

Chapter 5.0 HOUSING - DRAFT

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Section 5.1: Introduction

Housing stands as a cornerstone of this Comprehensive Plan, shaping the daily lives of every Cranston resident. The intricate relationship between a municipality's demographic makeup and its housing characteristics is undeniable: the nature of the housing stock available shapes who is drawn to live within its borders and who can realistically afford to do so. Conversely, prevailing demographics and economic conditions directly influence housing demand and the market's capacity to respond. The City of Cranston's population and housing dynamics reflect this interconnectedness, with the long-term population shifts, alongside pertinent local, state, and federal policies, playing a crucial role in shaping its residential landscape. This analysis examines demographic trends, housing stock characteristics, affordability, and current housing programs and initiatives. This element explores how Cranston's population, economy, and historical context have shaped its residential landscape and outlines a path forward.

5.1.1 Housing Goals

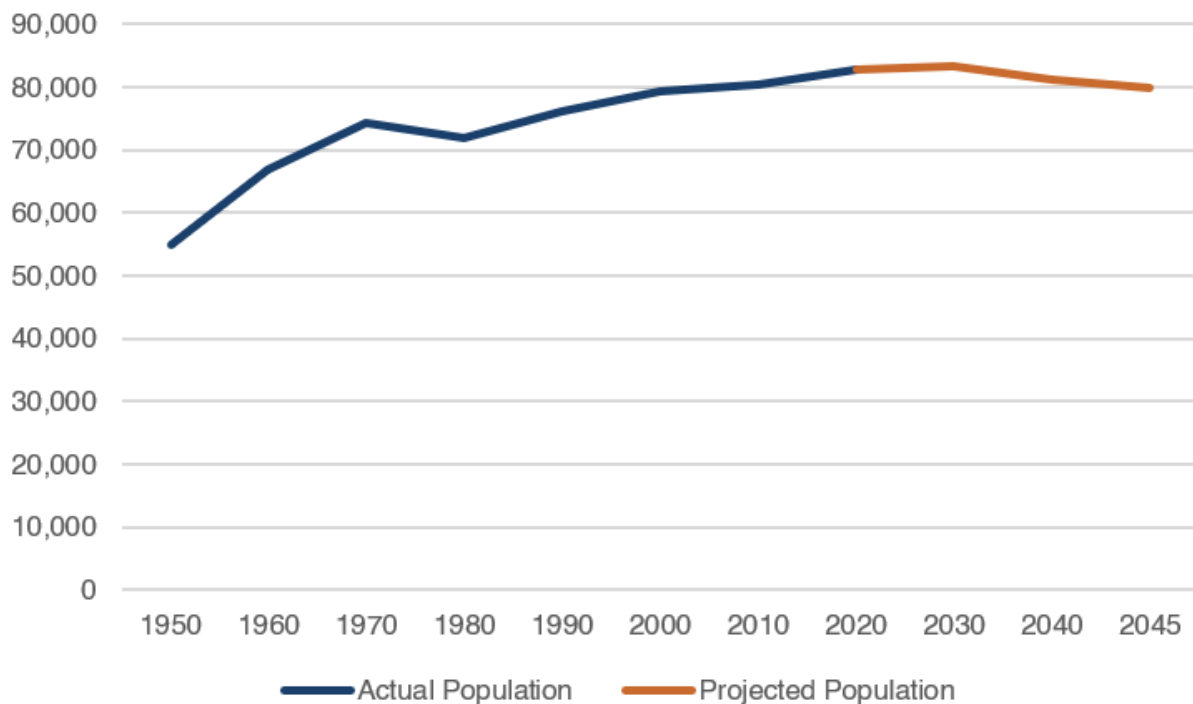
1. Cranston's housing stock is safe, well maintained, and healthy.
2. Cranston maintains its predominantly suburban character and preserves the density of its existing neighborhoods.
3. Cranston provides a mixture of distinct neighborhoods.
4. Cranston is an age-friendly community. Young people who grow up in Cranston will be able to afford to live in Cranston and older adults will have options for aging in place or downsizing within the city.
5. All household types and income levels in the Cranston community will be able to find safe housing that fits within their household budget.
6. Cranston makes progress towards the state goal of 10% of housing units being affordable to low- and moderate-income households by 2030, by permitting 1,367 housing units, of which 205 will be LMI housing units. By 2046, the City will permit 2800 market-rate housing units of which 1,390 LMIH will be units.
7. Cranston will maintain at least 15% of its occupied rental units as affordable to low and moderate income households.
8. The variety of housing options and neighborhoods in Cranston support economic growth and community vitality.
9. Residential development conserves natural resources and makes efficient use of infrastructure investments.

Section 5.2: Existing Conditions

5.2.1 Demographics and Population Trends

Population dynamics provide strong influence on housing demand and are an important feature to observe. According to the 2020 Census, the City of Cranston had a population of 82,823, a modest but consistent growth from the 2010 Census population of 80,387. Based on Rhode Island’s demographic profile, the population is expected to level off by 2030. Analysis by the Rhode Island Department of Statewide Planning finds that Cranston can expect to be home to approximately 79,944 residents in 2046, although the composition of households will continue to shift.

Figure 5.1. Cranston Population and Projections to 2046.



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. Historical data retrieved from the U.S. Decennial Census. Projections by RI Division of Statewide Planning.

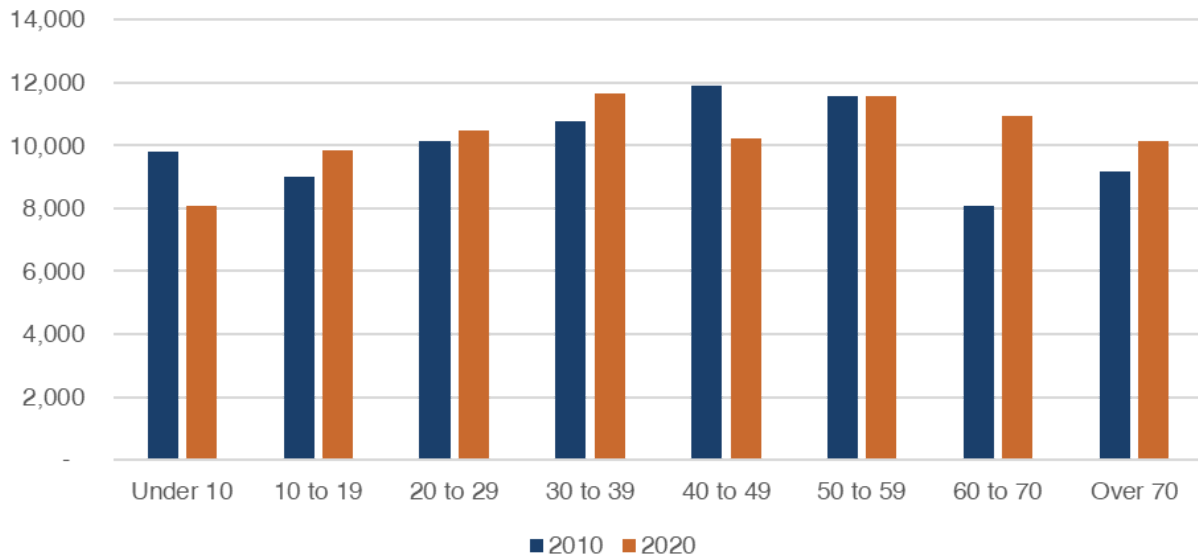
Age Profile

Cranston's population skews older than the national average. Residents aged 65 and older represent 16.8% of the city's population, while those aged 30 and younger represent 33.8%—roughly 5% below their share of the national population. This age distribution signals an aging community, which will significantly shape housing needs over the next 20 years.

National demographic trends are reflected locally. Younger adults are increasingly likely to live with roommates or parents rather than forming new households—a trend attributed to high

housing costs, longer years of education, and later age of first marriage. Simultaneously, older adults are maintaining independent households into advanced age rather than moving to care facilities or living with family.

Figure 5.2. Cranston Population Profile by Age, 2010 and 2020.



