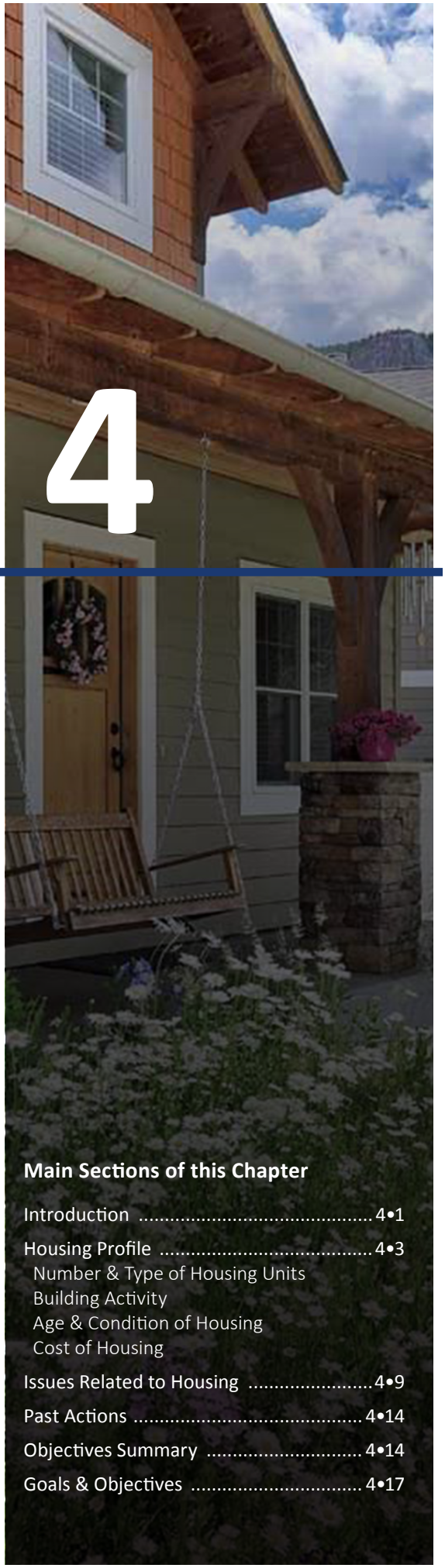
Housing 4



Introduction

Housing is a basic human need. Helena's prosperity depends on available housing affordable to its residents. If successful, the community's housing must also provide easy access places of employment and desired services, facilities, and amenities. The location, design, and affordability of housing influence many aspects of the community, including its transportation system, public safety, efficiency of services provision, cultural diversity, school locations and enrollment. Well-coordinated and implemented housing policy will contribute to Helena's stature as a livable and sustainable community.

Helena's Growth Policy considers housing because:

- Housing development patterns influence energy consumption and environmental quality. Lower-density housing patterns increase transportation costs for residents and encourage consumption of farm and ranch land;
- Despite its advantages, higher-density housing is often seen as incompatible with existing neighborhoods. As such, considerations such as relative scale, placement, and overall design quality are recognized as critical;
- Housing shortages hinder economic development and community safety. A shortage

Main Sections of this Chapter

Introduction ..... 4•1

Housing Profile ..... 4•3
- Number & Type of Housing Units
- Building Activity
- Age & Condition of Housing
- Cost of Housing

Issues Related to Housing ..... 4•9

Past Actions ..... 4•14

Objectives Summary ..... 4•14

Goals & Objectives ..... 4•17

Table 4.01 – *Number of Units by Type of Structure*

Units in Structure	2000		2010		2017	
Total Units	**12,118**	**%**	**13,538**	**%**	**14,621**	**%**
1 unit detached	6,583	54.32%	7,260	53.6%	8,020	54.9%
1 unit attached	488	4.03%	508	3.8%	945	6.5%
2 to 4 units	2,398	19.79%	2695	19.9%	2,800	19.2%
5 to 9 units	586	4.84%	989	7.3%	722	4.9%
10 or more	1,326	10.94%	1363	10.1%	1,472	10.1%
Mobile Home, etc.	737	6.08%	723	5.3%	662	4.5%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey Data 2000, 2010, 2017

of housing affordable to prospective employees may affect local employers and area businesses;

- Housing development patterns affect the use of public resources now and into the future.

Many of Helena's working population struggle with the affordability and availability of housing. In addition, many retirees and those with disabilities or special needs require affordable or moderately-priced housing that appear to be in short supply. Gaps between what residents may afford for housing and prevailing market costs create challenges for many households.

DRAFT

According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing is affordable if it costs households no more than 30% of their gross income for housing and utilities costs. Though historic patterns and regional norms may vary somewhat, this HUD definition is used extensively by the US Census Bureau and the City of Helena in measuring and addressing community housing needs.

Market-driven housing development – as managed through thoughtful policy – may address much of Helena's housing needs. But active use of all available policy tools may be necessary to achieve many of the community's housing objectives, particularly regarding issues including:

- An aging resident population;
- Aging housing stock with deferred maintenance issues;
- Rising disparities between wages and housing costs;
- Shifting demographic trends;
- Helena's growing popularity among those seeking an escape from larger, often far more expensive, communities.

Table 4.02 – *Helena Building Activity 2011-2018*

Type of Permit	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Townhouse	4	8	2	6	8	0	0	0
Single-Family	81	65	58	46	67	51	37	56
Duplex	3	16	17	11	16	2	4	7
Tri- and Four-Plex	20	21	10	12	16	19	21	19
5+ Unit buildings	0	0	0	6	6	14	1	8
Remodel/Alteration	71	52	78	85	103	95	98	101
Total	**179**	**162**	**165**	**166**	**216**	**181**	**161**	**191**

Source: City of Helena Building Permit Statistics (2011-2018)

This Growth Policy supports partnerships between local governments, financial institutions, private and public organizations, and the general public to work together to understand the housing needs of all residents and to ensure that everyone in the community has the opportunity to live in safe, affordable housing.

