requirements, this annual plan coordinates funding streams from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs. The plan integrates assessment of local needs, programmatic priorities, public input, and accountability measures into a unified vision aimed at fostering inclusive growth, neighborhood revitalization, and support for special populations, including people experiencing homelessness and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS FROM THE REPORT:

A major theme in the 2024-2025 plan is the persistent and growing need for affordable and workforce housing, especially as federal funding allocations continue to decrease. Despite funding challenges, the plan underscores the city and county's commitment to maintaining core programs for housing rehabilitation, new housing production, support for homeless services, and neighborhood revitalization. Public-private partnerships, particularly with non-profit developers like Habitat for Humanity, are highlighted as crucial to increasing the production of both single-family and multifamily affordable housing units. The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) remains a centerpiece of the city's revitalization strategy, leveraging a multi-year investment in the Cleveland Avenue area to replace distressed public housing with new, mixed-income developments and supporting infrastructure.

"HAWs' focus will continue to be on providing quality, mixed-income developments of choice to support the agency's mission. Goals include: 1) preservation and modernization of affordable housing stock; 2) development

of additional affordable housing in high-opportunity areas; 3) de-concentration of poverty in traditionally underserved areas...” (p. 26)

Another recurring theme is the integration of housing strategies with broader community development goals, such as expanding economic opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship, and improving neighborhood environments. The plan prioritizes the rehabilitation of both owner-occupied and rental properties, the removal of blight through acquisition and clearance, and the use of vacant properties for infill affordable housing. There is also significant attention to meeting the needs of vulnerable and special populations through emergency repairs, accessibility improvements, and the expansion of tenant-based rental assistance and permanent supportive housing programs.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The CHCD Plan outlines a multifaceted approach to expanding affordable and workforce housing. In FY25, key activities include investments in the rehabilitation and repair of existing homes (targeting both owner-occupied and rental units), support for new construction and infill development, and programs for first-time homebuyers. The plan projects the rehabilitation or repair of over 60 owner units and 150 rental units, as well as the new construction of 36 owner units and 70 rental units. Multifamily housing production is a clear priority, with substantial funding committed to large-scale developments like the Salem Gardens Apartments rehabilitation and new phases of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. The plan also calls for expanded homebuyer assistance, particularly through partnerships with Forsyth County and leveraging additional sources such as the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency’s Community Partners Loan Pool. Additionally, the plan supports the ongoing development and use of Individual Development Accounts (IDA) and other forms of down payment assistance to help lower-income families attain homeownership.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The CHCD Plan is organized around five overarching goals:

- 1. Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Conservation:** Continue CNI implementation, rehabilitate housing, utilize vacant properties for infill, and preserve historic sites.
- 2. Housing Production and Neighborhood Development:** Increase production of single-family and multifamily units, promote homeownership, and provide targeted subsidies and loans.

- 3. Expanding Access and Opportunities:** Address the needs of homeless individuals and special populations, improve access to services, and support programs that promote economic self-sufficiency.
- 4. Expanding Economic Opportunities:** Encourage small business development, job creation, and commercial revitalization in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
- 5. Expanding Coordination and Accountability:** Strengthen coordination among local agencies, improve planning and monitoring, and ensure ongoing community engagement and accountability.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The 2024-2025 Annual Plan positions Winston-Salem and Forsyth County as proactive in addressing the evolving needs of their communities, despite the challenges of decreased federal funding and rising development costs. The plan's strong emphasis on partnerships, innovation, and data-driven evaluation reflects an understanding that housing stability, economic opportunity, and community well-being are deeply interconnected. Through a combination of new production, preservation, assistance to first-time buyers, and robust support for vulnerable populations, the CHCD Plan provides a pragmatic and inclusive roadmap for advancing affordable housing and community development in the region.

COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS: WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA (2024)

APA CITATION:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. (2024). *Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis: Winston-Salem, North Carolina*.

