
TO:	Wes McCart Franklin County	DATE:	September 21, 2026
FROM:	MillieAnne VanDevender & Nicole Stickney Tri-Cities - (509) 380-5883	PROJECT NO.:	2240914.30
		PROJECT NAME:	Franklin County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
SUBJECT:	Plan Draft Elements: Housing and Economic Development		

STAFF REPORT for Planning Commission Review on October 6, 2026

The AHBL consultant team and Franklin County staff have worked to draft updates to the 2018-2038 Franklin County Comprehensive Plan. This memo provides a summary of proposed revisions throughout the plan along with an overview of proposed revisions specific to the **Housing Element** and the **Economic Development Element**. The proposed changes are based on updated data, community feedback, requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) which apply to Franklin County, and guidance from the Department of Commerce. We suggest that you include this memo with the initial draft in the Planning Commission's packet for their review as a read-ahead item (staff report) for the meeting scheduled for October 6, 2026.

This will be the final staff report of this nature, for Element drafts. Next we will be moving forward with proposed code updates.

GENERAL CHANGES THROUGHOUT ALL ELEMENTS

As previously noted, we have prepared updated drafts with the following improvements:

- Improved grammar and word use to improve readability
- Updated formatting and graphics
- Updated (or removed) old information
- Updated links to online resources
- Replaced previous maps with updated maps, where newer maps and information were publicly available online
- Reconfigured Elements to provide the goals and policies in one volume and the discussion and analyses in a second volume. This organization is intended to meet staff's objective to provide the policy language up front and not co-mingled with the other data and information sets. Notably, no executive summary or other narrative is included with the goals and policies which would be redundant; for each element "Volume A" will contain a listing of the Goals and Policies whereas "Volume B" will provide the supporting and related information. This is an exceptionally streamlined approach.
- Proposed rewrite of all goals and many of the policies, per your department's review and direction after reviewing our first drafts which provided an initial assessment and analysis.

GMA Requirements

The GMA contains extensive specific provisions for required information in the Housing Element, found in RCW 36.70A.070(2). It is important and very interesting to note what is required for this periodic update as something that is **NEWLY** required since the last time the Comprehensive Plan was updated. In the text shown below (quoted from the RCW) we put into boldface everything that was required during the past periodic update. All the remaining language is new.

The GMA sets out that the County must include:

“A housing element ensuring the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods that:
(a) Includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth, as provided by the department of commerce, including:

- (i) Units for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households; and
- (ii) Emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing;

(b) Includes a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences, and within an urban growth area boundary, moderate density housing options including, but not limited to, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes;

(c) Identifies sufficient capacity of land for housing including, but not limited to, government-assisted housing, housing for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, group homes, foster care facilities, emergency housing, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, and within an urban growth area boundary, consideration of duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes;

(d) Makes adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community, including:

- (i) Incorporating consideration for low, very low, extremely low, and moderate-income households;
- (ii) Documenting programs and actions needed to achieve housing availability including gaps in local funding, barriers such as development regulations, and other limitations;
- (iii) Consideration of housing locations in relation to employment location; and
- (iv) Consideration of the role of accessory dwelling units in meeting housing needs;

(e) Identifies local policies and regulations that result in racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing, including:

- (i) Zoning that may have a discriminatory effect;
- (ii) Disinvestment; and
- (iii) Infrastructure availability;

(f) Identifies and implements policies and regulations to address and begin to undo racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing caused by local policies, plans, and actions;

(g) Identifies areas that may be at higher risk of displacement from market forces that occur with changes to zoning development regulations and capital investments; and

(h) Establishes antidisplacement policies, with consideration given to the preservation of historical and cultural communities as well as investments in low, very low, extremely low, and moderate-income housing; equitable development initiatives; inclusionary zoning; community planning requirements; tenant protections; land disposition policies; and consideration of land that may be used for affordable housing.”

HOUSING ELEMENT

Volume A of the Housing Element includes consolidated goals and policies pertaining to housing.

The updated housing element substantially streamlines and modernizes the housing framework. The previous version contained nine separate goals with extensive policies addressing housing need assessments, fair-share allocations, affordable housing funding, public education, housing diversity, farmworker housing, and regional coordination. The revised version consolidates these concepts into a single overarching goal focused on developing, improving, and preserving a diversity of housing types and densities attainable to all income levels.

Many of the former policies are proposed to be retained but expressed more directly and concisely, reducing emphasis on procedural requirements. The revised policies place greater emphasis on expanding housing choice and reducing regulatory barriers. New policies specifically encourage accessory dwelling units (ADUs), support prefabricated and manufactured housing, promote innovative housing developments, minimize regulatory burdens, and identify and zone land for multiple housing types near transit, employment, government facilities, and services. While the previous version generally supported a variety of housing types and innovative construction methods, the updated language is more action-oriented in encouraging housing production (and accommodating various housing forms).

The proposed policies sets out a simple framework, maintaining support for affordable housing, housing preservation, nonprofit housing development, farmworker housing, and special needs housing, while adding an explicit policy supporting fair housing practices and focusing more heavily on housing supply, flexibility, and implementation.

Volume B of the Housing Element includes background information and evaluates existing housing conditions, future housing needs, and strategies to ensure the county can accommodate projected growth while meeting new requirements under Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) and recent housing legislation. The analysis recognizes that safe, affordable, and attainable housing is essential to the county's long-term vitality and quality of life. Recent state legislation has significantly expanded local housing planning requirements, including the need to plan for housing affordability across all income levels, evaluate potential displacement and racially disparate impacts, and identify sufficient land capacity to accommodate future housing needs.

Franklin County remains a relatively young and family-oriented community, with a median age well below the statewide average and large household sizes compared to many other parts of Washington. The county continues to experience population growth, creating demand for both family-sized housing and smaller housing units that can serve changing household compositions, seniors, and individuals living alone. While household incomes have grown, income levels remain below statewide averages, poverty rates remain elevated for some populations, and housing affordability continues to be a challenge for many residents.

The county's housing inventory has expanded steadily over the past decade, with housing unit growth generally keeping pace with population growth. However, the housing stock remains heavily dominated by detached single-family homes, particularly units with three or four bedrooms. Although this housing pattern reflects Franklin County's large family households, it may not fully address the needs of smaller households, aging residents, or lower-income households. Manufactured housing remains an important component of the county's housing supply, particularly in rural areas, where it provides a significant source of naturally occurring affordable housing. The county also supports a variety of housing options including accessory dwelling units (ADUs), multifamily housing, group living arrangements, farmworker housing, and other specialized housing types.

Looking ahead, Franklin County is projected to require approximately 2,847 additional housing units in unincorporated areas by 2046 to accommodate forecasted population growth. Through coordination with its cities and the countywide planning process, housing allocations have been established across income levels in accordance with HB 1220. Most housing affordable to lower-income households is anticipated to be accommodated within urban jurisdictions where services, employment, and infrastructure are available. Nevertheless, the county can contribute by reducing regulatory barriers, supporting manufactured housing, encouraging ADUs and innovative housing forms, and maintaining zoning strategies that allow for diverse housing opportunities in rural communities.

The affordability analysis indicates that housing costs have increased more rapidly than incomes. Fair market rents have nearly doubled over the last decade, median home prices have increased substantially, and over one-quarter of county households are considered cost-burdened. While Franklin County remains more affordable than many areas of Washington, rising housing costs present growing challenges for lower-income households, renters, seniors, farmworkers, and other vulnerable populations. Public housing programs,

housing subsidies, and affordable housing initiatives continue to play an important role in meeting these needs.

The element also addresses new state requirements related to equity and fair housing (including historical discriminatory housing practices like racially restrictive covenants which may have contributed to long-term disparities in housing access and homeownership. For example, current data indicate that Hispanic and Latino households experience lower homeownership rates and higher levels of housing cost burden than white households. While no discriminatory language was identified in the county's previous housing policies, the analysis recognizes the importance of continuing to monitor housing outcomes, support fair housing practices, reduce barriers to housing choice, and address potential displacement risks associated with growth and redevelopment.

Overall, we note that Franklin County has a diverse housing base and adequate opportunities to accommodate future growth, but continued efforts will be needed to expand housing choice, improve affordability, support rural and agricultural housing needs, and ensure housing opportunities are available to residents across all income levels. The county's role will remain focused on coordinating countywide housing strategies, maintaining sufficient land capacity, reducing regulatory barriers, and working alongside local jurisdictions to address housing needs throughout the planning period.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

GMA Requirements

The GMA contains broad guidance for regarding an Economic Development Element, found in RCW 36.70A.070(7), which simply states that an economic development element must contain information "establishing local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life." (It further states that "a city that has chosen to be a residential community is exempt from the economic development element requirements" which does not have any bearing on our work).

Despite the lack of relative emphasis in the Growth Management Act on developing goals and strategies for a strong and vibrant local economy (as compared to other growth topics such as housing, land use and transportation), this is nonetheless a very important topic in Franklin County. Without a healthy local economy (or if a significant economic downturn was to occur) we could see reduced agricultural revenues, lower employment, slower housing demand, and declines in local tax revenues that support public services and infrastructure. Given the county's reliance on agriculture, food processing, logistics, and regional commuting patterns, a downturn in any of these sectors could increase unemployment, reduce household incomes, and place greater pressure on affordable housing and social service programs.

New Requirements

None

Proposed Changes

We prepared the draft with the following revisions:

Volume A of the Economic Development Element significantly streamlines the planning framework, reducing thirteen goals and numerous detailed policies into two broad proposed goals and a concise set of proposed implementation-oriented policies. The overall focus remains the same: supporting economic growth, maintaining a strong agricultural sector, creating employment opportunities, and encouraging economic diversification. However, the updated version shifts from listing out highly specific actions and projects in favor of broader policy direction that can remain relevant over a longer planning horizon.

Agriculture remains a central theme in the updated ED policies. Former policies supporting crop diversification, irrigation expansion, and value-added agricultural industries have been retained and

consolidated into policies supporting agricultural prosperity, research into new agricultural opportunities, and expansion of the Columbia River Irrigation Project. Economic development efforts also continue to emphasize workforce development, infrastructure investment, and collaboration with outside agencies and organizations to promote economic opportunities throughout the county

Several topics from the current element receive less emphasis (or were removed entirely). The updated policies eliminate references that are found in the existing plan to specific organizations, projects, and facilities (such as the HAPO Center, Hanford-related technology partnerships, designated employment centers, central business district revitalization, tourism-focused natural resource policies, high-speed internet, jobs-housing balance, and cultural resource development). Instead, newly revised proposed policies place more emphasis on emerging technologies, regulatory streamlining, leveraging external funding sources, and so forth (also, encouraging master planned resorts and major industrial developments). The revised element, as proposed, reflects an overall “pivot” or shift toward a more flexible, business-oriented, and implementation-focused economic development strategy that also preserves a commitment to agriculture.

In the Economic Development analysis (**Volume B**), we discuss how Franklin County's economy remains closely tied to its agricultural foundation, but it is becoming increasingly diverse and resilient. Agriculture, food processing, transportation, warehousing, government services, healthcare, education, and energy-related industries all play important roles in the local economy. While household incomes and wages remain below state averages, wages have been growing faster than in neighboring Benton County, and unemployment has recently improved. The county also benefits from a young population, a growing workforce, and relatively affordable housing, all of which support long-term economic growth.

The analysis identifies both strengths and challenges within the labor market. Franklin County's workforce is increasingly employed in higher-wage industries located elsewhere in the Tri-Cities region, resulting in significant commuter flows between Franklin County and neighboring jurisdictions. Educational attainment remains below statewide levels, particularly for bachelor's and graduate degrees, which may limit future economic opportunities. At the same time, wage growth, declining unemployment, and the county's comparatively young population provide opportunities to strengthen workforce development and attract new industries.

Agriculture continues to be the county's economic backbone. We discuss how much land is in agricultural use and provide data relating to the value of annual agricultural production. Farm acreage and the number of farms have declined modestly over time. However, production value has increased significantly. The analysis emphasizes the importance of protecting agricultural lands (plus supporting agricultural processing and value-added industries, encouraging agritourism, and so forth).

Topics such as Opportunity zones, renewable energy development, tourism, logistics, warehousing, food processing, and advanced transportation infrastructure are all presented.

Overall, we emphasize that Franklin County's economic future depends on balancing protection of its agricultural resources with efforts to diversify the economy, develop workforce skills, invest in transportation and utility infrastructure, attract new industries, and support business recruitment and retention efforts

c: Planning Commission



HOUSING ELEMENT

HOUSING GOALS

Goal A *Develop, improve, and preserve a diversity of housing types and densities attainable to all segments of the population.*

HOUSING POLICIES

- H-1 Plan for and encourage housing in the county's UGA and LAMIRDs per the agreed upon affordable housing share per income segment.
- H-2 Maximize available private, local, state, and federal funding opportunities in the development of affordable housing.
- H-3 Support various types of farmworker housing, including housing for guest workers.
- H-4 Allow for a variety of housing types.
- H-5 Promote the preservation of existing housing stocks.
- H-6 🌲 Encourage infill housing development generally consistent with existing neighborhood character.
- H-7 🌲 Identify and zone land to promote multiple housing types considering the proximity to transit facilities, government facilities, employment, and other relevant services.

- H-8 Minimize regulatory burdens for all housing types.
- H-9 Explore and identify opportunities for non-profit developers to build affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households¹.
- H-10 Support manufactured and prefabricated housing opportunities and regulate it the same as site-built housing outside of mobile home parks.
- H-11 Encourage innovative housing developments.
- H-12 Encourage the development of attached and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) throughout the county.
- H-13 Plan for special needs housing where compatible infrastructure exists.
- H-14 Support fair housing practices as required by law.

¹ Housing for Extremely Low-Income Households and Very-Low Income Households can also be sited in the County; however, for planning and target allocation purposes it is expected that “deeply affordable” housing for those income groups will be focused in urban areas where services exist to support the needs of the served population.

HOUSING ELEMENT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Decent, safe, and affordable housing is a basic human need, and supporting measures to ensure that present and future Franklin County residents have a wide range of housing options and opportunities is an important part of planning for the future.

The GMA requires Franklin County to include a Housing Element in the Comprehensive Plan that recognizes the vitality and character of established neighborhoods, and that:

- Includes an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs that identifies the number of housing units necessary to manage projected growth, including by household income level, as well as emergency housing and permanent supportive housing units;
- Includes a statement of goals, policies, and objectives for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing;
- Identifies sufficient land for housing including, but not limited to government assisted housing, housing for households at every income group, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, permanent supportive housing, emergency shelters and group homes, and foster care facilities; and
- Makes adequate provisions for existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the population in unincorporated Franklin County.

Lawmakers developed several bills which were passed into law in 2023 and subsequent years which together have significantly modified the GMA with respect to housing.



The new requirements that apply to Franklin County, beginning with the 2026 update specify the Housing Element must also:

- Identify local policies and regulations that potentially result in racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing;
- Identify areas that may be at a higher risk of displacement from market forces that occur with changes to zoning regulations and capital investments; and
- Establish anti-displacement policies, with consideration given to the preservation of historical and cultural communities, as well as equitable investments, tenant protections, and inclusionary zoning.
- Plan for and accommodate housing production which will be affordable to all income levels. Population projections¹ are provided by the state’s Office of Financial Management once every five years, projected 20 years in the future. Subsequently, cities and counties work collaboratively to determine the allocation for each city and the unincorporated areas of the county. In order to accomplish this, jurisdictions within a county are assigned a housing allocation through the countywide planning process. Subsequently, they must demonstrate, through a land capacity analysis that current zoning is sufficient to allow for the allocated growth. It is assumed that certain housing types will be affordable to specific income groups and must be allowed within a jurisdiction in alignment with their housing allocation.

Table 1 shows the income bands for whom housing must be considered. More detail related to Franklin county is described throughout this chapter.

Table 1: Income Bands as described by HB 1220 (2021)

INCOME LEVEL (% AMI)	INCOME LEVEL DESCRIPTION
0-30% PSH ²	Extremely low
0-30%	Extremely low
30-50%	Very low
50-80%	Low
80-120%	Moderate
> 120%	High

¹ Every year OFM provides current population estimates. Future population projections, however, are released every 5 years (RCW 43.62.035).

² PSH refers to permanent supportive housing.

This is a complicated solution for a complex problem, and it may be amended in future legislative sessions. However, the idea is that the housing market does not adequately provide housing units for lower income households, and many local governments prevent the construction of such units with development regulations. The State has preempted some of those restrictions, with the expectation that the market will respond with a greater variety of housing types in more locations.

ROLE OF THE COUNTY

Franklin County has the opportunity to play a role in shaping housing policies to work alongside the four cities in the County to achieve a vision relating to the provision of housing for all residents of the county. Planning for affordable housing should be done on a regional basis³. This ensures the comprehensive plans of all jurisdictions are consistent with one another while providing a framework for regional issues, such as affordable housing. To this end, the County and its cities collaborated to propose countywide planning policies (CWPP)⁴ which were adopted by the Franklin County Commissioners, see the Introduction of the Plan for these policies.

The Franklin County-Wide Planning Policies include a discussion of what methods will be used to plan for affordable housing throughout Franklin County. As part of that discussion, the CWPPs direct each community to provide its fair share of affordable housing. It's important to note that although the County adopts and enforces the countywide planning policies, the County does not control the zoning or development regulations of its cities. The role of the County in housing issues is more likely to be of support and guidance.

An additional role for the County is to allocate growth to all jurisdictions in accordance with GMA requirements, also through the countywide planning process. The GMA encourages development in urban areas and discourages the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land⁵ therefore, population growth will be guided towards cities, their UGAs and other areas with the ability to provide urban infrastructure and services. More detailed discussion of the allocations follows. While most of the County's share of allocated housing growth is unlikely to occur in rural settings, the County can still work to reduce regulatory barriers and allow for appropriate diversity in housing type and cost. While the growth in the rural county will remain low density housing, the County can work to achieve an increase in manufactured homes, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, multigenerational housing, and farmworker housing that fulfills the needs of rural residents.

Finally, Franklin County determines the zoning classifications, zoning regulations, and other development regulations for lands located outside of city incorporation limits. These land use

³ WAC 365-196-410(2)(e)(i)(C)(iii)

⁴ Adopted August 6, 2025, via Resolution 2025-233

⁵ RCW 36.70A.020

controls directly authorize (or prohibit) what is built – and where. Major updates to the zoning code were considered in concert with the update to the Comprehensive Plan.

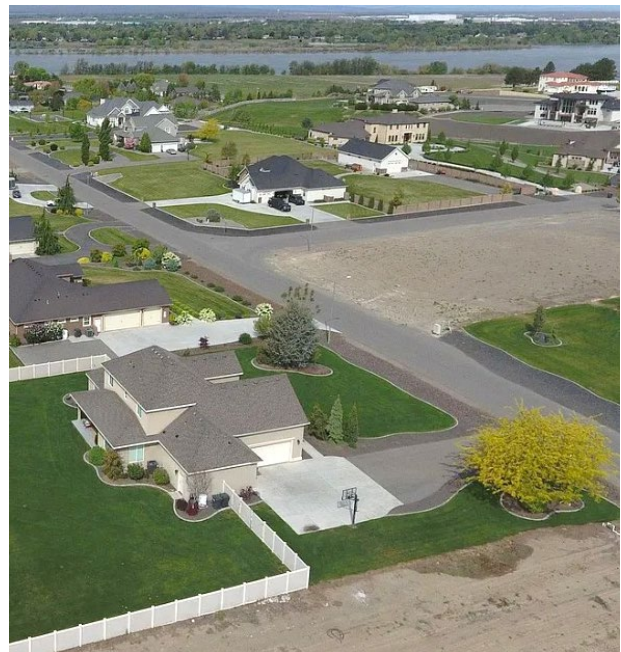
The goals and policies in Volume A of this Element apply primarily to the unincorporated or rural areas of the county, as the cities have their own separate Comprehensive Plans with goals and policies articulated for their municipalities.