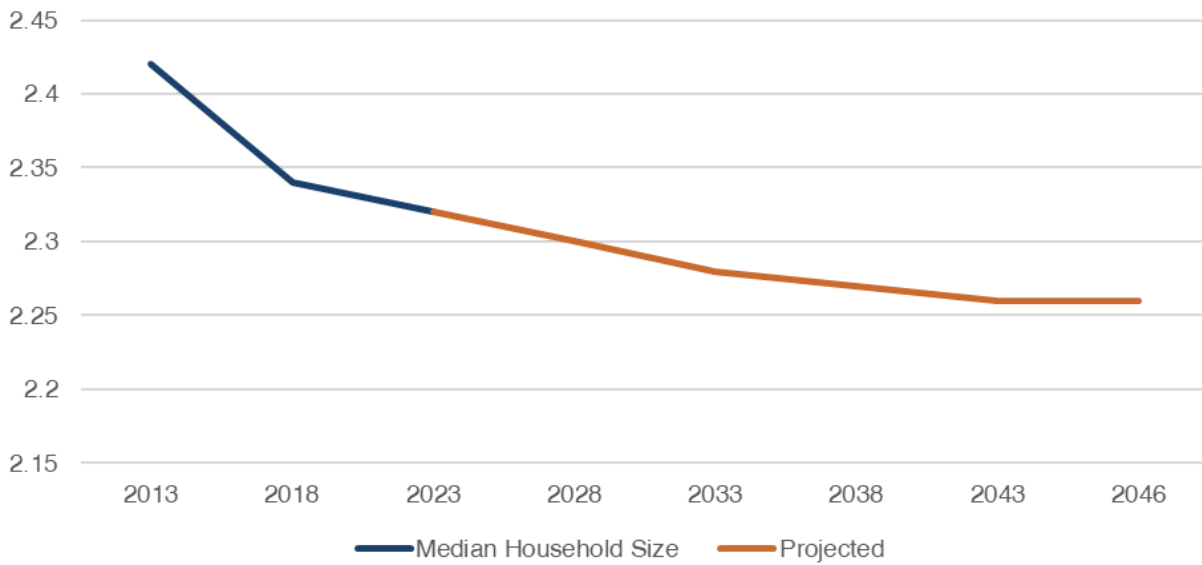
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. 2010 and 2020 Census.

Household Size and Composition

The median household size in Cranston is 2.32 people per household and the median household income is \$90,206. Household size has been trending downward with the aging population, meaning demand for housing units is growing faster than overall population—a trend projected to continue through 2046.

The Statewide Planning population projections for each municipality assume each municipality retains an equal share of the state population. Cranston is designated a "strategic growth" municipality in the state's Housing 2030 plan because it functions as a job center with above-average transit options and employment access. As a result, Cranston may experience less population decline than communities with fewer jobs and fewer working-age residents.

Figure 5.3. Cranston Household Size 2013-2023 and Projection 2023-2046.

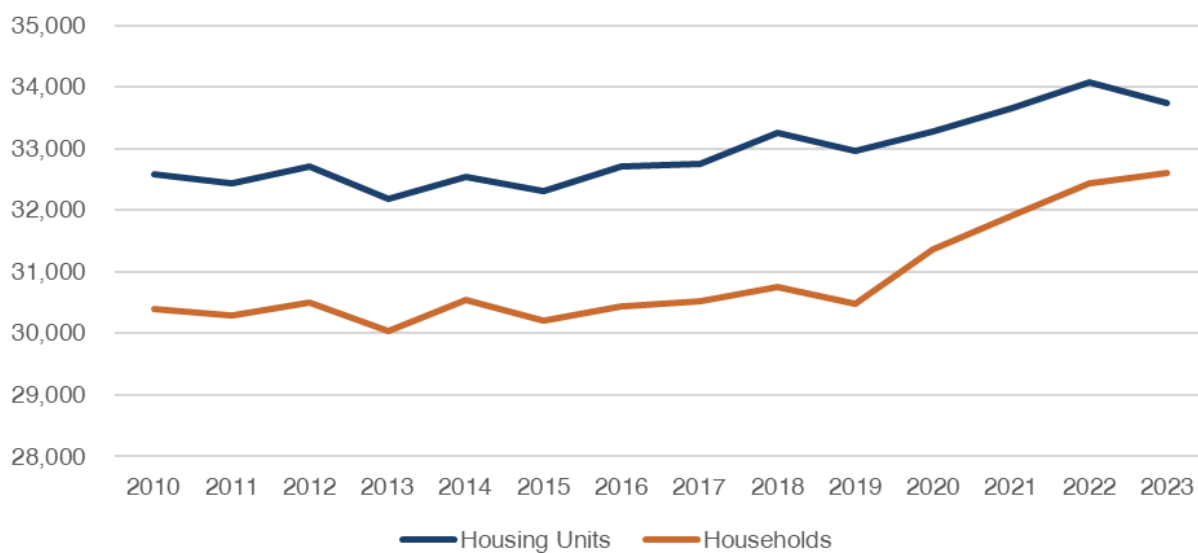


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Projections by Cranston Planning Department.

5.2.2 Housing Stock Characteristics

The 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) reported 33,834 housing units in the City of Cranston. Of these units, 1,239 were reported as vacant, reflecting a tight housing market, with a homeownership vacancy rate of 0.2% and a rental vacancy rate of 1.6%. According to Housing 2030, a healthy vacant rate for homeownership would be around 1.5%, while a healthy rental vacancy rate would be around 6%.

Figure 5.4. Growth in Households and Housing Units 2010-2023.

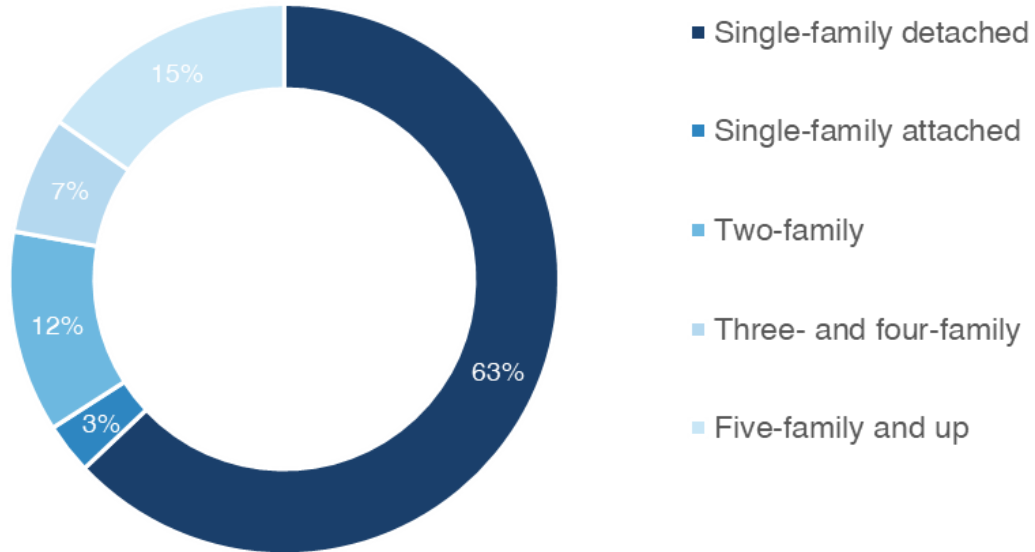


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 5 year data,

Housing Types

The housing stock in Cranston is predominantly composed of single-family homes. Specifically, 21,152 units, or 62% of the total housing stock, are single-family detached (1-unit detached). There are 1,006 single-family attached (1-unit attached) units, 4,002 two-unit structures, and 2,338 three or four-unit structures. Additionally, 5,163 units, representing 15% of the total housing stock, are in structures with five or more units.

Figure 5.5. Housing Unit Types in Cranston as of 2023.

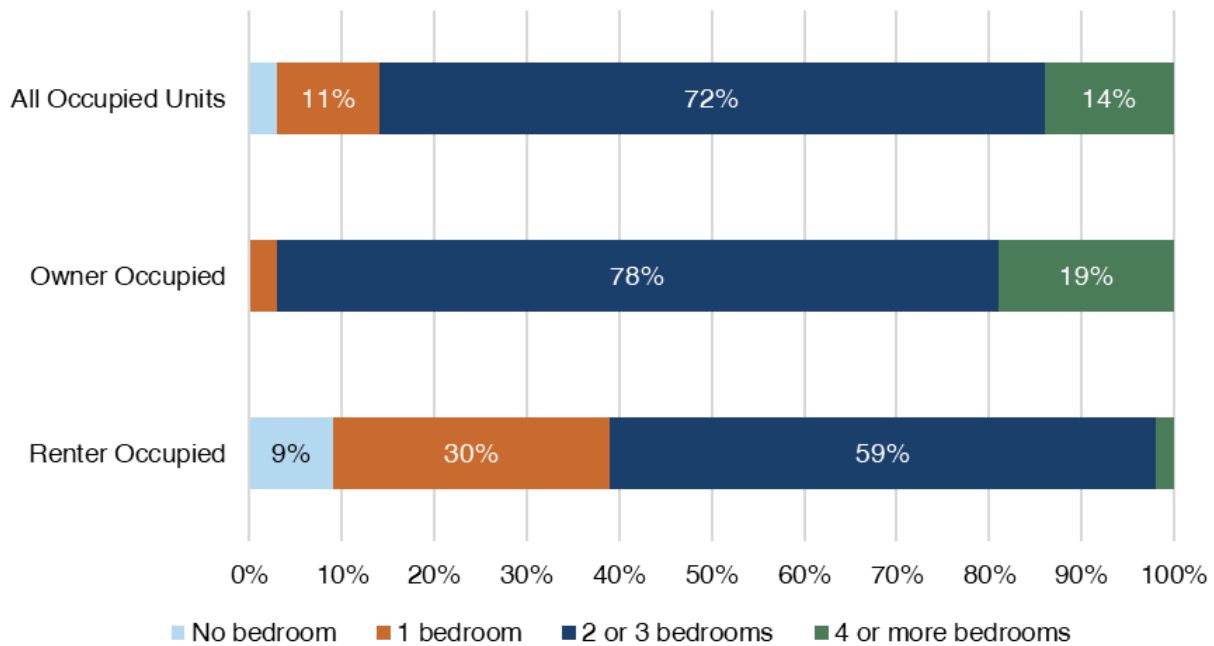


Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Housing Unit Types. By definition, this excludes group quarters such as nursing homes.

