

HR&A +



# Bangor Housing Study

## **Final Report**

February 2025

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## Introduction

*Demographic and Economic Trends*

*Housing Supply*

*Housing Affordability*

*Conclusions & Recommendations*



## INTRODUCTION

In recent years Bangor has made significant efforts to increase housing development. More work is needed to overcome market barriers and meet residents' housing needs.

In response to a growing state and nationwide housing affordability crisis, the State of Maine has recently taken steps to identify and address gaps in housing supply. In recent years, the City of Bangor (the City) has made zoning changes and investments to increase the supply and affordability of housing. To build on this work, the City engaged HR&A Advisors to develop a study of housing needs and market challenges.

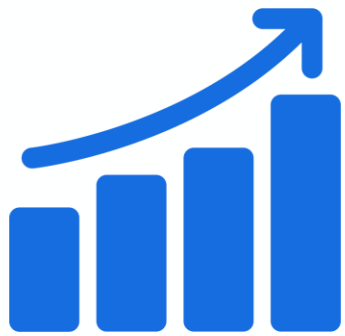
The Bangor Housing Study reflects trends in the housing market, demographics, and affordability in Bangor, as well as input from stakeholders. It identifies types of housing likely to be most in demand based on the findings of this analysis, and strategies to increase development activity.



## INTRODUCTION | HOUSING STUDY OVERVIEW

This study reflects trends in Bangor's housing market as well as stakeholder input. It provides a synthesis of findings and identifies unmet housing needs and program gaps.

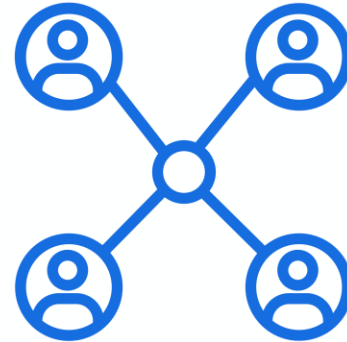
Research included quantitative and qualitative analysis of relevant trends in population, employment, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, housing supply, home prices, and development activity, as well as recent and ongoing programs and policies related to housing investment and affordability at the local and state level. HR&A engaged City officials and staff, housing service providers, developers, lenders, and other groups to contextualize Bangor's housing challenges.



**RESIDENTIAL  
DEMAND**



**HOUSING  
SUPPLY**



**STAKEHOLDER  
INTERVIEWS**



**POLICY  
CONTEXT**

## INTRODUCTION | BANGOR'S RECENT HOUSING EFFORTS

The City of Bangor has recently made multiple investments and policy changes to encourage housing development production and increase housing affordability.

### LAND USE

In recent years, Bangor has made zoning changes to **allow and encourage more uses** including Accessory Dwelling Units, tiny home parks, boarding houses, Permanent Supportive Housing, and mixed-use development. These changes include: reduced **lot sizes** and setbacks in some residential zones, and reduced **parking** requirement; **short-term rental** regulations; and revised **manufactured home park** language to comply with state law.

### SUBSIDY

Bangor uses its **federal entitlement funds** (CDBG, HOME dollars) to provide funding for **down payment assistance**, **weatherization** improvements, and **residential rehabilitation** programs.

The City dedicated a portion of its one-time ARPA funds to make **loans to property owners serving low-income renters**, and to support affordable housing development including **affordable homeownership** and **Permanent Supportive Housing**.

### TENANT'S RIGHTS

Bangor has adopted a **tenants' housing rights ordinance** regulating certain landlord practices and fees and requiring written notice for rent increase. The City has also piloted a **rental registry and strategic code enforcement** for long-term rentals.

## INTRODUCTION | RECOMMENDATIONS

The City can deploy funding, information, and policy changes to provide homes for residents of all incomes.

The City should work to reduce market barriers to housing development, and dedicate public funding to subsidize the development of homes affordable to low- and moderate-income households. These efforts should encourage all housing development, but where possible should prioritize certain populations and home types with particular need in Bangor.

### PRIORITY POPULATIONS



#### Low and Moderate-Income Workers

Bangor lost nearly 2,000 working age adults from 2012 to 2022, and a comparable number of households earning less than \$75,000.



#### First-Time Homebuyers

Home sale prices have risen sharply in recent years, and for the first time in 2022 the median income household could not afford the median-price home in Bangor.



#### Seniors

Bangor has had 28% growth in the population aged 65 and older since 2012. Seniors note a lack of options to downside or age in place.

### PRIORITY HOME TYPES



#### Smaller Homes (Studio and 1 Bedroom)

One person households account for over 40% of households in Bangor (5,700 households), while 0- and 1-bedroom homes account for only 25% of homes (fewer than 3,600 homes)



#### Townhomes

Because they are often smaller and cost less to build than detached homes, townhomes are often ideal entry-price homes for new owners or downsizing options for seniors



#### Multi-unit homes

Smaller homes located near downtown are in high demand among both young workers and seniors.



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**Demographic and Economic Trends**

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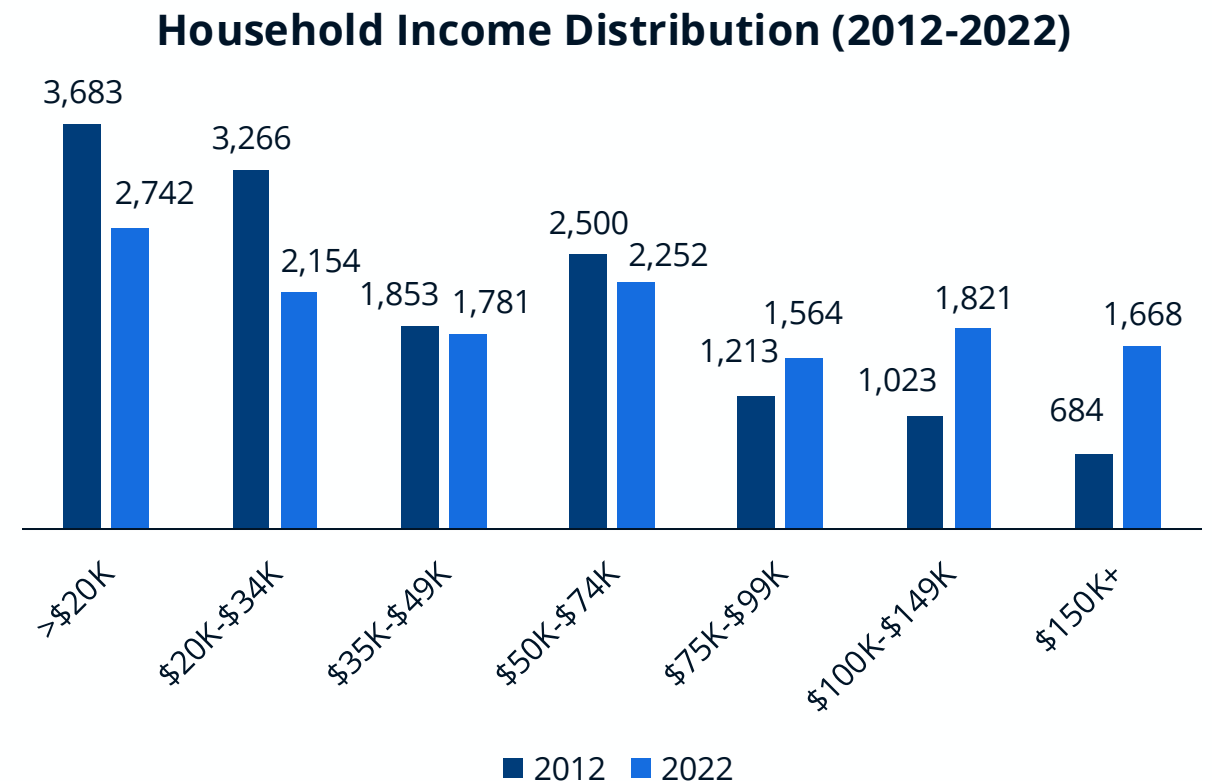
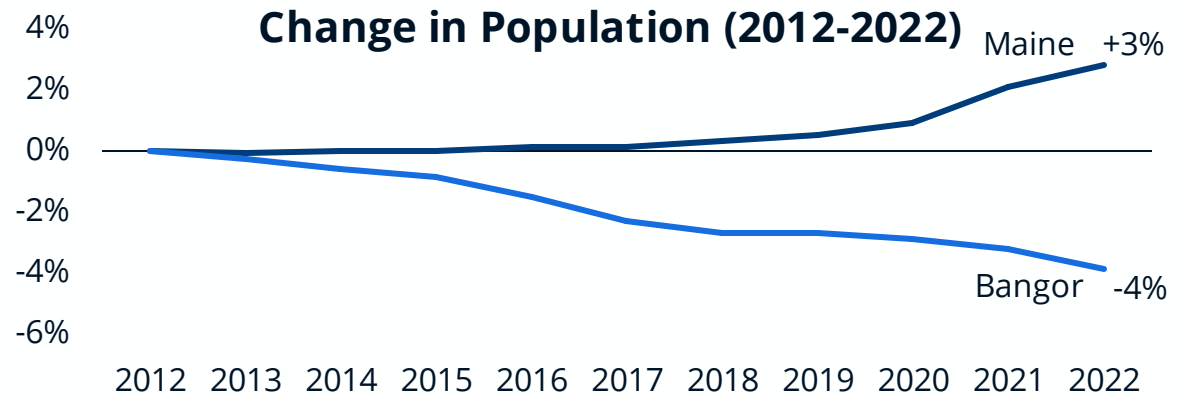
*Conclusions & Recommendations*

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Bangor's population is slowly declining, even as statewide population has grown in recent years.

Since 2012, the number of low- and moderate-income residents has declined. Bangor's population has lost over 2,000 households earning \$75K or less. This might indicate economic and displacement pressure on low-income households, who may be unable to find affordable homes in the city.

Concurrently, Bangor has added nearly 1800 households earning \$75K or more. As the cost of housing in Bangor has increased, higher-income households have greater access to housing options in the city than lower-income households.



