

Chapter 4: Housing and Neighborhoods

Introduction

This chapter considers the existing characteristics of Orange's housing and neighborhoods, including affordability and elderly housing, and makes recommendations on how to balance the preservation of existing residential neighborhoods while addressing the community's evolving housing needs.

The primary datasets used in the analysis are the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates and the 2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Typically, decennial census data is more reliable than ACS data due to its larger sample size and would be utilized for this report. However, the quality of the 2020 Decennial Census data was affected by the pandemic, so the 2021 ACS data is considered a more reliable source for the housing trends analyzed in this chapter.¹

Almost all of Orange is zoned as single-family residential and relies on septic. Sufficient land area is necessary for septic to work in much of the town. Figure 1 illustrates the areas zoned for single-family uses as well as existing multifamily and senior housing developments. The multifamily developments shown in Figure 1 are primarily located within sewered areas. This aligns with the Plan for Connecticut, which encourages municipalities to "redevelop and revitalize regional centers and areas with existing or currently planned physical infrastructure." The impact of sewer infrastructure is described in further detail in Chapter 8: Infrastructure.

Additionally, in 2020, the State of Connecticut published the 2020-24 Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development in accordance with Section 8-37t of the Connecticut General Statutes and 24 CFR Part 91. The following overarching goals are established in the 2020-24 Consolidated Plan:

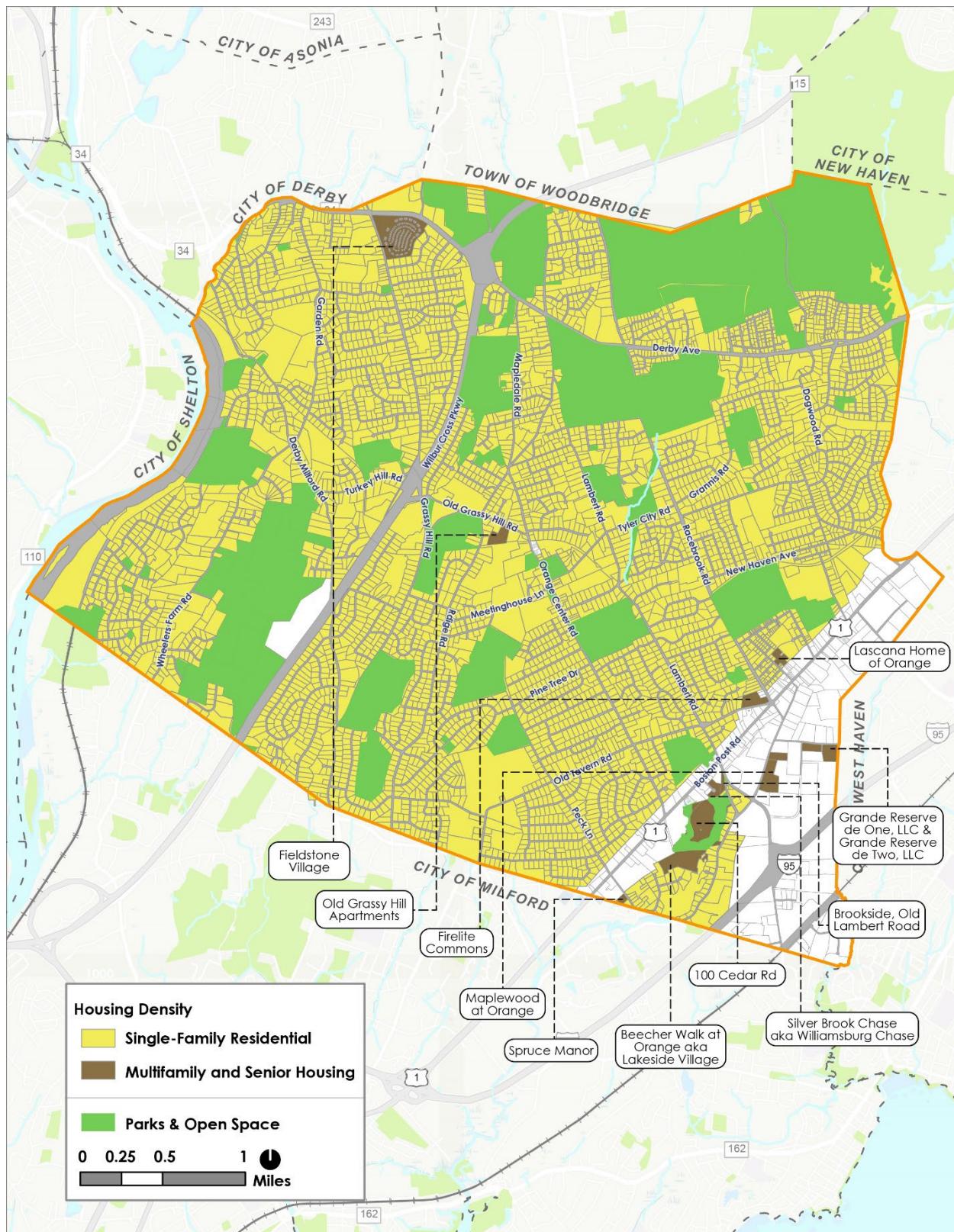
- Work to ensure decent housing is available to all.
- Work to ensure that all of the state's residents live in a suitable living environment.
- Work to ensure that all of the state's residents have access to economic opportunities.