KEYWORDS:

Affordable housing, workforce housing, housing market, rental market, housing development, population growth, economic conditions, housing construction

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

This 2024 HUD report provides an in-depth analysis of the Winston-Salem Housing Market Area (HMA), which encompasses Forsyth, Davidson, Davie, Stokes, and Yadkin Counties in central North Carolina. The report evaluates recent economic trends, demographic changes, housing market conditions, and construction activity, with a specific focus on affordable and workforce housing needs. It offers a 3-year forecast (2024–2027) for both sales and rental housing demand, while contextualizing the findings within local economic developments and migration patterns.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

Several core themes emerge from the analysis. First, the Winston-Salem HMA is characterized by stable economic conditions following recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Job growth, particularly in education and health services, continues to drive the local economy. The report highlights a low unemployment rate of 3.5% as of May 2024, signaling a strong labor market, although the rate of job growth has moderated.

Second, population growth is accelerating, driven by net in-migration rather than natural increase. This migration is largely fueled by the relative affordability of housing in Winston-Salem compared to larger metropolitan areas, as well as an influx of retirees attracted by healthcare services and younger adults seeking lower living costs and remote work opportunities. The report notes that Forsyth County, home to Winston-Salem, accounts for the bulk of regional growth, with an estimated population of nearly 393,000 as of 2023.

Third, the housing market, both for sales and rentals, is currently balanced but under considerable pressure from rising demand. Home sales fell by 18% in the last year, yet the average home price still increased by 4% to \$262,000. The market for new construction has rebounded, with nearly 3,875 homes permitted in the previous 12 months. Meanwhile, the rental market is also described as balanced, with a vacancy rate of 8.7% and average apartment rent reaching \$1,173. Recent years have seen increased multifamily

construction, particularly in downtown Winston-Salem, but rental demand is expected to remain high over the forecast period.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

A key focus of the report is the ongoing need for affordable and workforce housing. The rapid pace of population growth, particularly among lower-income households and in-migrants, has created a demand for both affordable homeownership and rental options. The largest share of home sales is in the \$150,000 to \$349,000 range but rising prices and limited inventory have made it difficult for moderate-income buyers to enter the market. The report notes that, "the average price for a home increased 4 percent during the 12 months ending May 2024," even as sales volume dropped, indicating an affordability squeeze.

Rental development has accelerated, with most new construction concentrated in Forsyth County and the city of Winston-Salem. Projects like the Link Apartments® 4th Street reflect a trend toward higher-end, market-rate developments, but the analysis also recognizes an ongoing need for affordable units, particularly as rents have risen steadily in recent years.

"Recent years have seen increased multifamily construction, particularly in downtown Winston-Salem, but rental demand is expected to remain high over the forecast period." (p. 15)

IMPLICATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

While the HUD analysis does not make explicit policy recommendations, its forecasted housing demand points to the necessity of continued production of both for-sale and rental housing units to achieve market balance. Specifically, it projects a need for 11,450 new sales units and 1,900 new rental units by June 2027, with much of this demand driven by net migration and changing household composition. The findings implicitly recommend sustained or increased support for affordable housing initiatives, as well as targeted rental development to address the needs of lower-income residents.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

This analysis highlights the intersection of economic, demographic, and market trends shaping Winston-Salem's housing landscape. The city's shift to a healthcare and education-driven economy, coupled with sustained in-migration, has generated robust demand for both affordable and workforce housing. At the same time, rising costs, shifting tenure patterns, and an aging population underscore the importance of diverse, inclusive, and accessible housing strategies. The forecasted demand for thousands of new housing units over the next three years is a call to action for local leaders and stakeholders to coordinate investments, modernize policy, and ensure that growth benefits all segments of the community.

CAROLINA CORE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT - FORSYTH COUNTY, NC HOUSING OVERVIEW (2024)

APA CITATION:

Bowen National Research. (2024). *Forsyth County, NC Housing Overview*. Prepared as part of the Housing Needs Assessment for the Carolina Core Region.

KEY WORDS:

Housing needs assessment, affordable housing, workforce housing, demographic analysis, rental housing, for-sale housing, housing gap, cost burden, housing development, housing market, population growth

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Forsyth County, NC Housing Overview* is a comprehensive assessment prepared in June 2024 by Bowen National Research as part of a broader 21-county analysis of the Carolina Core Region in North Carolina. The report offers an in-depth look at the demographic, economic, and housing market conditions in Forsyth County, with a particular focus on the evolving needs for affordable and workforce housing. It places Forsyth County within both regional and statewide contexts, using detailed data from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and proprietary field research.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

Forsyth County has experienced steady population growth, expanding by nearly 12% since 2010 to a 2023 estimated population of 392,474. The number of households has grown by over 14% since 2010, outpacing the region, with both owner-occupied and renter households expected to increase through 2028. Projections indicate continued, albeit slower, growth into 2028. The county's population density is notably higher than the regional and state averages, and it exhibits a higher share of unmarried residents and college-educated individuals. Yet, poverty rates, particularly among children, remain elevated.