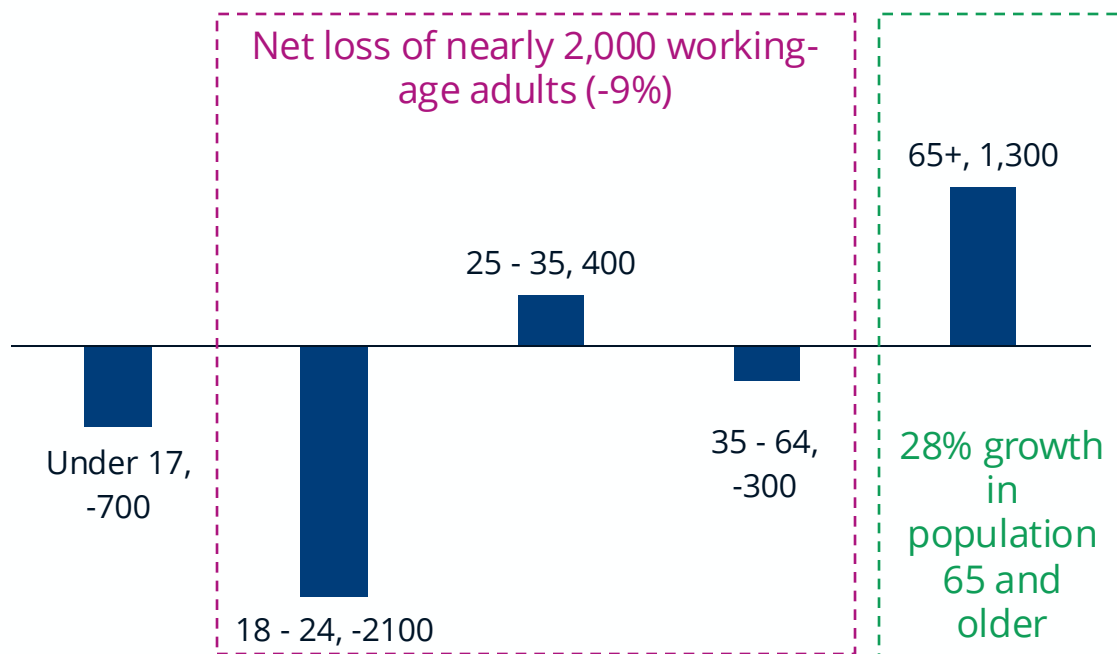
Source: American Census Bureau (2012-2022)



## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS | AGE

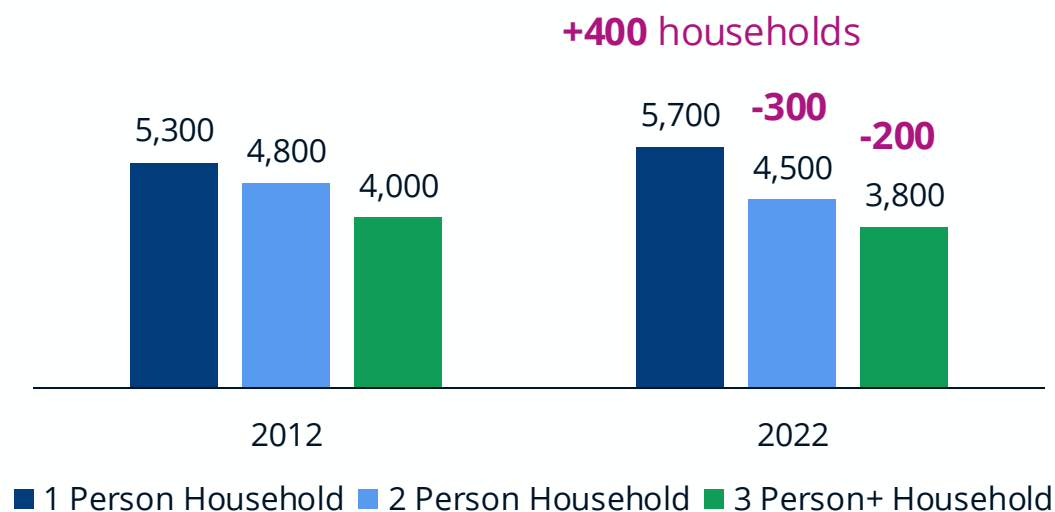
Bangor's population is growing older as the senior population is growing and the number of working-age adults is falling. The number of 1-person households has grown.

### Population Change by Age (2012-2022)



Bangor has not retained young households in the past decade. This may be due to a lack of suitable housing options. Growth in the population 65+ indicates that the City likely needs more senior housing.

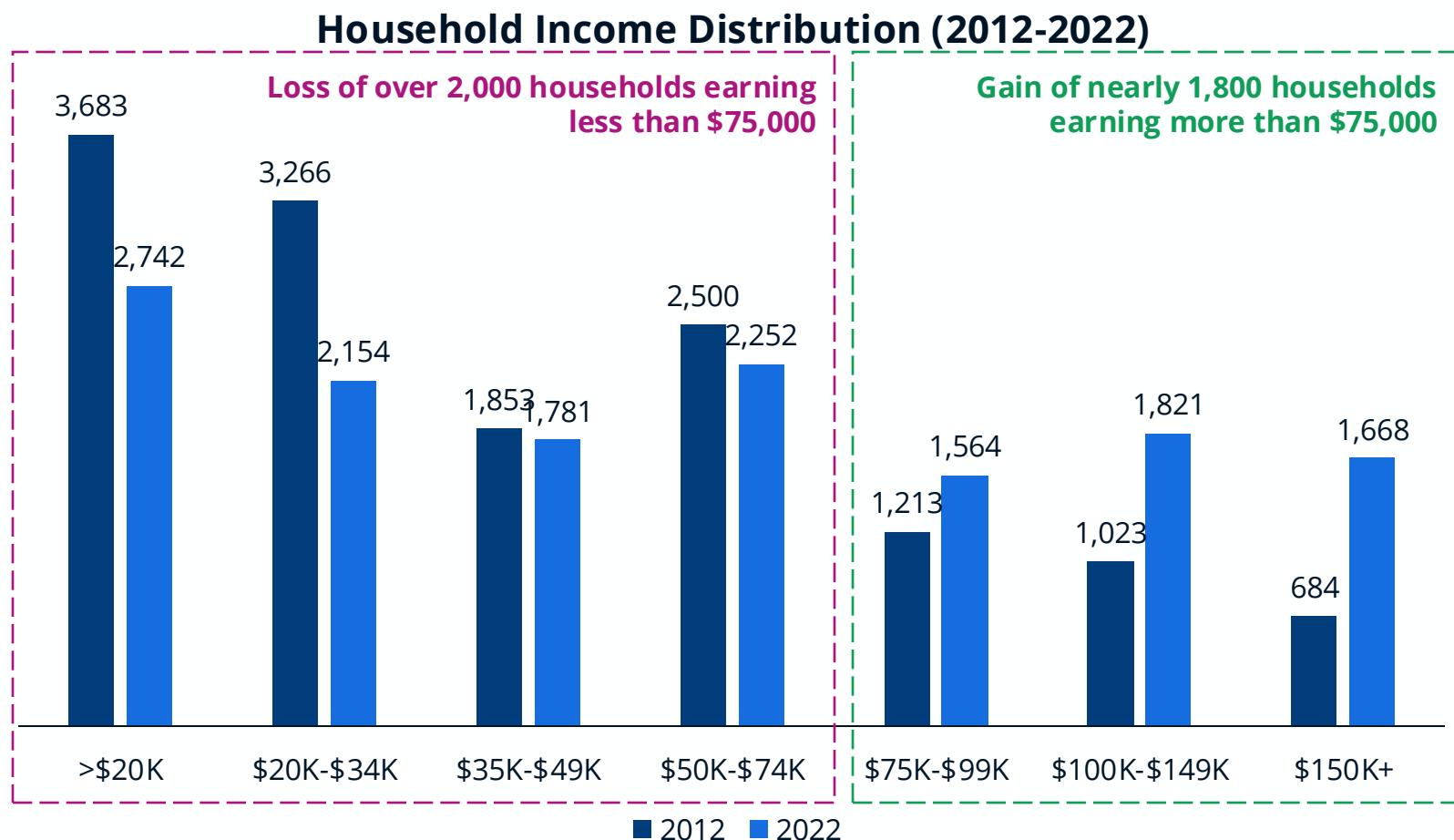
### Population by Household Size (2012, 2022)



The number of single-person households in Bangor has increased while two-person and three-or-more households have decreased, suggesting a growing need for housing suitable for smaller households.

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS | INCOME

Since 2012, the number of low- and moderate-income households in Bangor has declined. This may indicate displacement pressures due to rising costs and limited housing options.



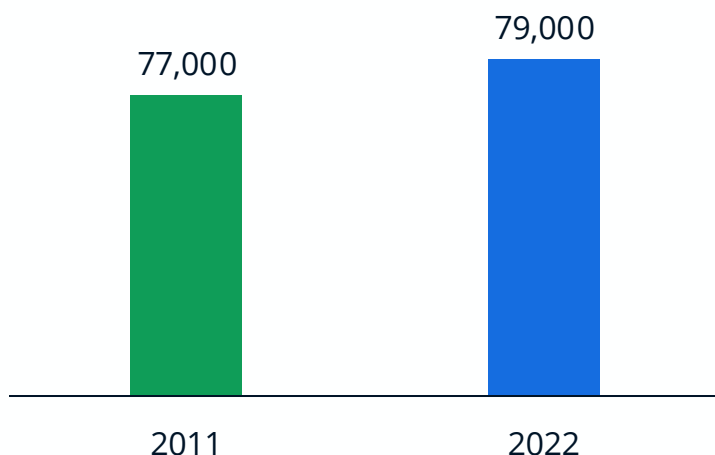
**Bangor has lost over 2,000 households earning \$75K or less,** indicating increased economic and displacement pressures on low-income households, who may be unable to find affordable homes in the city. Inflation also likely drove an increase in incomes.

Concurrently, **Bangor has added nearly 1,800 households earning \$75K or more, a 104% increase** since 2012. As the cost of housing in Bangor has increased, higher-income households have greater access to housing options.

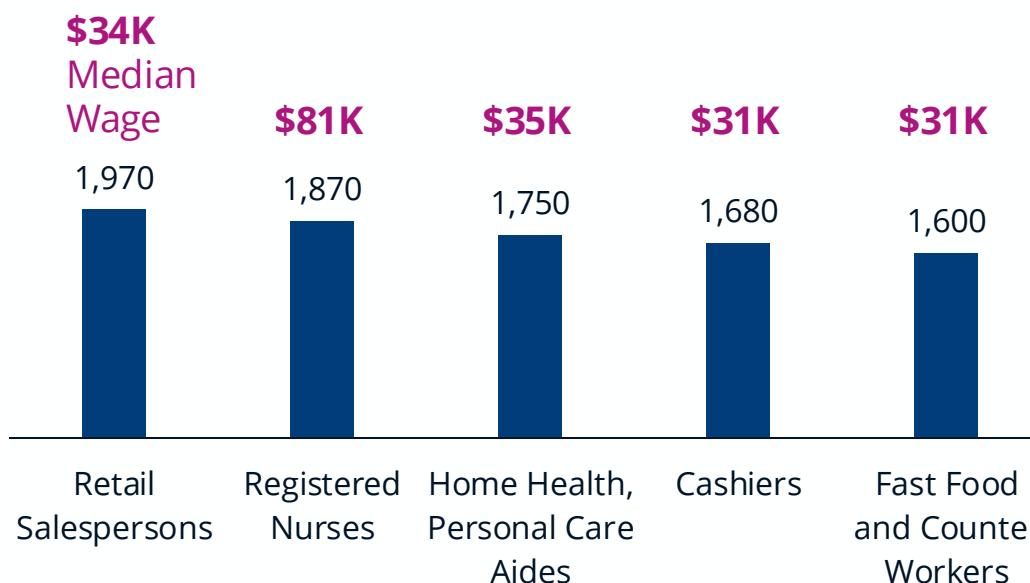
## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS | EMPLOYMENT

Despite job growth in Bangor over the past decade, most of the city's workers commute from other locations, which could indicate a lack of housing available for Bangor's workforce.