Bedroom Distribution

Among renter-occupied units, 9% have no bedroom, 30% have one bedroom, 59% have two or three bedrooms, and 2% have four or more. Among owner-occupied units, 78% have two or three bedrooms and 19% have four or more. Across all occupied units, 72% have two or three bedrooms and 14% have four or more.

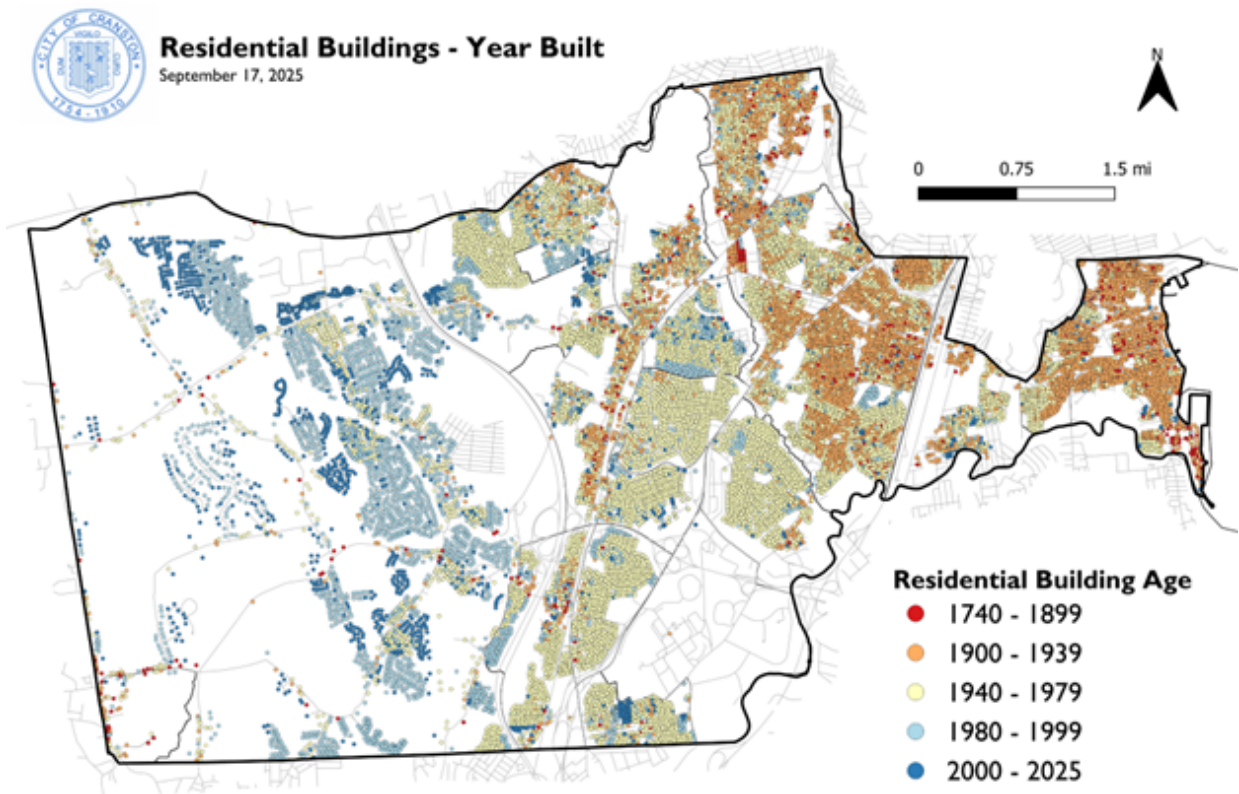
Figure 5.6. Occupied Housing Units in Cranston by Number of Bedrooms, 2024.



Age of Housing Stock

A significant portion—78%—of Cranston's housing stock was built before 1980, indicating a mature housing inventory. This age profile has two important implications: vigilance around lead abatement (lead paint was banned in 1978), and reduced energy efficiency, which raises utility costs for occupants. Only 2,391 units, or 7%, have been built since 2000. Another 4,912 units, or 15%, were constructed between 1980 and 1999. The largest segment, 16,362 units or 49%, was built between 1940 and 1979. Meanwhile, 10,071 units, or 30%, were built before 1940. The median age of housing units is 68 years old.

Figure 5.7. Residential Buildings by Year Built.



Source: 2025. City of Cranston. Tax Assessor. Residential buildings by year built.

Tenure

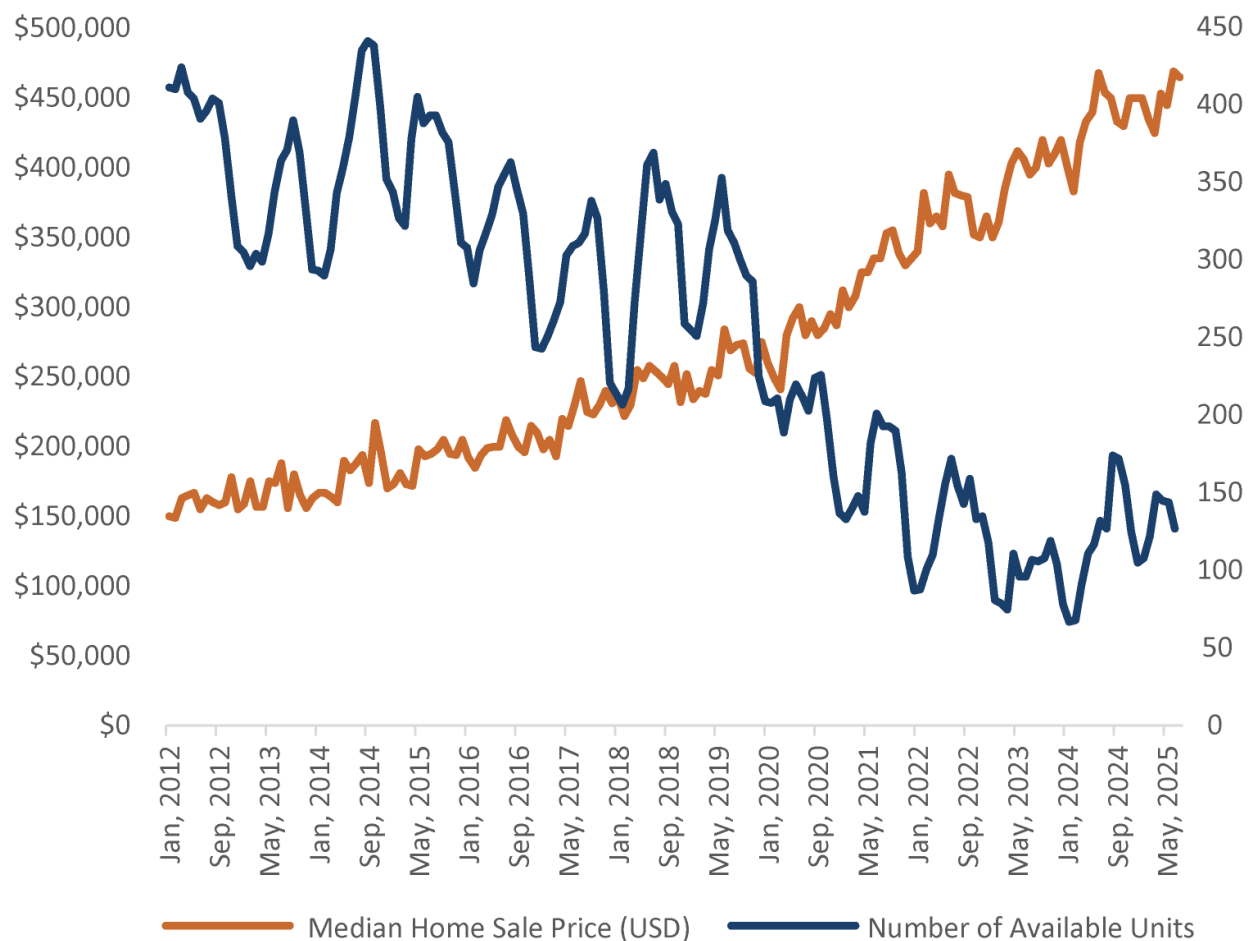
Regarding tenure, 65% of units are owner-occupied, while 35% are renter-occupied. This is near the Rhode Island average, with relatively more owners, and slightly fewer renters than the state as a whole.