A central theme of the report is the intensifying pressure on Forsyth County's housing market across multiple affordability levels. Approximately 44% of renter households and nearly 19% of owner households are cost burdened, with more than 20,800 households experiencing severe cost burdens (paying over 50% of income toward housing costs). The rental market is characterized by a significant shortage of affordable options: vacancy rates for both tax-credit (0.4%) and government-subsidized (0.2%) multifamily rentals are well below optimal levels, with long waitlists. Even non-conventional rentals (e.g., single-family, duplexes, mobile homes) are scarce, with a 0.5% vacancy rate.

The for-sale market is similarly tight, with only 455 homes available as of May 2024, representing a mere 0.5% of the owner-occupied stock. The median list price for available homes has risen to \$325,000, and the median sale price has increased by over 36% since 2020. The distribution of homes skews toward larger, more expensive units, further constraining affordability for moderate- and lower-income buyers.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

Forsyth County has a notable share (nearly 50%) of multifamily rentals, which is typical for a more urbanized area. However, both new development and preservation of affordable and workforce housing remain urgent needs. The report identifies a “housing gap” of more than 25,000 units through 2029: 10,848 needed rental units (primarily at rents affordable to those earning up to 80% of area median household income) and 14,503 for-sale units (concentrated in the higher price segments, but still requiring attention at all levels). The tight supply in both rental and for-sale markets, combined with robust household growth and in-migration (including a large proportion of young adults and lower-income individuals), exacerbates the pressure for more housing.

IMPLICATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The Carolina Core report identifies a number of key strategies for addressing the housing gap:

- **Support the development of a wide variety of housing products** at multiple price points to address the diverse needs of Forsyth County residents.
- **Prioritize construction of affordable rental units** for households earning up to 80% of the area median income, where the gap is most acute.
- **Expand the supply of for-sale housing** across the price spectrum, with particular attention to increasing availability for moderate- and lower-income buyers.
- **Encourage the redevelopment and rehabilitation of existing housing stock**, especially in areas with aging homes or underutilized properties.
- **Target policies and incentives to attract in-commuters** (over 103,000 daily) to become Forsyth County residents, thereby supporting local economic growth.
- **Mitigate risks of out-migration** by ensuring adequate housing options for current residents, helping to retain population and workforce.
- **Collaborate across sectors**, local government, nonprofit, and private sector, to develop and implement strategies for increasing affordable and workforce housing.

- **Align housing policies with employer needs** to ensure that a shortage of affordable/workforce housing does not impede business attraction or employee retention.
- **Conduct ongoing monitoring and market analysis** to adapt to changing demographics, market pressures, and development patterns.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The findings in this assessment underscore longstanding trends in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County: persistent cost burdens among renters, rapid price appreciation outpacing incomes, and constrained new development, especially for affordable and workforce housing. These dynamics are likely to continue unless there are significant policy interventions, incentives, or investments to stimulate the construction and preservation of affordable units. Local government, non-profit partners, and the private sector must collaborate to meet the projected housing demand, ensure housing stability, and support the county's continued economic and demographic growth.

FORWARD 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2024)

APA CITATION:

City-County Planning Board. (2024). *Forward 2045 Comprehensive Plan: Winston-Salem and Forsyth County*.