**Bangor MSA Job Growth  
(2011-2022)**



**Bangor Top 5 Occupations by Total  
Employment (2023)**



**80%**

Of workers in Bangor **commute into the city but do not live there**, with the largest share coming from Brewer, Hampden, and Hermon.

Among employed residents of Bangor, around **50% both live and work in the city, and the remainder commute out** of the city for work.

Bangor has added approximately 2,000 jobs in the past decade, a **3% total growth compared to 7% job growth in the State of Maine**. Many of Bangor's largest occupation areas provide salaries of around \$30,000 annually.

Source: American Community Survey (2022), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS), US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2023), Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), Origin-Destination Files

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## HOUSING SUPPLY

Population loss may be in part due to limited housing supply, housing diversity, and housing quality which limit the ability of residents to remain in Bangor as housing needs evolve.

Bangor lacks housing diversity, and available might not be suitable for all residents. Most homes in Bangor have 2 to 3 bedrooms, despite one person households accounting for over 40% of total households in Bangor. Stakeholders expressed interest in more opportunities to live in or near downtown.

**Construction costs have skyrocketed following the pandemic**, making development of new housing challenging.

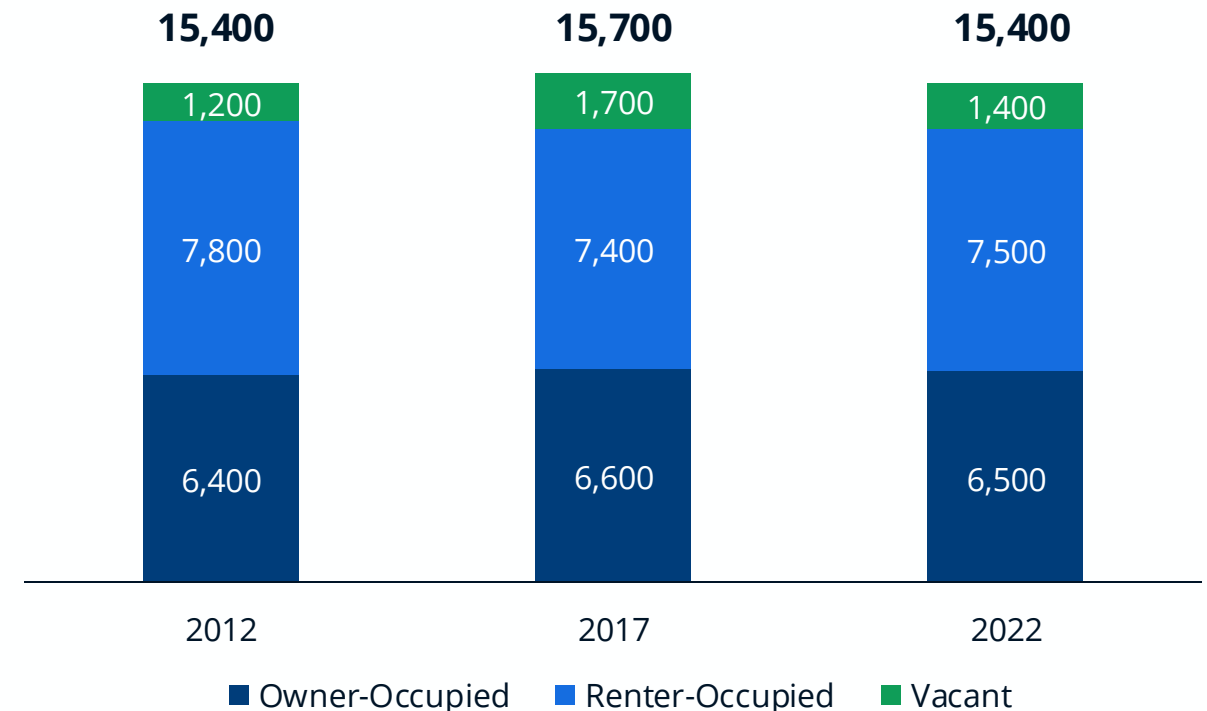
When not properly maintained, **aging housing stock can reach obsolescence, reducing overall supply**, posing financial, health, and safety challenges for households. Most Bangor's homes (83%) were built before 1990.

## Growth of Housing Units (2011-2022)

State of Maine: **+3%**

Bangor: **+0.2%**

## Bangor Total Housing Supply and Occupancy (2012-2022)

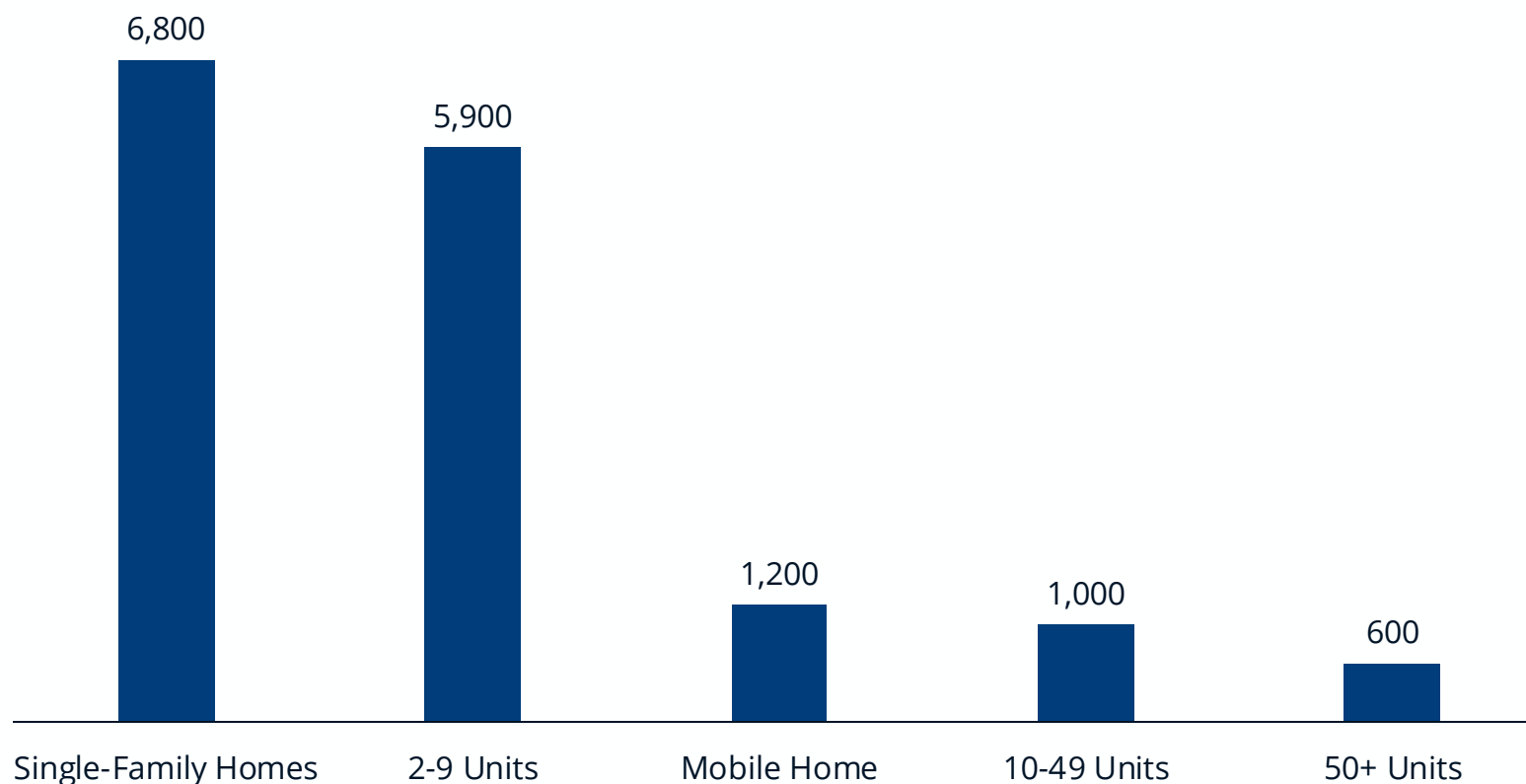


Source: American Community Survey.

## HOUSING SUPPLY | TYPOLOGY

Available homes may not be suitable for the households in Bangor, particularly in terms of housing size and typology.