Section 5.2.3 Housing Affordability

Cranston is a city of homes in an economy where houses are increasingly out of reach for people working to buy a first home. While Cranston’s population growth has been slow and steady, the picture for housing affordability has moved into unfamiliar territory where a median income family can no longer afford to buy a home. The median single-family home in Cranston was valued at \$405,000, which would require a monthly housing payment of \$3,579. This is while the median household income in Cranston is \$90,206, meaning they would have to spend 48% of their income on housing. The median two-bedroom rent stood at \$2,108. As a result of housing costs being higher than income, a number of households in Cranston are cost-burdened—meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing, as recommended by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This includes 28% of owner households and a striking 49% of renter households.

Figure 5.8 illustrates the increase in median home sale price and the decline in available housing units on the market.

Figure 5.8 Home Sale Prices and Housing Vacancy in Cranston 2012-2025.



Source: Redfin.

Low- and Moderate-Income Housing

In an effort to address affordability, the state of Rhode Island tracks the number of housing units deed-restricted to be affordable to individuals with incomes below 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI), which includes roughly two-thirds of Cranston households (See Table 5.2). The State's housing plan, Housing 2030, encourages the construction of 1,367 additional market-rate housing units and 205 Low-to-Moderate Income Housing (LMIH) units in Cranston over the next 5 years, given that Cranston has above-average job concentration and robust public transit infrastructure. This document serves as a guide in determining our goals for the next 20 years and ensuring that they align with statewide efforts.

The City of Cranston has not yet attained the state-wide LMIH goal of 10% of its total housing stock being designated LMIH. This highlights a gap in the provision of housing accessible to low and moderate-income households. As of 2025, the city would need to have 1,283 more units to achieve this goal. As the housing stock grows, the number of LMIH units required will also grow.

Table 5.1. Low and Moderate Income Housing Units.

Total LMIH Units	Elderly	Family	Special Needs	LMIH as Percent of All Units
2,122	1,348	518	256	6.23%

Source: RI Housing. 2024 Low and Moderate Income Housing Chart

Table 5.2. 2026 Income Thresholds for LMIH by Number of People in Household

Percent of AMI	1 person	2 person	3 person	4 person	6 person	6 person
80%	\$62,800	\$71,800	\$80,750	\$89,700	\$96,900	\$104,100
100%	\$78,470	\$89,680	\$100,890	\$112,100	\$121,050	\$130,050
120%	\$94,200	\$107,640	\$121,080	\$134,520	\$145,320	\$156,120

Sources: RI Housing. 2026. FY2026 Rhode Island Income Limits for Low- and Moderate-Income Households. Providence--Fall River, RI-MA HMFA.

5.2.4 Current Housing Programs and Initiatives

Housing is a key determinant of health and economic stability for individuals and families. Healthy homes are: dry, clean, pest-free, ventilated, safe, contaminant-free, maintained, thermally-controlled, accessible, affordable, and disaster-prepared. Cranston employs two inspectors specialized in minimum housing standards to ensure compliance with the minimum housing standards of the City. While these standards are an important tool to ensure that housing is of acceptable quality, updates are necessary to align the City's standards with the 11 elements

of healthy homes. Given that 78% of Cranston’s housing stock was built before 1980, the enforcement of these standards—and especially the Lead Safe Homes provision—will remain important. According to the RI Executive Office of Housing, six percent (510 of 8,477) renter-occupied units built before 1980 have Lead Safe Certificates as of 2023. The Cranston Building Department was unable to provide data on progress on lead safety or other minimum housing standards.

Age Friendly Cranston

Under leadership from the Senior Services Department, Cranston has joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and is working to earn the Age-Friendly designation. Communities that promote the health, participation and security of older adults are described as “age-friendly.” The work focusing on mobility, active lifestyles, and housing affordability intersects with both the Housing and Municipal Services Planning elements, and is a key initiative to keep seniors living in their homes and community. A second initiative within Cranston to support seniors is the Village Common of Rhode Island: Edgewood Village. This is an organization that helps neighbors help neighbors within the neighborhood.

Community Development

The City of Cranston offers a range of housing assistance initiatives through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, designed to help income-eligible residents enhance their homes and achieve homeownership. For current homeowners, the Department of Community Development provides low-interest or interest-free loans to help with essential repairs and to correct code violations through the Housing Rehabilitation Loan program.

The Department of Community Development also supports first-time, income-eligible homebuyers in Cranston through two programs. The first is the Closing Cost Assistance Program, which provides a grant of up to \$3,000 to help cover closing fees, helping make homeownership more attainable to lower-income residents. Secondly, the Down Payment Assistance Program assists first-time homebuyers by matching 50% of the required down payment, up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Cranston Housing Authority

The Cranston Housing Authority (CHA), incorporated in 1961, has a mission to provide affordable decent, safe, and sanitary housing for low-income residents. CHA owns and operates 587 public housing apartments designated for elderly and disabled residents and 17 units in its public housing ownership program. In addition, the CHA administers a rental subsidy program consisting of 262 tenant-based vouchers and approximately 50 vouchers whose holders have relocated to Cranston through Section 8 portability. Although considered a “medium” size housing authority, these programs and activities make CHA one of Rhode Island’s larger housing authorities.

CHA’s operating and capital budgets are funded entirely by annual HUD allocations, rent receipts, and miscellaneous income generated from other sources. CHA does not receive state or municipal funds as a regular source of revenue but has applied for and been awarded state and federal grants to support specific projects. In accordance with its Cooperative Agreement, CHA

makes an annual Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the City of Cranston. This payment was more than \$150,000 in the past fiscal year.

CHA's public housing program provides subsidized housing for elderly and disabled residents at six locations. This housing includes Cranston's two most high-profile residential buildings: Arlington Manor, located at 50 Birch Street, a twelve-story high rise building with a total of one hundred twenty studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments and CHA's largest facility, Knightsville Manor, a thirteen-story high rise at 85 Briggs Street, composed of one hundred eighty-six studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments.

CHA's other public housing facilities include Randall Manor (75 Mathewson Street) with a total of eighty efficiency and one-bedroom apartments in three garden style residential buildings, plus a dedicated community building; Hall Manor (70 Warwick Avenue) with a total of seventy-nine efficiency and one-bedroom apartments in a six story low-rise building; Budlong Manor (100 Arthur Street) with seventy one efficiency and one-bedroom apartments in a two story building; and Jennings Manor (125 Harris Avenue) with fifty one one-bedroom apartments in a three story building. Pursuant to a HUD-approved Designated Housing Plan, CHA has been permitted to operate Budlong Manor and Jennings Manor as "elderly only" for residents aged sixty-two and over. This Plan expired in June of 2023 and CHA is seeking its renewal.

Finally, CHA promotes housing opportunities for low-income families through the continuing progress of its Homeownership Program, which includes seventeen units in single-family and two-family houses. Program participants are required to meet income criteria and demonstrate an ability to qualify for a mortgage loan through a subsidized program to purchase the property. A number of participants are moving closer to their individual home ownership goals, and several have succeeded in meeting program requirements in recent years.

In accordance with regularly updated rolling five year and twenty-year modernization and capital improvement plans, CHA makes consistent capital investment in its housing assets and equipment. CHA maintains a strong commitment to the long-term viability of its public housing facilities, while operating in a fiscally responsible manner with no long-term debt to ensure day-to-day operational stability and future availability of resources to support essential programs and services.

There are several privately-owned and operated subsidized housing facilities in the City of Cranston totaling over 800 LMIH units including Scituate Vista, Meshanticut Vista, D'Evan Manor, Harris House, and Riverbend Apartments. These facilities are neither operated as public housing nor are they affiliated with CHA, and each has its own criteria and procedure for admission.