¹ It should be considered that 2021 data may not include some of the Town's most recent residential developments.

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Figure 1: Types of Housing

Source: Esri, Town of Orange, BFJ Planning

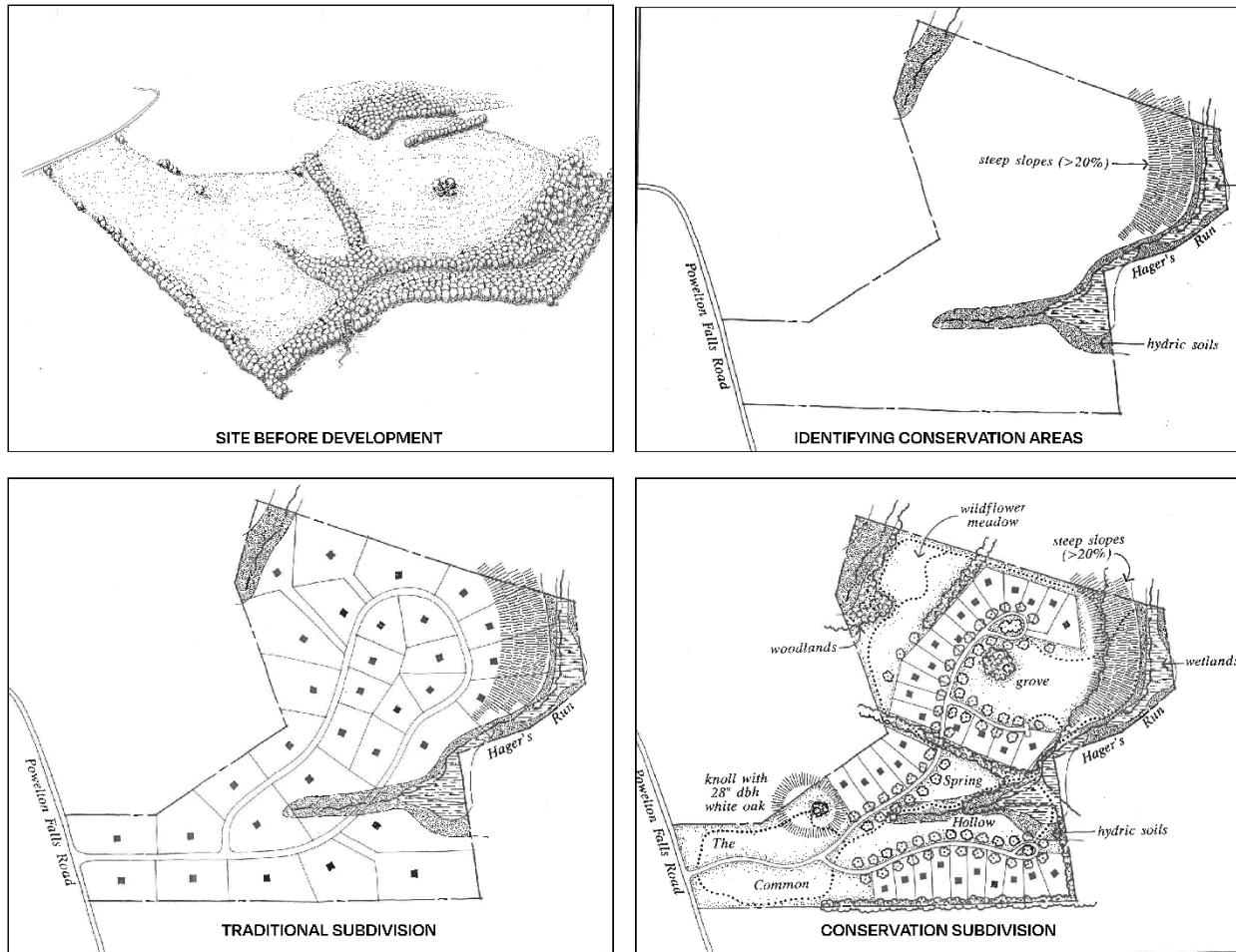


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Figure 2 illustrates an example of a conservation or “cluster” development. The Town of Orange could encourage conservation subdivisions as a strategy to maintain existing housing density while preserving open space. The “traditional subdivision” shown in Figure 2 consists of larger lots, leaving little land for conservation. A conservation subdivision, however, reduces lot sizes to maximize preservation of open space. Conservation subdivisions do not increase the overall density of a subdivision but rather use smaller lot sizes to allow for larger conservation areas. One example in Orange is the RES zone. This zone requires 60,000 square feet of land area per single-family home. In a conservation subdivision, the same number of homes could be built on 40,000 square foot lots, saving a third of the land for open space.