**Housing Units by Typology**



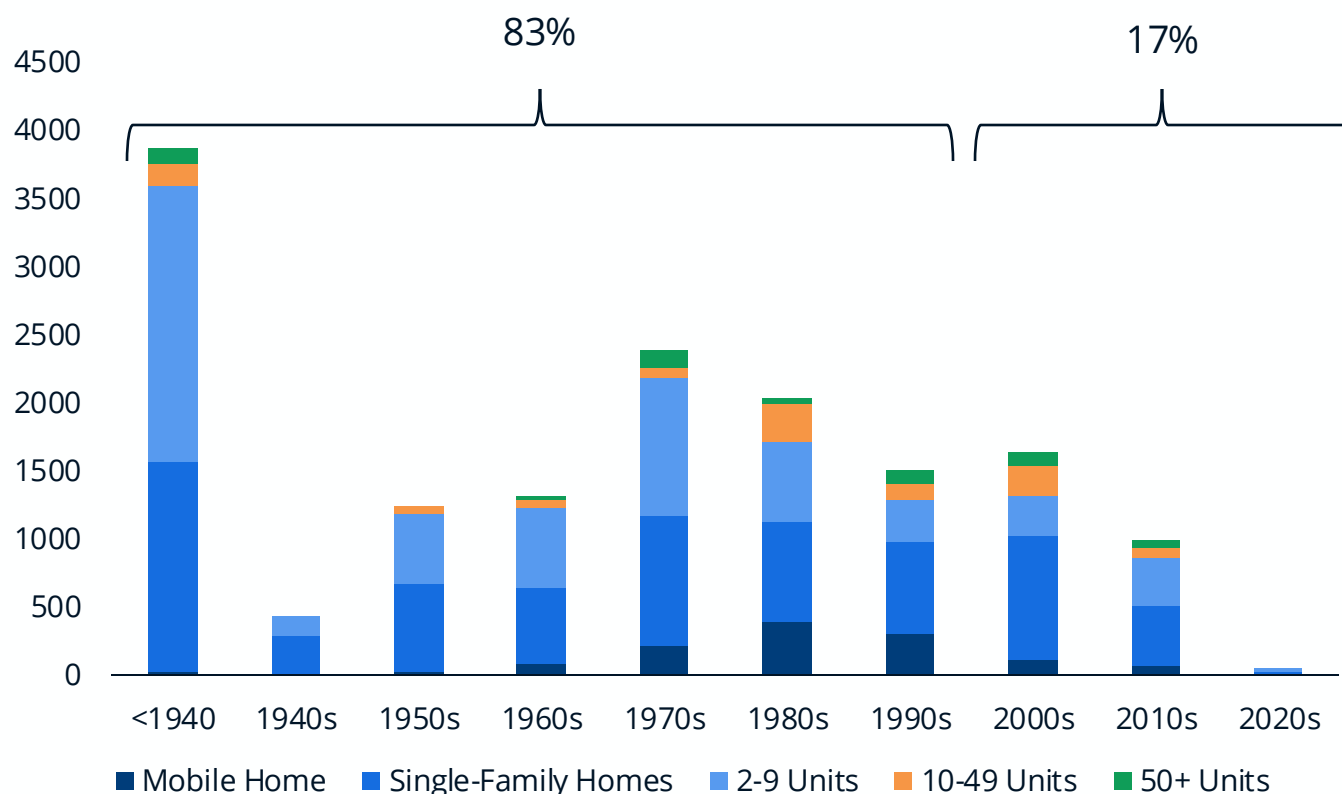
Most homes in Bangor are single-family. There is also a large number of duplexes, many of which may be subdivided former single-family homes. Mobile homes are also prevalent in Bangor.

One person households account for over 40% of households in Bangor, and 2-person households account for another 32%. However, **0- and 1-bedroom homes account for only about 25% of homes.** There are 5,700 1-person households in Bangor and fewer than 3,600 0- and 1- bedroom homes. Most homes have 2 to 3 bedrooms.

## HOUSING SUPPLY | TYPOLOGY

Most of Bangor's housing stock is older and may require repairs and upgrades to avoid becoming obsolete.

### Homes by Decade Built and Typology



Source: American Community Survey, City of Bangor Community & Economic Development.

**Housing quality challenges arising from a large stock of older housing and a lack of investment can pose a hazard** to the health and safety of residents.

If unaddressed, obsolete housing can also present significant costs to homeowners, renters, and landlords.

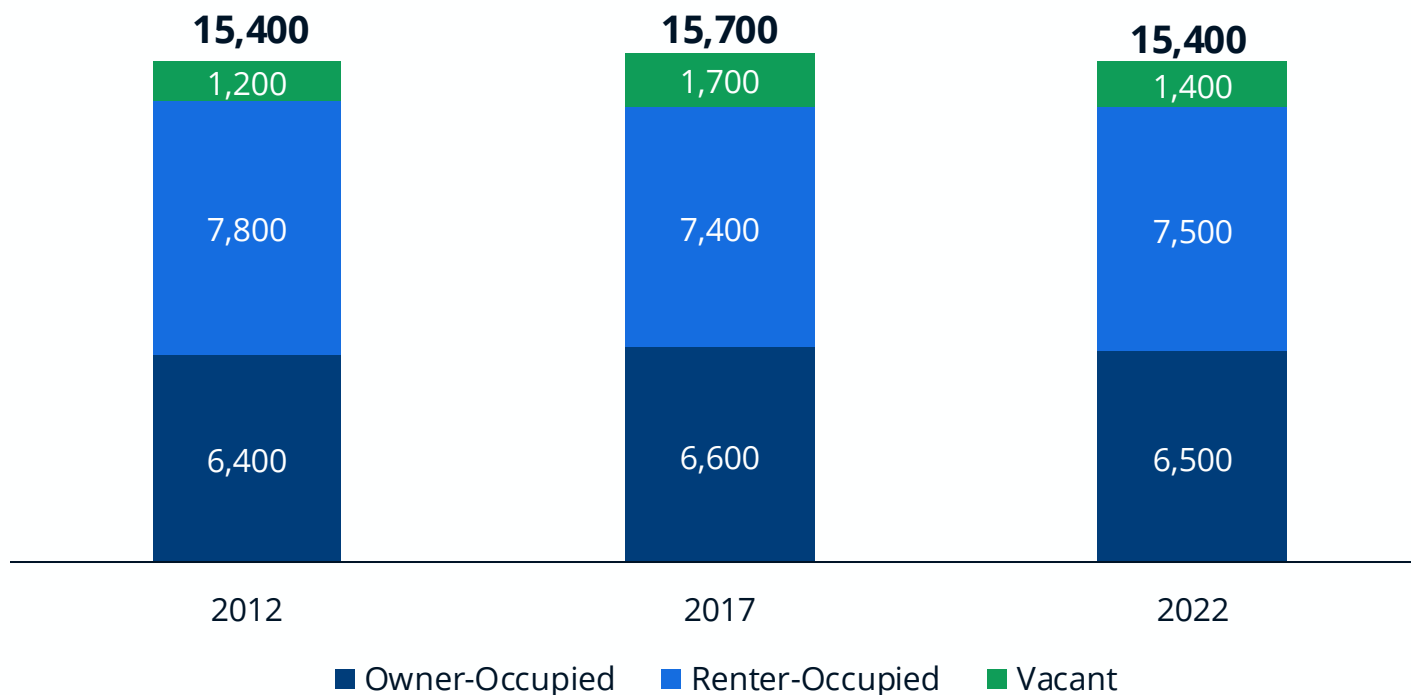
The City has placarded 83 properties for housing quality concerns of varying degrees of severity. The City also notes 53 vacant properties, many of which were placarded almost a decade ago. **Stakeholder interviews cite housing quality as a challenge for Bangor's housing market.**

**The City of Bangor administers several homeowner repair programs to address these challenges**, including the Owner-Occupied Property Loan Program and Heat Pump & Weatherization Assistance Grants in collaboration with Efficiency Maine.

## HOUSING SUPPLY | SUPPLY GROWTH

Over the past decade, Bangor's housing supply has not grown, suggesting a need to identify and overcome barriers to development.

**Bangor Total Housing Supply and Occupancy  
(2012-2022)**



**+0.2%**

Change in total Housing Supply in Bangor, 2012-2022, compared with **+3.0%** for the State of Maine

**9%**

Residential vacancy rate in Bangor in 2022, compared with **22%** for the State of Maine

**3.4%**

Share of vacant homes that are for seasonal use in Bangor



## HOUSING SUPPLY | RENTAL DELIVERIES

Renovations of historic buildings downtown have comprised a large portion of recent rental housing deliveries.



**Tower 99 – 99 Franklin St**  
(Completed 2020)



**213 Exchange Street**  
(Completed 2020)

Units	18	15
Average Rent	\$2,596	\$1,997
Rent PSF	\$2.18	\$2.44
Lot Size (Acres)	0.12	0.09
DUs/Acre	154 DUs/acre	169 DUs/acre
Vacancy	5.4%	67.1%
Parking	Covered	N/A
Amenities	Courtyard, elevator, fitness center, lounge, roof terrace	N/A
Unit Mix	2 BD: 100%	1 BD: 100%

Downtown locations have zoning to support larger-scale (10+ units) multifamily rental developments.

**The City has undertaken reforms to allow more residential development** in commercial zones, reduced lot sizes and setbacks in some residential zones, and reduced parking requirements.

**Recent multifamily developments have focused on renovation or conversion of historic buildings rather than new construction.**

This may be due to high construction costs and a prevalence of small or irregular lots downtown that make larger development difficult. It may also be because of the opportunity to repurpose Bangor's older office buildings.

## HOUSING SUPPLY | FOR-SALE DELIVERIES

Though some new single-family construction has been on single lots, the Maine Woods subdivision represents a larger development of 30 homes total. Maine Woods will include a mix of housing types, all with 3 bedrooms.