Guaranteed Low and Moderate Income Housing Units

Throughout this Housing Element, we refer to the 10% Low- and Moderate-Income Housing (LMIH) goal as one indicator to watch. This metric is defined in RIGL Chapter 45-53. This goal is met through a combination of public housing, privately-operated subsidized apartment buildings, organizations serving special needs, housing vouchers, and deed-restricted affordable units within market-rate housing developments (listed in Attachment H-1). Moving forward, Cranston plans to meet the need for additional affordable units through private development that

is required and incentivized through density bonuses to include guaranteed affordable units through inclusionary zoning. Private developers utilizing Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and subsidies from state-issued bonds will continue to be critical to meeting this need.

5.2.5 Addressing Homelessness

As the cost of housing has escalated, more people struggle to maintain stable housing, and homelessness has increased. Homelessness is a complex issue requiring a multi-faceted and coordinated approach that involves government agencies, non-profit organizations, and the community. This chapter outlines the City's strategies to address and prevent homelessness, with a focus on creating a continuum of care that moves individuals and families from crisis to stable, permanent housing. The strategies are grounded in the principles of Housing First, which prioritizes providing immediate access to safe housing, and are designed to be integrated with broader community health and wellness initiatives.

CCAP (Community Action Program & Health Services) provides many of the services that are available to prevent homelessness in Cranston. Statewide, they serve approximately 44,000 individuals annually by providing many services, such as health, dental, behavioral services, social services, case management programs, youth programs, and Head Start.

The Cranston Police Department maintains a crisis intervention team that undergoes mental health management training and conflict de-escalation training. Alongside clinicians from Brown Health and CCAP representatives, this team works to provide aid to homeless people in need of medical attention and vital services.

State-operated Harrington Hall off Howard Avenue is the second largest shelter in the State of Rhode Island with 112 beds available for single men each night. Overall, there is limited shelter space that fails to address the demand that is seen in the city and state.

There aren't enough affordable housing units currently available or in development. When funding is available for CCAP, they assist with a security deposit for individuals who have a valid reason for moving and can sustain themselves going forward. However, only 1 in every 15-20 calls regarding rental assistance or help with a security deposit is eligible for the service. This is due to the inability to sustain the rents moving forward and the current cap on security deposits of \$1,000.

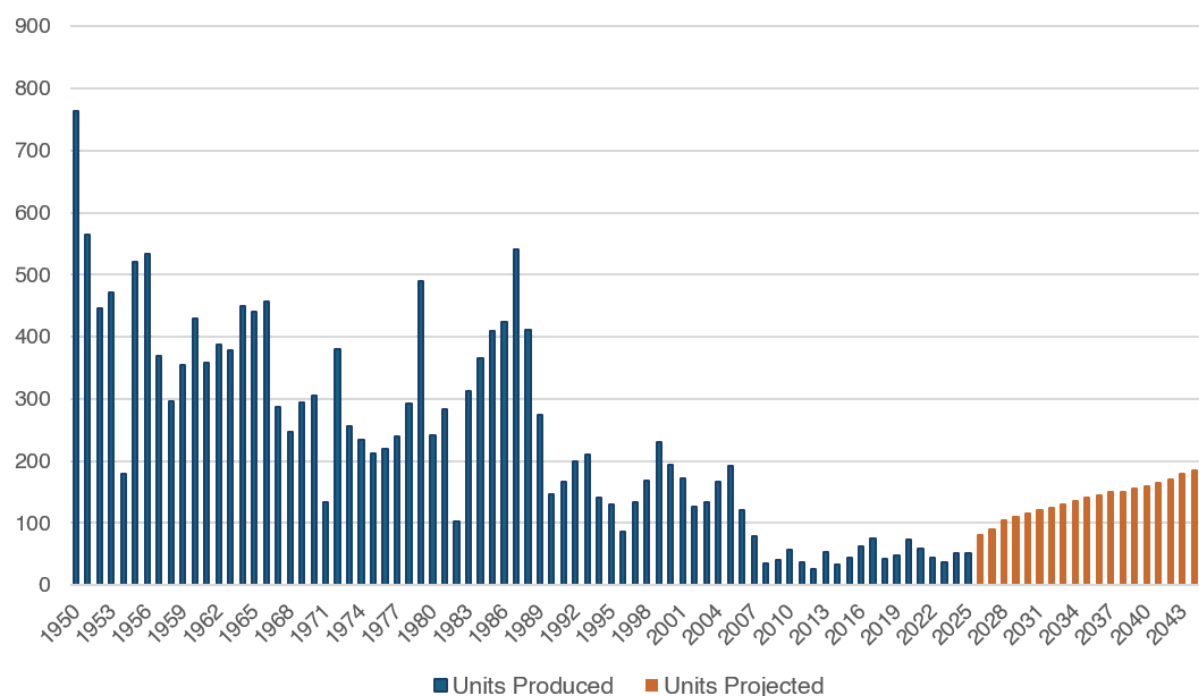
Proactive intervention and early assistance are considered best practices to address homelessness in combination with greater availability of affordable housing. Cranston's long standing partnership with CCAP is a strength that brings a suite of support together in one organization. As housing costs outpace wages, the cost of bridging that gap grows.

Section 5.3: Implementation Plan for Housing Unit Development

This Housing Element offers a plan for implementing the City's goal to permit the identified 2,800 market-rate housing units, of which 1,390 will be LMIH units by 2046. Figure 5.9 illustrates this overall production target in the context of the pace of housing production since 1950. Meeting Cranston's housing needs requires production levels not seen since the 2008

Great Recession. The levels of housing production required do not stand out in historical context, but conditions have changed with far less developable land remaining undeveloped and regulatory limitations on what land is considered developable.

Figure 5.9. Annual Housing Unit Production and Projections.



Source: 2026. City of Cranston. Building Permit Data. Number of housing units. Projections by the City Planning Dept as shown in Table 5.3.

This plan uses a multi-pronged approach by leveraging municipal assets, zoning changes to enable market-driven home construction on privately-owned vacant and underutilized land, and promoting the creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) alongside existing homes to diversify the housing stock. Enacting inclusionary zoning will require that new major housing developments include 15% LMIH units, thereby supporting Cranston in maintaining its Low- and Moderate-Income housing stock. A density bonus for creating affordable units is included so that inclusionary zoning does not suppress housing development. The density bonus for affordable units can also support developers in going beyond 15% affordable units.

Table 5.3 quantifies the number of housing units required and Table 5.4 estimates the number of units associated with specific policy changes and permitted projects. While we cannot be certain of future market conditions and which projects will be built in this timeframe, the plan is to move forward with an array of policy changes and actions by the City which will enable the **number** of housing units commensurate with community housing needs.

Achieving 10% affordable units will require the passage of the Inclusionary Zoning with density-bonus for affordable units, requiring 15% affordable, but incentivizing developers to go above 15% with density bonuses. In addition, it will require affordable housing developers to build substantial numbers of new affordable units and convert some existing properties to LMIH

tapping into subsidies beyond density bonuses. Through bonuses provided by the Inclusionary Zoning ordinance and negotiated approvals, the City will work to support affordable housing developers to minimize costs and speed up approval processes.

Table 5.3. Cranston Population and Housing Units and Projections.

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
<i>Population</i>	83,485	83,410	82,382	81,262	79,944
<i>Household Size</i>	2.440	2.416	2.396	2.376	2.356
<i>Households</i>	34,215	34,524	34,383	34,201	33,932
<i>Needed Housing Units</i>	35,413	35,732	35,587	35,398	35,120
<i>Units Needed Above 2025 Existing</i>	1,579	1,898	1,753	1,564	1,286
<i>LMIH Units</i>	2,122	2,469	2,817	3,164	3,511
<i>Percent LMIH Units</i>	5.99%	6.91%	7.91%	8.94%	10.00%

As highlighted in Table 5.3, Cranston needs to identify strategies to create 1390 additional LMIH units by 2046 above where we stand in 2026. The severity of today's housing affordability crisis is uncharted territory and requires us to adapt. To that end, the City of Cranston is participating in the Housing Accelerator Learning cohort through 2026 to learn best practices and explore collaborations. In 2025, Cranston was competitively awarded a spot in this technical assistance program from the National League of Cities and the American Planning Association, through which, the City is working with national experts to identify locally-appropriate strategies to increase the LMIH units.

Table 5.4 summarizes the potential for additional housing productions from actions summarized in this chapter. Actual housing production by category will vary and even projects in the pipeline today may be modified or delayed. Overall, the policies and projects identified in this plan slightly surpass the housing unit yield requirements.