COMMUNITY PROFILE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic characteristics of the Franklin County population are important for all parts of this plan, but are particularly insightful and necessary to assess in this Housing Element. The information is contained here in recognition that community attributes directly relate to housing needs and “supply demands” in the community.

Household and family size, aging in the community, and income are all pertinent data points in sketching the housing needs of the larger community. Therefore, this section includes a snapshot of demographic information for the county sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), 1-year estimates. The state Office of Financial Management (OFM) also provides some data, and any differences between the various datasets is noted.

The data are in general on the county level; differences between rural Franklin County and the City of Pasco, for example, are not identified.



Median Age in the Community

The median age of Franklin County residents is 32.5 years of age, significantly lower than the State median of 38.6 years (as of 2024) however it is also important to observe that the County's median age value is trending upwards; a few years back (in 2017) the median age was 29.9 years. This is consistent with nationwide trends.

We can observe that the data indicate that Franklin County remains a very “young” community of many family householders; there is high percentage of children in the population and approximately 30 percent of the total population is under the age of 18. Both the aging population and high percentage of children have ramifications for housing in considering

various housing types that may be in higher demand in coming years- for example housing that is single-story or ADA accessible.

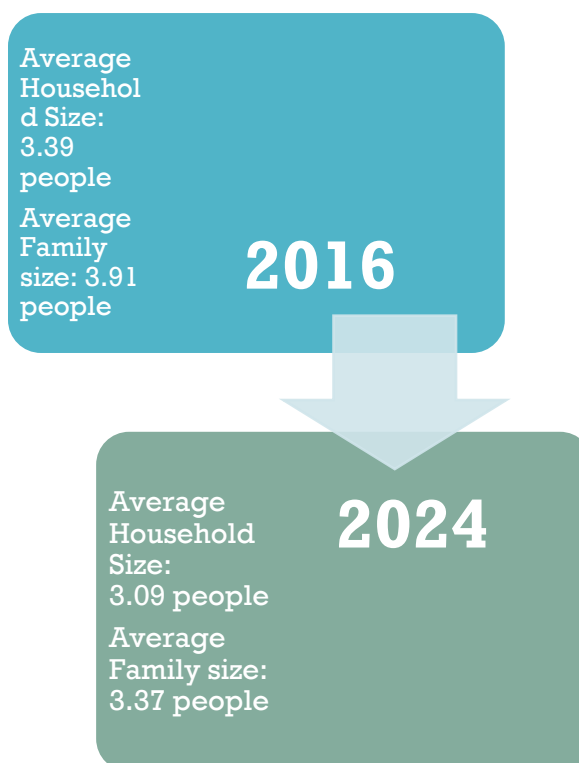
Household and Family Size

The Census Bureau reports household and family size and defines a family as including “a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.” In other words, a household includes families, but also includes those living alone, and those with roommates.

In Franklin County approximately 81 percent of households are identified as family households, and 41 percent of all households have children under 18 residing in the home. Approximately 25 percent of households include those with at least one member aged 65 or over.

In Franklin County, the average family size is 3.37 people, and the average household size is 3.09 people, according to the 2024 ACS 1-Year tables. This has decreased from 3.91 and 3.39, respectively, since 2016. However, among nonfamily households, average household size is 1.25 members, and approximately 15 percent of households are comprised of people living alone.

Monitoring these demographics is important to review indicators for what types of housing will be needed. In order to maintain sufficient and affordable housing stock, there must be an adequate number of housing units for each household type. This appears to indicate a need for more small-sized units as well as family-size homes as the population grows.



Income

Income, in relation to these requirements, is generally measured as median household income. Median refers to the midpoint of earners- meaning that half of households earn more than that, and half earn less. However, there are alternate ways to calculate income that are also useful indicators. The following sections consider personal income statistics, and the median income figures in Franklin County. The Economic Development element contains further information about income and the economy.

Personal Income

Table 2 shows annual Per Capita Personal Incomes (PCPI) for Franklin County and Washington State, between the years 2016 and 2024 (the last year for which data is available).

Personal income includes more than wages; all sources of income are counted as personal income such as investment income, pensions, and federal government transfer payments, such as Social Security, Medicare, unemployment benefits, and food assistance. It is by definition, an average; while a relatively lower PCPI can reveal lower wages, it may also reflect the results of persons with fewer investments, and this figure is also highly influenced by the number of children (or other non-working people) in the population.

Table 2: Per Capita Personal Income (in dollars)

YEAR	FRANKLIN COUNTY	WASHINGTON STATE
2016	\$35,119	\$54,918
2017	\$35,841	\$57,265
2018	\$36,646	\$60,221
2019	\$39,324	\$64,189
2020	\$42,756	\$68,350
2021	\$45,937	\$73,775
2022	\$46,072	\$75,332
2023	\$48,029	\$80,930
2024	\$50,535	\$85,187

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

In 2024, the per capita personal income (PCPI) in Franklin County was \$50,535. This PCPI ranked 37th highest among all 39 counties in the state. The 2024 PCPI in Franklin County reflects an increase of 44 percent from 2016. In comparison, the PCPI for the State of Washington outpaced that figure significantly, rising by 55 percent.

Median Household Income

The GMA requires that cities and counties plan for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community. In order to establish income bands, RCW 36.70A.070(2) sets out that Area Median Income (AMI) is used. AMI is a measure used by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): HUD collects data for metropolitan areas. This AMI is then used to determine the appropriate rent limits⁶ set by HUD for affordable housing programs. The AMI is basically an index that changes every year.

⁶ It is worth noting that HUD makes adjustments for income thresholds (and limits) using additional factors including household size and/ or number of bedrooms, depending on the situation, when administering their programs. However, no such adjustment is factored into the States's assessment of affordability.

The geography used for the AMI is the Tri-Cities metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which includes both Benton and Franklin Counties. Benton County has households reporting relatively higher incomes and therefore it is important to recognize there is a considerable difference between the AMI and what the Washington State OFM reports as median income in only Franklin County: in 2025, the OFM reported Franklin County's median income was \$82,515.

Area Median Income

Franklin County's AMI is based on the Tri-Cities metropolitan statistical area (MSA), and in the year 2025 was measured by HUD to be \$105,600 per household.

Despite these factors, the State requires communities to use the HUD AMI figures to identify the extremely-, very low-, low- and moderate-income household figures; Using these economic ranges, Franklin County's income bands are shown in **Table 3**. The income levels shown in the right column are for reference purposes only, as the AMI changes every year.

Table 3: Income Ranges for Franklin County, 2025.

DESCRIPTION	INCOME LEVEL (ACCORDING TO AMI)	FRANKLIN COUNTY 2025 HOUSEHOLD INCOME BANDS ⁷ (% AMI OF \$106,500 IN 2025)
Extremely low income	0-30% AMI	Less than \$31,680
Very low income	30-50% AMI	\$31,681 to \$52,800
Low income	50-80% AMI	\$52,801 to \$84,480
Moderate income	80- 120% AMI	\$84,481 to \$126,720
High income	> 120% AMI	\$126,721 and above

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Income Distribution & Poverty

Income distribution within communities can provide insightful information about labor markets, household composition, and economic opportunities. Numerous economic studies indicate excessive income inequality is increasing in the United States.

It's important to note that these income groups do not align with those applied by the state for the purposes of HB 1220 (2021) shown in **Table 1** above. Additionally, many of those with incomes less than \$25,000 may not be working; rather the wages may be those of retirement incomes, social security, or disability payments. **Figure 1** shows the income distribution for Franklin County in 2018 and 2024, according to the ACS 1-year estimates. It does appear from the data that those earning between \$25,000 and \$50,000 are decreasing as a percentage of households.

⁷ Household size is not factored

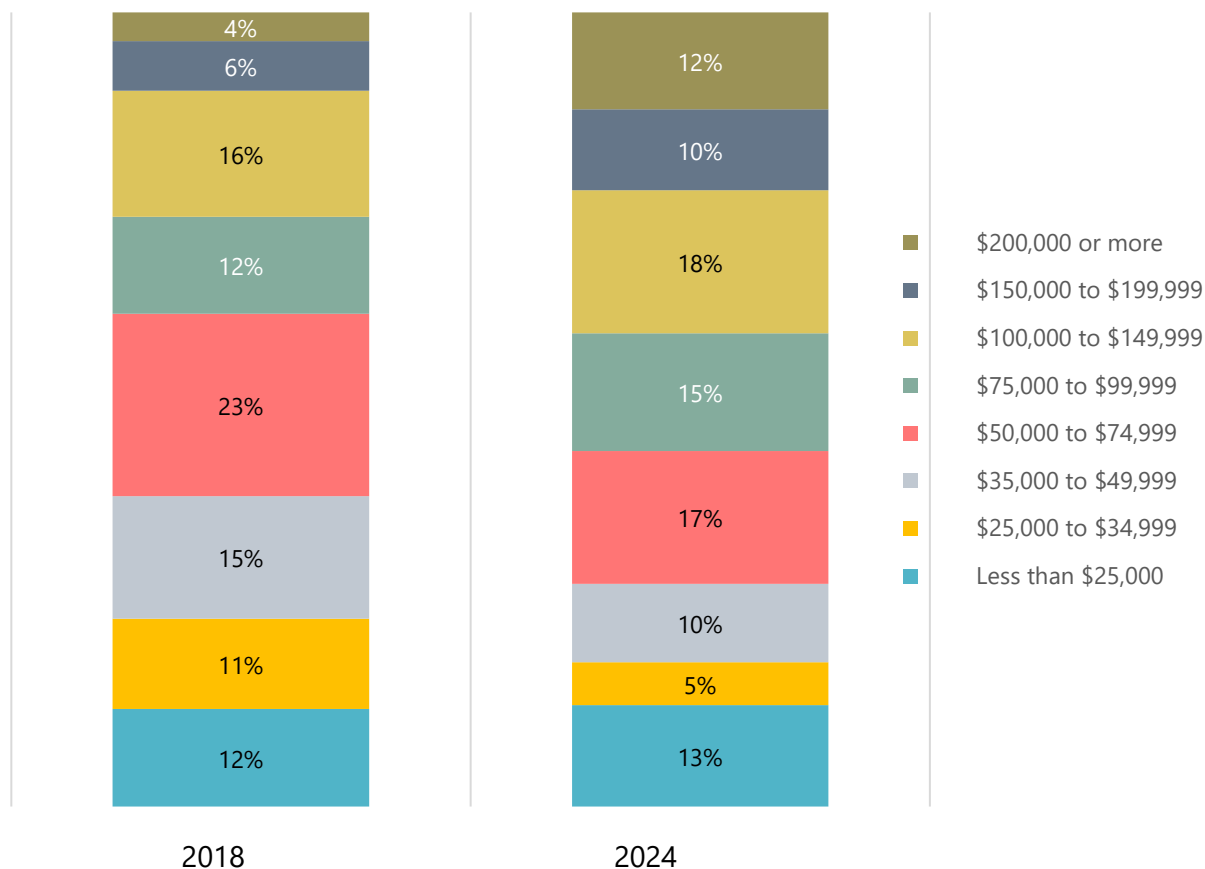


Figure 1: Income Distribution, Franklin County, 2018 and 2024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

According to the US Census Bureau for the year 2024, a single adult (under the age of 65) with an annual income of \$16,320 or less was considered to be living in poverty. For a family of four, an annual income of \$32,130 or below was determined to be living in poverty. Using the 1-Year ACS Estimates for 2024, nearly 18 percent of Franklin County residents were living below the poverty line; this includes 24 percent of Franklin County children. However, it is also important to note that of those who worked full time all year round, only 2.2 percent were under the federal poverty level.

Meanwhile, there was a 22 percent poverty rate among those who identify as Hispanic or Latino. The federal government does not consider geographic regional variations in income or costs in their poverty thresholds; this is the case for administrative purposes (like qualifying for social assistance) and for data collection.

Unemployment rates factor into these calculations; Franklin County has an unemployment rate which qualifies it as a “Distressed County” as classified by the Washington State Employment Security Department. For purposes of special assistance, counties that have experienced a three-year average unemployment rate that is 20 percent above the state’s average rate are designated as distressed counties. The three-year average unemployment rate from January 2022 - December 2024 (not seasonally adjusted) for Franklin County was 5.2 percent whereas the statewide unemployment rate for the same time period was 4.3 percent.

HOUSING STOCK AND INVENTORY

The data presented here on housing stock and inventory applies to all of Franklin County (both incorporated cities and the unincorporated areas).

Housing Units and Growth

In 2025, the OFM estimated that there are 32,433 housing units in Franklin County. The population – and related growth – is concentrated in Pasco, through construction and also as a result of annexation (but to a modest extent).

Since 2016 there has been a 15 percent increase in housing units, while population has grown 14 percent in the same time period in Franklin County. **Figure 2** depicts these trends, and additionally shows the extent to which Pasco’s population contributes to the overall population numbers.

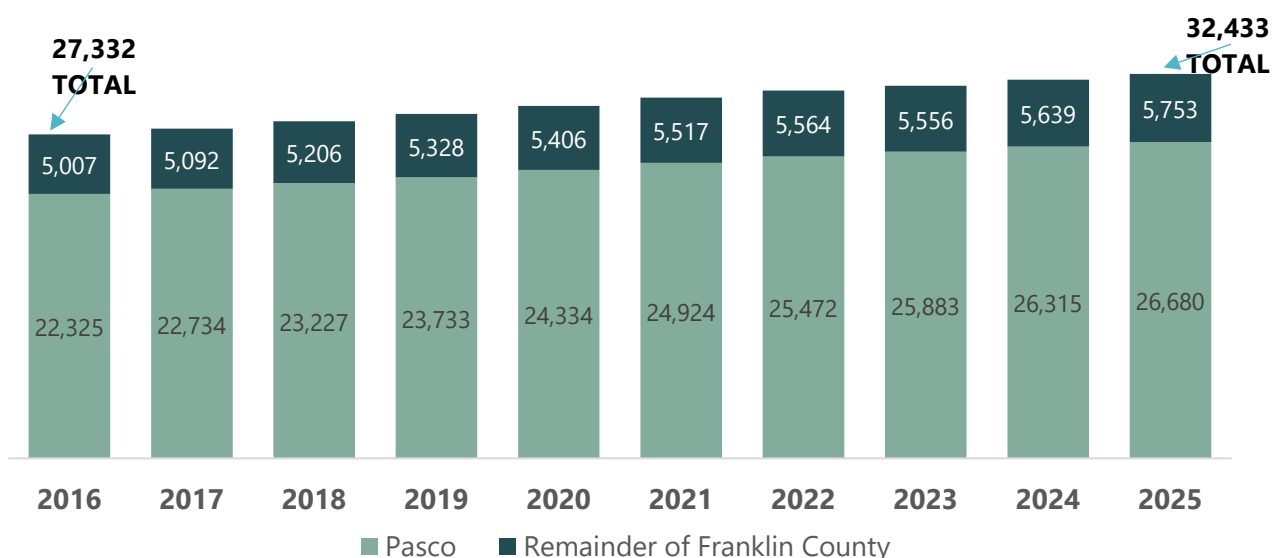


Figure 2: Housing Units in Franklin County, 2016-2025

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM)

Franklin County features a range of housing types. As shown in **Figure 3**, detached single units are most predominant. Although Franklin county continues to add housing to the county's inventory, the vast majority of that housing continues to be in the traditional, suburban style detached single-family home. That could have implications for levels of affordability along with the ability to align with shrinking household sizes.

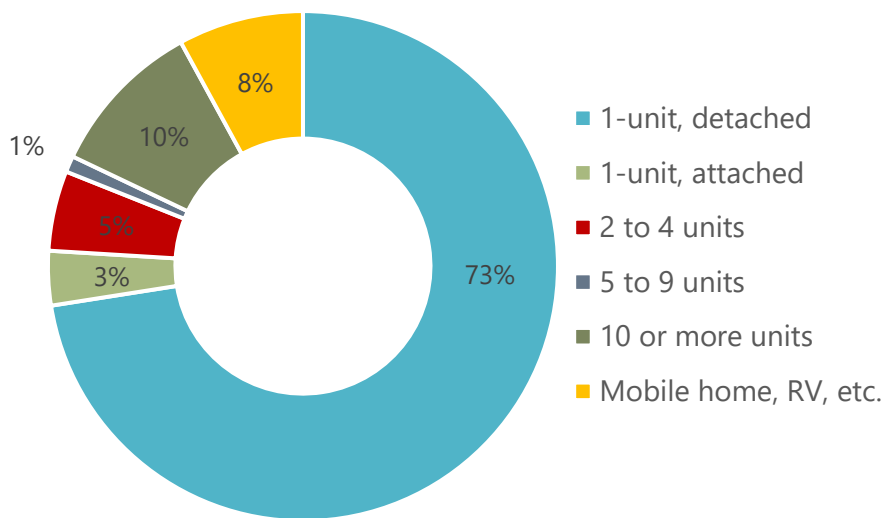


Figure 3: Number of Units by Structure, Franklin County, 2024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

It is also useful to examine the number of bedrooms in housing units, particularly since a large majority of the housing stock consists of single family homes. As shown in **Figure 4**, nearly 70 percent of units are those containing three or four bedrooms. This aligns well with the demographic make-up of Franklin County, and the higher percentage of families with children. However, according to ACS data, since the year 2016 the percentage of housing units with three and four bedrooms has increased, while the percentage of smaller units has decreased; this trend does not correspond to a reduction in household size seen in the data.



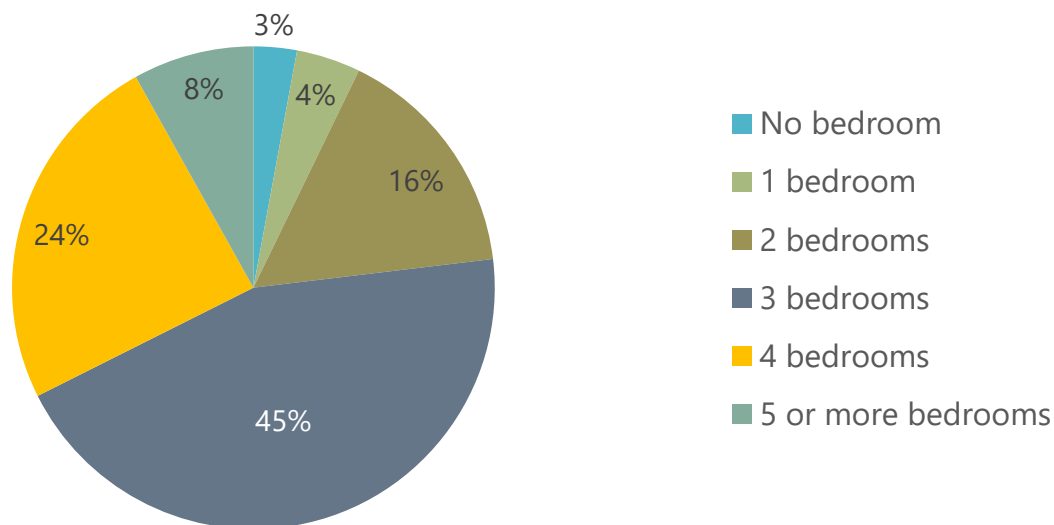


Figure 4: Number of Bedrooms in Housing Units, Franklin County
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Age of Units

Looking at the age of structures is another consideration that can aid in determining future needs for Franklin County. Roughly half of the housing stock in Franklin County was built after 2000, reflecting the rapid, recent growth trends. This may be a positive factor for the local population because newer structures must conform to improved residential building and energy codes, providing safer structures with greater energy efficiency (and thus lower energy costs), but those structures were also more expensive to build. This also results in a lower overall percentage of dwelling units potentially containing asbestos, lead paint, or other hazardous materials which were banned long ago yet can still pose hazards in older units. According to the data, and in line with population growth, the county continues to add to its housing stock, with roughly eight percent of the current housing stock being added after 2020.