KEY WORDS:

Comprehensive planning, affordable housing, workforce housing, reparative planning, equity, land use, urban renewal, economic mobility, transportation, sustainable development

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Forward 2045 Comprehensive Plan* is an ambitious blueprint for managing growth, guiding land use, and shaping public policy in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County through the year 2045. Developed by the City-County Planning Board, the plan reflects extensive community engagement, including thousands of residents who participated in surveys, meetings, and public forums. The report is organized thematically, with major sections on attainable housing and stable neighborhoods, economic opportunity, transportation and connectivity, character and identity, and sustainability. It combines an honest historical reckoning, including the legacy of redlining and urban renewal, with forward-looking strategies for an equitable, inclusive, and resilient community.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

A central theme throughout the plan is equity, acknowledging and directly addressing historical injustices that shaped Winston-Salem's physical and social landscape. The report documents the legacy of segregationist policies, redlining, and urban renewal, which disproportionately displaced Black residents and continue to inform patterns of poverty, disinvestment, and limited economic mobility in Forsyth County. One striking fact cited is that areas rated "hazardous" by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1937 remain 91% minority and 84% low-to-moderate income even eighty years later. The report insists on a reparative approach to planning, one that centers equity and intentionally directs investment to marginalized communities.

The plan foregrounds the housing crisis that now characterizes the region. Population growth, increasing construction costs, and stagnant wages have resulted in a housing shortage, particularly acute for affordable and workforce housing. Discriminatory development practices have compounded these challenges, making it ever harder for low-income and working-class families to access stable, dignified housing. The result is rising housing costs, a surge in cost-burdened households, and even increases in homelessness.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The section on attainable housing offers a nuanced definition of “affordable,” “workforce,” and “attainable” housing, with workforce housing generally targeting households earning 60-120% of the Area Median Income, people who earn too much for traditional subsidies but not enough to afford market-rate homes. The plan makes clear that new housing development has not kept pace with population growth and the changing needs of residents, especially as labor and materials shortages drive up prices.

“In recent years, the influx of new residents to Forsyth County has placed additional pressure on housing availability and prices. With local housing development failing to keep pace with population growth and the changing needs of residents, these issues, along with labor shortages and sharp increases in the cost of construction materials, have combined to create a distinct rise in housing prices that has outpaced gains in income, even pushing some residents into homelessness.” (p. 27).

A particularly innovative focus is on “middle density” housing, duplexes, triplexes, and other small-scale multifamily units that fit seamlessly into existing neighborhoods. The plan calls for a mix of market-based and public interventions, including zoning reform to allow middle density in more areas, conversion of non-residential properties (like vacant office buildings), and incentives for infill development near transit, schools, and jobs. There is a strong emphasis on preservation: protecting existing affordable units, expanding property tax relief, and supporting community land trusts to create pathways for generational wealth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The plan is organized around actionable goals and strategies. Among its many recommendations, the following stand out:

- 1. Increase Housing Supply and Diversity:** Prioritize higher-density housing near services, schools, and transit. Allow more middle-density homes in single-family zones. Convert unused office and retail space into housing.
- 2. Advance Reparative and Inclusive Planning:** Invest in neighborhoods harmed by redlining and urban renewal. Eliminate exclusionary zoning and support mixed-income development. Prevent displacement and ensure fair investment across all areas.
- 3. Preserve and Expand Affordable Housing:** Use local resources to build and preserve affordable units. Support nonprofits and the Housing Authority in using public land. Ensure long-term affordability with energy efficiency and targeted tax relief.

- 4. Promote Complete Neighborhoods and Transportation Choice:** Encourage walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with access to parks, groceries, and transit. Remove barriers to infill and innovative housing.
- 5. Reduce Housing Insecurity and Homelessness:** Invest in permanent and transitional housing for low-income and homeless residents. Expand emergency housing and study eviction trends.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

Forward 2045 marks a decisive turn toward holistic and reparative planning in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. It links housing policy with economic development, transportation, and sustainability, and it repeatedly insists that efforts to build and preserve affordable housing must be joined to efforts to advance racial and economic justice. This orientation, combining historical awareness with a robust, practical policy agenda, sets the stage for transformative change, provided the political will and public resources follow. The plan also notes the importance of coordinated public-private action, cross-sector partnerships, and continued community engagement if these ambitious goals are to be realized.

ADAPTING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TO AN EVER-CHANGING ECONOMY IN WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA (2025)

APA CITATION:

Campbell, M. E., Eckholm, C., Eruz, E., Korfmacher, S., Loh, T. H., Meyers, J., Paynter, S., & Render, D. (2025). *Adapting the built environment to an ever-changing economy in Winston-Salem, North Carolina*. Brookings Institution.