Table 5.4. Housing Production Potential

Policy Action or Project	2046 Total Units	2046 LMIH Units
<i>Small Lots & Oversized Lot Splitting</i>	150	0
<i>Mixed-Use Centers and Corridors Project</i>	1,200	600
<i>Inclusionary Zoning</i>	400	400
<i>Neighborhood Mixed-Use Rezone</i>	60	10
<i>Accessory Dwelling Units</i>	100	0
<i>Adaptive Reuse</i>	50	12
<i>Appendix A Rezone to Residential A+B zones</i>	76	10
<i>City-Owned Parcels</i>	91	91
<i>Independence Way Rezone</i>	200	200
<i>1746 Cranston St</i>	30	5

<i>661 Park Ave - Legion Bowl</i>	69	10
<i>1930 Cranston St - Knights Corner</i>	160	24
<i>1381 Cranston St - Cranston Print Works</i>	100	0
<i>The Residences at Oaklawn Ave</i>	12	1
<i>Meridian Point Phase I</i>	90	0
<i>Meridian Point Phase II</i>	152	37
Planning Target	2,800	1,390
Total Yield	2,940	1,400

Source: City of Cranston Planning Department. See description of methods at end of chapter.

5.3.1 Leveraging Municipal Land for Housing Development

The City of Cranston possesses various parcels of land that, while currently serving other purposes or remaining undeveloped, could be strategically repurposed for housing. The first step in this strategy is an assessment of all city-owned properties to identify those suitable for residential development, considering factors such as size, location, existing zoning, access to water and sewer infrastructure, flood risk, and future municipal need. The Planning Department will vet the city-owned parcel inventory with all city departments to create a prioritized list of potential properties for housing development.

Once suitable parcels are vetted and prioritized, the City will establish clear processes for their disposition or development. This may include issuing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to qualified developers. To incentivize the creation of LMIH units beyond the minimum required by Inclusionary Zoning (if enacted), the City could offer development incentives, such as additional density bonuses for these municipal sites.

5.3.2 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

There are 514 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in Cranston located in all neighborhoods. ADUs take many forms, but they are always a small dwelling unit that can never be sold separately from the primary dwelling. ADUs offer a flexible and cost-effective way to add housing and diversify housing options without requiring large-scale new construction.

Cranston has long allowed ADUs that pre-exist zoning and family-member ADUs that are conditionally allowed as long as it is home to a qualifying family member and that status is confirmed annually with an affidavit. In 2024, State law expanded the options for constructing new ADUs. Commonly ADUs are located within the envelope of the principal structure on the footprint of an existing barn or garage. On larger lots, 20,000 sq. ft. or more, ADUs may be built, as of 2024, as a separate cottage structure or an addition to the primary structure.

Conforming with state law, the City updated ordinances to allow construction of ADUs. (meaning they will be allowed without special permission or a variance as long as they meet accessory structure setbacks) in residential zones.

To educate and encourage homeowners to create ADUs, the Planning Department will develop comprehensive educational materials and launch targeted outreach programs. The City will also

explore options to facilitate ADU construction, including providing pre-approved ADU plans or design guidelines to simplify the process for homeowners and ensure that new ADUs are well-designed for the City's existing neighborhoods.

While it won't yield new housing units, Cranston plans to address unwarranted ADUs with a path to retain these residential units. Cranston has 514 existing ADUs identified by the tax assessor, most of which lack recognition as legal dwelling units under zoning. Virtually none of the ADUs built for family members are current with the requirement of submitting an annual affidavit that a qualifying family member is living in the unit. Under Cranston City ordinance these ADUs were only temporary and conditional. It is desirable to create a path for the conditional family-member units to gain legal status as permanent ADUs that may be occupied or rented by non-family members and retained upon sale of the property. Cranston will create an application process to convert temporary or unwarranted ADUs to permanent, permitted ADU status. Enabling ADUs conversions with signoff from a building inspector or credentialed building professional is a key strategy for healthy and safe housing.

5.3.3 Developing Low- and Moderate-Income Housing

Addressing the need for Low- and Moderate-Income Housing (LMIH) is paramount, especially given that Cranston has not attained the state-wide goal of 10% of units being LMIH. Achieving this goal will require a dedicated strategy of leveraging regulatory tools to incentivize private developers to create deed-restricted LMIH units.

A cornerstone strategy for increasing the supply of LMIH is the adoption of an Inclusionary Zoning ordinance, which would require that 15% of units in new multifamily residential developments of ten units or more, or residential conversions are designated as deed-restricted LMIH affordable to households making less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). To ensure the success of such an ordinance in producing LMIH units without restricting market-rate construction, the City will explore mechanisms such as density bonuses and parking reductions for the inclusion of LMIH units (See Attachment 1: Draft Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance). The city will monitor the impact of the ordinance on housing production.

The City will encourage applications from experienced non-profit housing developers and community development corporations. The adaptive reuse of existing vacant buildings into LMIH units, presents another avenue for expanding the LMIH inventory. This plan recommends offering, density bonuses, and expedited permitting for adaptive reuse projects. These combined strategies will ensure that Cranston is able to increase its relative share of LMIH units and achieve the 10% goal by 2046.

5.3.4 Enabling Historically Appropriate Development Patterns

Cranston is a city of neighborhoods, and this plan calls for neighborhood-based thresholds that offer a streamlined path to determine whether a small lot is buildable or a large lot can be split. Many older lots and whole neighborhoods of Cranston do not conform to lot size requirements in zoning. Another way to say that is that most of the homes in our more historic neighborhoods would be prohibited by today's zoning. One of the most common development requests made in Cranston is to build a house on an existing lot recorded in the City land records that is smaller

than the minimum lot size prescribed in zoning. These “substandard lots of record” are merged for zoning if they are in common ownership, and not considered buildable lots.

In order to respect the historical neighborhood character of Cranston’s residential areas and allow similar small-scale development, the City of Cranston is exploring approaches to streamline construction of housing that is of the same type and scale as is predominant in the local neighborhood context. Integral to allowing development on small lots is heightening review of how stormwater, parking, landscaping and tree canopy standards. These efforts will be driven by the goal of preserving and enhancing the existing character of each neighborhood and are not intended to transform neighborhood character to make way for new housing construction.

Cranston has amended its zoning code to reflect recent changes in state unmerger and oversize lot subdivisions enabling laws. This application pathway is available to lot owners. There are an estimated 408 substandard lots that are as large as at least half the developed lots in their neighborhood and unconstrained by water or flood hazard. Many lots that meet the size threshold for unmerger, nonetheless, require a dimensional variance for side yard or other nonconformity because of the location of built structures.

A focus group of small-scale housing developers held in April 2026 emphasized that lengthy, unpredictable or multi-step approval timelines increase costs. Each delay translates directly into higher housing costs. Cranston could address these concerns with performance standards and neighborhood specific lot size standards that make clear the standard for approval and move these decisions away from the variance process.

5.3.5 Utilizing Existing Infrastructure

The City of Cranston spans a range of built forms across its landscape, with denser streetcar suburbs located to the east, mid-century lower-density suburbs in the center, and larger lot development occurring in the west. This pattern combines with the underlying water and sewer infrastructure serving the City to indicate where new housing would minimize the costs the City and its citizens incur to fund infrastructure expansions and operations. The city's capital facilities like schools, libraries, and safety services are similarly located to serve this development pattern. This plan deliberately encourages housing where it can utilize existing infrastructure. Housing built beyond the urban services area enjoys spaciousness and more rural character, but there is a trade-off of longer distances to public services. The City plans seeks to minimize new capital expenditures for new schools or public safety facilities in low density areas.

5.3.6 Mixed Use Centers and Corridors Project

A key strategy for meeting housing goals is to identify areas where greater flexibility, density, and cohesive design elements can bring new investment to areas with potential for further growth. Through the creation of mixed-use zones in these areas, Cranston will not only enable the creation of much-needed housing units, but it will also minimize traffic congestion, support business owners, and promote economic vitality.