Figure 2: Traditional versus Conservation Subdivisions

Source: Rural by Design, Randall Arendt

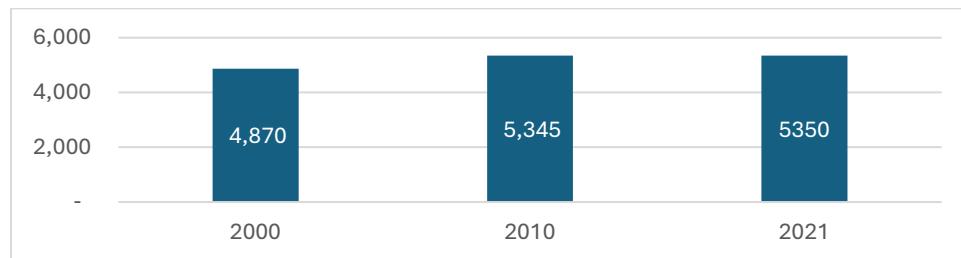


Housing Stock and Development

Orange is home to 5,350 housing units. The Town's total housing stock grew by 9.86% over the last 20 years (2000 – 2021). However, growth between 2010 and 2021 was just 0.09%, suggesting that new housing construction has slowed in recent years.

Chart 1: Total Housing Units, 2000 – 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census (2000 and 2010), 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates



Of the Town's 5,350 housing units, 3.4% are vacant – a 2.5% drop since 2010, similar to the Countywide decrease of 2.2% (see Chart 2). Most vacant units are rentals, with a rental vacancy rate of 8%, significantly higher than the homeowner vacancy rate of 0.3% (see Chart 3). This low homeowner vacancy rate is indicative of a competitive housing market.

Chart 2: Housing Vacancy, New Haven County, Orange, 2010 – 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010 and 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