**631 Essex St | \$399,000**

Year Built: 2023

Beds: 3

Square Feet: 1,500

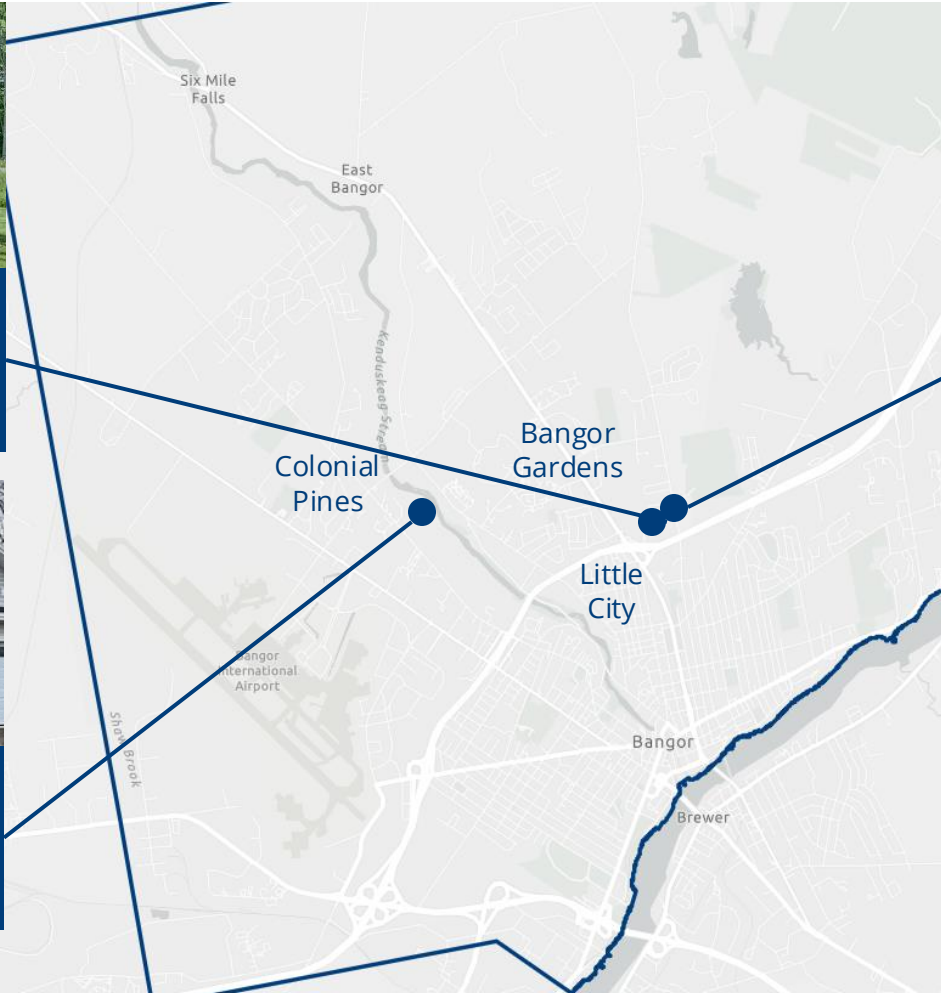


**32 Meadow Farm Rd | \$269,000**

Year Built: 2021

Beds: 2

Square Feet: 1,208



**55 Wildwood Dr (Maine Woods) | \$270,000**

Year Built: 2024

Beds: 3

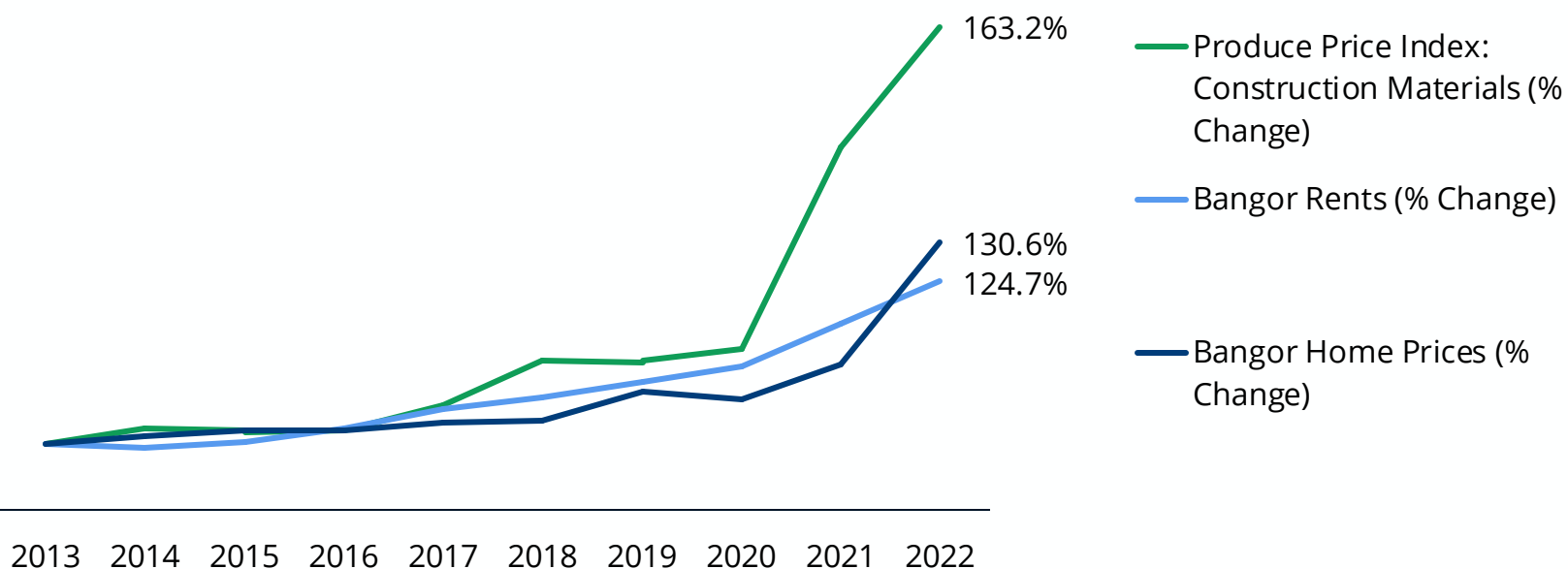
Square Feet: 1,520

The Maine Woods subdivision is adding 30 duplexes close to public amenities. Larger subdivision projects have not been as common in Bangor as they require accompanying infrastructure investment (such as stormwater, roads, and utilities) and planning costs.

## HOUSING SUPPLY | CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Housing supply may be constrained because of rising costs, and a mismatch between regional construction costs and the rents or prices that are achievable in the Bangor market.

### Construction Costs (US), Rent and Home Sales Prices (Bangor) (2013-2022)



# 5.3%

Interest rates increased to 5.3% in 2024 from a low near 0% in 2020).

In recent years, **construction costs and interest rates have both increased substantially across the country**. Rents and home prices in Bangor are low compared to some other New England markets, and regional developers may choose to build where they can achieve higher returns.

## HOUSING SUPPLY | FOR-SALE MARKET

Single-family homeowners in Bangor are selling less frequently, creating a constrained market. This may be due to high interest rates and a lack of options for downsizing.

**Median Days on Market  
(2017-2024)**



# -81%

Decrease in median days a property is on the market between January 2017 and May 2024.

**This sharp decrease indicates homes are selling rapidly. High interest rates also make new mortgages unattractive,** further contributing to a limited availability of homes on the market.

Stakeholder interviewees noted that existing **Bangor homeowners are less willing to put homes on the market because there may be a lack of available housing that meets their needs - like downsizing.**

**A lack of diverse housing options for sale poses a unique challenge for seniors who might be looking to downsize.**

Stakeholders, including developers, realtors, and housing service providers noted the need for more housing options for seniors who want to age in place -- "Realtors are seeing seniors staying in their homes longer or moving in with relatives more than they would if there was housing availability that suited their needs."



## HOUSING SUPPLY | FOR-SALE MARKET

Bangor's for-sale housing market is constrained by low "market churn," due to a small supply inventory of houses on the market. However, this may be changing.

**End of Month For-Sale Inventory  
(2017-2024)**



**-54%**

Bangor saw a decrease in the end of month for-sale inventory between January 2017 and May 2024, suggesting there are fewer homes for sale overall.

**77%**

Despite low market volume in recent years, June 2024 saw an increase in active listings compared to June 2023, indicating a rebound in market volume

**3 Months**

"Months' supply" represents the months it would take for the current inventory on the market to sell given the current sales pace. Five or six months of supply is considered a healthy market with moderate price appreciation, while **a three-month supply can result in more rapid price increases.**

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## AFFORDABILITY

As rental and for-sale home prices have skyrocketed in Bangor, more households have faced affordability challenges.

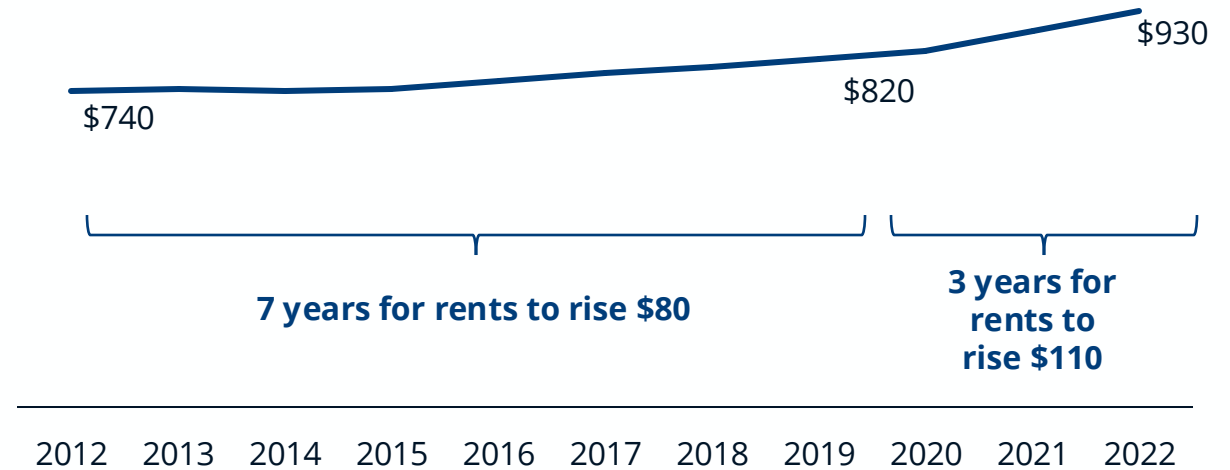
Rents and home prices have risen sharply in recent years, threatening to displace residents.

Rents have increased at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 1.3% between 2012 and 2020 and have grown at a 6.5% CAGR between 2020 and 2022, signaling significant increases in recent years. Home prices have increased at a 11% CAGR between 2020 and 2024.

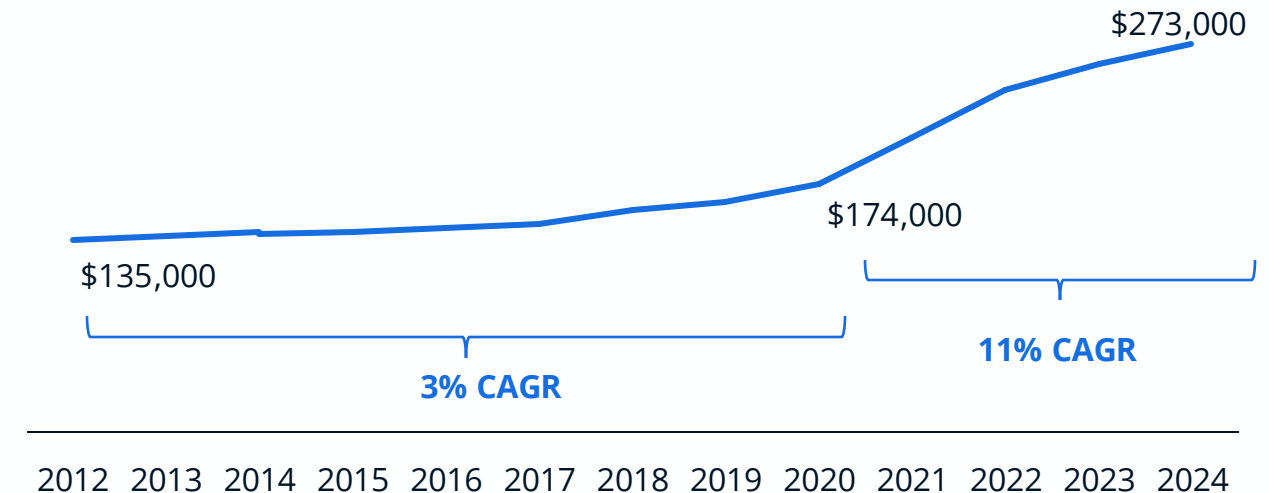
There is currently a shortage of 700 homes for households earning less than \$35,000, resulting in renters paying rents higher than their income can support. 86% of households earning 50% AMI or less are cost-burdened, and cost-burdened households are disproportionately seniors.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the income required to purchase a median-price home has surpassed median household income in Bangor – the first time this has happened in the past decade.