Figure 5 depicts the number of housing units built during specific construction periods; note that not all categories represent the same number of years. Importantly, about 48 percent of housing units in Franklin County have been built since 2000 according to ACS data.

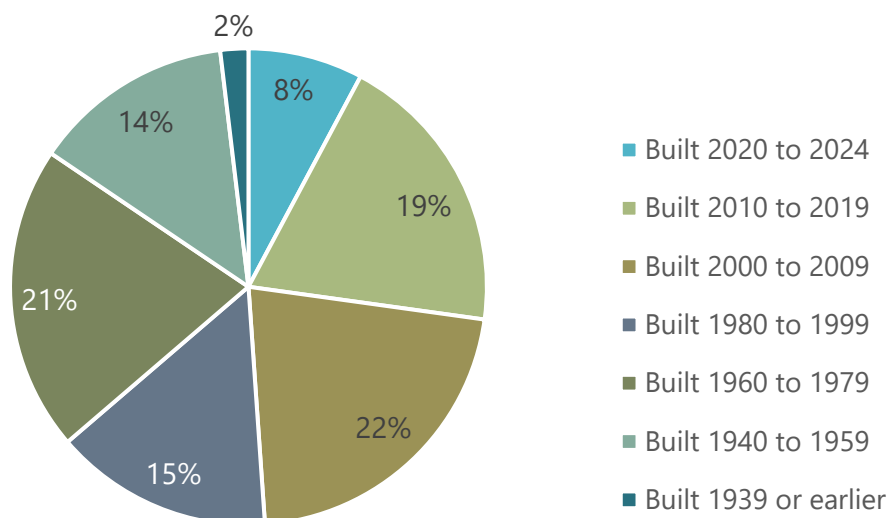


Figure 5: Housing Structures by Year Built, Franklin County

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Figure 6 depicts the same data set but organized evenly by decade. The data highlights high periods of construction activity.

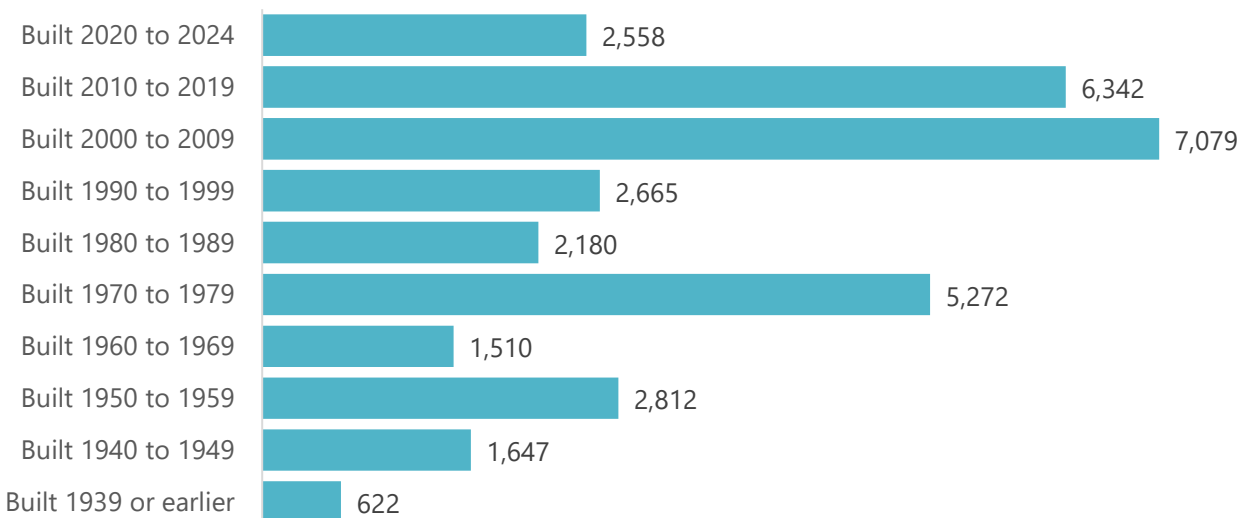


Figure 6: Housing Units by Time Period Built

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Tenure

Tenure is a term used in housing to describe if a unit is occupied by a household that owns the home or if it is rented. In Franklin County, 67 percent of occupied housing units were owner-occupied (**Figure 7**).

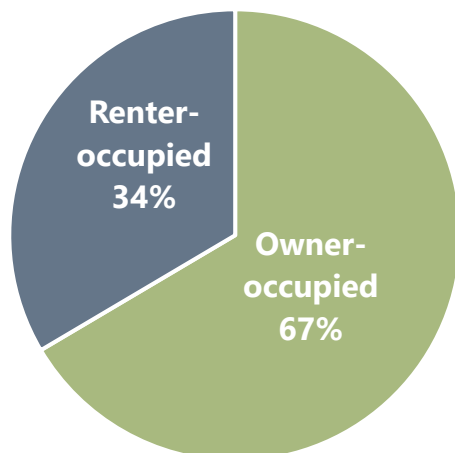


Figure 7: Housing tenure, Franklin County, 2024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Next, it is also useful to consider how many people are living together, whether they are considered a family household, and whether they rent or own their dwelling.

The average household size among those living in owner-occupied housing is 2.95 members as compared to an average of 3.37 members residing in rented housing. This diverges from other places in the State, because renter-occupied units typically accommodate households sized much smaller owner-occupied units (at 2.17 and 2.63 average members, respectively). That could signal that more families (or more large families) are living in rental housing in Franklin county.

Table 4 shows the number of family households, non-family households, owner and rental units, and how many people are living together in those units. According to the ACS, the most common household type in Franklin County is a two-person, Family Household. Franklin County housing units are occupied approximately 81 percent by family households and 15 percent of households consist of those living alone. Additionally, approximately 27 percent of households include people aged 65 years and older according to 2024 ACS 1-year Estimates.

Table 4: Housing Units by Tenure and by Household Sizes, Franklin County, 2024

	1- PERSON H.H.	2- PERSON H.H.	3- PERSON H.H.	4- PERSON H.H.	5-OR MORE- PERSON H.H.	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS
Owner-occupied	2,959	7,424	3,298	3,819	3,496	20,996
Renter-occupied	1,810	2,780	1,498	2,023	2,457	10,568
Total Occupied Housing Units	4,769	10,204	4,796	5,842	5,953	31,564

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Tenure also often correlates with wealth or income, with higher earners generally opting for, or having access to, homeownership. This is shown in **Figure 8**, which indicates that very high earning households (those making \$150,000 or more) are much more likely to be homeowners. Interestingly, we also notice that 51 percent of those earning less than \$25,000 are also owner households. Since the ACS does not distinguish between type of income, many of those could be retired or receiving other benefits that aren't reportable as normal income. Meanwhile, **Figure 9** indicates that renter households are less likely to have higher income earnings. Nonetheless, 28 percent of the County's renter households are estimated to have incomes of \$100,000 and up, which might indicate fewer opportunities for homeownership, or less interest in it. Homeownership has consistently been a powerful method for building wealth in the U.S.

In Franklin County approximately 39 percent of owner-occupied housing units do not have a mortgage, compared to 35 percent statewide.⁸ This correlates to lower housing costs for those households - according to ACS data for 2024, median monthly costs for mortgage holders are \$1,934 versus \$587 for those living mortgage-free.⁹

⁸ Table B25081

⁹ Tables B25081 and B25008.

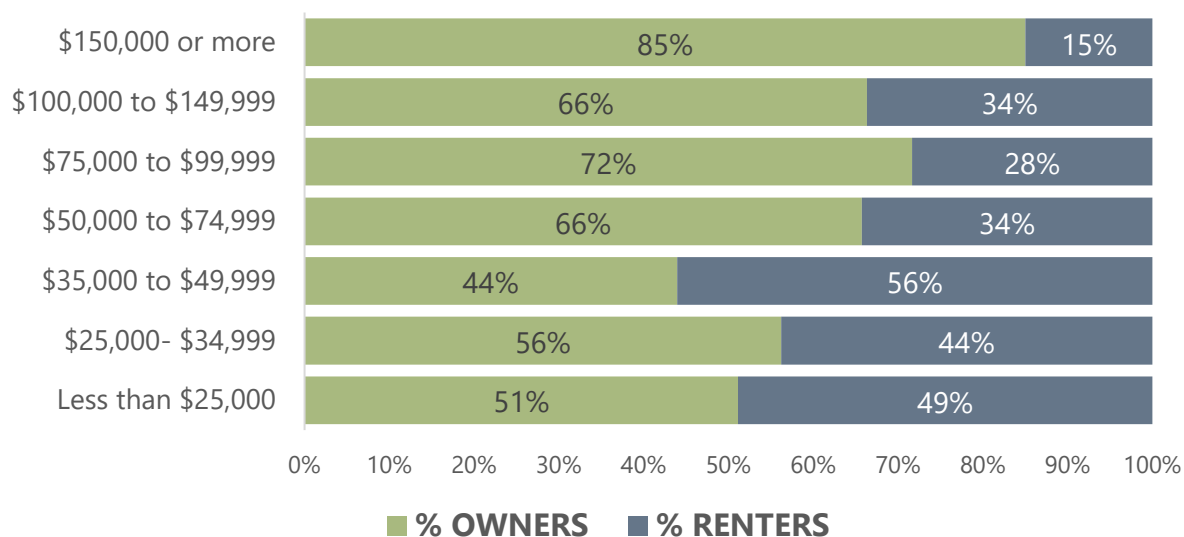


Figure 8: Household Tenure (Share of Owners / Renters) according to HH Income
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

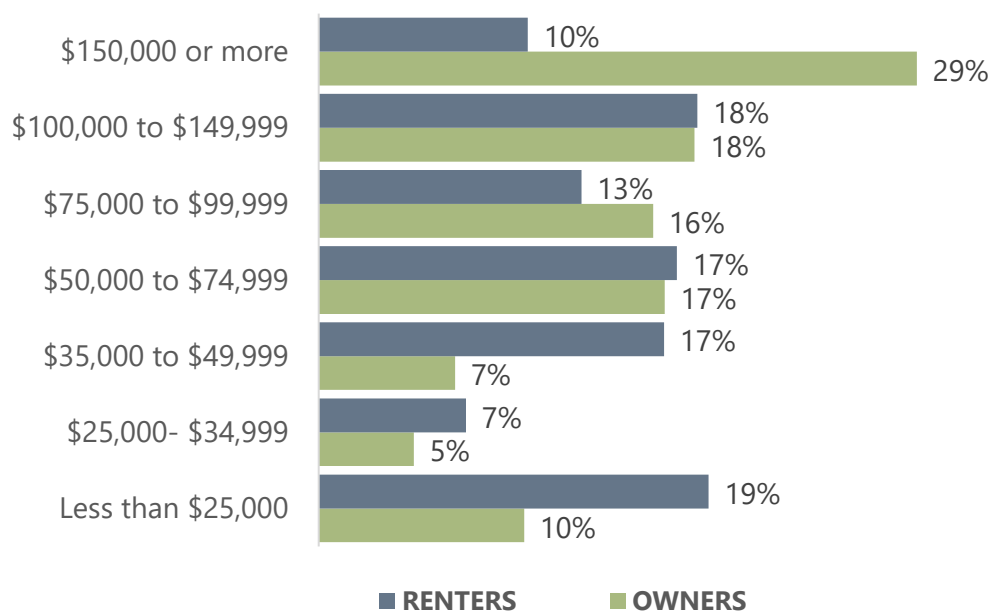


Figure 9: Percentage of Households by Tenure and Income Group, 2024
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Vacant Units

To further understand the housing needs of Franklin County for the next twenty years it is important to consider the current data on vacant units and, where possible, distinguish why these units are vacant. Franklin County is growing rapidly and the vacancy rates are very low. Depending on the data source, vacancy rates appear to range between 3.4 percent and 5.5 percent¹⁰. There will always be some vacancies in a community and the reasons for those vacancies can provide insight into housing needs.

Figure 10 identifies the variety of reasons housing units may be vacant, and the percentages of the occurrences by type, according to the 2024 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

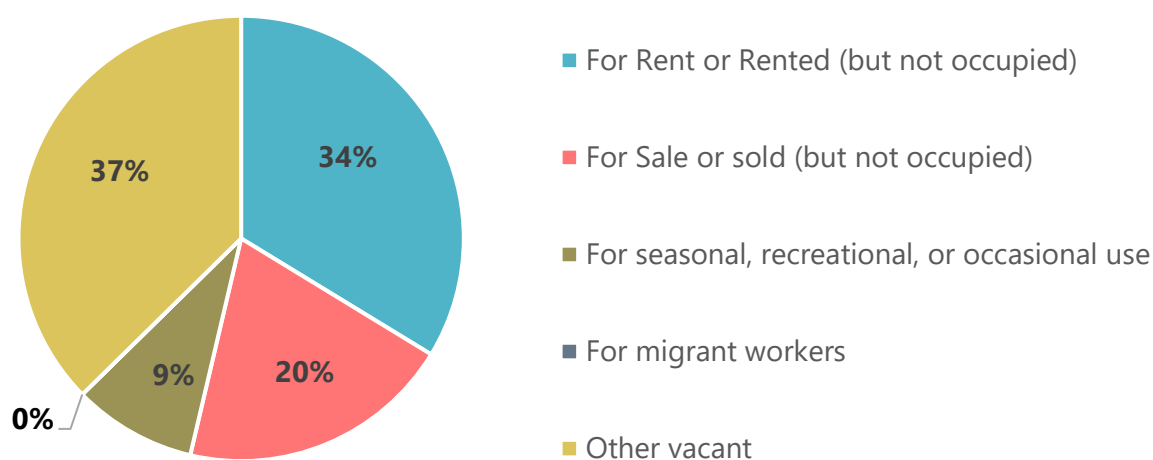


Figure 10: Vacant Housing Categories, 2024

Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, 2024

HOUSING TYPES AND OPTIONS

Manufactured Homes and Factory assembled housing (which includes modular and manufactured homes) is often a viable option for providing affordable housing, particularly in rural communities. According to the state OFM forecasting and research division, Franklin County was estimated to have 3,388 mobile and manufactured homes in April 2025, which accounts for 10.4 percent of the total housing stock.¹¹

When accounting for only unincorporated Franklin County, we find that there are 1,446 mobile and manufactured home units, which is 32.2 percent of the unincorporated housing stock. Throughout the state of Washington, 16.8 percent of the housing stock in non-incorporated

¹⁰ The ACS has estimates on this, as well as the University of Washington's Center for Real Estate Research (WCER).

¹¹ This number varies slightly from the 2024 ACS estimates, as shown above. However, because the ACS data is broken down more fully by number of units in the building, we opted to use that in the inventory section.

areas is mobile and manufactured homes; therefore, unincorporated Franklin County has about double the share of mobile and manufactured housing stock as compared statewide by percentage, and about one in three homes through the unincorporated County are mobile or manufactured homes.

Most of the county's manufactured housing stock is situated on private lots, and not located within manufactured housing parks. **Table 5** lists the Manufactured Housing Parks identified by the Washington State Department of Commerce, as of March 2026. Only the first entry, the Basin City Mobile Home Park, is outside of a city.

Table 5: List of Manufactured (Mobile) Home Parks, 2026

PARK NAME	MOBILE HOME PARK ADDRESS	SPACES AVAILABLE	UNITS- RENTED	UNITS - VACANT
Basin City Mobile Home Park	7471 RD 170, BASIN CITY	107	107	0
Sands Mhp LLC	1416 N 1ST AVE, PASCO	39	39	0
Lakeview Mobile Home Park	1505 S RD 40 E, PASCO	217	217	0
A Street West Manufactured Home Park	2525 W A ST, PASCO	12	12	0
Connell Park Estates	200 W HAWTHORNE, CONNELL	118	103	15
Pathfinder M.H.P	3417 RD 84, PASCO	70	60	10
Sundance Mobile Home Park	925 N ELM AVE, PASCO	122	120	2
Flamingo Village Mobile Home Park	130 DIAMOND DR, PASCO	203	201	2
El Jazmin	715 S COLUMBIA, CONNELL	16	16	0
AJJ Property Solutions Inc	823 N 3RD AVE, PASCO	7	2	5
A Street West Manufactured Home Park	2525 W A ST, PASCO	12	12	0
Western Living Trailer Court	500 W MARTIN ST, KAHLOTUS	52	3	49
Riviera Village (55+)	700 ROAD 32, PASCO	155	154	1
	TOTAL:	1,130	1,046	84

Source: State of Washington Department of Commerce, March 2026

The County is legally obligated to regulate the siting of manufactured homes the same as site-built homes (RCW 36.01.225). However, the County can legally enact local ordinances that specify that manufactured homes be set on a permanent foundation, comply with any local design standards that also apply to other homes in the zoning district, be thermally equivalent to the state energy code, and meet requirements for the definition of a designated manufactured home (RCW 35.63.160), which excludes "single-wides."

The County does not have any current policies that differentiate between mobile homes constructed prior to and after the National Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act was enacted in 1976 by the US Department Housing and Urban Development

(HUD). The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) does not insure mortgages on mobile homes built prior to June 15, 1976, and most mortgage insurance firms follow the same practice. The County does require that factory-assembled structures constructed prior to June 15, 1976 be inspected and approved by the State L&I Department, prior to issuance of a placement permit, in those locations where they are allowed.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are independent, self-contained dwelling units that are within or attached to a single-family dwelling, or in a detached building on the same lot as the primary unit (detached ADUs are often referred to as “DADUs”). As of 2023, the County must allow two ADUs, either attached or detached on all residential lots within UGAs. They are still subject to certain development standards that apply to all residential units.

In the non-incorporated areas of the county, ADUs can take on many different shapes and forms, and are regulated by the County Zoning code to maintain the character of the single-family districts where they are located. The County has allowed both attached and detached ADU’s for a number of years. New legislation as of 2026 (HB 1345), clarifies some requirements for detached ADUs in unincorporated areas, including provision of sewer and water facilities.

Multifamily Housing

Apartments and multiplex housing (typically duplexes) can be located in various locations throughout non-incorporated Franklin County. The County has allowed multifamily housing for farm families and farm labor for many years and plans to continue to support this type of housing as it is a needed component to support the viability of the farms and agriculture base in the county.

Group Housing

Group homes, adult family homes, assisted living facilities, and co-living housing are residential housing types that are intended to house two or more unrelated persons together in one structure. Group homes are intended to house more than six individuals over the age of 16 in a single structure. Adult family homes are similar to group homes, but require that some level of care be provided, typically for older adults. While adult family homes house up to six unrelated adults, assisted living facilities are specified as those that house seven or more residents, but provide similar levels of service as adult family homes. Co-living is not limited to older adults, and does not provide any



services such as housekeeping or medical care. Co-living specifically requires that sleeping quarters are independently lockable, while kitchen and other amenities are shared with other residents.

Although these housing types differ somewhat in their intended users, the intent of all of them is to provide additional housing type options, with the hope that affordability will be improved. State legislation requires that co-living housing types be permitted on any lot within a UGA that allows at least six multifamily residential units (RCW 36.70A.535).

Recreational Vehicle Housing

Although Recreational Vehicles are not intended for year-round living, permanent living in Recreational Vehicles (RVs) appears to be on the rise. In some cases, short-term residents may reside in an RV on a limited basis – such as during a visit by a visiting family member, or short-term housing while between house moves. In other cases, RV living occurs on a more extended basis, with workers residing in RVs during limited-tenure jobs or tending animals in fields. Still, others may be living in RVs as that is the only affordable option for them.