The following describes current housing conditions and issues in Helena, setting the stage for the goals, objectives and actions adopted as part of this Growth Policy. For more on housing conditions, including detailed information on various strategies for consideration, see the 2018 *Tri-County Housing Needs Assessment,* prepared for Broadwater County, Jefferson County, and Lewis and Clark County.[1]

DRAFT

Housing Profile

The following inventory of existing housing stock and general age and condition is provided to assess Helena's current housing stock, guiding housing related-goals and objectives. It also identifies the need for programs or actions to protect and preserve existing housing.[2]

Number & Type of Housing Units

Helena has a mixture of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing, but more people live in single-family homes than any other type of structure. As shown in Table 4.01, the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that single family detached homes account for 54.9% of the city's housing units. Other prevalent housing types include duplexes, homes converted to apartments, or other small apartment buildings (19.2%); large multi-family (15.0%); mobile homes or trailers (4.5%), and a few row houses, condominiums and other attached homes (6.5%).

---

1 https://www.helenamt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/City_Com_Dev/Planning/Documents/Housing_Needs_Assessment_12.19.18.pdf

2 For additional information, see the 2010 Helena Area Housing Needs Assessment, Greater Helena Area Housing Task Force.

Table 4.03 – *Single-Family Housing Starts, Helena and Vicinity*

City/County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Helena City	74	67	60	48	70	51	40	55
Lewis & Clark County	144	212	257	203	182	212	225	186
Jefferson County	37	51	55	54	70	64	68	67
Broadwater County	27	23	10	27	13	26	53	56

Source: Montana Building Industry Association Housing Starts Data, http://montanabia.com/housingStarts

Notably, the percentage of mobile homes as a percentage of Helena's housing stock has decreased since 2000. Approximately one-third of mobile homes in the city were built prior to 1976, before basic safety and construction requirements were put into place.[3]

Building Activity

Within the City of Helena, the number of building permits for single-family units ranged from 37 (2017) to 81 (2011) dwelling units per year from 2011 through 2018, with little clear pattern of growth or reduction. Over the same time-frame, permits for new multi-family structures ranged from 27 (2011) to 46 (2015), again with little discernible pattern (See Tables 4.02, 4.03). In general, new development has occurred in pockets across the city, with grouped activity primarily occurring on the city's edge and or the unincorporated county.

DRAFT

Some newer subdivisions feature more townhouses and condominium complexes as alternatives to traditional single-family homes, providing more cost-effective and/or more needs-tailored options. The City Building Department does not track the number of mobile homes and manufactured homes.

The Montana Building Industry Association (MBIA) maintains data for single-family housing starts in Montana on a county-wide basis.[4] As shown in Table 4.03, building activity fluctuates on an annual basis in the region, with some indication of an upswing (between 2017 and 2018) of starts in Helena versus a drop in Lewis and Clark County starts.

Age & Condition of Housing

The ages of Helena's housing units closely correspond to changes in city limits. More than 22% of existing stock was built before 1940, while another 22% is less than 30 years old. Many older homes were built on small lots close to the downtown, while larger homes tend to be located

3 U.S. Census data. Due to their age and condition, many of these units likely need replacement.

4 MBIA housing starts figures are compiled primarily from electrical permit data for unincorporated areas and from building permits issued by the City of Helena.

Table 4.04 – *Age of Housing Units, Helena*

Year	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	All Units *(Occupied and non-occupied)*	All Units *(Percent of total)*
1939 or earlier	1,427	1,667	3,283	22.45%
1940-1949	459	441	958	6.55%
1950-1959	959	456	1,551	10.61%
1960-1969	755	632	1,448	9.90%
1970-1979	1,384	1,158	2,703	18.49%
1980-1989	665	573	1,359	9.29%
1990-1999	715	637	1,486	10.16%
2000-2009	813	401	1,365	9.35%
2010-present	210	218	468	3.20%
Total	**7,387**	**6,183**	**14,621**	**100.00%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

in the upper west side in the community's "mansion district" or on the outskirts of the city.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, homes were built on larger urban lots. In the 1970s, this trend continued, but the community also saw more multi-family and rental units. Renter-occupied units accounted for more than 50% of the housing stock created in that era. Most of the older homes are in the central parts of town, as is common in most communities.

DRAFT

The City had building boom of sorts in the 1960's through the 1970's, with almost 30% of the housing units being built in that era. To date, most of the new construction is occurring on the edges of the City; with very little infill development for new construction. (See Figure 4.04, Housing Construction Timeline Map)

As of 2017, there are a total of 14,621 housing units in Helena, with 13,570 of those occupied and 1,051 vacant. Table 4.04 presents the composition of occupied units by tenure and by decade built.

Typically, older homes represent a significant portion of a city's "affordable" housing supply. In Helena, approximately 40% of homes were constructed before 1960, compared to 20% of homes in Broadwater County and Lewis and Clark County. Many of the housing units operated by the Helena Housing Authority (HHA) are over 60-years old.[5] Though older homes may offer higher value per dollar, typical concerns with older homes include deferred maintenance, lack of weatherization features,

5 The HHA is a non-profit agency established by federal and state legislation to provide safe and affordable housing in combination with related services to eligible low-income residents. HHA is the largest landlord in Helena, with 366 units of public housing and 345 Housing Choice Vouchers (formally Section 8) to distribute across Lewis and Clark County.