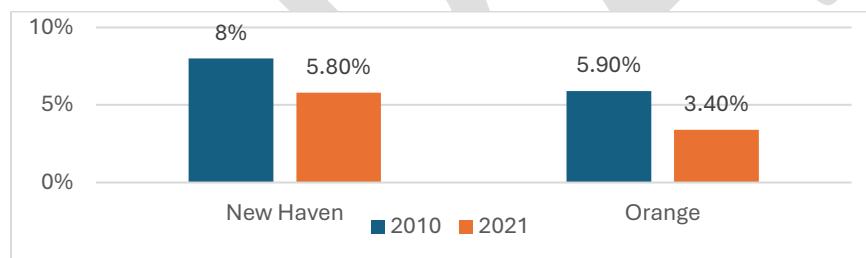
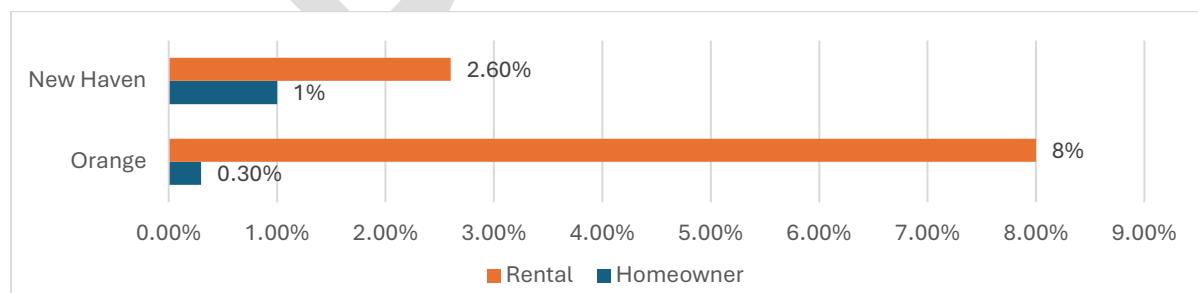


Chart 3: Housing Vacancy by Tenure, New Haven County, Orange, 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

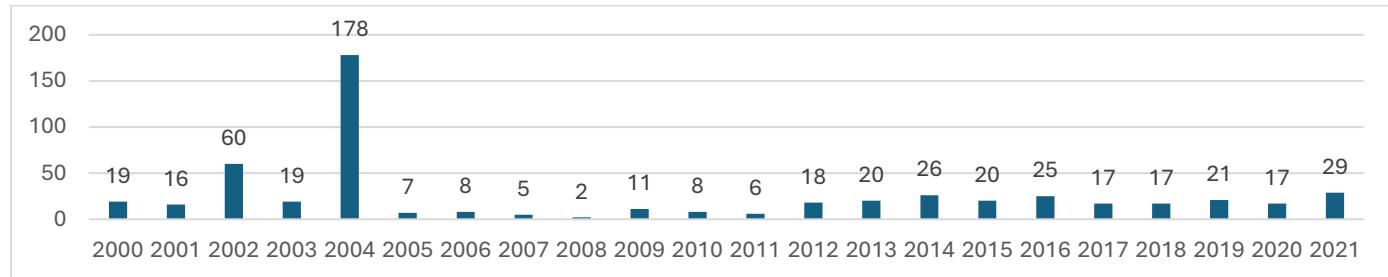


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Between 2000 and 2021, Orange issued 549 housing permits for single-family, two-family, and multi-family units, with a median of 17.5 permits per year. One notable exception is 2004, where the Town issued 178 building permits. This spike was primarily due to the approval of a permit for Grand Reserve Orange, a 168-unit luxury multi-family apartment community on Prindle Hill Road.

Chart 4: Housing Permit Data, 1990 - 2023

Source: CT DECD (Data in years prior to 2018 is Census data. 2018 to present is DECD survey data.)