### Median Rent (2012-2022)



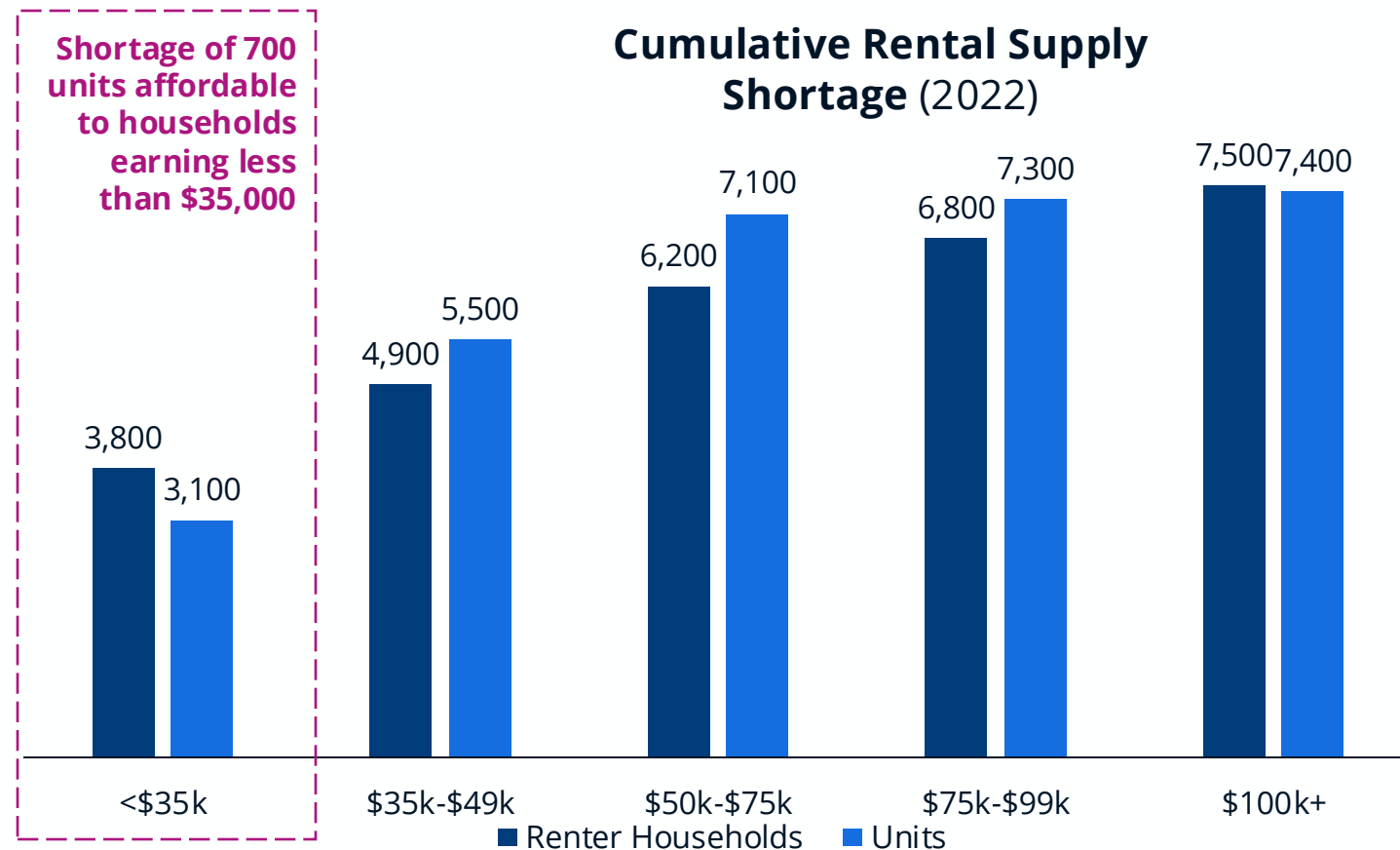
### Home Sales Prices



Source: Zillow.

## AFFORDABILITY | RENTAL SUPPLY SHORTAGE

Bangor does not have enough housing affordable to its lowest-income residents. There is a shortage of up to 700 rental homes available to households earning less than \$35,000 annually.



**Bangor needs more subsidized affordable rental housing, which typically serves households with incomes at or below 60% of AMI.** A comparison of available rental homes by cost and incomes of renter households indicates that there is a **shortage of up to 700 homes affordable to households earning less than \$35,000.** In other words, for every 100 households earning \$35,000 annually, there are around only 80 rental homes available.

This is slightly less than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of 4, and slightly greater than 60% of AMI for a single person. **The shortage of homes affordable to households with income less than \$25,000 is larger, approximately 1,200.**



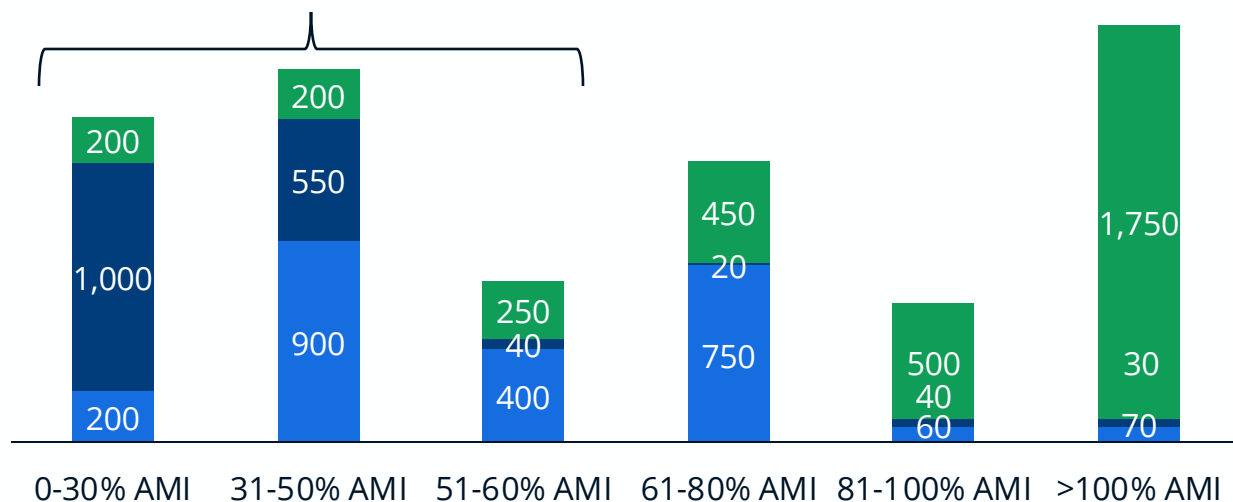
## AFFORDABILITY | RENTER COST BURDEN

Low-income renters in Bangor cannot afford their homes, and many moderate-income households may be choosing to leave Bangor to find affordable rentals.

### Renter Housing Cost Burden by Income (2022)

■ Cost Burdened ■ Severely Cost Burdened ■ Not Cost Burdened

**86%** of renters with incomes at or below 50% of Area Median Income are cost burdened and 70% are extremely cost burdened\*



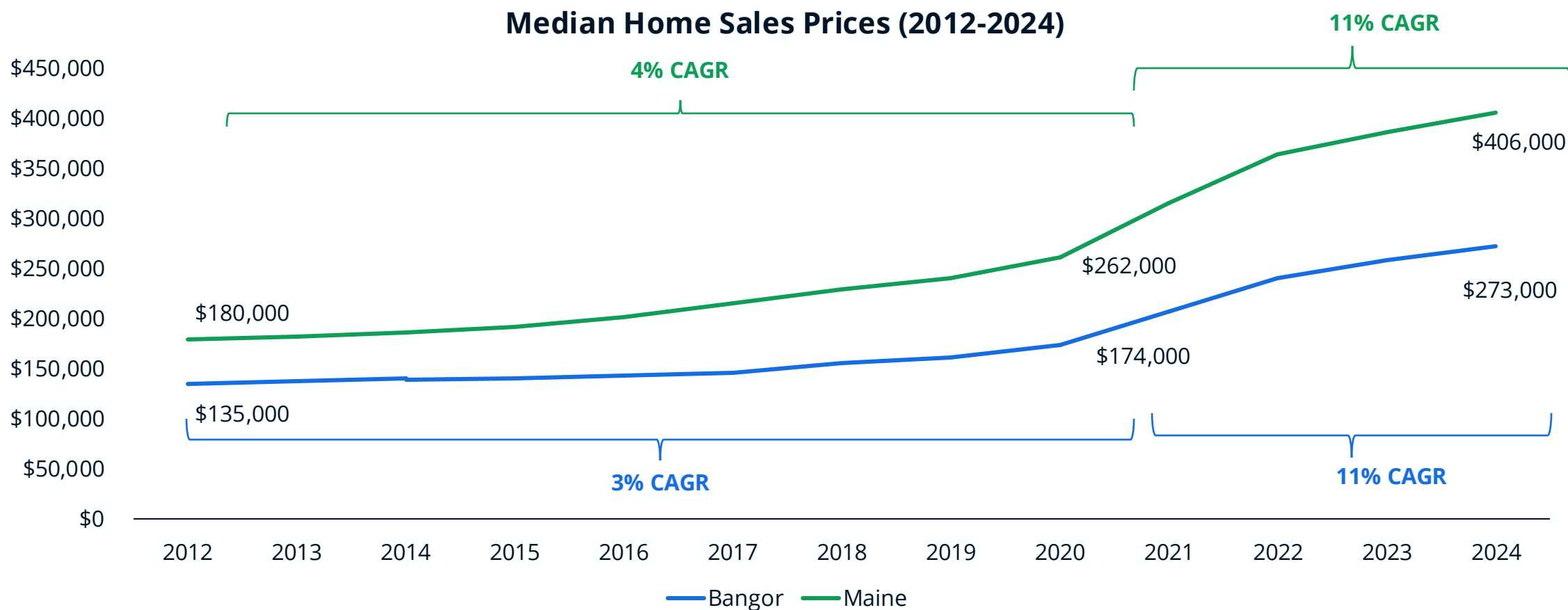
**Many low- and moderate-income households experience housing cost burden, which can lead to instability.** When households pay too much income on rent, they have fewer resources to pay for other expenses, and unexpected expenses or loss of income can put them at risk of eviction.