Table 4.05 – *Housing Condition Analysis, 2008*

Physical Condition	Single				Mobile			
	Helena		County		Helena		County	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Unsound	18	0.1	30	0.6	3	0.2	175	3.5
Very Poor	23	0.2	36	0.8	2	0.2	32	0.6
Poor	71	0.5	80	1.7	4	0.3	72	1.4
Fair	465	3.5	497	10.7	37	3.0	305	6.1
Average	5,915	44.5	3,255	70.5	1,151	92.5	4,280	85.9
Good	4,894	36.7	340	7.3	41	3.3	78	1.6
Very Good	1,854	13.9	373	8.1	4	0.3	19	0.4
Excellent	80	0.6	15	0.3	2	0.2	25	0.5
Total	**13,320**	**100**	**4,626**	**100**	**1,244**	**100**	**4,986**	**100**

Source: Montana Department of Commerce Housing Condition Study, 2008

Table 4.06 – *Housing Condition Ratings*

DRAFT

Unsound	The dwelling is structurally unsound and practically unfit for use.
Very Poor	The dwelling is structurally unsound and is approaching abandonment or major reconstruction.
Poor	Definite deterioration is obvious. Property is undesirable and barely usable.
Fair	Marked deterioration but is still quite usable. Deferred maintenance is obvious.
Average	Normal wear and tear relative to age. Property has average attractiveness and is desirable. All major components are still functional.
Good	Minor deterioration is visible. No obvious maintenance is required, but neither is everything new. Appearance is above the standard relative to the property's age.
Very Good	Slight evidence of deterioration and a high standard of upkeep relative to age.
Excellent	Perfect condition. All items that can be normally repaired or refinished have been recently corrected.

Source: Montana Department of Commerce

Table 4.07 – *Owner-Occupied Housing Values*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% Change
Lewis & Clark Co.	$200,600	$203,600	$204,600	$208,600	$212,600	$220,600	10.0%
Helena	$195,000	$198,600	$201,000	$205,500	$209,500	$220,100	12.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

lack of accessibility features, and the expense to upgrade homes to meet newer codes.

A 2008 Housing condition analysis performed by Montana Department of Commerce showed a significantly higher percentage of single-family homes reported as being in "Good" or "Very Good" condition compared to the rest of the county (36.7% versus 7.3%, 13.9% versus 8.1% respectively). Reporting on conditions of mobile home units were generally comparable between Helena and the county (See Table 4.05). A map, "Housing Condition of Structure" is provided as Figure 4.05.

Cost of Housing

Owner-Occupied Housing

Median home prices in Helena and in Lewis and Clark County are about equal as of 2017. Median home prices in both the city and the county have increased since 2012, but Helena's home prices have risen at a quicker rate, bringing them about equal to Lewis and Clark County. As shown in Table 4.07, Helena's median home price increased by 12.9% from 2012-2017, and Lewis and Clark County's median home price increased by 10.0% over the same time.

Table 4.08 and Table 4.03 compare owner-occupied home values in Helena with Lewis and Clark County and the U.S. Helena and the county share a similar makeup of home values, with a majority for both (62.8% for Helena and 58.30% for Lewis and Clark County) falling between $150,000 and $299,999, whereas national trends show a much more evenly distributed array of home values. At the national level, only 33.30% of home values fall between $150,000 and $299,999.

DRAFT

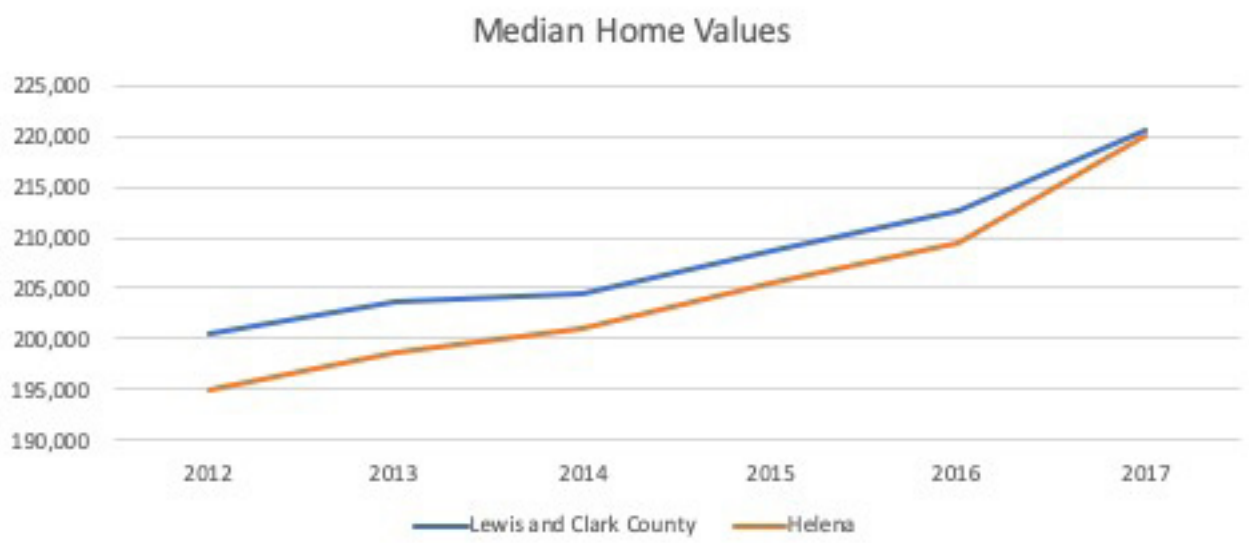


Figure 4.01 – *Median Home Values (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate)*