The State Legislature passed laws in 2009 prohibiting localities from preventing the entry (or requiring the removal) of a recreational vehicle (RV) used as a primary residence in designated manufactured/mobile home communities.

The County operates the Franklin County RV park at the HAPO Center, within the City of Pasco, which was opened in 2004 and features about 34 spaces. There are several other RV parks throughout the county.

Temporary Worker Housing (Guest/ Migrant Farmworker Housing)

Temporary Worker Housing is located in several rural sites throughout the county. In order to receive permission to employ H-2A temporary workers, the employers must provide housing for the guest workers. The housing is commonly referred to as "H-2A housing," as H-2A is the coding number for a "guest worker" program administered by the Employment Security Department, with oversight by the U.S. Department of Labor. The state legislature determined that "Temporary worker housing located on a rural worksite, and used for workers employed on the worksite, shall be considered a permitted use at the rural worksite for the purposes of zoning or other land use review processes, subject only to height, setback and road access requirements of the underlying zone." (Chapter 70A.114A.050 RCW). This means that migrant farmworker housing overrides local zoning regulations except for the building height and setback, and road access requirements of the local zone. In addition, permits for these housing structures come from the State Department of Health, and are not issued by the local building department.

The number of H-2A temporary visa application for workers in Franklin county has ranged from 794 in 2017 to approximately 3,253 in 2024 according to the State’s Employment Security Department (ESD), with data sourced from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Table 6: Franklin County Annual H-2A Visa Applications

YEAR	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
NUMBER	794	2,231	1,336	2,714	3,377	4,800	4,395	3,253

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department

FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS

To accommodate future forecasted population increases, additional housing units are needed in the unincorporated areas of Franklin County. Based on population projections for this planning period as discussed in the Land Use Element, approximately 2,409 additional dwelling units will be required to house the 2046 population in unincorporated Franklin County (Table 7).

Table 7: Population and Housing Allocations for 2046 – Unincorporated Franklin County

	2020 LEVELS	ALLOCATED GROWTH	2046 PROJECTION
Population	13,668	6,108	19,776
Housing Supply (Units)	4,041	2,847 ¹²	6,888

Based on the new requirements from HB 1220 (2021), Franklin County was required to allocate housing based on income levels related to area median income (AMI). Franklin County in coordination with its cities has allocated housing units as seen in Table 8. To derive these figures, Franklin County used a tool provided by the state Department of Commerce (Commerce), called Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT). To provide flexibility, Commerce developed three alternative allocation methods- A, B, and C. The County in conjunction with the cities selected method C during the update process of the County-Wide Planning Policies.

Due to limited availability of services and jobs in rural locations, and the lack of urban infrastructure to support the appropriate density levels that provide for housing allocated for those under 50% AMI, those housing allocations have been assigned to cities with urban infrastructure levels.

According to the State, the County needs to add 159 “Emergency Housing” beds by the year 2046. All but two of the beds (which will be required in Connell) will be provided in Pasco.

¹² Of these, 438 are allocated to the Pasco unincorporated UGA.

Table 8: Housing Allocations (Growth by the Year 2046) by Jurisdiction and According to Income Band (per AMI)

	0-30%		30-50%	50-80%	80-100%	100-120%	>120%	TOTAL UNITS ALLOCATED
	Non-PSH	PSH						
CONNELL	21	21	29	40	21	18	70	220 Plus 2 Emergency Housing beds
KAHLOTUS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MESA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PASCO ¹³	1,839	1,833	2,511	3,511	1,824	1,618	6,133	19,269 Plus 157 Emergency Housing Beds
COUNTY (OUTSIDE UGAS)	0	0	0	439	228	202	1,540	2,409

Source: Population Projection and Allocation, Memo #2 dated April 30, 2025 (Prepared by AHBL for Franklin County)

Based on historical trends, the mix of new housing in the unincorporated rural areas is expected to be about 50 percent site-built and 50 percent manufactured homes. The remaining new population would be accommodated by new homes built in the cities and within UGAs.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing is generally considered “affordable” if the monthly costs of that housing (including utilities other than telephone) do not exceed 30 percent of the monthly income of a household. This description can apply to all households, regardless of income.

An underlying assumption is that the free market will guarantee adequate housing for those in the upper economic brackets. However, some combination of regulatory incentives, financial subsidies, and innovative planning techniques are helpful, or sometimes necessary, to ensure adequate provisions for the needs of middle and lower-income households. Ensuring ample appropriately-zoned land is an additional crucial factor.

Public interventions – such as subsidies and government programs - are often viewed as necessary in order provide housing below market-rates, particularly for those in the 50 percent AMI and lower. These housing types are often specifically what people think of when they think of “Affordable housing.” Depending on the type of program, these affordable housing units are

¹³ This includes those allocated to the unincorporated Pasco UGA

often either income restricted (meaning that the household income cannot surpass a certain set level to receive a subsidy or benefit), or rent restricted (which means rent price cannot surpass a certain level, or often a percentage of the occupant's income).

These are distinct from that is what is sometimes referred to as "naturally occurring" affordable housing. Naturally occurring affordable housing is housing that was built at market rate and without subsidies that continues to provide affordable options in the community. Often mobile or manufactured homes fall under this umbrella. In some communities, but not all, housing units that are older or smaller in size produce "affordable housing" inventory. The conditions and location of the homes are also significant factors. These types of housing are responses to market forces rather than intentionally created and funded for the purpose of being available to lower income households. The caveat with naturally occurring affordable housing is that it is not guaranteed to remain affordable. In instances of increasing housing costs, even these once attainable units can become broadly unaffordable, particularly when wages do not increase at similar rates to housing costs.

Under the GMA and as identified in the County Wide Planning Policies , all jurisdictions share in the responsibility for accommodating a reasonable and equitable distribution of affordable housing to meet the needs of extremely low-, very low-, low- and moderate-income households. While government policies and programs alone may not ensure that everyone is sufficiently housed, adequate provisions must be made to ensure that there is a potential for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community to be served. This means that structural or regulatory barriers to affordable housing should be removed, consistent with GMA. In the overall implementation of the Act, an effort should be made to avoid an escalation of costs, which will defeat the achievement of the GMA's housing aims.

Still, there are other factors that negatively impact housing costs and rents that are all too often overlooked by state policy makers, which need to also be contemplated. That is, policy priorities in the state directly related to Growth Management and other policy priorities in the state (such as aims certain greenhouse gas emissions through building energy programs) drive up housing costs. In essence, excessive regulations and permitting requirements – together with land policies that constrain land supply - can limit the market's ability to provide ample housing supply to meet the needs of average families. According to the Washington Center for Housing Studies (a part of the Building Industry Association of Washington), changes to the Washington State Building

Affordable Housing

According to the GMA, housing is considered "affordable housing" when the total housing costs, including basic utilities, does not exceed 30 percent of the income limit.

For renters, the income limit is 60 percent or less of the County median family income, adjusted for family size, and for owners, the limit is 80 percent or less of the County median family income, adjusted for family size.

Codes (including the Washington State Energy Code) after 2009 had added \$39,876 to the cost of building a new home when their analysis was prepared in 2021; further energy code requirements have been introduced since.

Housing is expensive, and often times “slow” to build – particularly when new building codes and additional review processes are implemented across the state. Every fee, tax and regulatory cost has to be borne by someone, and greatly influence the escalating costs. Uncertainty in the permitting process and increased costs spoil feasibility and prevent potential projects from moving forward.

Cost Burden

Consideration of housing affordability can have different implications for renter and homeowner households. One indicator of affordability is the level of “cost burden.” This is the rate of households who pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Those paying more than 50 percent of their income are considered “extremely cost-burdened.” According to 2024 ACS 1-year Estimates, approximately 27 percent of all households in Franklin County are cost-burdened. Of those, 13 percent of all households are extremely cost-burdened. It is fairly common in many communities for renters to generally have higher levels of cost-burden than owners, which we also observe in **Figure 11**.

Fair Market Rent

Another indicator of housing costs is the “Fair Market Rent” for the region. Fair Market Rent is set by HUD, and is the gross rent estimates (rent plus the cost of all tenant-paid utilities) for privately owned, safe and decent rental housing. It represents the “starting cost” for modest rental units. The Fair Market Rent calculations are primarily used to determine payment standard amounts for the Housing Choice Voucher program, to determine initial renewal rents for some Section 8 contracts and to serve as a rent ceiling in the HOME rental assistance program.

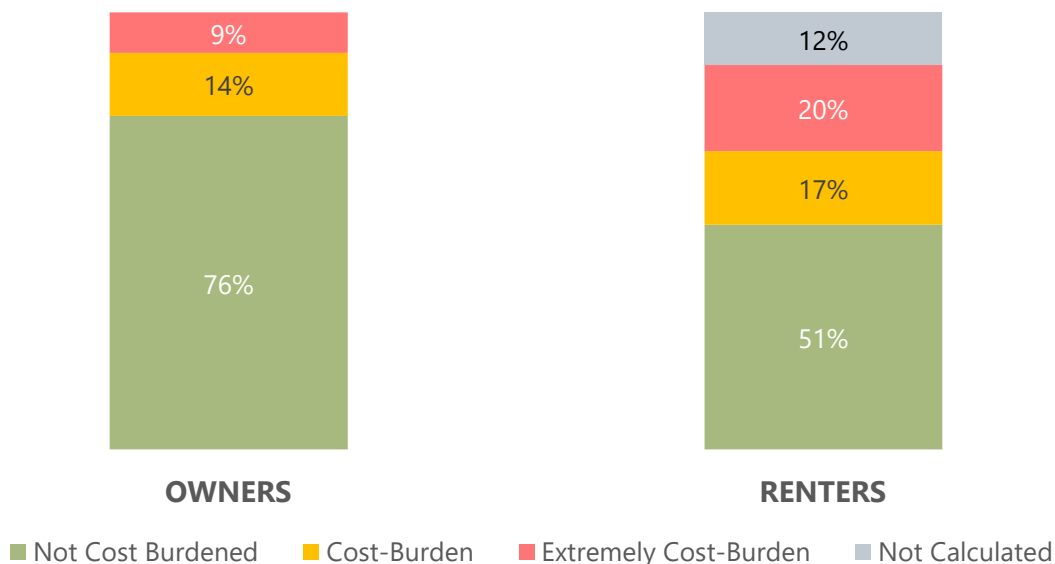


Figure 11: Cost Burden by Tenure, 2024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

The Fair Market Rent figures, as determined by HUD for specific areas, are shown in **Figure 12** for one, two, three, and four bedroom units in Benton and Franklin Counties (combined). As shown in the figure, the Fair Market Rent for one-bedroom living spaces in Benton and Franklin Counties, combined, was \$1,268 in 2026, increasing from \$669, or by 89 percent, since 2016. This is significant, since OFM’s data shows that median income for Franklin County has only increased by approximately 40 percent in the same timeframe.

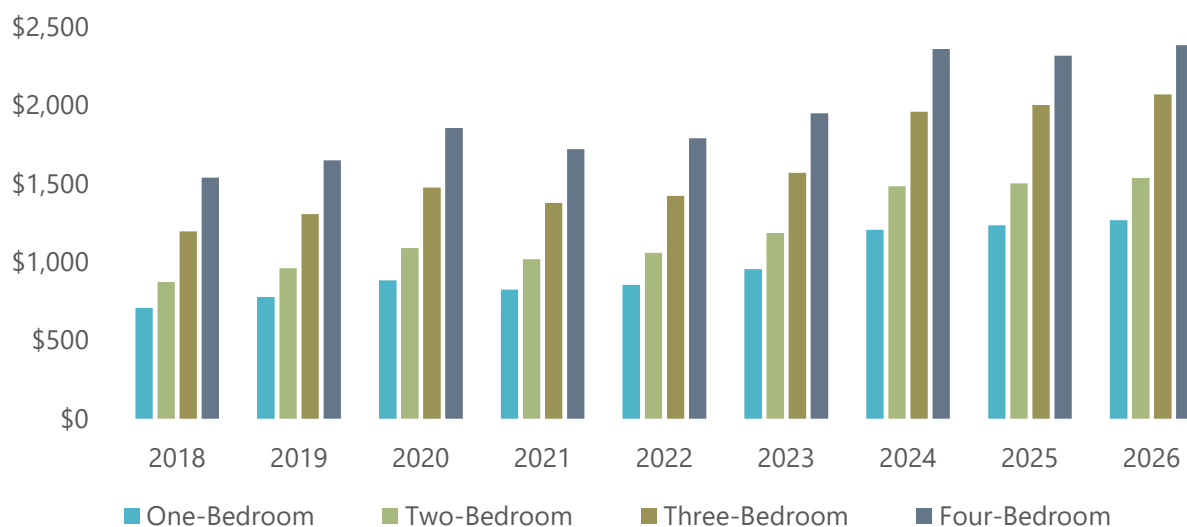


Figure 12: Fair Market Rents (According to number of Bedrooms), 2018 through 2026

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Home Sale Price Trends

The University of Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCRER) maintains a housing market database. Their research for home sales relies on Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data. **Figure 13** shows that Franklin County's median home prices have remained below the state prices overall since at least 2017, and they appear to be leveling off faster than the statewide figure. Nonetheless the median home sale price has increased at a similar rate to rental housing-78% since 2017.

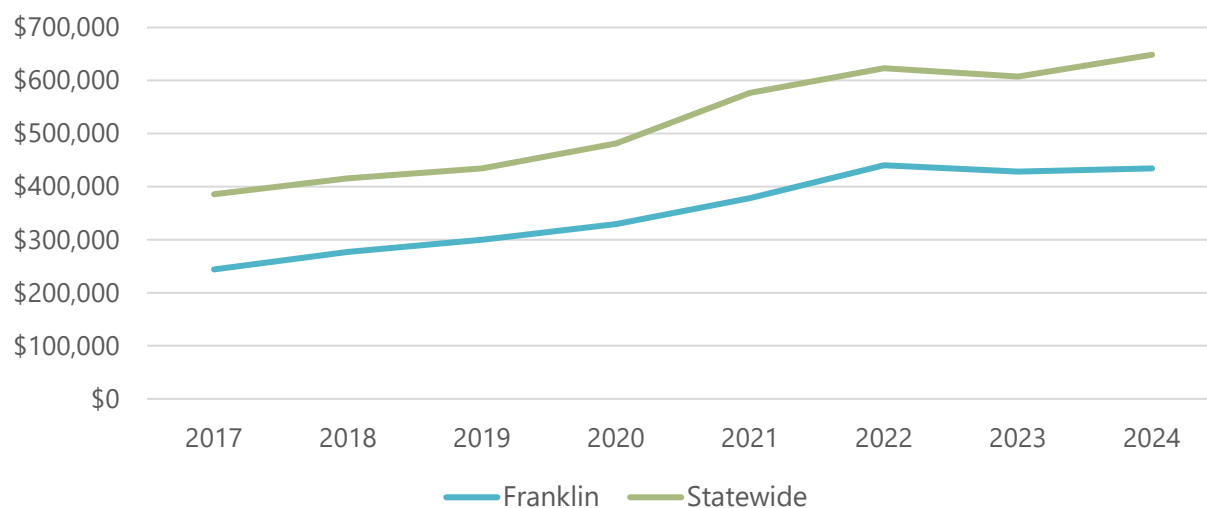


Figure 13: Median Home Sale Price, 2017 through 2024

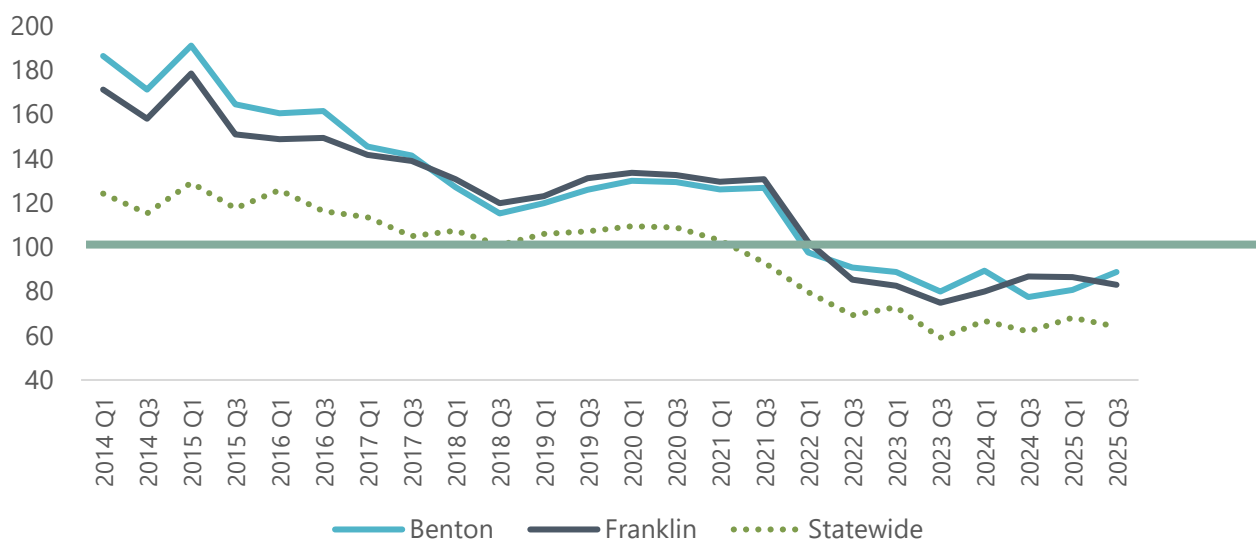


Figure 14: Housing Affordability Index for Median Income Homebuyers, 2014 to 2025
 Source: Washington Center for Real Estate Research- University of Washington

Another dataset the WCRER monitors is a Housing Affordability Index (HAI). The index is computed using sale price data obtained from MLS and income data from the Census Bureau's ACS Estimates, along with data from the OFM and US Bureau of Labor Statistics. A central assumption behind the index is that a household does not spend more than 25% of its income on principal and interest payment¹⁴. When the index is at 100, the household is paying 100% of this amount towards housing. When it lies above 100, it is paying less. Therefore, a number above the benchmark of 100 indicates affordability. As shown in **Figure 14** Franklin County has historically been much more affordable for the buyer with average investment qualifications, as compared to the statewide average and the county is considered affordable; however, the index dipped below 100 in 2022.

Housing Authority

The Housing Authority of the City of Pasco and Franklin County is a Section 8 and Public Housing Agency in Pasco serving the City of Pasco, Franklin County, and the City of Connell. This housing authority offers eight public housing communities with 280 units for families and senior/disabled individuals. In 2014, a 38-unit tax credit property named Varney Court was added. In addition, the Authority manages around 350 Housing Choice Vouchers.

Housing Subsidies

According to a dataset¹⁵ prepared by the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington, on the whole Franklin County had about 1,340 total subsidized rental housing units in the year 2023, and about 930 of those units were within the City of Pasco. The units were identified as being subsidized across four different broad categories: dwelling units funded by programs managed by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission (which may include those funded with Low Income Housing Tax Credits), units funded through Commerce including the Housing Trust Fund, units funded by USDA's Rural Housing Service Section 514 and 515 programs, units funded by HUD via project based Section 8 and other multi-family programs, and units through Public Housing Authority.

GMA REQUIREMENTS FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY REVIEWS

HB 1220, passed in 2021 amended the GMA to require local governments to plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all income levels. In addition, new changes now require jurisdictions to examine potential racially disparate impacts, displacement, exclusion and

¹⁴ The HAI does not include property taxes, home insurance, and other expenses associated with homeownership that increase the total cost of homeownership.