Grand Reserve Orange Apartments

Source: Grand Reserve Orange

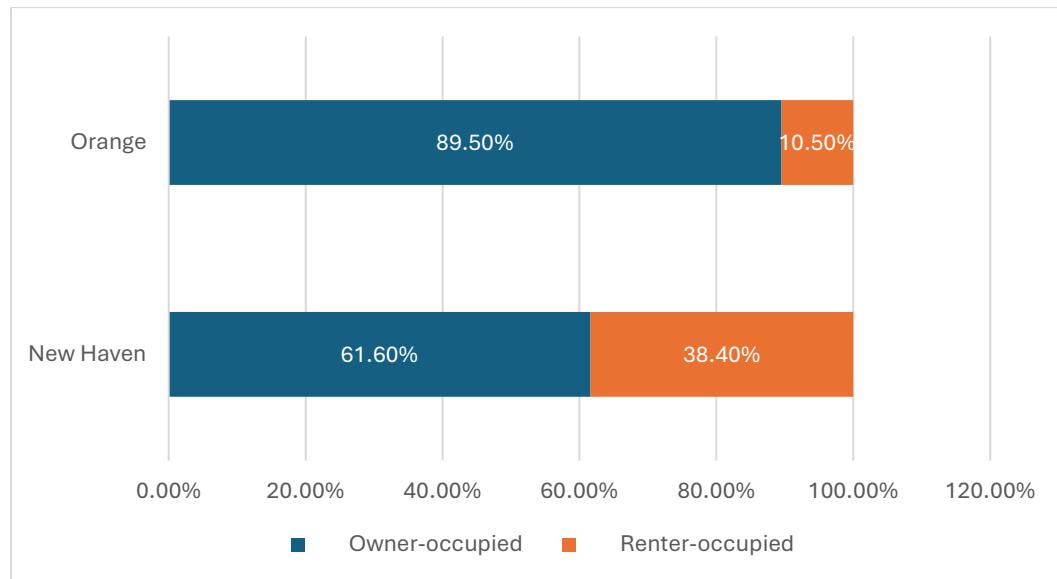


Housing Types

Most of Orange's housing units are owner-occupied (89.5%). Renter occupancy in Orange (10.5%) is much less than that of New Haven County (38.4%), indicative of Orange's suburban character.

Chart 5: Housing Occupancy by Tenure, New Haven, Orange, 2021

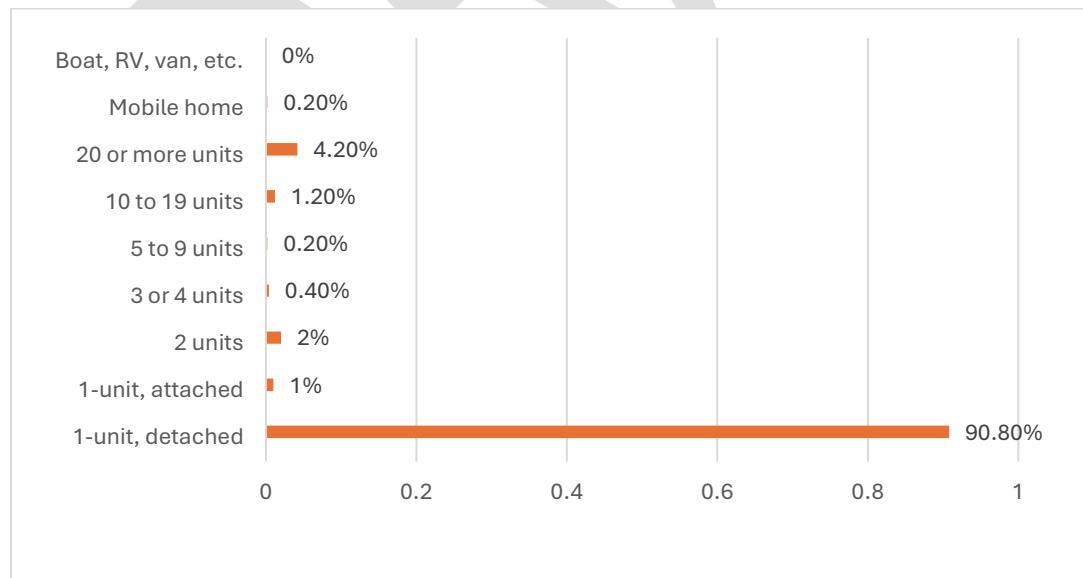
Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates



Most Orange residents live in detached, single-family homes (90.8%) (see Chart 6). Those in housing structures other than single-family homes tend to live in apartment buildings.

Chart 6: Orange Housing Stock, 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates

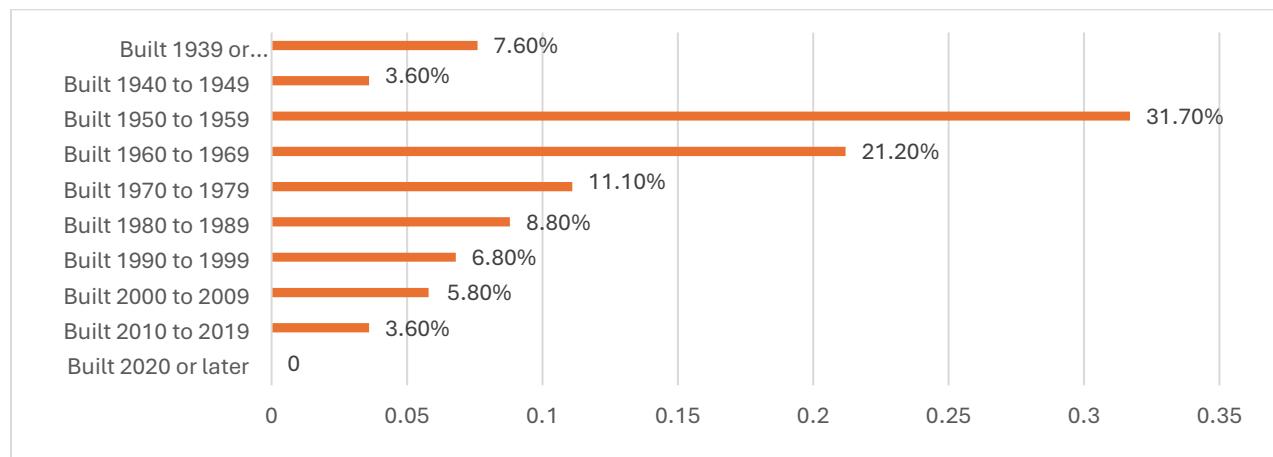


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Approximately half of Orange's housing stock was built between 1950 – 1969. This growth in housing construction is consistent with the national “Baby Boom” trend, which saw high birth rates from 1946 – 1964. Housing units built between 2000 and 2021 represent only 9.4% of the Town's total housing stock.

Chart 7: Orange Year Structure Built, 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates



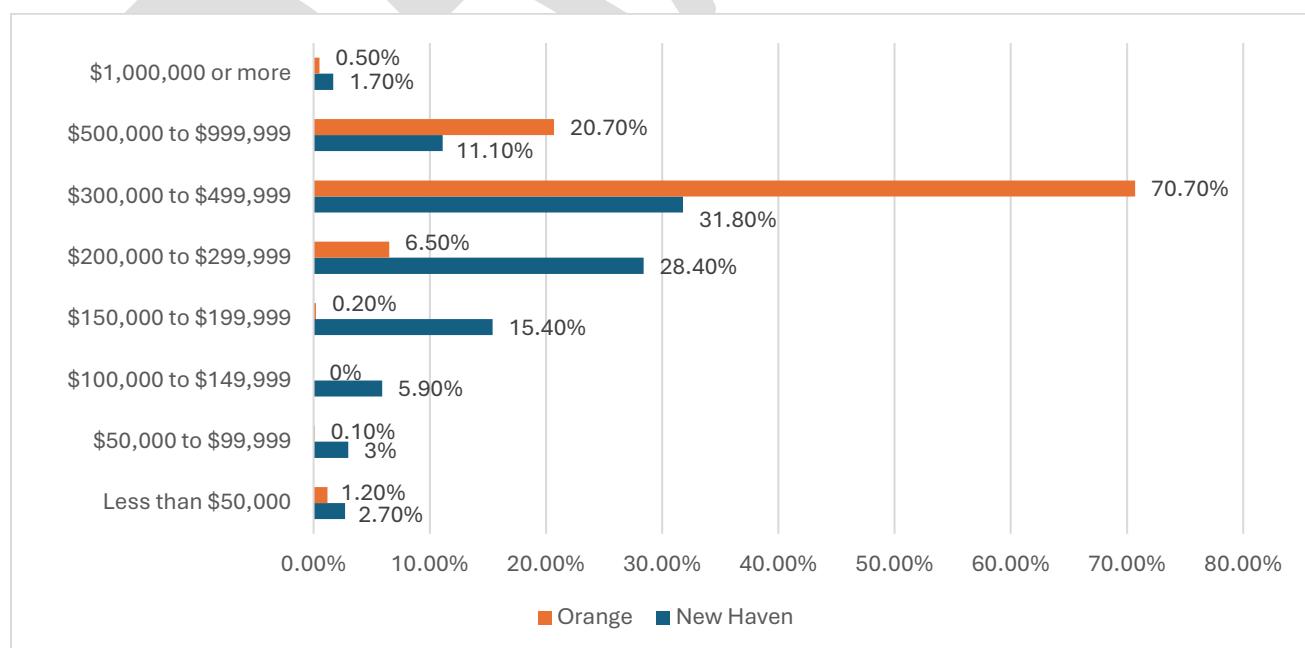
Housing Value and Affordability

Housing Value

The median housing value in Orange is \$406,100, compared to the Countywide median of \$282,200. Approximately 71% of homes in Orange are valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999.