A household earning \$30,000 annually (30% AMI for a household of four) and paying monthly rent of \$750 is considered cost burdened. The household would have only \$1,750 remaining monthly income for **necessities such as food, medicine, childcare, and transportation**, as well as income tax.

While most households earning under 50% AMI are cost burdened, only around 8% of 80-100% AMI households are cost burdened. However, the smaller number of households at this income level suggests that **moderate-income renters are moving away from Bangor to find suitable housing.**

## AFFORDABILITY | HOME SALES PRICES

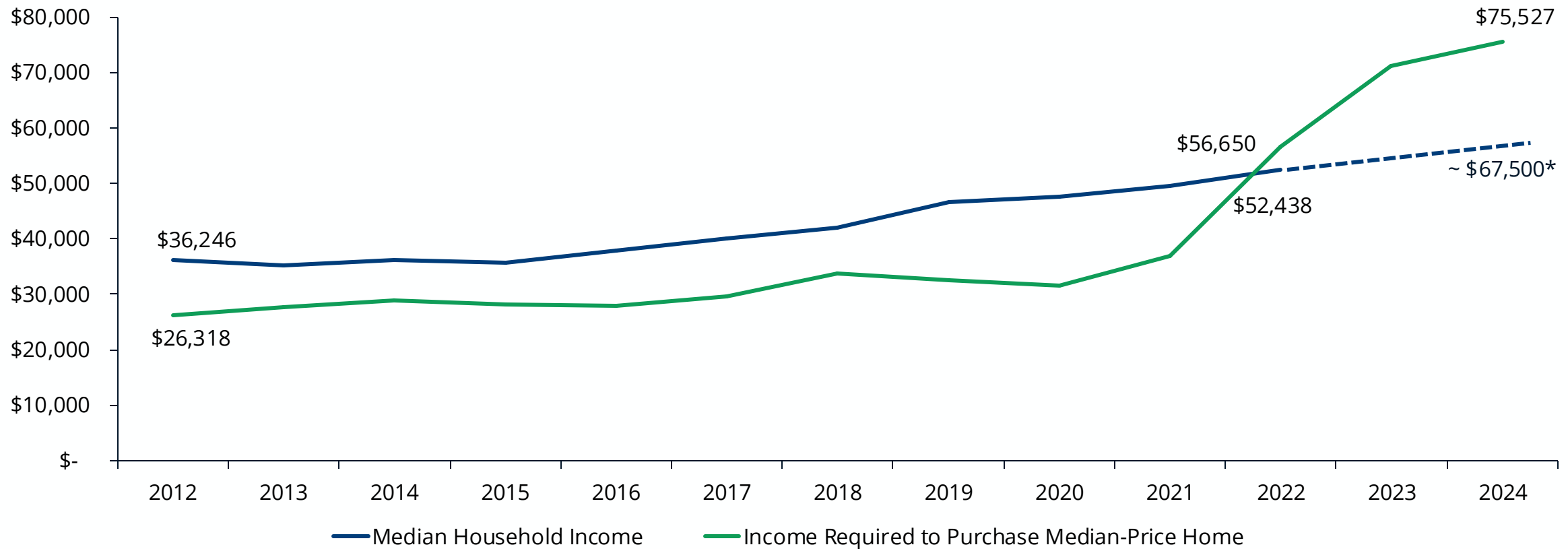
Home values have increased in Bangor, mirroring increases across the State of Maine, with the most rapid surge following 2020.



## AFFORDABILITY | FOR-SALE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

In 2022 for the first time a household earning the median income cannot afford to purchase a median-price home.

**Median Household Income and Income Required to Purchase Median Price Home (2012-2024)**

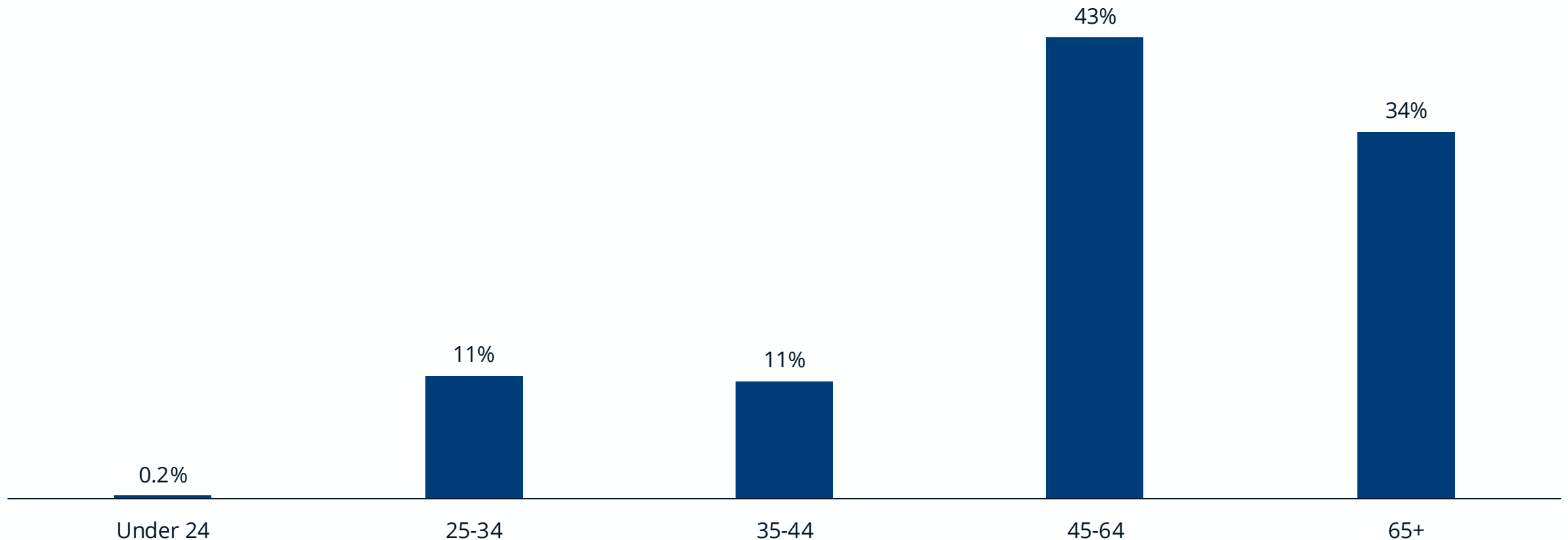


Source: American Community Survey (2022). \*An estimate based on rate of income growth between 2020 and 2022.

## AFFORDABILITY | HOMEOWNERSHIP BY AGE

Almost no households younger than 35 are homeowners, which suggests there are barriers or limited homeownership opportunities for first-time homebuyers.

**Homeownership by Age of Householder**



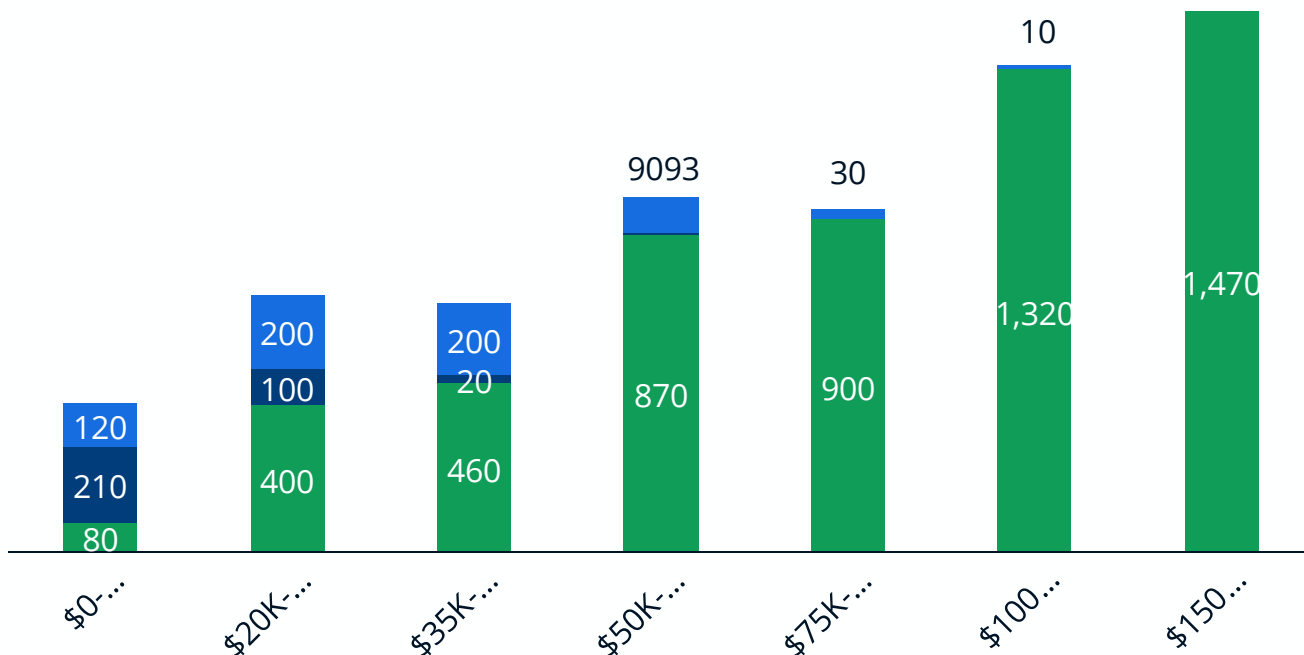
Source: American Community Survey (2022).

## AFFORDABILITY | HOUSING COST BURDEN

Low-income and senior homeowners in Bangor are most impacted by housing cost burden, which can lead to displacement risk.

### Owner Cost Burden by Income (2022)

■ Not Cost Burdened ■ Severely Cost Burdened ■ Cost Burdened



**Housing cost burden is low for most homeowners, but highest for lower-income homeowners.**

Senior households experience higher levels of housing cost burden than other households - 26%, compared to 18% for all homeowners. **Senior households in Bangor have a median household income of around \$45K annually.** A portion of all homeowners in Bangor are likely seniors with lower incomes, due to retirement. This could indicate that seniors require smaller, more affordable options to support the process of aging in place.