¹⁵ Source: Subsidized Rental Housing Profile by the Washington Center for Real Estate Research accessed May 2026. [<https://wcrer.be.uw.edu/housing-market-data-toolkit/subsidized-rental-housing-profile>] Significant data gaps were noted and so the inventory value is approximate in nature.

displacement risks in their communities. There are several ways cities and counties have and, in some cases, continue to exclude various segments of their population. Other entities, such as banking and insurance companies, in the past have encouraged discriminatory lending practices, commonly referred to as “redlining,” which was prohibited by the Fair Housing Act of 1968. While the County has no jurisdiction over lending practices, some local regulations can also have discriminatory impacts. Among the most prevalent are zoning restrictions, disinvestment and the availability of infrastructure. It is not the intent of Franklin County to discriminate in any way in the county’s policies regarding housing. In 2018, Resolution 2018-276 was passed to enforce the fair housing practices in Franklin County.

The following sections provide a number of countywide demographic data points related to race, ethnicity, affordability, and housing. The data are taken from the analysis conducted by the State Department of Commerce in 2023 (Commerce). The data points are from the HUD data set known as the *Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy* (CHAS), which uses the ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates. Because this is a slightly older data set than others presented in this chapter, there might be some divergence. Several racial categories have very small populations in Franklin County (for example, Native Hawaiian and American Indian), and in some graphs these have been combined. In any instance in which a sample size is relatively small, there can be a larger margin of error in the data.

Racial Composition

Race and ethnicity data are collected by the Census Bureau and people self-identify their race, which is primarily delineated by physical characteristics. Ethnicity refers to groups who share common ancestry, language, and / or cultural identity. For this analysis, Commerce integrated both ethnicity and race, in that the racial categories are those who identified as non-Hispanic and white, for example. There are certainly those who identify as Hispanic and white, but those are indicated separately here. **Figure 15** shows the distribution of Race and Ethnicity in the County as of the 2020 census year and **Figure 16** shows changes observed in a five year period.

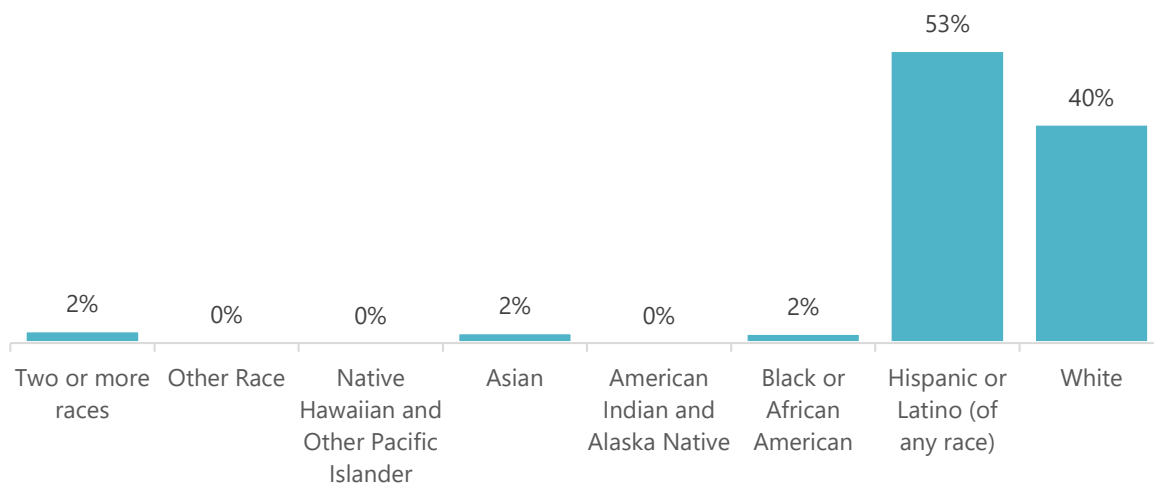


Figure 15: Race and Ethnicity in Franklin County, 2020

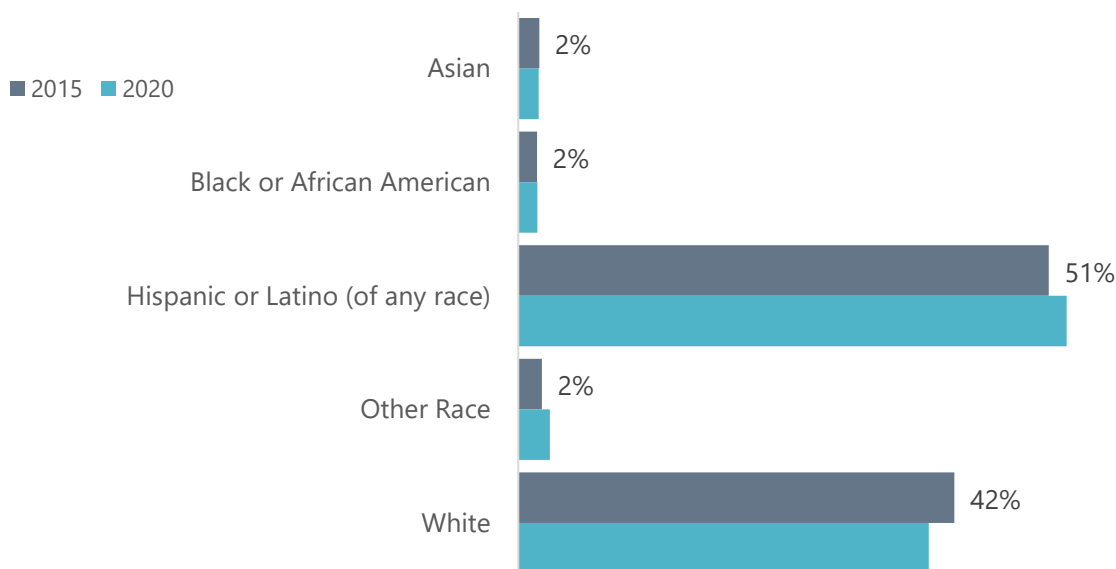


Figure 16: Racial and Ethnic Demographic Changes, 2015-2020

Income

For the purposes of enacting HB 1220 (2021) the state uses the same income groups as HUD; extremely low-, very low-, low-, moderate, and above median incomes. The CHAS data creates

estimates of income groups based on the area median income (AMI)¹⁶ and also adjusts for household size. The data indicates (**Figure 17** and **Figure 18**) that those in the non-hispanic, white group tend to have a higher representation in above median incomes. The population of other non-white, non-hispanic groups is quite small, so there is a high margin of error, but there is considerable variation among those groups as well.

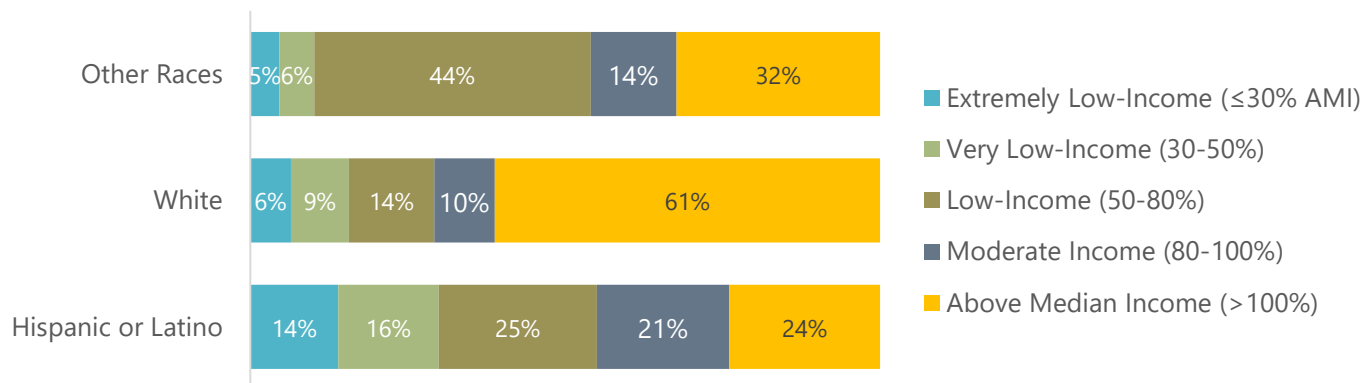


Figure 17: Income by Race and Ethnicity, 2019

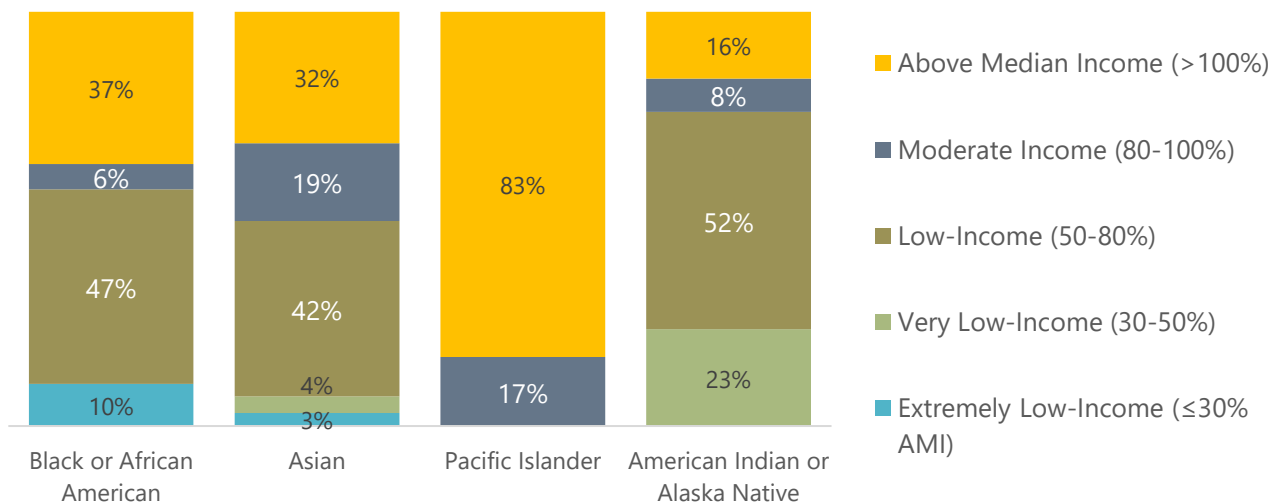


Figure 18: "Other Race" Income Distribution, 2019

¹⁶ For Franklin County, this is that for the Tri-Cities MSA.

Tenure Variations

As stated above, tenure and income are often correlated. Since income is often associated with race and ethnicity, it is logical to suspect that tenure and race may also be correlated. Indeed, the data do indicate higher homeownership rates among Asian and White households, as seen in **Figure 19**.

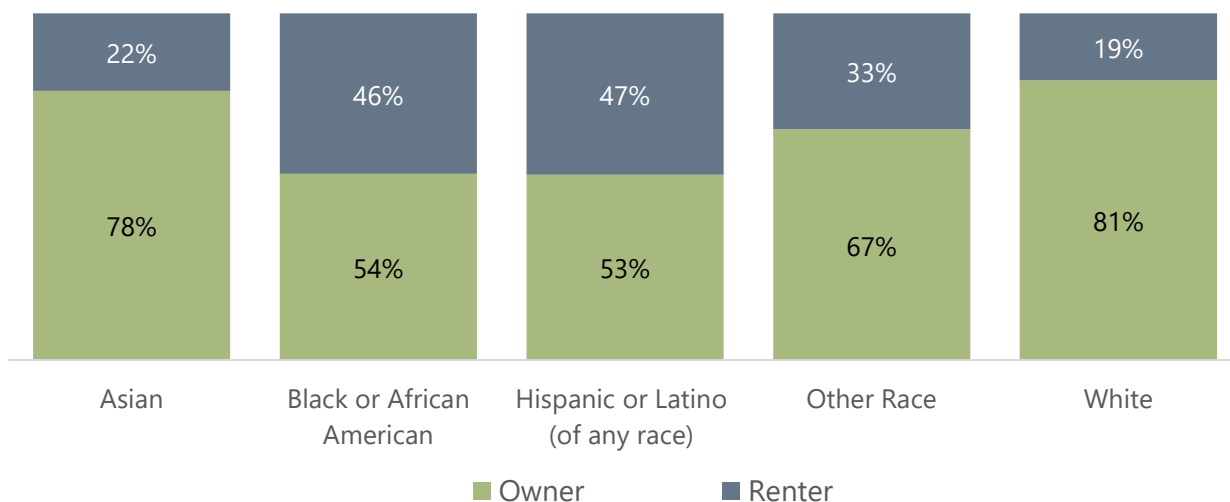


Figure 19: Tenure by Race and Ethnicity

Cost Burden

Housing cost burden was discussed earlier in the element, but an equity analysis coincides with other findings as regards racial and ethnic identities. Total cost-burden for both owners and renters coincides with the tenure of the racial and ethnic groups as well; meaning those with higher homeownership rates tend to have lower levels of cost-burden.

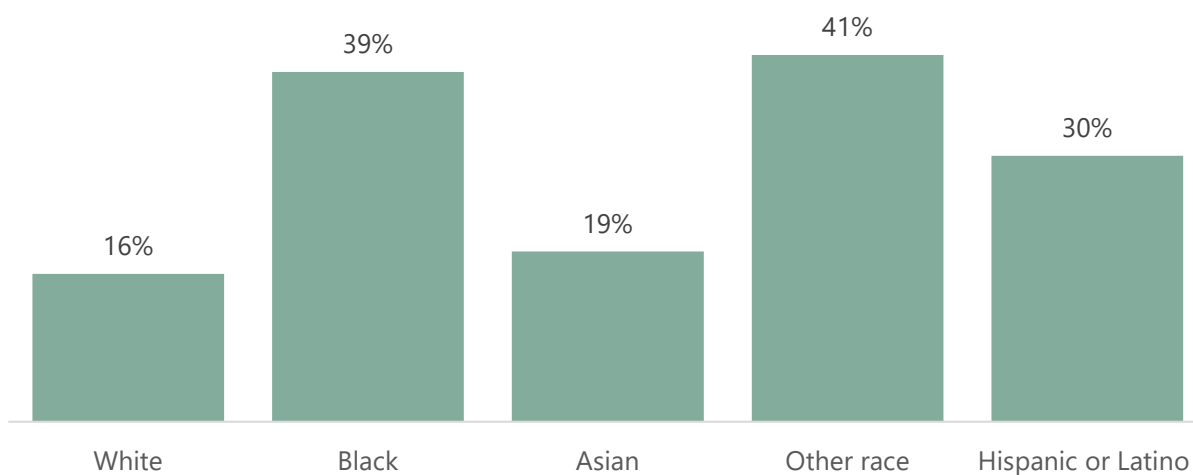


Figure 20: Share of Housing Cost-Burdened Households by Race / Ethnicity, 2019

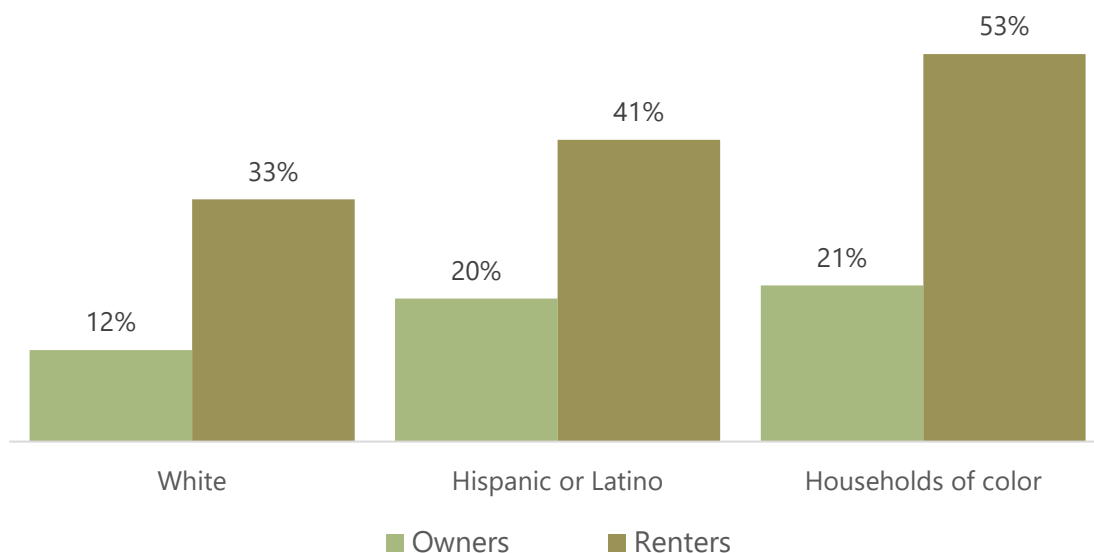


Figure 21: Share of Housing Cost-Burdened Households According to Tenure and by Race and Ethnicity, 2019

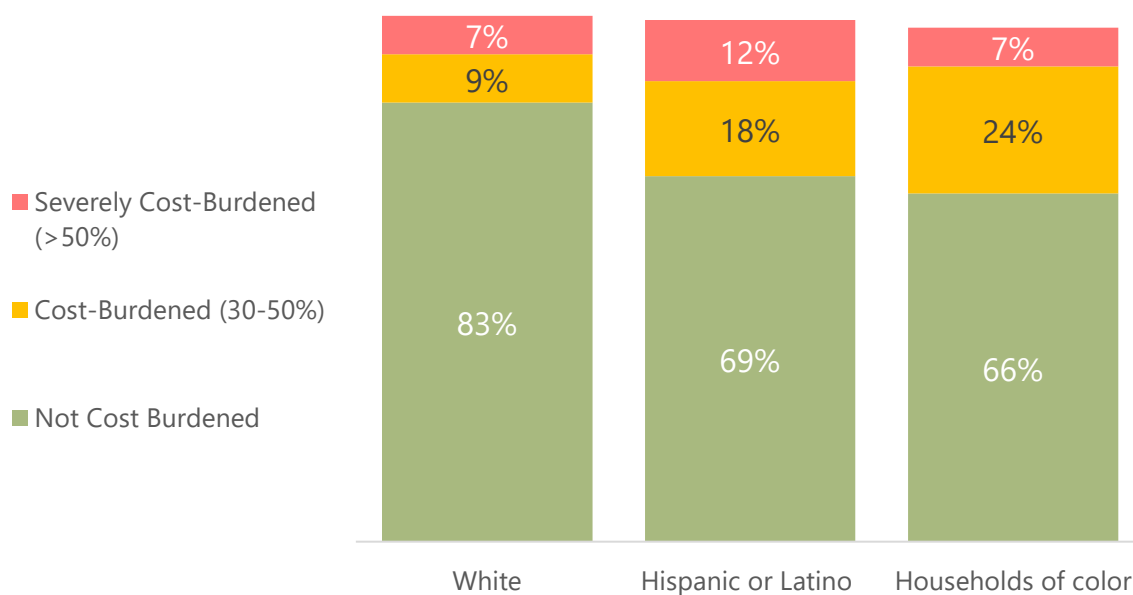


Figure 22: Share of Housing Cost-Burdened Households by Tenure and Race, 2019

Review of Potentially Racially Disparate Impacts

HB 1120 (2021) requires local jurisdictions to assess the racially disparate impacts of their housing policies and regulations, as well as the risks of exclusion and displacement. They are additionally required to adopt measures aimed at addressing and reversing these harmful effects. The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) provided guidance for local governments on “how to integrate the new requirements related to racially disparate impacts, displacement, exclusion and displacement risk in their housing element updates” in their document: Guidance to Address Racially Disparate Impacts (April 2023).