KEY WORDS:

Adaptive reuse, office-to-residential conversion, housing development, historic preservation, affordable housing, economic transition, downtown revitalization, urban policy, North Carolina.

OVERVIEW OF REPORT:

This Brookings publication is part of a national series examining office-to-residential conversions in six U.S. cities, focusing here on Winston-Salem as a case study in economic adaptation and urban redevelopment. The report traces the city's historical trajectory, from a tobacco and textile powerhouse to a city facing industrial decline, and now to a model of downtown revitalization emphasizing residential growth and adaptive reuse of legacy buildings. The analysis is rooted in data, interviews, and architectural assessments, with the intent of offering replicable lessons for similar mid-sized American cities.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

A central theme is Winston-Salem's strategic use of its historic built environment to drive downtown revitalization, particularly through adaptive reuse. The city has prioritized walkable, mixed-use development and successfully leveraged state tax credits and streamlined rezoning processes to catalyze private investment. Landmark projects like the conversions of the Nissen Building, R.J. Reynolds Building, and Wachovia Bank and Trust Building have established the viability and desirability of converting underutilized office space into residential units, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting office market demand.

The city's story is also one of economic transition: from deep industrial roots, through painful deindustrialization and loss of major employers, to a new focus on research, education, and healthcare anchored by Innovation Quarter. Importantly, the report situates downtown housing production within a broader context of inequality, with historical patterns of racial segregation and disinvestment in Black neighborhoods still shaping the city's urban landscape.

Winston-Salem's downtown now features a stable, if unspectacular, office market and a rapidly diversifying residential market. Most downtown residents are renters and the area remains more affordable than peer cities, with roughly 35% of units affordable to those at 50% of the area median income.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

Housing development downtown has outpaced office construction in recent years. Notably, residential deliveries in the core have continued even through the pandemic, and multiple large-scale conversions have successfully turned historic and legacy office buildings into multifamily housing. Yet, most recent conversions have been market-rate, with higher-end amenities, raising concerns about the supply of workforce and affordable units.

Among the tools employed are state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, local tax abatement for historic landmarks, and brownfield incentives, though these have mostly supported market-rate development. A major policy recommendation is the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund, seeded by American Rescue Plan funds and philanthropic contributions, to subsidize affordable housing production. The city has already directed staff to study and recommend options, but as of the report's publication, no vote had been taken.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

The Brookings study had a number of implications for engaging in further adaptive reuse:

- **Expand Financial Incentives:** The city should supplement existing tools with new financial instruments, like a dedicated Housing Trust Fund, to spur the development of affordable and workforce housing, particularly through adaptive reuse and conversion of vacant office buildings.
- **Policy and Regulatory Streamlining:** Winston-Salem should maintain and build upon its streamlined rezoning and permitting environment, which has been a key enabler for adaptive reuse.
- **Targeted Affordable Housing Production:** Policymakers should leverage incentives not just for market-rate conversions, but also for projects that deliver units affordable to moderate- and low-income households.
- **Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Downtown:** Continue to foster a vibrant, mixed-use downtown that encourages a more age-diverse and income-diverse residential population, in part by creating family-friendly and workforce-oriented housing types.

- **Historic Preservation as Economic Strategy:** Recognize that historic preservation is not merely aesthetic but an economic development strategy that enhances the city's identity and attracts both visitors and residents.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** Use ongoing market analysis and demographic tracking to inform policy, particularly as the market absorbs new deliveries and as the balance between office, retail, and residential demand continues to evolve.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

Winston-Salem's experience illustrates the opportunities and complexities of revitalizing a post-industrial downtown through adaptive reuse, but also the risks of displacement and inequitable growth if affordable housing is not prioritized. The city's relatively strong planning environment and integrated approach, facilitated by long-serving leadership, offer a model for mid-sized Southern cities. However, the history of urban renewal, freeway construction, and persistent racialized poverty, especially in East Winston, are a reminder that housing development strategies must be equity-centered and attentive to historic injustices.

WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY CONSOLIDATED HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 2025-2026 ANNUAL PLAN (2025)

APA CITATION:

City of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County. (2025). *Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan: 2025-2026 Annual Plan* (Draft for Public Review). Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Housing Consortium.