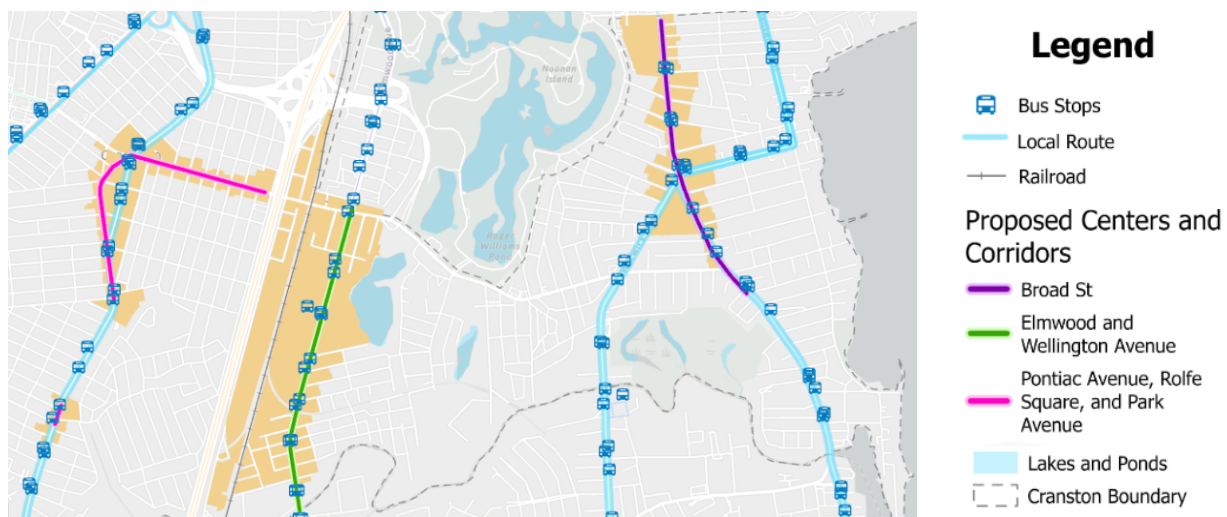
In October 2025, Cranston received a RI Housing Transit Oriented Development Technical Assistance grant bringing expert guidance on transit-oriented zoning and expert facilitators to

work with the community to shape locally appropriate ordinances. This work will produce draft ordinances in 2026 for consideration by the City Plan Commission and City Council.

The purposes of the Mixed-Use Centers and Corridors project are:

- 1.) Connect housing, commerce, and transit opportunities.
- 2.) Provide standards for high-quality development, adaptive reuse, and rehabilitation.
- 3.) Increase housing supply and options including multifamily, mixed-use, and live/workspace.
- 4.) Create a pedestrian-friendly environment conducive to walking, bicycling, and transit use.
- 5.) Reflect the community context and enhance the livability of each district.

Figure 5.10. Mixed Use Centers and Corridors Project Areas



Source: Kittleson and Associates. 2026.

The Elmwood Avenue Corridor has a high potential for redevelopment opening up 75 acres of land to housing development where it is not allowed today. This industrial corridor had its heyday in the age of rail. It has been identified in City Comprehensive Plans since 2010 as a special redevelopment area because of the real estate market shifts and the location on the northeast corridor – which would be the location of a future Cranston rail station, if and when one is ever contemplated. It also has redevelopable industrial buildings including taller brick structures that make this an appropriate place to allow higher height limits.

Pontiac Avenue, Rolfe Square and Park Avenue and Broad Street are vibrant Main Street areas where more flexible mixed use zoning regulations can help bring in new investment and cohesiveness by replacing the patchwork of separate zoning districts. These areas already permit housing as an allowed use. Cranston is complementing the Mixed-Use Centers and Corridors Project with participation in the Rhode Island Main Streets Learning Cohort.

5.3.7 Conservation Development

Conservation Development is primarily addressed in the Land Use Element. Conservation development offers significant, economic, ecological, and fiscal benefits. According to the Urban Land Institute it reduces habitat fragmentation, commands higher real estate premiums, and costs municipalities less to service than conventional suburban subdivisions. The Plan incentivizes conservation development zoning in remaining sparsely developed areas of Western Cranston - maintaining the same number of allowable housing units but incentivizing designs that conserve natural and agricultural resources by clustering homes onto smaller individual lots and using low impact design practices. Conservation development aims to preserve Cranston's scenic, agricultural, and natural resources while maintaining the rural character of our western-most roads and villages.

Section 5.4: Alignment with State Housing Goals

Cranston is dedicated to addressing the diverse housing needs of its residents and seeks to align the efforts outlined in this Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan with the State's overarching housing goals, as presented in Housing 2030. The Implementation Plan outlined in Section 3 includes measures to support a variety of State goals, which are detailed below.

The City of Cranston recognizes the critical role of "missing middle" housing—housing types like duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings that bridge the gap between single-family homes and large apartment complexes. A quarter of Cranston's housing units fall into the 2-4 unit category with the greatest concentration in neighborhoods developed in the street car era. Missing middle housing is well suited to accommodate the growth in 1-2 person households and the high demand for traditional neighborhoods. These historic structures are overwhelmingly non-conforming to today's lot size requirements.

Cranston's Comprehensive Plan has long called for the rezoning of a number of commercial areas in neighborhoods to "neighborhood mixed use," allowing the construction of missing middle housing and housing above commercial. These actions will provide a flexible and incremental approach to increasing housing density guided by the historic pattern of each neighborhood.

Figure 5.11 Missing Middle Housing



Courtesy of Opticos Design, Inc.

In alignment with the State’s goal of creating opportunities for aging adults to downsize, the City of Cranston is dedicated to supporting suitable housing options for its older residents to age in place. This plan will consider allowing more manageable and affordable housing options that cater to the needs of seniors, such as senior cottage communities. Cranston will look at enabling these types of development by special permit in selected zones.

Cranston treasures its historic villages, streetcar suburbs, and Garden City- style curvilinear suburban enclaves. Prioritizing the character of these established neighborhoods necessitates identifying locations where new denser development can expand housing opportunities outside these established neighborhoods without sacrificing the last remaining farms and forests. The designation of Elmwood Avenue for transit-oriented development is the largest redevelopment opportunity. This corridor already has better RIPTA service than much of Cranston and are under consideration for service improvements through the Metro Connector project. The recommendation is to adopt a transit-oriented mixed use zone to replace the patchwork of industrial, residential, and commercial zones along these corridors. The recommendation is to adopt streetscape design standards and require street trees to create a coherent district where transit is prioritized, but give developers more flexibility around use and building height. Shared parking will be incentivized. Height restrictions would vary based on the surrounding area and distance from homes.

Another key element of Housing 2030 is increasing the supply of affordable housing options, specifically targeting those earning below 80% of the Area Median Income. To achieve this goal, the City of Cranston drafted an Inclusionary Zoning ordinance, as outlined in Section 3, requiring 15% of new multifamily residential developments or residential conversions to include deed-restricted LMIH housing units. This approach would ensure that as Cranston permits new units, more than 10% of the new housing stock will be deed-restricted LMIH, thereby aiding Cranston in reaching the statewide goal of having 10% of units be LMIH.

In addition to creating new units—both market-rate and LMIH—the City of Cranston is committed to preserving and enhancing its existing housing units. Maintaining the quality of the existing housing stock supports health and neighborhood stability. To support the Housing 2030

goal, Cranston will maintain funding for existing housing renovation programs, including grants to abate code violations and provide financial support for low-income first-time homeowners.

The City's Building Department has an outsized role to play in supporting safe and healthy housing in the city. This department has the lead role in identifying minimum housing code deficiencies and working with property owners to make necessary repairs. Furthermore the Building Inspections team is responsible for enforcing complex, safety-critical, and evolving building code regulations. Having a fully-staffed building inspections team can reduce wait times that can add costs to construction projects. Inspectors can educate builders, contractors, and property owners about the importance of compliance and the details of current building codes including special rules for Flood Hazard Areas. There is a need to continue to invest in professional development for this team and evaluate staffing levels, which have declined in recent years. Cranston aims to create a more affordable and healthier housing landscape that meets the needs of all its residents.

Section 5.5: Schedule of Ordinances

The following table lists the ordinances anticipated to implement the Housing chapter.

Table 5.3 Schedule of Ordinances

Ordinance Title	Ordinance Description	Adoption Timeframe
Inclusionary Zoning	Enact inclusionary zoning to require 15% of units be affordable in multifamily projects of 10 or more.	S
Conservation Development	Implement a conservation development ordinance in western Cranston to prioritize the conservation of natural and agricultural resources by clustering homes onto smaller individual lots, dedicating permanently protected open space, and using low impact design practice.	S
Independence Way	Rezone to C2 with conditions with density bonus for 100% affordable residential project.	S
Mixed-use districts	Develop and implement Mixed Use Zones through the Mixed Use Centers and Corridor's Project.	S
Neighborhood-based zoning designations	Right-size the zoning districts to legalize by-right construction of housing that is of the same type and scale as is predominant in the local neighborhood context.	S

Align zones with FLUM	Adopt recommended zone changes to align with the Future Land Use Map.	S
Pre-approved ADU designs	Create pre-approved ADU designs or design guidelines to simplify the process for homeowners and ensure that new ADUs are well-designed for the City's existing neighborhoods.	M
ADU Legalization Standards	Creates a streamlined pathway to 1) grant permanent status to conditional family-member ADUs permitted prior to 2024 with lapsed compliance with affidavit requirements, and 2) approve ADUs originally built without proper permits and inspections. Establishes a process for non-compliant ADUs starting with a warning of non-compliance, followed by fines, followed by more intensive enforcement.	M

Section 5.6: Estimation Methods

Population projections

The most recent ACS data (2023 five-year data) and the Rhode Island Population Projections Summary Tables 2025-2045 from RI Statewide Planning were utilized. Figures for 2046 are extrapolated one year from the available 2040-4045 Statewide Planning projections.