Commerce describes that racially disparate impacts arise when policies, practices, or systems disproportionately affect specific racial groups. To effectively assess potential disparities within their communities, jurisdictions should incorporate a range of measures into their data analysis.

Restrictive Covenants

Many practices, although now illegal under the Fair Housing Act, were once in place to restrict minorities or certain ethnicities from residing wherever they wanted to such as redlining (a banking practice where maps indicated areas that were “hazardous,” labeled in red, to deny lending to Black communities). Another practice that occurred as a way to exclude ethnic and racial minorities was to record a racially restrictive covenant on property, normally at the time of establishing a new development, such as a subdivision. This prevented people of color from buying or living in homes or even hotels or lodging houses. In order to be enforceable, covenants had to be recorded with the County Auditor. Due to this, we have records of those documents recorded before 1968, when the practice was ruled illegal, and formally prohibited by the Fair Housing Act.

In 2021, the State legislature noted that the legacy of restrictive covenants are still visible in many communities today and began a program to expose the injustices of the past, so that they are not repeated. With the passage of SHB 1335 an effort to identify and locate all the racially restrictive covenants in the state was begun; the work has been led by researchers at the University of Washington (UW) and Eastern Washington University (EWU). As of April 2026, EWU students had identified three Franklin County properties (or subdivisions) with racially restrictive covenants, summarized in **Table 9** (some of these properties have multiple recorded documents). In the case of Franklin county, all of these once restricted properties have been rebuilt or redeveloped and no longer exist in the form recorded.

Table 9: Properties with Recorded Racially Restrictive Covenants

RECORDING DATE	ADDRESS	PROPERTY NAME/ GRANTEE	RECORDING NUMBER
3/3/1940	424 S 28th Ave Pasco	Colonial Acres ¹⁷	87510
3/31/1927	104 N 4th Ave Pasco	The Hotel Pasco Inc.	6160
2/19/1948	Bordered by N Cedar Ave, E Adelia St, Heritage Blvd. and E Lewis St.	Avery's Addition Plat	114541

The results of a “Sundown Town” and “Redlining”

During the mid-20th centuries many communities restricted housing, employment and movement of Black people and other racial minorities; Black residents were often confined to East Pasco and were expected to leave other areas before dark, including Kennewick which was considered a “sundown town.”¹⁸ Further, it is clear from research sources that redlining and other related practices (which are now outlawed) prevented Black people from buying homes in certain parts of the Tri-Cities.¹⁹

Data Analysis

As shown in **Figure 16**, the population of Franklin County has experienced a shift in the racial makeup of the population. The percentage of Asian and Black (or African American) residents held steady, while Hispanic or Latino and Other Races increased, and the overall percentages of White residents was reduced as growth occurred.

Next, **Figure 19** through **Figure 22** provides data that could be considered indicators for potential racially disparate impacts.

Findings:

- In Franklin County, White and Asian households are more likely to be homeowners than Black, Hispanic or other non-white races. However, the share of people that are Black, Asian or other non-white races is quite low and so the statistical significance of that part of the data can’t be validated. Clearly when we compare the owner to renter ratios of Hispanic or Latino households (53% owner and 47% renter) to White householders (81% owner to 19% renter) there is a distinct divide.

¹⁷ Today this is the Flamingo Village Motor Home Park.

¹⁸ “Until the early 1960s, there was a sign on the Kennewick side of the old Pasco-Kennewick bridge warning Black people to leave town by sunset” Washington State Bar News article by George Critchlow, November 5, 2021 [Accessed May 5, 2026 at <https://wabarnews.org/2021/11/05/pasco-1976-confronting-racism-redlining-and-housing-discrimination/>]

¹⁹ <https://www.nwpb.org/nw-news/2022-12-14/how-jim-crow-policies-shaped-the-tri-cities>

- There is a significant difference among the percentage of households that are cost-burdened: while 16 percent of white households are cost-burdened in Franklin County, this figure jumps to 30 percent among Hispanic / Latino households. (Figure 20)

The legacy of discriminatory housing and land use policies and practices (e.g., redlining, racially restrictive covenants, exclusionary zoning, and so forth) have led to significant racial and economic disparities in access to housing and neighborhoods of choice. Further, historical land use and housing policies have played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequities. Today, these housing disparities continue to impact equitable access to well-funded schools, healthy environments, open space, and employment.

However, it is important to note that there are a number of factors that we have not studied, which could be further explored in order to draw any substantial conclusions as to what is directly driving disparities today, recognizing the correlation does not mean causation. Still, it will be important to continue tracking these trends when future comprehensive plan updates are performed.

Displacement

Displacement describes a situation when a household is forced or pressured to move from their community by factors outside of their control; this is also often commonly referred to as gentrification. Displacement can have negative effects on families or individuals, as well as causing disruptions in historic social networks that exist within communities. Those vulnerable to displacement are most often those of lower incomes who can be “priced out” of their neighborhoods due to one or more forms of displacement including:

- **Economic displacement:** Rising rents, property taxes or other costs.
- **Physical displacement:** Eviction, demolition, redevelopment of homes, expiration of formal affordable housing, climate-related causes.
- **Cultural Displacement:** Traditional community institutions and social networks move.

One way displacement can occur as a side-effect of redevelopment and efforts to increase housing density due to growth in a community, as has occurred in Pasco. As areas are rezoned to allow for higher levels of density including apartment buildings, the land becomes more valuable. This can lead to both economic and physical displacement, due to rising property values and taxes or rents of current residents, and direct demolition as the area becomes more attractive to developers. Sometimes this is then followed by cultural displacement. This is referred to as displacement by market forces. Although the GMA mandates that growth be concentrated in urban areas, thereby contributing to potential displacement, the act also requires jurisdictions to consider the effects of these policies and attempt to remedy negative externalities.

We have seen in the data provided in this element that although incomes are rising in the county generally, rents and sales prices are also rising and are rising faster than incomes. Although Franklin county remains a more affordable county statewide, cost increases are an indication that market forces are also potentially contributing to displacement. The demographic analysis offered in earlier sections of this element show a high and increasing percentage of the population that identifies as Hispanic or Latino. That, and some other non-white population groups presently tend to be of lower income, more cost-burdened, and less likely to be homeowners. These same indicators (income, cost-burden, and homeownership) are some of the demographic markers that can contribute to the level of vulnerability to displacement driven by market forces.

In 2023, to support local implementation of HB 1220 (2021), Commerce released a draft statewide displacement map to estimate the risk of displacement. Franklin County is pictured in **Figure 23**. This map consolidated data based on various socio-demographic data at the census tract level. Many of the areas indicated as “high risk” of displacement are very rural sections of the county with low population density, in which a small change might have large effects on the data. Commerce used three indicators²⁰ to evaluate the displacement risk, with the data points listed in each category:

- Social vulnerability: non-white share of the population, renter share of the population, median household income.
- Market Trend: Average rent in 2015 and the change in rent from 2010 to 2020.
- Demographic change: Percent change in the non-white population, percent change in low income households (those under 80% AMI).

²⁰ Unfortunately the basis for the calculation which is used for the analysis is limited to one academic source that was not peer-reviewed, and was based on a single study of the City of Portland, Oregon; the applicability or use of the calculation in Franklin County is dubious.

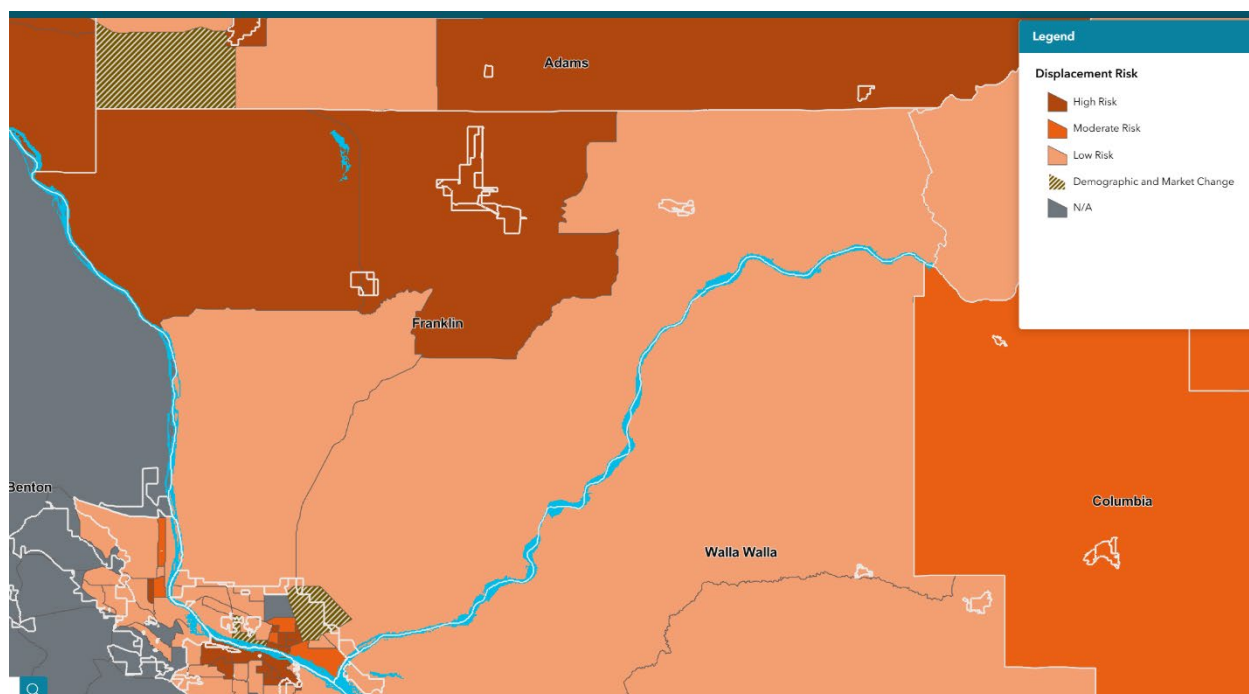


Figure 23: Displacement Threat Map, 2023

Review of Housing Policies in the 2019 County Comprehensive Plan

The Housing Goals and Policies set out in the County’s 2019 Comprehensive Plan were reviewed for language that could potentially lead or perpetuate a racist outcome (regardless of the intention of the statement). No such language was identified. To the contrary, the County’s goals and policies call for a broad range of housing choices to be promoted in order to meet needs of the population among specific needs and according to “fair-share” principles. Moreover, the policies call for the regulation of manufactured housing to be no different than site-built housing and to promote education and awareness addressing compatibility between various dwelling types and set out the concept of extending education and awareness programs regarding universal needs to accommodate housing for all, within all communities. This language is affirming and works against discrimination. Finally, Goal 9 and the related policies of the former plan positively express the County’s support for ensuring safe, sanitary and affordable housing is made available for migrant (guest workers) and permanent-resident farm workers.

Land Capacity

Table 10 details the County’s estimated net capacity for new housing units among parcels that were classified among four categories, as vacant, underutilized, vacant – single unit, or pipeline

to arrive at estimates for capacity on a per unit basis according to zoning district (built out and undevelopable counts are not shown).

Table 10: Housing Capacity (Dwelling Units), Franklin County, 2026-2046

ZONE	VACANT	UNDER-UTILIZED	VACANT SINGLE UNIT	PIPELINE	TOTAL

In order to evaluate land capacity by income level, AHBL used the 6-step process as outlined by Commerce. The 6 steps include:

1. Summarize land capacity by zone.
 2. Categorize zones by allowed housing types and density level.
 3. Relate zone categories to potential income levels and housing types served.
 4. Summarize capacity by zone category.
 5. Compare projected housing needs to capacity.
 6. (If deficit is found) Implement actions to increase capacity for one or more housing needs.
- Then reassess capacity (Step 1) based on actions

(the rest is forthcoming)

Table 11: Zone Categories and Potential Income Levels Served

ZONE CATEGORY	HOUSING TYPES ALLOWED	LOWEST POTENTIAL INCOME LEVEL SERVED		ASSUMED AFFORDABILITY LEVEL FOR CAPACITY ANALYSIS
		MARKET RATE	WITH SUBSIDIES/ INCENTIVES	

Table 12: Zone Categories and Potential Income Levels Served

ZONE CATEGORY	HOUSING TYPES ALLOWED	MARKET RATE	WITH SUBSIDIES/ INCENTIVES	ASSUMED AFFORDABILITY LEVEL FOR CAPACITY ANALYSIS



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

This volume of the **Economic Development Element** includes the County's goals and policies intended to maintain a strong and vibrant economy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Goal A.** *Maintain a thriving and stable economy that supports existing industries, businesses, and agriculture while attracting new opportunities for economic growth and diversification.*
- Goal B.** *Provide ample economic and job opportunities for all residents and geographic areas of the county.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

🌱 Denotes policies that are strongly related to the Climate Element.

- ED-1. Provide adequate infrastructure to support economic development.
- ED-2. Promote the development of an educated and well-trained workforce.
- ED-3. Ensure that the farming community and agricultural industry continue to flourish as the county's population grows and economy diversifies.

- ED-4. Streamline regulations and permitting processes to be consistent, fair, predictable and timely without causing an undue burden.
- ED-5. Promote employment and economic opportunities for all citizens.
- ED-6. Support the research and development of new agricultural opportunities.
- ED-7. Support the development, construction, and expansion of the Columbia River Irrigation Project.
- ED-8. Support the research and development of new emerging technologies across all economic sectors.
- ED-9. Work with outside agencies and groups to promote economic development opportunities.
- ED-10. Encourage redevelopment of declining commercial areas.
- ED-11. Support the development of business incubation.
- ED-12. Encourage the use of federal, state, and other funding opportunities to enhance economic development.
- ED-13. Strive to maintain adequate public facilities and service levels.
- ED-14. Encourage the creation of Master Planned Resorts and Major Industrial Developments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a strong and vibrant economy is important in Franklin County. County residents need employment options and county businesses need access to a stable and ready workforce. The local economy is driven by locally produced agricultural commodities as well as value-added products, local goods and services, and other factors. Additionally, a vibrant economy ensures that the local tax base remains stable and can support community needs such as school, police protection, infrastructure, and other public facilities and services.

The U.S. Census Bureau includes Franklin County in the Richland, Kennewick-Pasco Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which is referenced in this document as the Tri-Cities MSA. Although the economies of the bi-county area and region each contribute to the vitality of the Tri-Cities MSA and Franklin County, for the purposes of this analysis and because the land use discussed in the Comprehensive Plan is primarily unincorporated Franklin County, this section will focus on the rural economy of Franklin County. The economy in the County mostly consists of agriculture and its related businesses with a few non-agricultural economic contributors.

INCOME

Income is generally measured as median household income. Median refers to the midpoint of earners—meaning that half of households earn more than that, and half earn less. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) then collects data for a metropolitan area, this measure is referred to as Area Median Income (AMI). This practice is meant to differentiate areas of higher incomes and is then used to determine the appropriate rent limits set by HUD for affordable housing, as well as indicate overall economic prosperity for an area. This metric differs from wage data presented by Benton-Franklin Trends, who also offer inflation-adjusted wages, with the base value of 2012 applied to every year.

Income versus Wages

Income is the total of all earnings including investment income, income from sources other than wages such as rental income. It can also include social security, disability and unemployment. Income is measured at the dwelling unit.

Wages are payment for work. Data for wages do not include the self-employed, military, students living on campus, or Native Americans working on reservations. Wage data is taken at the place of employment.

These indicators provide insight into incomes in Franklin County. Both wages and income are lower than those of the State overall.

Table 1: Income in Franklin County, 2004 and. 2023

MEASURE	2004	2023
Per capita personal income	\$22,667	\$48,029
Median Household (HH) income	\$42,029	\$84,366
Average annual wage (2012 dollars)*	\$33,257	\$41,459
Average annual wage	\$27,362	\$55,021

*This metric is inflation-adjusted

Adjusted for inflation, they have increased by 20% since 2010, while in the state, wages have increased by 28%. Median income was approximately 53% higher than average wages in 2023 which could be attributed to a higher percentage (approximately 77%) of family households, presumably many of those have two incomes. That ratio has remained consistent over time. As mentioned in an earlier section, Franklin County residents are more likely to be employed in higher income industries, such as scientific research/ management or the finance, insurance and real estate services (FIRES) sector, than are present *within* Franklin County, which is over-represented in lower wage jobs. The data also show the wages are higher in Benton County than Franklin County, however, wages in Benton County are growing at a much slower rate (1.2% in constant dollars) than in Franklin County or the state overall. This is a positive sign for Franklin county's economic future. However, the data also show that when adjusted to 2012 dollars, wages are not keeping pace with inflation.

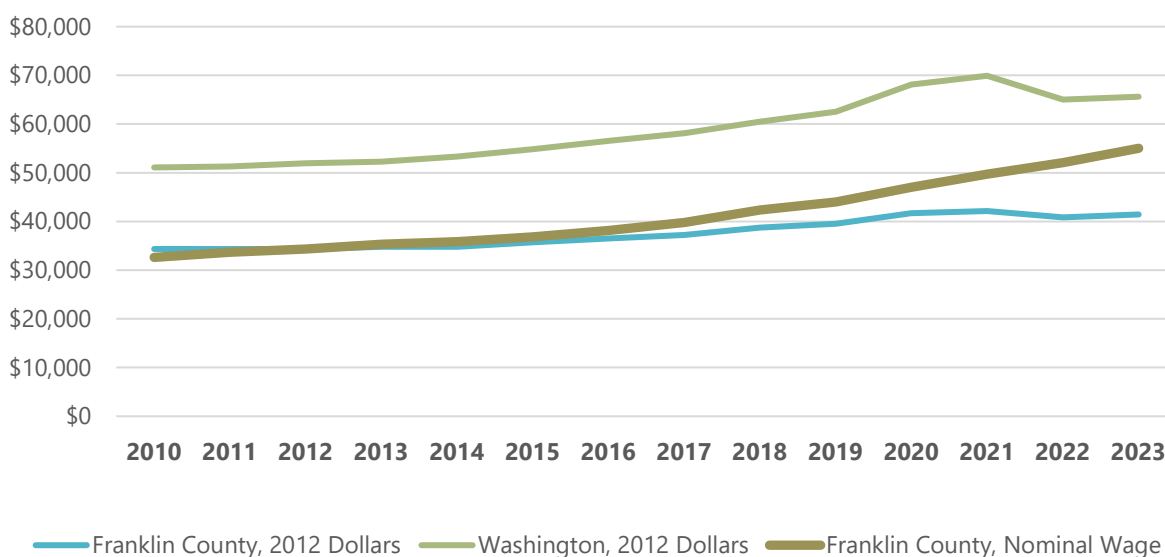


Figure 1: Wages; Franklin County vs. Washington State

Source: Benton-Franklin Trends

Figure 2 shows how income distribution has changed since 2018 in nominal terms. The data show that the share of households earning \$75,000 or more has increased from 38 percent of households to 59 percent of households. What could be worrisome, is that the percentage of those earning less than \$25,000 has not improved, despite inflation since 2018. Someone earning \$25,000 in 2018, adjusted for inflation using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation calculator would need to be making \$30,270 to keep pace with inflation in 2024.