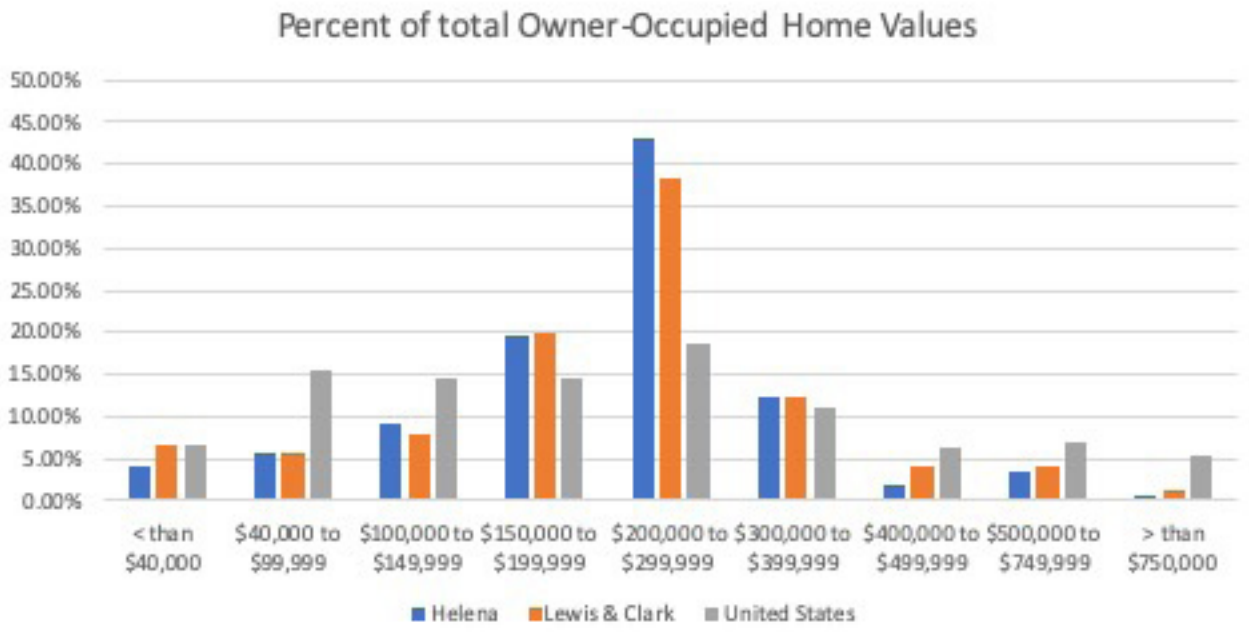


Figure 4.02 – *Owner-occupied Home Values, Comparative (Source: Sterling's Best Places Housing data, 2018)*

Renter-Occupied Housing

DRAFT

The median rent is higher in Lewis and Clark County than in the City of Helena. This gap has remained about the same since 2012, as shown in Table 4.9, although Helena's median rent increased at a quicker rate (19.0%) than that of the county (17.8%). Helena's median rent also increased at a quicker rate than the median rent for the State of Montana

Table 4.08 – *Owner-Occupied Home Values, 2018*

Value	Helena	Lewis & Clark Co.	United States
< than $40,000	4.20%	6.50%	6.60%
$40,000 to $99,999	5.70%	5.60%	15.60%
$100,000 to $149,999	9.20%	7.80%	14.70%
$150,000 to $199,999	19.70%	20.00%	14.60%
$200,000 to $299,999	43.10%	38.30%	18.70%
$300,000 to $399,999	12.30%	12.40%	11.00%
$400,000 to $499,999	2.00%	4.00%	6.20%
$500,000 to $749,999	3.50%	4.10%	7.00%
> than $750,000	0.50%	1.10%	5.40%

Source: Sterling's Best Places Housing data, 2018

Table 4.09 – *Median Rent Cost*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% Change
Helena	$670	$708	$724	$754	$784	$797	19.0%
Lewis & Clark County	$695	$737	$749	$783	$802	$819	17.8%
Montana	$667	$682	$696	$711	$732	$751	12.6%
United States	$889	$904	$920	$928	$949	$982	10.5%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 4.10 – *Permit Values, Helena*

Year	SF Units	Total Value	Average/Unit	MF Units	Total Value	Average/Bldg.
2011	81	$17,124,877	$211,418	27	$7,472,937	$276,775
2012	65	$14,775,813	$227,320	45	$10,352,362	$230,052
2013	58	$14,503,124	$250,054	29	$9,261,156	$319,350
2014	46	$10,167,822	$221,040	35	$27,557,073	$787,345
2015	67	$17,473,813	$260,803	46	$30,820,271	$670,006
2016	51	$15,257,103	$299,159	35	$31,563,258	$901,807
2017	37	$11,426,217	$308,817	26	$11,858,859	$456,110
2018	56	$17,260,730	$308,227	34	$16,019,490	$471,161

SF = Single-Family units; MF = Multi-Family units
Source: City of Helena Building Permits (2011 thru 2018)

DRAFT

as a whole (12.6%), rising at nearly double the pace of rent increases across the entire U.S. (10.5%).

Building Cost

The average cost per unit of new construction in Helena has increased substantially over the past several years. As shown in Table 4.10, the average cost per unit rose by 45.7% since 2011 for single family dwellings and 70.2% for multi-family buildings.

Issues Related to Housing

Housing Affordability

As recently as the mid-1970s, economists noted that the vast majority of households in the United States paid no more than 25% of their household incomes for housing costs. By the early 1980s, the ratio rose to 30% or more of household income.