Housing Unit projections

The demand for market rate and affordable housing are computed from the population and household size projections. The projection extrapolates the recent downward trend in household size on a curve that approaches 2 persons per household. This method results in housing demand increasing faster than population growth, in line with recent trends.

Housing Unit Production Projections

As shown in Table 5.3, 1579 housing units need to be produced to catch up with demand in 2025 and another 344 units are needed for household growth expected by 2030. Beyond 2030, population decline will eliminate any need to further grow the overall number of homes in the 20-year planning horizon. The production target of 2,800 housing units takes into account the need for replacement units that will also require building permits during this timeframe.

Small Lots & Splitting Oversized Lots

Most homes in Cranston sit on lots smaller than the 6000 minimum lot size required by zoning, therefore empty house lots are generally not buildable if in common ownership with an adjoining lot. As of 2025, Rhode Island Law (RIGL) allows recorded residential lots that are as large as at least half the lots within a 200' foot radius to be separate buildable lots. Our yield analysis used a simplified estimation method and looked at all the undersized lots without buildings and subtracted out wetlands and floodplains. We then compared the size of substandard lots of record

to the median lot size in each neighborhood. There are 408 lots that could become buildable lots under these criteria. From experience, we know many lots which meet the lot size threshold will nonetheless need a variance for side-yard setback or other dimensional nonconformity. These lots are not spread throughout the city, but are rather concentrated in specific zones in neighborhoods developed before 1966, mostly in areas zoned A6, B1 or B2. We estimate that 150 (roughly a third) will be split in the next 20 years.

Mixed-Use Centers and Corridors Project

The City of Cranston received a Transit-Oriented Development grant in October 2025 from RI Housing to work with Kittleson and Associates to create transit supportive zoning allowing mixed use along these transit-served corridors with the express goal of accommodating housing growth near transit and infrastructure. The project will determine the boundaries and development guidelines of the new overlay zones.

Elmwood Avenue represents a large opportunity for new housing. There are 96 acres of property on Elmwood Avenue above the flood plain zoned mostly industrial and highway commercial – zones that prohibit housing. Only 20 of these acres are in a zone that allows housing (B2). We expect a mix of continued industrial and commercial activities mixed with new multifamily housing. Combined we estimate the potential for 1200 new housing units (12.5 units times 96 acres).

The Pontiac/ Park, and Broad Street are largely built out and the project is expected to make new development possible at densities similar to the historic pattern. Housing is already allowed throughout these corridors and therefore no net new housing is forecast for this policy initiative.

Independence Way - 15 acre rezone

The City of Cranston is considering a zone change to allow multifamily housing on an 8.53 acre lot with access off Independence Way. There is also a 7.32 acre lot zoned MPD with potential for development. Our estimated yield of 200 units is equivalent to 13 units per acre for the total lot area and assumes 100% LMIH.

Inclusionary Zoning

The proposed inclusionary zoning ordinance requires 15% LMIH for multifamily projects of 10 or more units. The numbers in this line of the table are estimates of units created through density bonuses in the inclusionary zoning ordinance that exceed the number of units otherwise allowed on the lot.

Main Street / Neighborhood Mixed Use

The C-1, C-2, and C-3 zones are the city's residential and commercial mixed-use zones that overlay much of Cranston's main streets and neighborhood-serving commercial areas. Where there are legacy industrial or highway commercial zones (C-5) adjoining these traditional neighborhood commercial centers; there is potential to open this land up for residential and mixed use development.

Our yield estimate is based on such properties identified in Appendix A for conversion to neighborhood commercial/services. Lots were excluded for proximity to Randall Pond with its flooding issues and Machapaug Pond with its MS4 stormwater compliance issues – as these have limited potential as long as these issues remain unaddressed. Land already included in the Mixed-Use Centers and Corridors project is also excluded to avoid double counting. Assuming 10.89 residential units per acre and maximum uptake of 30%, yields 60 units. Knightsville, Park Avenue, and Pontiac Ave at Glen Road include examples of areas that are included.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

Cranston is receiving an uptick in inquiries and applications to create ADU. We estimate approximately 5 new ADUs added per year based on building permit applications from 2025.

Adaptive Reuse

The estimate here excludes projects in the TOD or other neighborhood mixed-use zones, which are itemized separately. The Cranston Print Works development is itemized separately and not included in this line item. The City Planning Department has a list of potential adaptive reuse locations used to create this estimate.

Rezoned to Residential in Appendix A

The 2024 City adopted Comprehensive Plan has a parcel-based list of zone changes carried over from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Previously, the Planning Department's policy was to require property owners to carry out those zone changes paying an application fee and for certified mailings to 400' abutters. In 2024, a state law change made it a requirement for the zoning map to be aligned with the future land use map within one year. The City Council has the authority to make a comprehensive change to zoning designations of properties provided they are consistent with its comprehensive plan. By design, the process for rezoning land requires multiple steps including a recommendation by the City Plan Commission and an advertised public hearing with the City Council. If implemented, these zone changes open up more areas for residential and mixed-use development. It enumerates 146 parcels for rezoning. As a method of estimation we did a lot-by-lot analysis of all parcels in Appendix A. First we excluded parcels that had been rezoned since 2010 (63 parcels). Second excluded lots whose yield was counted elsewhere in the analysis. Finally we considered zone changes toward residential and away from residential estimating the net new units that Appendix A zoning changes enable.

City-Owned Parcels

Barrows Elementary could yield 25-30 units, Waterman Elementary could yield 20-30 units. Excluding wetlands and other known purposes and constraints the Planning Department has identified parcels that could yield 41 additional units. More vetting is needed on the housing potential of each lot in the inventory. Baseline Trend Housing Production

The "Baseline Trend Housing Production" shown in Table 5.3 is an extrapolation of past housing permitting rates. Since 2012 Cranston has permitted an average of 48 units per year. As a baseline, we assume that, even without policy changes, Cranston can expect this rate of development.

Projects Permitted or in Permitting

The unit counts for “projects permitted or in permitting” are unit counts from known projects with plans submitted to the City Planning Department.

Section 5.8: Inventory of Low and Moderate Income Housing.

Development	Population	Housing Type	Address	LMIH Units	Subsidy Type	Income Limits
27 Ferncrest Ave	Family	Rental	27 Ferncrest Ave	1	Providence Revolving Fund	80%
315 Park Ave	Elderly	Rental	315 Park Ave	71	RIH Sec. 8	30%, 50%, 80%
Arlington Manor	Elderly	Rental	50 Birch St	120	Public Housing	
Budlong Manor	Elderly	Rental	100 Arthur St	71	Public Housing	
Cranston Commons	Family	Rental	1303 Elmwood Ave	19	Tax Credit, State RAP, Thresholds	60%
D'Evan Manor	Elderly	Rental	1214 Cranston St	127	RIH Sec. 8	30%, 50%, 80%
Fellowship House	Elderly	Rental	1257 Cranston St	7	HUD 202	50%
Group Home Beds	Special Needs	N/A	N/A	233	Group Home Beds	
Hall Manor	Elderly	Rental	70 Warwick Ave	79	Public Housing	
Harris House Apartments	Elderly	Rental	28 Harris Ave	133	RIH Sec. 8, LIHTC	30%, 50%, 80%
Jennings Manor	Elderly	Rental	125 Harris Ave	51	Public Housing	
Knightsville Manor	Elderly	Rental	85 Briggs St	186	Public Housing	
Meshanticut Vista	Elderly	Rental	225 New London St	140	RIH Sec. 8	30%, 50%, 80%
New Life Estates	Special Needs	Rental	20 Phenix Ave	8	HUD 811, HOME	50%
Northup Street	Family	Homeownership	297 Northup St	1	NOP	80%
Presidential	Elderly	Rental	70 Lincoln Ave	51	HUD 202	50%

Place						
Qualifying Federal Vouchers	Family	Voucher	Scattered Sites	312	Federally Financed Vouchers	
Randall Manor	Elderly	Rental	75 Mathewson St	80	Public Housing	
Riverbend Apartments	Family	Rental	575 Dyer St	168	HUD Sec. 8	30%, 50%, 80%
Scattered Sites	Family	Rental	Scattered Sites	17	Public Housing	
Scituate Vista Apts	Elderly	Rental	115 Scituate Ave	232	RIH Sec. 8	30%, 50%, 80%
Wentworth Apartments	Special Needs	Rental	91 Wentworth Ave	15	HUD 811	30%
Total				2122		