KEY WORDS:

Affordable housing, community development, CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, ESG, public housing, neighborhood revitalization, homelessness

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT:

The *Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan: 2025-2026 Annual Plan* (CHCD) is an annual update to the five-year strategic framework for housing and community development investment in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. As a federally mandated document, it aligns local goals with funding streams from HUD, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs. The plan details needs assessment, program priorities, funding allocations, and performance measures, while incorporating recommendations from local and federal housing assessments, public input, and multi-sector partnerships. The CHCD Plan is notable for its collaborative approach, integrating municipal, county, and non-profit resources for maximum impact.

KEY THEMES & LEARNINGS:

A central theme in the plan is the persistent need for affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization, particularly for lower-income households, special populations, and communities historically impacted by disinvestment. The report highlights the importance of both housing production and preservation, with a strong focus on leveraging federal resources to meet the needs of the homeless, people with disabilities, and those living with HIV/AIDS. The ongoing Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI), which aims to transform the Cleveland Avenue neighborhood, is a cornerstone example of cross-sector collaboration, with substantial investment directed toward new affordable rental housing, infrastructure, and services. Another recurring theme is the importance of public participation and accountability, as reflected in multiple rounds of public hearings, stakeholder consultations, and citizen engagement mechanisms.

The plan also acknowledges barriers to affordable housing, such as rising development costs, aging housing stock, restrictive zoning, and the legacy of segregation and redlining.

Addressing these barriers requires not only funding but also structural and regulatory reforms, such as the review of Unified Development Ordinances and the creation of the Winston-Salem Housing Justice Act, which aims to reduce obstacles related to criminal background and source of income discrimination.

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING:

The CHCD Plan presents a multifaceted strategy to increase affordable and workforce housing in FY26. It emphasizes investment in the rehabilitation and repair of both owner-occupied and rental properties, including emergency repairs and accessibility upgrades. The plan also supports new single-family and multifamily construction, infill development, and acquisition-rehabilitation projects, often in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity and similar organizations.

First-time, lower-income homebuyers will benefit from down payment and closing cost assistance from the County, as well as access to Individual Development Accounts and state or federal loan programs. The plan also prioritizes the creation and rehabilitation of permanent supportive housing, with targeted resources for homeless individuals and survivors of domestic violence.

“Multifamily housing production and programs for the homeless have become forefront categories of program activity relative to allocation of funds.” (p 3)

A major highlight is the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, which began its implementation phase in 2019 and focuses on transforming the Cleveland Avenue area through the redevelopment of obsolete public housing and the addition of more than 400 mixed-income units. For FY26, projected outcomes include the rehabilitation or repair of 62 owner units and 260 rental units, the construction of 31 new owner units, and 132 multifamily rental units through several major projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT:

The plan advances five overarching goals, each accompanied by detailed strategies and targeted programs:

- 1. Neighborhood Revitalization and Housing Conservation:** Focus on the rehabilitation of substandard housing, adaptive reuse of vacant properties, and targeted investment in distressed neighborhoods.
- 2. Housing Production and Neighborhood Development:** Increase new single-family and multifamily housing production, particularly for low- and moderate-income households, through subsidies, lending programs, and partnerships with local developers and non-profits.

3. **Expanding Access and Opportunities:** Meet the housing and service needs of homeless and special populations, expand fair housing access, and support programs for economic self-sufficiency and wealth-building.
4. **Expanding Economic Opportunities:** Foster entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, especially in low- and moderate-income areas, and support neighborhood-based economic development.
5. **Expanding Coordination and Accountability:** Strengthen partnerships, systematic evaluation, and the integration of local, regional, and federal housing policies.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

The 2025-2026 Annual Plan situates Winston-Salem and Forsyth County as proactive in their response to evolving housing needs. With a coordinated approach that draws from HUD-mandated priorities, local innovation (such as the Housing Justice Act), and a willingness to adapt based on assessment and public input, the plan provides a roadmap for sustained investment in affordable and workforce housing. The plan's multi-layered strategies, spanning production, preservation, assistance, and policy reform, reflect an understanding that housing stability and community development are interconnected, requiring both financial investment and structural change to ensure equity and resilience in the region.