Table 4.11 – *Households with a Housing Cost Burden, 2013-2017*

	Helena	Lewis & Clark	Montana
Renters	42.7%	42.6%	46.0%
Homeowners with a mortgage	21.8%	23.8%	30.1%
Homeowners with no mortgage	9.6%	9.7%	12.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

Based on the Census' 30% threshold – and that of most housing agencies – Table 4.11 shows the percentage of households with a housing "cost burden" for the city, county, and state for renters and homeowners.[6] Figures indicate residents in Helena and Lewis and Clark County are similarly cost-burdened, but both are less likely to be cost burdened than those across the state. Still, a large number of Helena's households and those in the county pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

Using fair market rent data, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) calculates the average hourly wage required for renters to afford housing in units across the U.S.[7] As noted in Table 4.12, NLIHC figures show fair market values for studio, one and two-bedroom units in Lewis and Clark County at $573, $703 and $892, respectively. Given the mean hourly wage for renters at $11.81, market rent exceeds cost-burdened thresholds for units larger than zero-bedroom (studio) size. Minimum wage earners ($8.50 per hour) avoid the cost-burdened threshold given rents no greater $442. Similarly, those reliant on Social Security income are restricted to rents at or below $231.

DRAFT

In 2017, average wage earners in the City of Helena who were renting paid 27.0% of their income in rent, which remains below the 30% cost burden threshold, but not by much. However, more than one-third (35.7%) of households with working age (25-64 years) adults had a housing cost burden, whereas almost half (48.2%) of senior citizens 65 years and older paid more than 30% of their income for housing.[8]

The Center for Neighborhood Technology developed the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index (H+T Index) to identify the true cost of housing based on its location by measuring the transportation costs associated with place.[9] Transportation costs are typically the second-highest expense for American households after housing. According to the H+T Index, combined housing and transportation costs should be no more than 45% of household income in order for housing to remain affordable. In Helena, figures show average housing costs at 23% of total income and transportation costs at 21% for a total H+T Index of 44% of household income – just 1% below thresholds. In comparison, Lewis and

6 Housing agencies typically calculate the affordability levels of housing costs based on the definition that mortgage or rent and utilities should not exceed 30% of household income.

7 NLIHC assumptions include 40-hour work week for 52 weeks per year, 30% threshold total income / rent and utilities.

8 U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates.

9 Center for Neighborhood Technology, https://htaindex.cnt.org.

Table 4.12 – *Fair-Market Rent, Cost-Burdened Thresholds, Lewis and Clark County*

Unit Size	Market Rent	Housing Wage
0 Bedroom (Studio)	$573	$11.02
1 Bedroom	$703	$13.52
2 Bedroom	$892	$17.15
3 Bedroom	$1.278	$24.58
4 Bedroom	$1,433	$27.56
Mean Renter Wage (estimated)	$11.81	
Affordable Rent for Mean Renter	$614	
Affordable Rent at Minimum Wage ($8.50)	$442	
Affordable Rent at Average SSI	$231	

Source: National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 2019, https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/montana

Clark County's costs are statistically higher, at 25% for housing and 23% for transportation, yielding a H+T Index of 48% of household income.

Distance from employment centers, lower-density housing patterns (such as one acre or more per dwelling unit), and higher oil prices lead to higher transportation costs for homeowners. Transportation costs can be reduced and kept to a minimum by creating walkable neighborhood streets, improving access to public transit, and locating employment opportunities and retail closer to housing. For some, depending on location and circumstance, the cost benefits of higher-density housing may be offset by perceptions of lower quality of life. Due to this, Helena needs to develop housing strategies that address both qualitative and quantitative factors, understanding the costs, tradeoffs, and responsibilities associated with meeting the housing needs of all residents.

DRAFT

Preservation of Housing & Existing Neighborhoods

In this and prior update cycles, there remains strong public support for the preservation of existing neighborhoods, including through provision and maintenance of quality infrastructure, and through design standards that preserve localized character. Transportation-related objectives in this plan support this, calling for increased pedestrian access and walkability in existing neighborhoods as a means to increase the desirability of the older parts of the city – and to some degree, help offset higher unit and transportation costs.

This plan aims to balance the preservation of existing housing (and its unique, often historic character) with the fresh energies that growth brings. As identified in the various community workshops, surveys, and interviews as part of this planning process, the city aims to incorporate much of its growth into higher-density, mixed-use "Neighborhood Centers." This, to provide greater housing diversity, lower transportation costs and urbanized character – as well as to reduce transformational pressures on existing neighborhoods.

Poverty & Homelessness

The portion of the local population living in poverty is increasing. The percentage of people living below the poverty line in Helena increased from 12.1% in 2010 to 15.6% in 2017, with figures in Lewis and Clark County increasing from 9.7% in 2010 to 11.4% in 2017. Poverty rates at the state level have remained steady over this same time period, measuring at 14.4% in 2017. Therefore, poverty is becoming a larger issue in Helena and across the county.

Housing for those living in poverty often requires subsidies. Lewis and Clark County has about 1,432 units of housing with subsidized rents that are intended to serve not only households below the poverty line, but also working families with low-income wage earners.[10]

Homelessness is increasing, and its face is changing. The traditional notion that homeless persons are usually single males is being challenged as more families, teens, and children become homeless. The federally-mandated 2019 Montana Homeless Survey for Helena identified 268 respondents as homeless – a number that grew from 240 in 2017 – but has decreased from 423 in 2015.[11] Many of the area's emergency and transitional shelters report that they are often filled to capacity. Homelessness imposes costs on communities far beyond the costs of shelters. More permanent solutions to the problem of homelessness need to be identified, and this plan's objectives and actions framework supports such efforts.

DRAFT

Energy Costs & Conservation

Rising energy costs are affecting almost every household in Montana. The Montana Department of Commerce's 2012 White Paper: Housing in Montana reports that the gap between what the average low-income family could afford for energy rose from $426 in 2002 to $1,354 in 2007, and costs have risen even higher since that time. Many homeowners are looking at either remodeling to increase the energy efficiency of their existing home or asking their builder to incorporate newer green building techniques when constructing their new home.

Since the city of Helena is a Certified City for building code enforcement, all renovations and new construction fall under the most currently-adopted Energy Code. Energy codes are designed to increase the energy efficiency in both residential and commercial construction. While a homeowner can ask a contractor to increase the efficiency of their home through more stringent construction techniques, the City cannot require that construction exceed that of the adopted code.