Chart 8: Housing Value, New Haven County, Orange, 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates



Affordability of Housing

Housing cost burden is measured by the percentage of income a household spends on housing costs (i.e., rent, mortgage). Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are considered housing cost-burdened. Approximately 58% of renters in Orange spend more than 30% of their income on rent, a 10.4% decrease from 2010 (see Chart 9). Similarly, the number of housing cost-burdened homeowners decreased since 2010: 34.2% were housing cost-burdened in 2010 compared to 30.3% in 2021 (see Chart 10).

Chart 9: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income, Orange, 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates

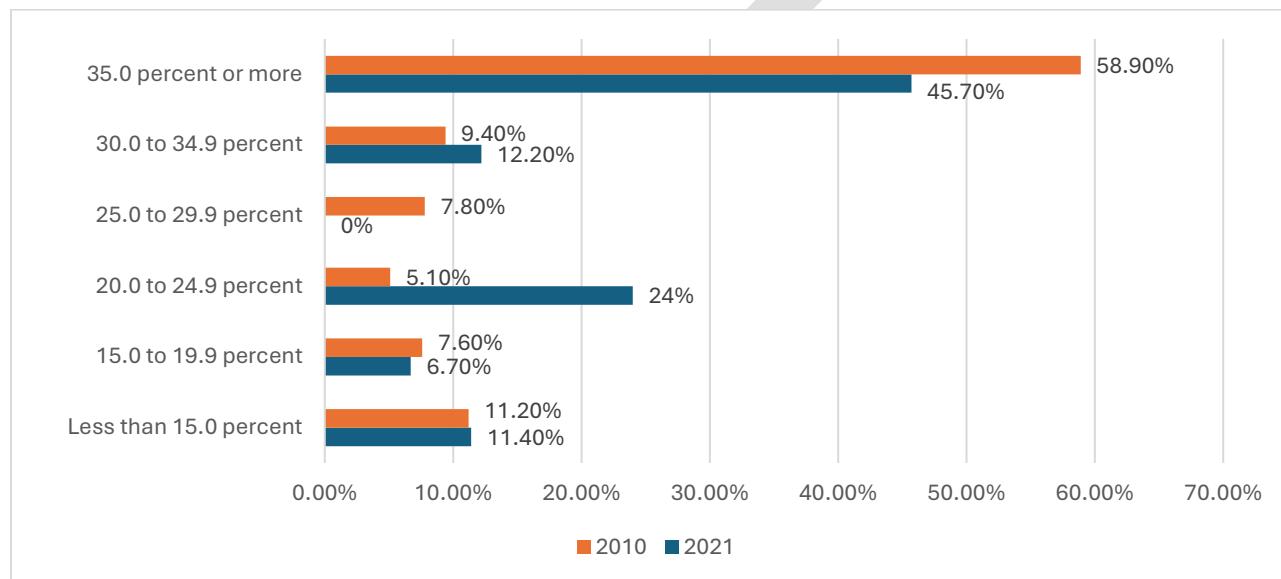
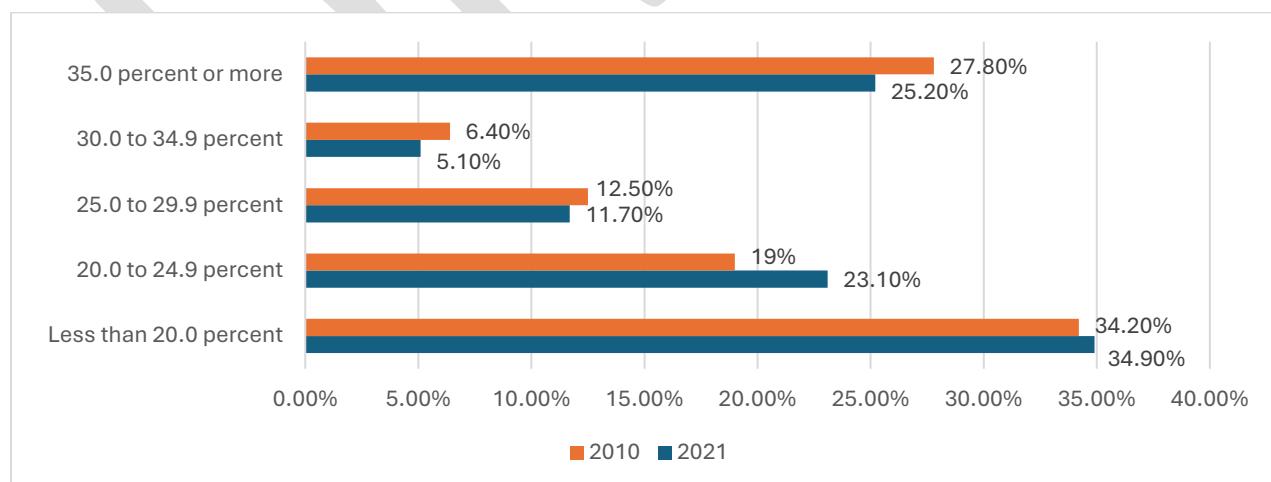