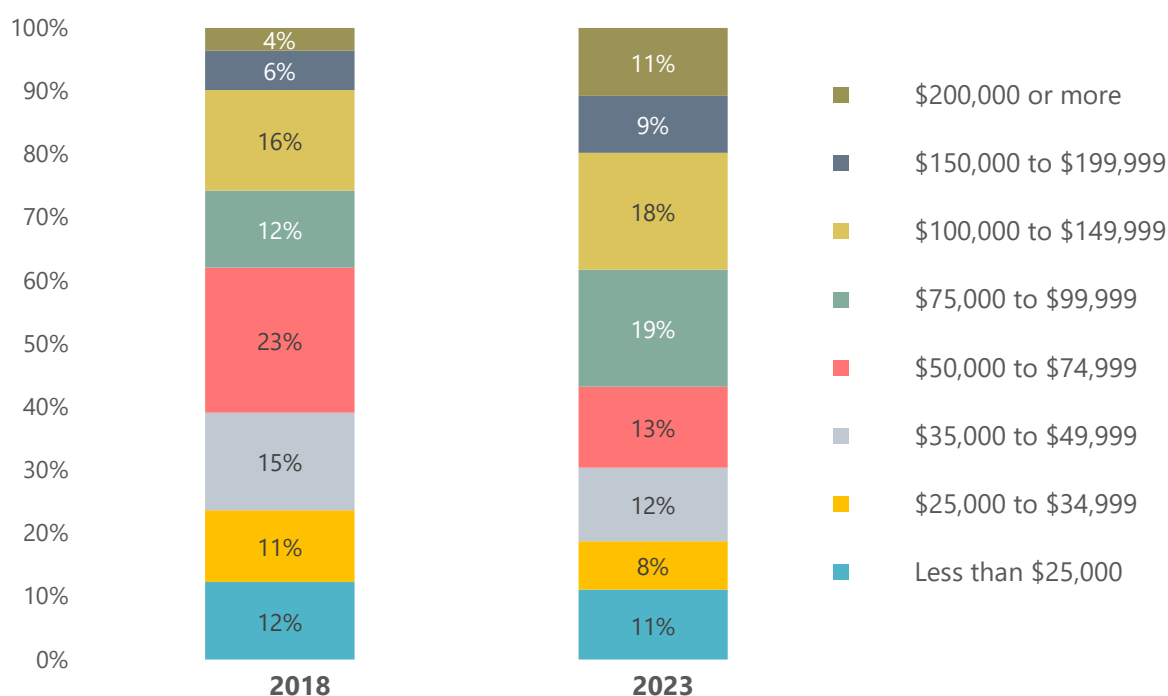


Figure 2: Income Distribution in Franklin County, 2018 and 2023
Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates

Income distribution among communities can provide clues about labor markets, household composition, and economic opportunities. There are numerous economic studies indicating excessive income inequality is harmful and increasing in the United States. Furthermore, wage growth has been higher amongst higher income households since the 2008 recession.¹

¹ "Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. [Regional Economist](https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional-economist/april-2016/measuring-trends-in-income-inequality) article. March 2016. M. T. Owyang and H. Shell. Accessed at: <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional-economist/april-2016/measuring-trends-in-income-inequality> and Pew Research Center. Washington DC. January 2020. J.M Horowitz, R. Igielnik and R. Kochhar. Accessed at <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/12/14/the-growth-of-the-older-workforce/> Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/01/09/trends-in-income-and-wealth-inequality/>

The data reveal Franklin County reflects these changes, albeit in small ways. The share of top earners (\$200k+) has increased by 175%, while the bottom of the income distribution has shrunk by only 8.3%. It should be noted that a percentage of those earning \$25,000 or less will be those not working, but living off retirement income, social security, or savings.

WORKFORCE

Jobs and Wages

With broad strokes we can outline some generalities of the economic activity in the county. The goods-producing sector is more dominant in Franklin County than in other developed economies, even neighboring Benton County.² This is largely due to the presence of a robust agriculture industry and the associated manufacturing of food products. The sector that trails closely behind is education, social services and health care. There is a divergence between the fields that provide employment, and the sectors that produce the most GDP; this is likely due to the lower costs of agricultural products versus homes for example³

Wages and income are also lower in Franklin County than both the Tri-Cities region and the state. There are more lower wage jobs located within the county, although we do see that county residents are often employed in higher wage industries. We see a correlation in the data between lower wages and lower educational attainment. However, wages are increasing, and at a higher rate than in Benton County. The data also indicate an aging workforce, and a consolidation of employers, with an increasing number of workers employed by companies with 500+ employees. **Table 2** provides some economic context for Franklin County in comparison to Washington State.⁴

Table 2: Comparative Economic Statistics, 2023

	WASHINGTON STATE	FRANKLIN COUNTY
With social security	29%	23%
Mean social security income	\$24,964	\$21,630
Employed in Agriculture	2%	10%
Unemployment Rate	4.4%	5.7%
With food stamps	12%	18%
Median family earnings	\$113,053	\$88,566
Median non-family earnings	\$59,147	\$45,280
Children living below the poverty level	12%	15%

Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates

² In contrast to most highly developed economies in which the service-sector is more prevalent.

³ Home sales included in the Finance, Insurance and Real Estate ("FIRES") category.

⁴ Table DP03

EDUCATION

The educational attainment of people residing in Franklin County is lower than that of the state overall for each level of education (high school graduate, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree). According to data from the OSPI data portal, approximately 77 percent of public high school students graduated on time. This includes students from North Franklin and Pasco School Districts.⁵

However, data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) indicate that only 36.5% of residents aged 18-24 are high school graduates.⁶ This is remedied by the time residents turn 25, with the 79% high school graduation rate we see in **Figure 3**. This could mean that many residents are gaining their equivalency in later years. This could correspond with a relatively high rate of immigration and non-native English speakers.

The data indicate a larger difference in the levels of attainment for bachelor's and graduate degrees. National studies have consistently shown a correlation between higher educational attainment and increased incomes, professional mobility, and improved health outcomes. Benefits to the local communities of higher incomes can include increased tax revenues, less reliance on government financial support, and increased quality of civic life. A well-educated labor market is also key to attracting and retaining knowledge-based industries, which are coveted by many communities

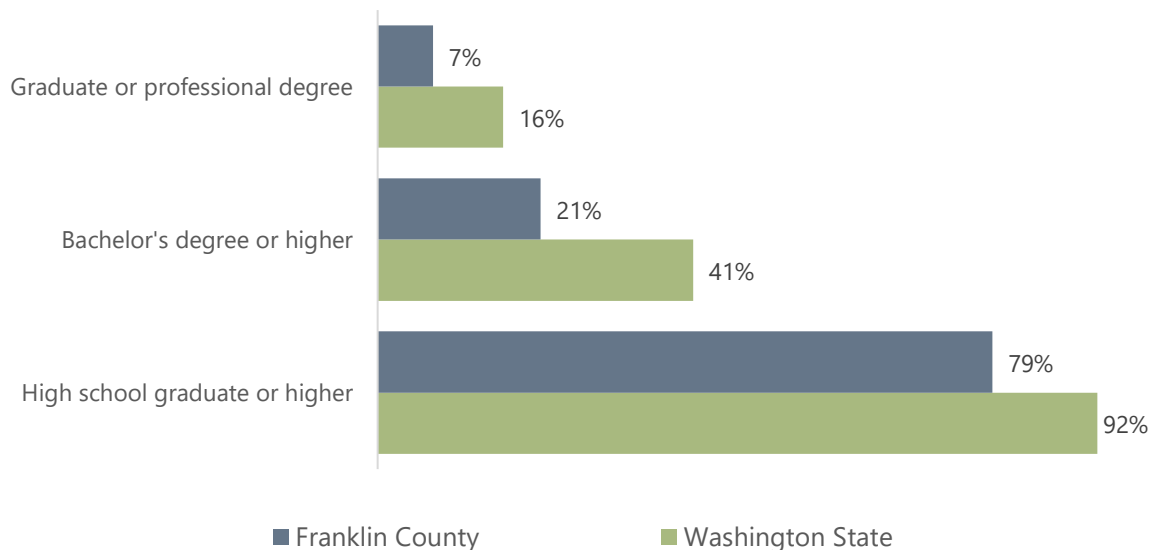


Figure 3: Educational Attainment
Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, 2023. Table S1501

⁵ Data sourced from Benton-Franklin Trends

⁶ Table S1501- Margin of error listed at +/-10.7%

However, many of the jobs found in the top five industries in Franklin County are industries that typically do not require advanced degrees. This is further supported by data from the Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies⁷ This statistic measures available jobs in Franklin County, and what kind of degree, if any, is required to perform this job. Surprisingly, given the technological changes since the year 2000, required education levels have not changed in a significant way; so, they aren't shown here. But it appears that educational requirements for employment differ between Franklin County and the state overall; both a higher demand for roles which do not require a specific level of education, as well as a reduced demand for employment requiring higher education levels, as seen in **Figure 4**.

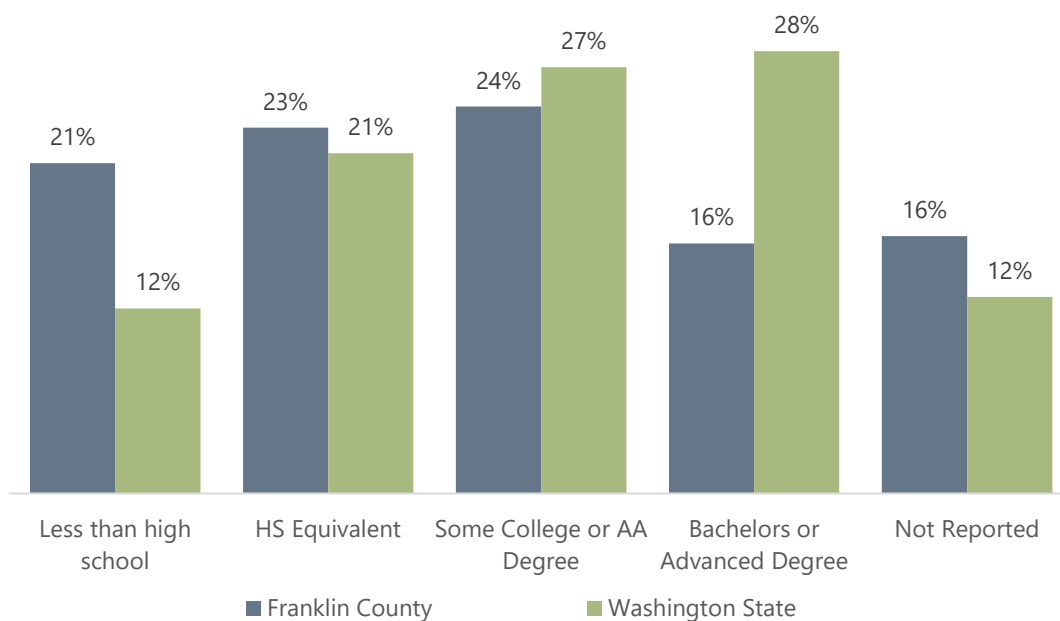


Figure 4: Share of Jobs by Educational Attainment

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Center for Economic Studies- Quarterly Workforce Indicators Explorer, 2023

⁷ As presented by Benton-Franklin Trends.org.

LABOR MARKET

Labor market participation rates are similar for Pasco, Franklin County, and the State. Approximately 65 percent of those over 16 are in the labor force. This number is reduced if we account for only female residents, which in 2023 was estimated at 57 percent according to ACS 1-Year Estimates. Franklin County is considered a “Distressed Area” due to high unemployment, by the Washington State Employment Security Department. This means that there has been an unemployment rate greater than 5.4%. However, this seems to be showing improvement, as data indicates the rate in Franklin County had fallen to 4.6% as of December 2024.⁸

Table 3: Workforce Age Distribution, Franklin County

WORKFORCE AGE GROUP	2000	2023
14-24	17%	14%
25-44	48%	42%
45-54	22%	19%
55+	13%	24%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Quarterly Workforce Indicators

The age distribution in the workforce provides more context for the pool of available workers. Data show Franklin County has an aging workforce. This indicates there will be a need for replacements in the near future, as workers transition into retirement. This is particularly true of industries in which there is a great deal of institutional knowledge to be transferred. As workers remain in the workforce later in life, this can have an impact on the opportunities available to younger workers and can delay the start of their careers. This is a nationwide trend⁹ and can have a variety of causes, including rising cost of living and insufficient retirement income. In this case we see an 85% increase in those aged 55 and over as a share in the workforce from 2000 to 2023, as well as a decrease in the share in all other age categories.

Next, we consider what industries are present in the county, **Figure 5** shows the 10 most prevalent industries in which Franklin County residents (over 16 years of age) are employed, as defined by the ACS. The top industries employing Franklin County residents are agriculture, education, health care and social services, government, manufacturing, and retail trade¹⁰

⁸ Washington State Employment Security Department
⁹ Pew Research Center. Washington DC. December 2023. Fry, Richard and Braga, Dana. Accessed at <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/12/14/the-growth-of-the-older-workforce/>
¹⁰ This is data from the Washington State Employment Security Department, which differs from the ACS and OnTheMap data regarding government and educational sectors. In the State data, public school teachers are included under the category of Government, whereas in the Census and OnTheMap, education is either considered as part of health care and social assistance, or as its own category, “Educational services” respectively.

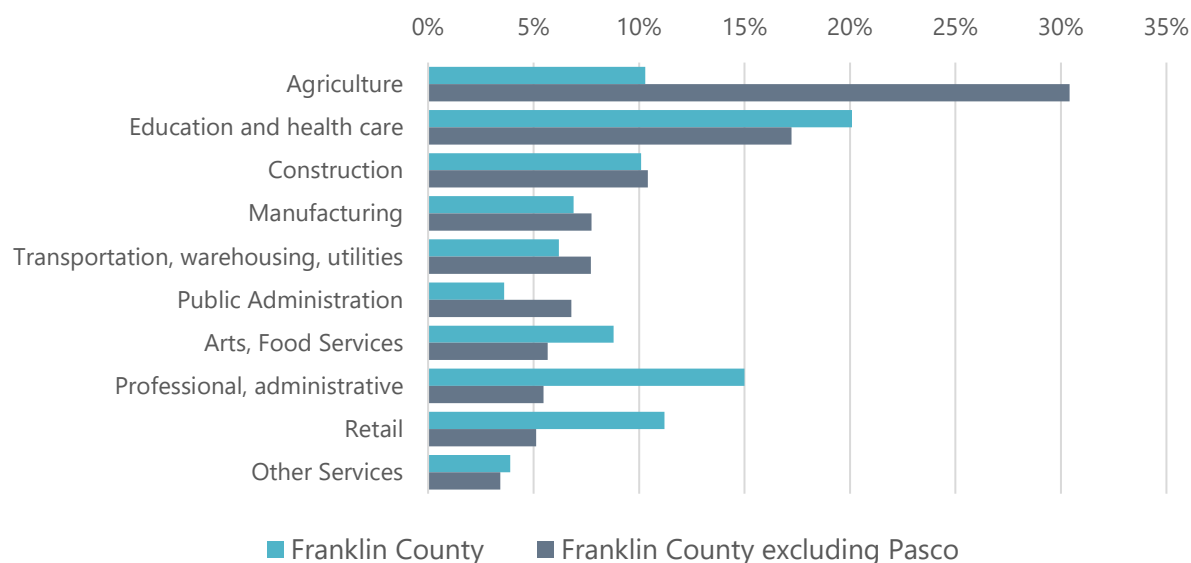


Figure 5: Distribution of Employment by Industry- 2023

Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, Table DP03

If we exclude Pasco from this data, the agriculture, and education and health care industries become even more dominant.

Regardless of the industry, employment at larger, privately owned firms has been on the rise. Since 1993, the share of employees working at firms with more than 500 employees has increased from 25 percent to 39 percent, and the trend appears to be continuing.¹¹

When considering overall economic activity, we can also examine the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) attributable to Franklin County activities, among the top industry types.¹² GDP is calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, and is often used to measure the health of an economy. GDP includes wages paid by businesses, personal consumption of goods and services, investments by businesses such as buildings and equipment, government spending, and net exports.

¹¹ Benton-Franklin Trends, via U.S. Census Bureau: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

¹² Some data in "Transportation" and "FIRES"(Finance, Insurance and Real Estate Services) was unavailable.



Figure 6: Share of GDP by Industry, Franklin County, 2022

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Data

**FIRES stands for Finance, Insurance and Real Estate Services*

In Franklin County, government spending (“Public Administration”) accounts for the highest percentage of GDP by industry, at 15 percent. By contrast, in Benton County, Government spending accounts for 11.4 percent of GDP. In Benton County the private services sector accounts for 4.5 times the goods producing sector. In Franklin County, services account for only two times the amount of goods; today’s advanced economies are generally heavily weighted towards services as opposed to goods. This is another indicator of the county’s strong agricultural sector, including food manufacturing, which is considered “manufacturing” as opposed to agriculture, but is still included under the goods producing umbrella. Another takeaway is that government spending is contributing proportionally more to Franklin County GDP than the Tri-Cities region more generally.

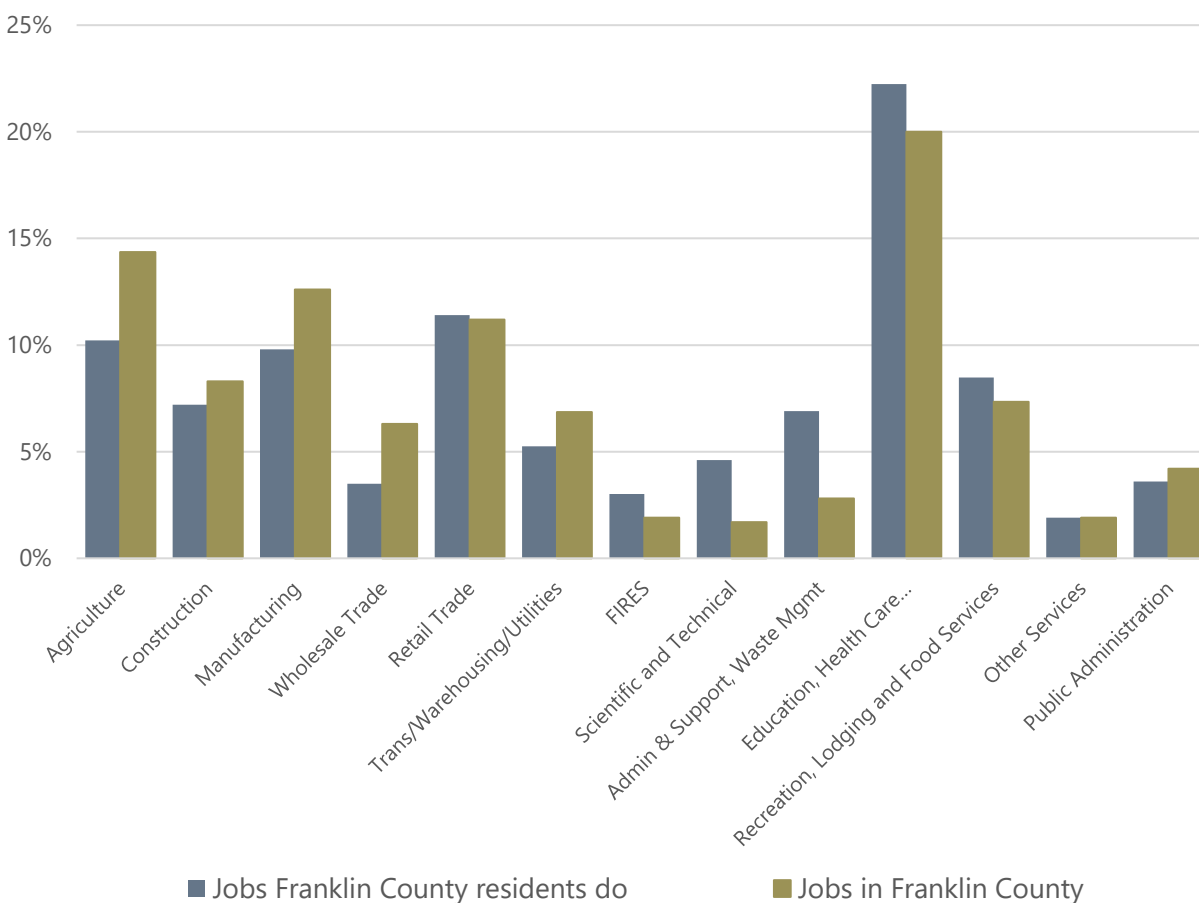
The US Census Bureau maintains another tool for data visualization, called OnTheMap. This tool is a partnership between the Census and all 50 States, plus the District of Columbia. There are some slight differences in data from the 1-year ACS estimates.. This tool delineates between the location of a job versus the location of a worker.