To encourage greater building energy efficiency, the City of Helena notes the following:

- *The State of Montana and Northwestern Power offer tax incentives and rebates to encourage energy conservation. Whenever possible,*

10 Combination of units managed by Helena Housing Authority (HHA) and Rocky Mountain Development Council (RMDC), "Tri County Housing Needs Assessment," October 2018.

11 2019 Montana Homeless Survey, http://mthomelessdata.com/2019/

the City partners with these organizations to promote energy conservation and provide education to building owners and contractors;

- *Helena maintains a revolving loan fund for residential solar photo-voltaic (PV) installation (0% loan).*

In addition, this plan's objectives support improved energy efficiency in Helena's housing stock, implemented through development standards, land use regulations, public/private partnerships, public education, and incentives where appropriate.

Figure 4.03 – *Downtown and elsewhere, mixed-use buildings are seen as an effective strategy for Helena's housing objectives. (Image: SCJ Alliance, Inc.)*

Regulations

While building regulations are necessary for cost-effective service provision, use compatibility, public health and safety, compliance costs are often cited as a factor in housing costs. For instance, a 2006 study done for the Missoula Realtors Association noted that between 1996 and 2006, permit costs rose by 87% while costs of construction rose by 64%. Expressed as a percentage, the study associated between 5.6% and 6.4% of new home costs to permitting, or an average of $10,949 per lot, excluding the costs of infrastructure.

Infrastructure regulations also can contribute to increased housing prices. Standards for some infrastructure, such as streets, curbs, parking, and sidewalks may at times exceed immediate, localized requirements, but provide great savings over the long-term, particularly when such areas are annexed or require integration with system infrastructure. Balancing short and long-term needs – and ascribing costs to implement such decisions – will remain a struggle, especially for Helena.

Development Patterns & Impacts on Housing

Development patterns and practices have a significant impact on the quantity and quality of housing in the community, particularly on low income households. As discussed in this chapter, housing and transportation costs are connected, so development patterns that guide transportation networks affect housing development as well. In addition, housing that is located near sensitive wildlife areas or wetlands may have negative impacts on environmental processes if not properly mitigated.

Past Actions

Because Helena does not have resources to develop housing, improving supply, ensuring neighborhood compatibility and influencing housing affordability will generally rely on policy initiatives and effective partnerships with housing providers and the larger community. In recent years, Helena has taken steps to address housing issues, including:

- Zoning ordinance updates
  - *Providing more flexibility for infill opportunities, with minimum lot and minimum dwelling sizes eliminated (except for multi-family in R-3 and R-4 districts);*
  - *Permitting second units in all residential districts by right;*
  - *Permitting manufactured and modular housing in all residential districts;*
  - *Allowing multi-family and single-family units by right when located in a commercial district above a commercial business;*
  - *Allowing flexibility in parking requirements and increased pedestrian access in new developments;*
  - *Eliminating building height limitations in the Downtown district;*
- Donation of surplus lots to Helena Area Habitat for Humanity and to the Montana Youth Homes for the new construction of affordable housing;
- Partnerships with nonprofit organizations and others authoring federal grant and loan applications for affordable housing, including low-income, multi-family complexes in the northern parts and eastern parts of the city;
- Passage of “hybrid” code supporting higher density, mixed-use development in new Downtown (DT) and Transitional Residential (TR) districts, implementing neighborhood-level planning;
- Creation of a RU District (Urban Residential);
- Adoption of this plan, including policies supporting greater diversity of housing types, and creation of higher-intensity, more walkable districts in key areas.

DRAFT

Objectives Summary

To keep up momentum in facilitating affordability in housing, this plan provides a focus on developing several higher-intensity "neighborhood centers." These centers strive to mix housing and non-residential uses, improving affordability conditions by means including:

- Reducing the need for personal autos and/or overall transportation costs;
- Creating areas with greater variety in housing unit type and size, addressing wider demographic and income markets.

In addition, plan objectives support a wide variety of actions including:

- Developing mechanisms that promote provision of workforce housing;
- Improved preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing stock;
- Support for development patterns that provide suitably-scaled, daily needs services within walking distance of residential areas;
- Ongoing partnerships with local and regional housing agencies;
- Development of mechanisms promoting "workforce" housing.

This growth policy also addresses qualitative considerations for housing in Helena, particularly regarding consideration of design standards to ensure compatibility and longevity of public and private investments. Land use objectives – which relate heavily to housing – encourages the location of new housing within city limits, helping reduce stress on infrastructure, maintain efficiency of city funds, and increase opportunities for all city residents, all while maintaining the character and culture of Helena.

DRAFT

(This page intentionally left blank)

DRAFT

Housing Goals & Objectives

Goals

[G.02] Support provision of housing that is safe, available, accessible, and affordable for all Helena residents.

Discussion: Helena's ongoing success depends on the ability of residents to afford safe, comfortable and convenient housing. This goal provides the foundation for a wide range of objectives supporting housing provision, guiding decisions regarding housing diversity, land use patterns, facilities provision, transportation, funding mechanisms and supporting services.

[G.09] Sustain the historic downtown as the "heart" of Helena, bringing the community together and enhancing its commercial, service and civic vitality.

Discussion: In preparing this plan, residents made it clear that the historic city center should still be considered the 'heart' of Helena. Maintaining a vibrant city center will require supporting its numerous and necessary functions, including a strong commercial base, community services, public space availability and access, parking and diverse housing options. This plan provides objectives and actions that help foster an environment in which the downtown can thrive, in turn aiding the attractiveness, efficiency and value of the entire community.

DRAFT

[G.10] Plan for and establish types and quantities of land uses in Helena supporting community needs, neighborhood centers, aesthetics and the City's long-term sustainability.