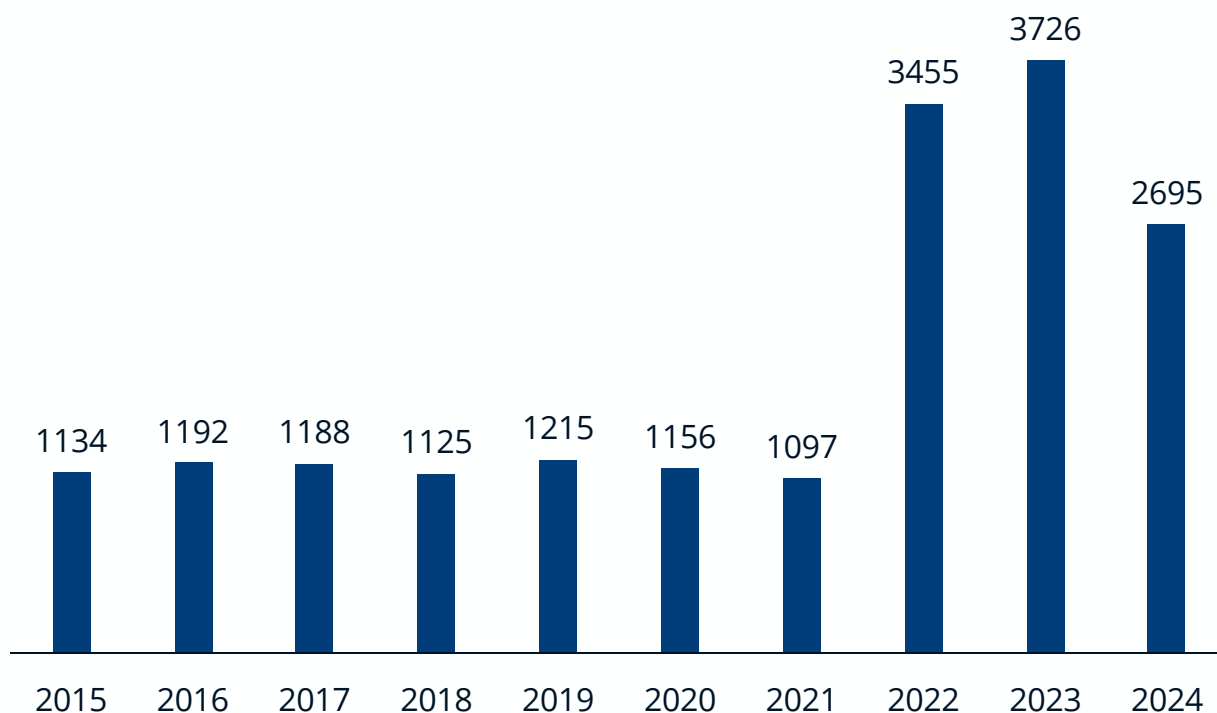
In addition, **56 percent of senior renter households are cost burdened**, compared to 49% of all renter households.



## AFFORDABILITY | HOMELESSNESS

The State of Maine has seen a sharp increase in individuals experiencing homelessness following the COVID-19 pandemic.

**People Experiencing Homelessness in Maine  
(2015-2024)**



**In Maine, 2,695 individuals were counted as experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in 2024.** 306 of these individuals were counted in Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties.

While the total number of people counted has decreased since 2023, homelessness likely has not decreased. **COVID-related emergency relief programs expired**, which supported the use of motels as transitional housing. The count decline can be attributed to **households shifting from these formal programs to unobservable, informal arrangements like living with relatives.**

Stakeholders from Bangor's continuum of care organizations noted that **the city needs a range of housing for individuals exiting homelessness**, including small units for individuals, and supportive services for those experiencing mental or physical health challenges. **The City passed legislation in 2023 allowing permanent supportive housing (PSH) in additional zones**, and Bangor has seen a range of new proposals for PSH development.

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## PRIORITY HOUSING TYPES

The City can deploy funding, information, and policy changes to provide homes for residents of all incomes.

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### PRIORITY POPULATIONS



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#### First-Time Homebuyers

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#### Seniors

Bangor has had 28% growth in the population aged 65 and older since 2012. Seniors note a lack of options to downside or age in place.

### PRIORITY HOME TYPES



#### Smaller Homes (Studio and 1 Bedroom)

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#### Townhomes

Because they are often smaller and cost less to build than detached homes, townhomes are often ideal entry-price homes for new owners or downsizing options for seniors



#### Multi-unit homes

Smaller homes located near downtown are in high demand among both young workers and seniors.

## HOUSING TOOLS

Affordable housing tools fall into three categories: land use, subsidy, and tenants' rights. Increasing Bangor's housing supply and quality requires a focus on land use and subsidy.

### LAND USE

Land Use tools **use municipal regulations and zoning authority** to encourage housing development. They increase the overall supply of housing without requiring public funding. However, they typically **will not produce housing for the lowest-income households**.

e.g. by-right development, regulatory processes, density bonuses

### SUBSIDY

Public subsidy tools provide below-market rate loans, grants, or other public resources to **close the gap between what a household can afford and the costs to provide housing**. Public subsidy creates affordable housing to meet a range of public priorities, however it can be expensive, and is most impactful through **predictable, transparent funding processes**.

e.g. gap financing, down payment assistance, public land sale

### TENANT'S RIGHTS

Tenants' rights tools **preserve housing affordability and stability using laws and regulations** to protect current occupants. They are an important part of a comprehensive housing policy, but they **will not change the supply of housing**.

e.g. right to counsel, just cause eviction

## HOUSING TOOLS | LAND USE

Easing regulations is important, but land use tools alone cannot overcome market barriers to housing supply in Bangor.

The City sets the regulatory environment in which developers make investment decisions, through zoning, development review and approval processes, and the availability of information. Developers are more likely to pursue new projects when zoning is in place and they feel confident that they will receive approvals promptly.

In recent years, Bangor has enacted land use policy changes to make it easier to build diverse housing types. The City reviews development proposals promptly, reducing developer risk and uncertainty.

The City could consider zoning changes that would allow flexibility for developers to provide housing downtown and to ensure that attached housing (e.g. townhomes) is allowed in all residential districts. The City can also pursue other approaches to remove barriers to new development and encourage development activity.

## CONTEXT

Recent land use policy changes in Bangor:

- 2019** Allowed Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- 2020** Reduced lot sizes and setbacks in some residential zones
- 2022** Reduced parking requirements and allow more uses including tiny home parks and boarding houses
- 2023** Allowed Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), multifamily, and mixed-use development by-right (PSH) in more zones  
Revised manufactured home park language to comply with State law
- 2024** Enacted short term rental regulations  
Created allowance for co-living dormitories  
Reduced restrictions on ADUs

## RECOMMENDATION

To encourage private investment in housing, the City should **continue to pursue changes to zoning** that make housing development more feasible, and **conduct outreach to attract and build the capacity of developers** to fill gaps in the market and provide needed homes for Bangor residents.



## HOUSING TOOLS | PUBLIC SUBSIDY

The City will need to allocate resources, including local funding, to encourage and subsidize new housing development.

Public subsidy, in the form of funding, land, infrastructure, or technical assistance, can lower the cost to develop, purchase, or operate homes to meet a variety of goals. The City primarily uses federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for its housing programs. It has also dedicated a portion of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal funds to housing programs.

Local funding is more flexible than federal funding, and establishing a predictable pool of funds to invest in affordable housing helps developers and nonprofit organizations plan for investments and build capacity. Dedicating local funding for housing, and deploying that funding competitively to meet local housing priorities, will increase the City's ability to address affordability and housing supply challenges.

## CONTEXT

The City has used one-time and ongoing federal entitlement funds to support housing in Bangor.

- Down payment and closing cost assistance
- Heat pump and weatherization rebates
- Quality housing provider program (loans to housing providers)
- Permanent supportive housing
- Affordable homeownership development

The City has also taken advantage of available state funding through the Housing Opportunity Program.

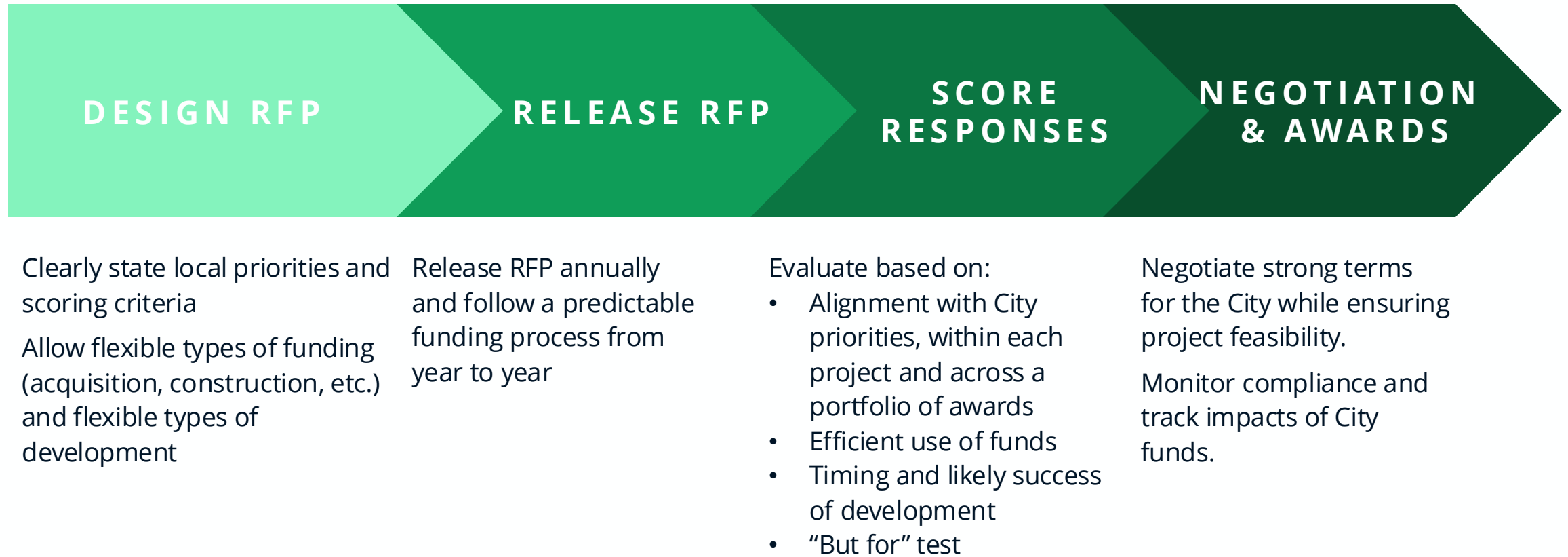
## RECOMMENDATION

The City should **deploy existing resources** to meet its housing needs while **establishing funding sources and processes** for ongoing investments. This can include continuing to leverage available state funding and dedicating new local funds or incentives.

The City can continue to invest in improving the **quality, sustainability, and accessibility** of older homes, and encourage **new housing development**.

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS DISCUSSION | EVALUATION CRITERIA

The City can issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for available funds to flexibly deploy local funding to produce affordable housing.





HR&A +



# Bangor Housing Study

## **Final Report**

February 2025