Chart 10: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income²

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates



² Calculated for housing units with a mortgage.

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As of 2021, Orange has 72 government subsidized units, accounting for 1.35% of total housing. The majority fall under a variety of government programs (“2021 Government Assisted”), while State / Federal Homeownership programs and subsidized rentals total 10 each. The 46 government assisted units are Lascana Homes, an 100% affordable housing development on Smith Farm Road.

Table 1: Government Assisted Units by Program Type

Source: CT DOH, Affordable Housing Appeals List, 2021

	2021 Total Housing Units	2021 Government Assisted	2021 Tenant Rental Assistance	2021 Single Family CHFA / USDA Mortgages	2021 Deed Restricted Units	2021 Total Assisted Units	2021 Percent Affordable
Orange	5,350	46	10	10	6	72	1.35%

Elderly Housing

The senior population (65+) represents 23% of Orange’s population and 35% of householders. Over the last decade, Orange has taken steps to support the Town’s aging population. The Town adopted the Senior Living District (SLD) in 2018, a zoning district created to provide flexible housing arrangements for seniors. Charter Senior Living, Errera Community Care Center, and Maplewood are assisted living and rehabilitation care facilities located in the SLD.

Chart 11: Tenure by Age of Householder, Orange, 2021

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates



Affordable Housing Plan (2022)

Orange adopted an Affordable Housing Plan in 2022 in accordance with Connecticut General Statute 8-30j. The plan sets forth goals and strategies to achieve the State Department of Housing's (DOH) requirement that at least 10% of the housing stock be designated as affordable. Affordable housing is defined as costing a household no more than 30% of their income. The plan's goals emphasize preserving the existing affordable housing stock, addressing housing gaps, providing housing for target populations like seniors, and exploring housing options in areas well-served by transportation and community infrastructure, especially sewered areas.

In September 2024, the Town of Orange was granted a Certificate of Affordable Housing Completion, which expires in September 2028. The affordable housing units from following developments were included as part of the Affordable Housing Completion calculation:

- Silver Brook Estates- 100 Red cedar Road
- Silver Brook Chase, LLC- Silver Brook Road
- Spruce Manor- 256 Peck Lane and 0 Peck Lane
- Avalon Hill aka Grand Reserve Orange- 45-74 Prindle Hill Road
- Beecher Walk at Orange- S. Lambert Rd
- Lascana Home of Orange CT Limited Partnership- 329 Smith Farm Road
- Brookside Condominiums- Old Lambert Road
- Former Military Housing- Smith Farm Road and Sybil Street

Recommendations

4.1 Preserve existing residential neighborhoods.

4.1.1. *Preserve established residential neighborhoods' scale and character.*

4.2 Orange should continue to support a diverse housing stock to accommodate its population's evolving housing needs.

4.2.1 *Explore opportunities to streamline approvals and permitting processes for housing rehabilitation.*

4.2.2 *Review and update accessory dwelling unit regulations and Planned Development Regulations.*

4.2.3 *Consider adopting conservation subdivision regulations.*

4.3 Continue to promote opportunities for affordable housing.

4.3.1 *Support private developers who seek Low Income Housing Tax Credits to provide some affordable units in market rate developments.*

4.3.2 *Pursue state/federal funding programs to support the provision of affordable housing stock.*

4.3.3 *Require that affordable units be deed-restricted in perpetuity where appropriate.*