Discussion: Cities exercise considerable influence over land use, in turn influencing the type and character of development, patterns of growth, and the short and long-term financial impact of growth on the local economy. Consequently, this plan supports the allocation of land use types, supporting features and facilities sufficient to achieve overall plan objectives.

[G.11] Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and agencies, including East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Jefferson County, and Broadwater County on issues that have regional impacts.

Discussion: In the past, Helena was a more centralized, independent place. Today, the City's fortunes and that of its residents depends on a set of dynamic, inter-dependent relationships between East Helena, Lewis and Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater Counties, and other agencies and forces that shape the region. Over the course of this plan's life cycle, it is expected that inter-agency collaboration will become even more important. Accordingly, this plan's goal and objectives framework supports actions building the economic health and resilience of the region as a whole, especially as it relates strategically to the unique qualities Helena residents enjoy.

Objectives

[O.01] Create and sustain a diverse local economic base by:
- Helping retain, promote and expand existing businesses and industry;
- Supporting innovative, entrepreneurial enterprises;
- Creating 'business campus' and mixed-use models;
- Developing mechanisms that promote provision of workforce housing;
- Attracting new businesses and clean industry.

[O.12] Promote and maintain development of a diverse housing stock, helping to:
- Minimize depletion of natural resources;
- Reduce land consumption and demands on the physical environment;
- Provide housing options for all residents;
- Optimize infrastructure use;
- Prepare Helena to meet emerging needs.

[O.13] Maintain a regulatory environment that minimizes barriers for the creation of new or upgrades to existing housing, while protecting residents' health, safety, and welfare.

[O.14] Support the development of housing located in proximity to necessary services and quality of life assets, including generalized physical, technological, social and economic infrastructure.

[O.15] Support and expand the supply of housing for lower income, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, homeless, and others with special needs.

[O.16] Support the preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock.

[O.17] Work to involve the community in developing housing-related planning and design standards that will provide more housing consistent with the character of the neighborhoods.

DRAFT

[O.18] Encourage maintenance of housing in an attractive, safe and sanitary condition, helping extend the service life of housing and enhancing the general appearance of the city and its neighborhoods.

[O.19] Maintain standards for multi-family housing that encourage quality building design, landscaping and usable open space, supporting long-term family living.

[O.29] Promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in new and existing development, minimizing impacts on natural resources and the environment through measures including, as appropriate:
- Development standards;
- Land use regulations;
- Public/private partnerships;
- Public education;
- Tax or other monetary incentives.

[O.76] Support land use patterns that:
- Promote compatible, well-designed development;
- Foster the long-term fiscal health of the community;
- Maintain and enhance resident quality of life;
- Implement related master plans and/or facility plans.

DRAFT

[O.80] Promote development of varied and compatible types of mixed-use neighborhood centers in Helena, serving to enhance neighborhood identity, address community need, and support more compact land use patterns.

[O.81] Identify and encourage the growth of mixed-use neighborhood centers where appropriate and may be served by existing infrastructure.

[O.83] Encourage development patterns that provide suitably-scaled, daily needs services within walking distance of residential areas, allowing a measure of independence for those who cannot or choose not to drive.

[O.87] With the school district, prioritize location of schools in areas with:
- Access to arterial and collector streets;
- Ample sidewalks and pedestrian access;
- Proximity to residential areas being served;
- Proximity to designated neighborhood centers;
- Cost-effective access to necessary utilities and services.

(This page intentionally left blank)