According to OnTheMap in 2022, Franklin county had 33,402 jobs located in the County, whereas there were 41,346 residents in Franklin county with jobs.¹³ A total of 28,661 residents live in Franklin County but work outside the County. Meanwhile, 20,717 residents are employed

¹³ The most recent data available. US Census OnTheMap Accessed at <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

in Franklin County but living elsewhere. There are 12,685 Franklin County residents who also work within Franklin County. This imbalance, which has implications for tax revenue, and also for traffic flows and transportation systems. This could be a result of the relative affordability of Franklin County versus neighboring Benton County.

Figure 7: Share of Jobs by Employment Sector
Source: OnTheMap, U.S. Census Bureau



The US Census Bureau tool, *OnTheMap* also collects data about commute patterns, including the top destinations workers are commuting to and from. In the most recent data available, roughly 50 percent of both residents of and workers in Franklin County are commuting between Pasco, Kennewick, Richland, and West Richland. Additionally, about 30 percent of commuting is occurring outside of cities and census designated places, which indicates commuting to or from rural areas within the County.

AGRICULTURE

Air, water, and land are important economic resources for Franklin County. Franklin County's fertile soils, available irrigation water, sunny skies and long summer daylight hours have made agriculture a cornerstone for economic development since the early pioneering days.

Franklin County lies within the Columbia Basin, one of the Northwest's most productive agricultural regions. According to the Agricultural Census taken every five years by the Washington Agricultural Statistics Service, in Franklin County there were 751 farms in 2022 compared with 857 farms in 1992, a slight increase over the 30-year period. However, the total land area in farming decreased between 1992 and 2022, by about twelve percent. The average size of a farm also decreased from 782 acres to 781 acres by 2022. The data is summarized in **Table 4**. The data are collected and released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) every 5 years.

Table 4: Natural Resources – Agriculture

	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Number of Farms	857	848	943	891	883	772	751
Land in Farms (acres)	670,149	563,716	664,875	609,046	625,047	615,274	586,594
Average Size of Farms (acres)	782	665	705	684	708	797	781
Number of Farms with irrigated Land	715	725	744	702	637	626	576
Irrigated Land (Acres)	214,748	230,279	241,063	217,238	207,151	188,119	179,580
Market Value of Products (\$1,000)	238,528	332,935	350,483	467,014	740,014	631,598	1,006,025
Average/Farm Dollars	279,496	392,612	371,668	524,145	838,068	818,132	1,339,580

Source: Censuses of Agriculture – National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA

In 2002 the general crop type in farms was 77 percent Cropland, 16 percent Pasture and seven percent Other Uses.

The market value of production has steadily increased over the years. The market value of agricultural products sold in 2012 increased dramatically from \$740,014,000 to \$1,006,025,000 in 2022, a 36 percent increase over 10 years, and higher than inflation as documented by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator.

Since agriculture is such an important economic sector and is particularly important for future land use designations and patterns, it calls for a closer examination. Roughly 73 percent of Franklin County's land mass is engaged in agricultural uses on 751 farms; 586,594 of 795,000

acres, as of 2022.¹⁴ The average farm is 781 acres in size, roughly 58 percent larger than the farms in Benton County but comparable in size to those in Yakima and Walla Walla counties. Roughly 31 percent of that farmland is irrigated, which has decreased by 5 percent since 2017. Production of the top five high value crops – apples, potatoes, sweet corn, onions, and grapes – has decreased by 25 percent in total acreage since 2002, and currently occupies approximately 10 percent of total agricultural area. The total value of agricultural production was a little over \$1 billion in 2022; with each farm contributing on average about \$1.35 million.

The average wage for agricultural workers (in nominal, non-inflation adjusted dollars) has increased from \$28,206 to \$40,463 or about 46 percent between 2016 and 2023, which is equivalent to the increase in overall average wage (44 percent), although wages for agricultural

Agricultural Production

Franklin County is among Washington States's leading producers of potatoes, onions, corn and wine grapes.



workers are still lower than the overall average for workers in Franklin County according to data collected by Benton Franklin Trends, sourced from the Washington State Employment Security Department at www.bentonfranklintrends.com.

The USDA census provides us with a look at some basic demographics of what they refer to as “producers” and data on the farms themselves. The data show that a little less than half (44 percent) of the farms in Franklin County are what might be referred to as “small farms,” or under 50 acres. Sixty-two percent of

farms are family owned- farms, with 72 percent of producers living on the actual farm. This is important as small farms support the competitiveness and sustainability of rural and farm economies, as well as keeping more of the farm revenue in the local economy.¹⁵

The continuation of existing farming practices depends upon future generations being willing and able to take over. The 2022 USDA Census identified only 119 Franklin county farms, with 162 producers as “young producers,” which is defined as a producer aged 34 or younger, these

¹⁴ Sourced from Benton-Franklin Trends; the data is from the USDA’s agricultural census, which occurs every 5 years. Accessed at: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1_Chapter_2_County_Level/Washington

¹⁵ USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Accessed at <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/topics/small-family-farms>

farms were working about 7 percent of the agricultural land in the county. Efforts could be made to ensure continuing interest and profitability in farming as a profession, as studies have shown that when economic returns are favorable, more farmers enter the profession.¹⁶ There could be opportunity to energize younger farmers by engaging female producers, who are still underrepresented in the field at 35 percent of total producers.

Right to Farm

Agricultural activities conducted on farmland are often subjected to nuisance lawsuits, and such suits encourage, and at times force, the premature removal of the lands from agricultural production. Franklin County protects agricultural activities conducted on farmland and forest practices from nuisance laws. Franklin County has adopted a “Right to Farm” policy (Franklin County Ordinance 8-2000). The policy grants the same degree of protection to agricultural activities as Chapter 7.48.305 RCW, but does not grant protection beyond that allowed by state law.

Conclusions

Agriculture will continue to be a major industry in the Mid-Columbia Region and Franklin County. Agricultural lands should continue to be protected as an important County resource, through land use designations, such as Agricultural lands of long term significance, as well as with other public policies. Agricultural industries and businesses, relating to production and/or processing should be encouraged, and are allowed per the zoning ordinance for siting locally. Cottage industries are encouraged in agricultural areas and agricultural tourism should be promoted to diversify the economic base of farm families.

¹⁶ Carl Zulauf. Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics; Ohio State University (May 8, 2024) Accessed at: <https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2024/05/age-of-us-farmers-not-a-problem.html>

DIVERSIFICATION AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Agriculture Related Businesses

The economy of Franklin County was built on farming, but the economic contributions do not end at harvest. There is an established agricultural-related complex from farm production and related services to processing, shipping, and marketing of farm products. A critical mass of agricultural service and supply firms are present within the County providing productive inputs to agricultural producers. The County has also attracted food processors — especially in the preserved fruits and vegetables sector — adding further value to farm products produced within the County. Decreasing labor has led to increased automation in both the agricultural and



agricultural processing sectors. Increased productivity drives the need for fewer, higher skilled employees that earn a better wage.

Distribution via barge, rail and trucking and warehousing functions are critically important activities and ongoing investment in infrastructure is key to remaining viable and competitive.

Furthermore, continued educational opportunities and workforce training are necessary for continued success of the industry. Ecological conditions such as drought and wildfire hazards, although posing increasing risk, continue to be managed and monitored by various local, regional, and state entities.

Transportation

Franklin County is a regional transportation hub, boasting one of the most efficient multimodal transportation systems within the state. The County has one of the largest inland port facilities with access to the Pacific along with excellent rail service. Connections to a multitude of transportation modes help regional shippers remain competitive in the delivery of their products to respective markets. Although there are significant development opportunities, there are problems on the horizon, namely continued rail abandonment and drawdowns affecting barge shipping on the Columbia River waterway. The Tri-Cities airport is another key piece of the

transportation system facilitating economic activity and fostering economic development opportunities.

Further information regarding freight transportation and freight mobility objectives can be found in the Transportation and Circulation element of this plan.

Planned improvements to regional and local infrastructure and the transportation system can boost the economy, particularly:

- Freight corridor improvements serving and supporting agriculture and industry;
- Continued expansion of Pasco's transportation network to support residential and commercial growth;
- Industrial-area infrastructure investments that support manufacturing, food processing, warehousing, and logistics. (examples can include extension of industrial sewer); and
- Airport and rail connectivity improvements also strengthen regional competitiveness.

Some specific examples of projects planned for the near future that will support local industry include:

- Bridge rehabilitation and replacement projects, including the Glenwood Bridge replacement;
- R-170 Pavement Rehabilitation;
- Taylor Flats Road all-weather improvements; and
- Intersection illumination and safety improvements.

Because Franklin County's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, even relatively small roadway improvements can have outsized economic benefits.

Opportunity Zones

The federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 included the Opportunity Zone program, designed to provide tax incentives to private investors who fund businesses in under-invested communities. Investors are able to defer paying taxes on capital gains that are invested in Qualified Opportunity Funds that in turn are invested in distressed communities designated as Opportunity Zones.

Low-income, or economically distressed census tracts were the basis for determining eligibility for Opportunity Zones. The nominated census tract needed to have an individual poverty rate of at least 20 percent or median family income up to 80 percent of the area median in order to qualify. The census tract established as an Opportunity Zone in Franklin County is shown in **Figure 8**, which comprises portions of land within City of Pasco incorporation limits, and some acreage in unincorporated Franklin County, including a portion of the East Foster Wells Road LAMIRD.

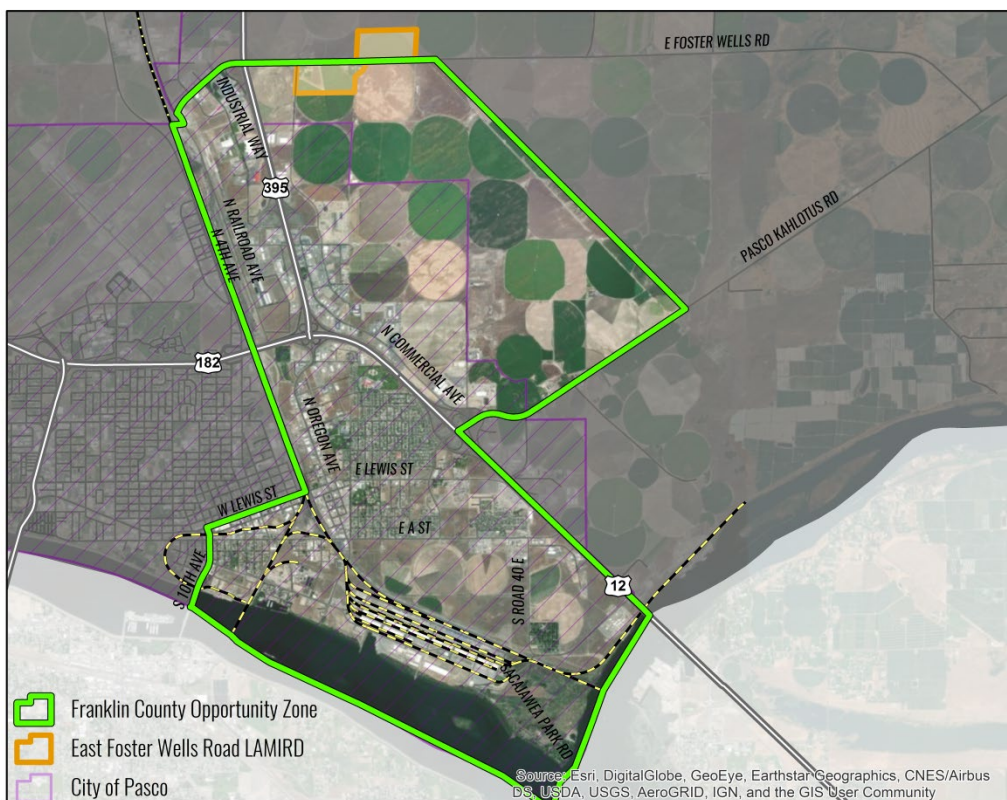


Figure 8: Opportunity Zone in Franklin County

Program implementation is through the IRS. Despite mixed evidence that the program improves outcomes for residents or local jurisdictions designated as Opportunity Zones relative to similar census tracts that are not designated,¹⁷ the program was renewed in 2025 under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. States are currently in the process of nominating census tracts for inclusion in Opportunity Zones 2.0 (OZ 2.0), the tax benefits of which will become permanent, with ten year cycles for designation.

For OZ 2.0, the definition of “low income community” has been tightened to less than 70 percent of AMI, or a poverty rate of over 20 percent. Results from OZ 1.0 showed that up to 95 percent of investments were made in urban zones, and approximately 75 percent was invested in real estate, primarily multifamily housing.¹⁸ To combat urban preference, more emphasis is being placed on rural census tracts for inclusion in OZ 2.0. In Franklin County there are 11

¹⁷ Research from the Tax Policy Center, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Tax Analysis, and the Economic Innovation Group.

¹⁸ Housing Solutions Lab [Accessed at <https://www.localhousingsolutions.org/housing-policy-library/opportunity-zones/>], and Tax Policy Center [Accessed at <https://taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-are-opportunity-zones-and-how-do-they-work>]

eligible census tracts, 10 of which are urban and clustered in and around Pasco.¹⁹ There is one rural tract (census tract 208.01), in the northwest corner of the county containing Basin City. Final designations will be made by January of 2027.

Energy Related Enterprises

One of the basic industries of the area involves energy research and development on the Hanford Reservation. Both nuclear power and research contribute to the economic well-being of the area and also the economic and strategic health of the nation. Providing support for continued growth in research, development, and energy production as it relates to the well-being of the bi-county area is very important.

In 2027 a new solar energy farm will begin producing energy near Connell.

In the future, the county could benefit from gauging interest and prospects in new renewable energy projects and pursuits.

Tourism

Franklin County has seen an increase in tourism spending for accommodations since the restrictions imposed during COVID 19 in 2020 were lifted (Figure 9).

Tourism assets include the multi-use HAPO Center facility (formerly known as the Trade, Recreation, and Agricultural Center, or TRAC) and associated support infrastructure such as hotels, retail services, sport fields, and RV parks. Natural areas in Franklin County such as the Hanford Reach National Monument, Juniper Dunes Wilderness area, and Palouse Falls, the designated state waterfall, also offer value as major attractions. In particular, recreation opportunities along the Snake and Columbia Rivers include boating, water skiing, kayaking and paddleboarding, fishing and other related activities.

The Sacajawea State Park is located in Pasco, situated at the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers. The site commemorates the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which camped there in October 1805. The interpretive center and historical exhibits draw visitors interested in early western exploration and Native American history.

Outdoor recreation pursuits also include hunting and wildlife viewing. The county's landscapes support waterfowl hunting, upland bird hunting and birdwatching. These activities are particularly popular during fall and winter migration seasons.

Juniper Dunes

The Juniper Dunes Wilderness is one of Franklin County's most unique outdoor destinations. It contains Washington's largest area of protected sand dunes. Visitors can enjoy hiking, nature photography, backcountry recreation and exploration of the unique desert landscape.

¹⁹ Washington State Department of Commerce, 2026 [Accessed at <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/035ad15299ae4a25ac7585d4d23ec309/page/All-Census-Tracts>]

Many visitors are also attracted to many of the 200 or so wineries that are located within a one-hour drive. Other agricultural-related pastimes and attractions include farmers markets, food festivals and events related to seasonal harvests, all made possible because of the region's vineyards, orchards, and other irrigated farmland.

Enthusiasts of the area's geological assets are interested in the local basalt formations, viewing the evidence of Ice Age flooding, ancient river terraces and sand dune systems. After all, Franklin County is poised within the Columbia Basin which is one of North America's most geologically significant landscapes.

These emerging industries will expand the local economy and provide increased economic diversity. Retail sales on accommodations have increased by 56 percent since 2019, and have increased at a larger rate than the state since 2004.

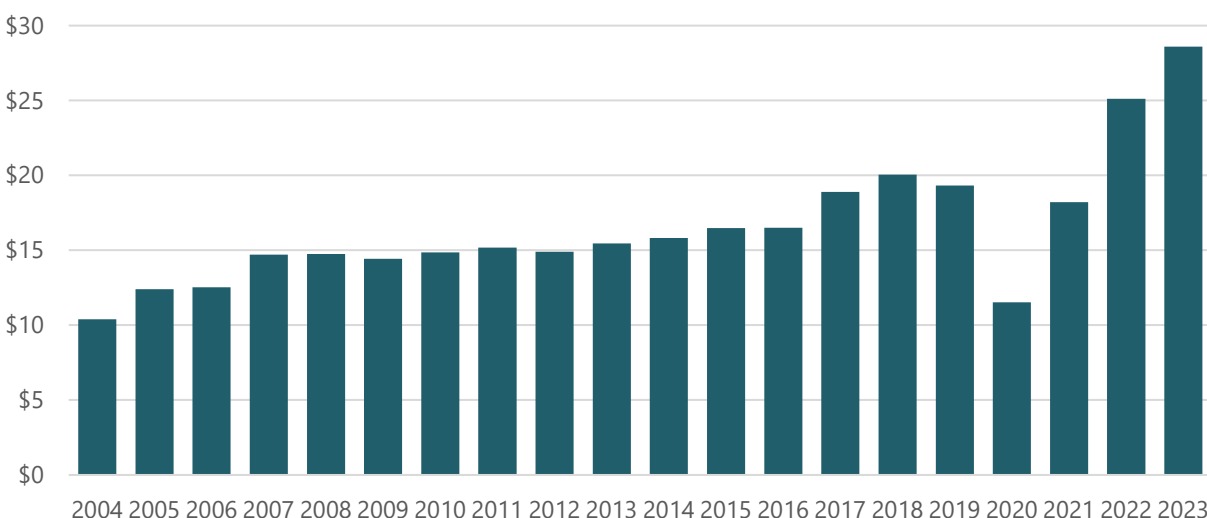


Figure 9: Accommodation Retail Sales (in millions) -Franklin County

Source: Washington State DOR: Quarterly Business Review, via Benton-Franklin Trends

Expansion

Quality of life factors and relatively low cost-of-living make Franklin County an attractive area for economic expansion. Housing within the County continues to be generally more affordable compared with other areas in the state. Franklin County is the third youngest county in the state. If these young people can be retained and given the skills necessary to succeed, the county could see a labor pool that will provide a competitive advantage as it seeks to expand.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The County is served by two Port Districts, the Port of Pasco and the Port of Kahlottus. The two ports, and the Tri-City Development Council, "TRIDEC," are important to Franklin County for their business recruitment and retention programs.

Port of Pasco

The Port of Pasco focuses on water, rail, and air transportation to support local economic development and business activities and functions. The Port of Pasco actively markets the region to attract new businesses and support existing ones. The Port of Pasco also develops properties and then sells or leases the properties to the private sector, promoting local investment and job creation.

TRIDEC

TRIDEC promotes the Tri-Cities region throughout the Pacific Northwest and beyond. TRIDEC's target sectors include the food business and agribusiness industry; the energy industry; and the logistics, warehouse and distribution industry. TRIDEC provides site location services, and produces key events related to entrepreneurship and local economic trends.

Port of Kahlottus

The Port of Kahlottus is one of the smallest port districts in the state and does not have a port manager or employees. Two leased grain facilities on the Snake River provide the revenue for the Port, which is governed by a three-member Board of Commissioners.