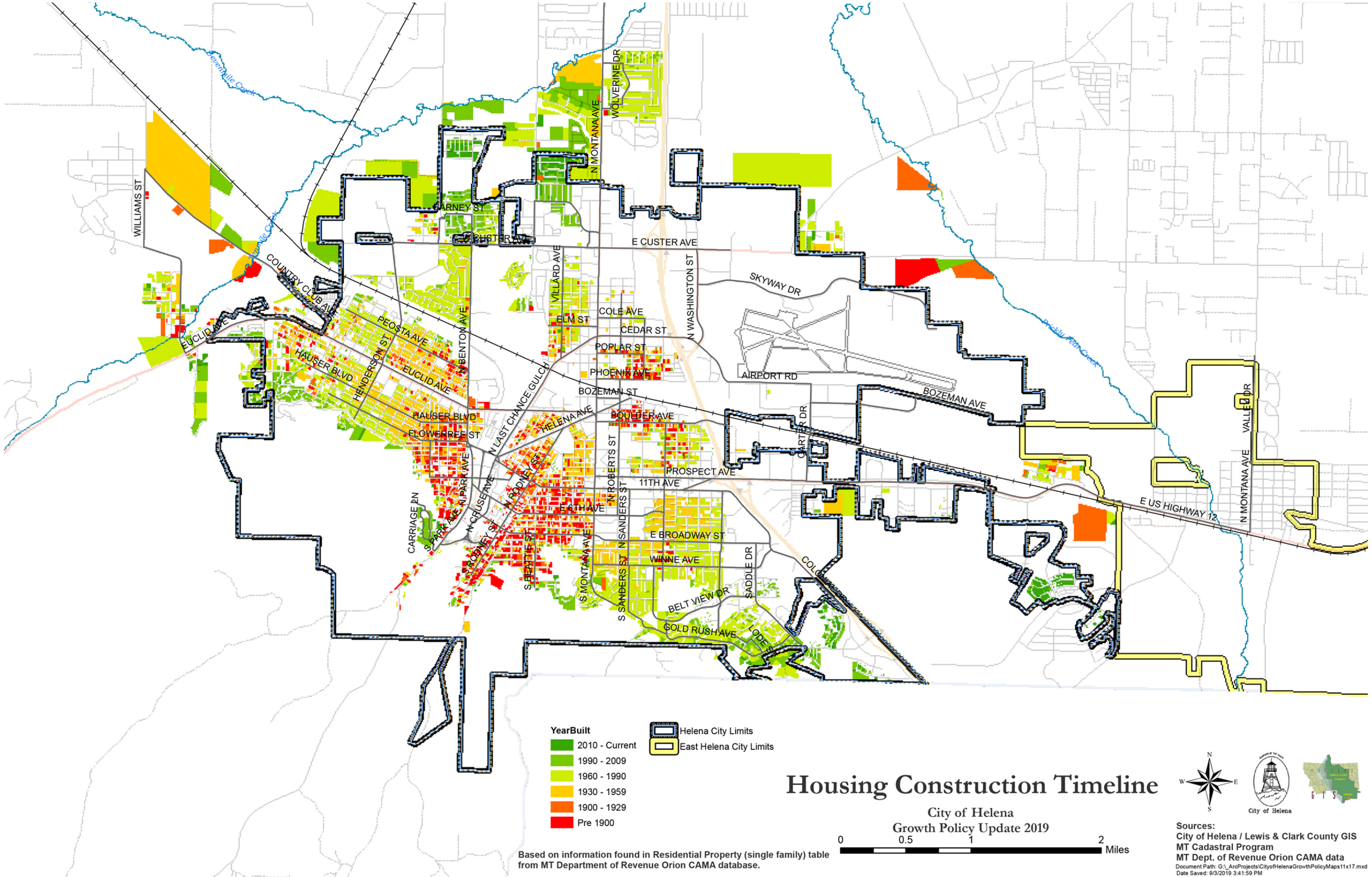


Figure 4.04 – *Housing Construction Timeline map (Image: City of Helena)*

(This page intentionally left blank)

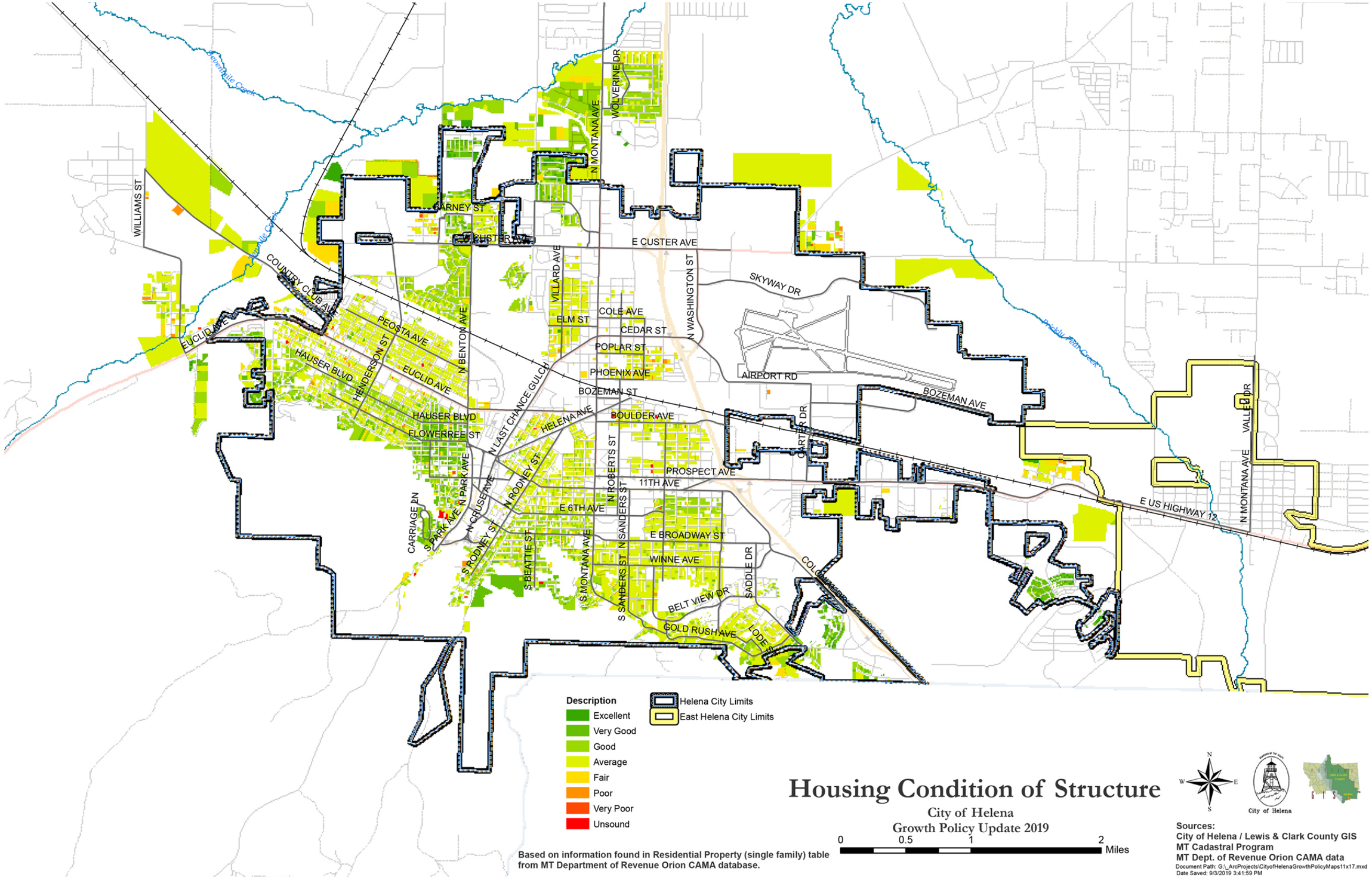


Figure 4.05 – *Housing Condition of Structure map (Image: City of Helena)*

(This page intentionally left blank)