

Chapter 5.0 HOUSING - DRAFT

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.

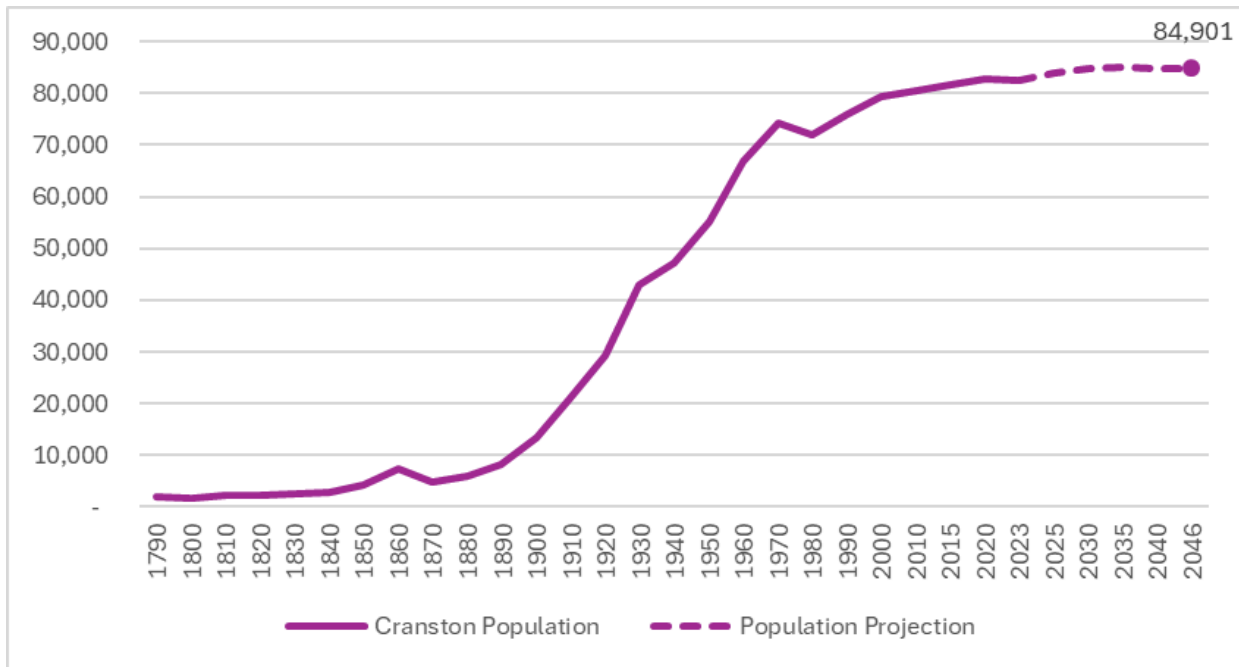
5. 1.1 Housing Goals

1. Cranston's housing stock is safe, well maintained, and healthy.
2. Cranston provides a mixture of distinct neighborhoods.
3. Cranston is an age-friendly community. Young people who grow up in Cranston will be able to afford to live in Cranston as young adults and older adults will have options for aging in place or downsizing within the city.
4. All household types and income levels in the Cranston community will be able to find safe housing that fits within their household budget.
5. Cranston makes progress towards the 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 3,700 market-rate housing units and 1,600 LMIH units.
6. Cranston will permit a healthy mix of both rental and ownership units to ensure there are options affordable to low- and moderate-income households.
7. The variety of housing options and neighborhoods in Cranston support economic growth and community vitality.
8. Residential development conserves natural resources and makes efficient use of infrastructure investments.

Section 5.2: Existing Conditions

5.2.1 Demographics and Population Trends

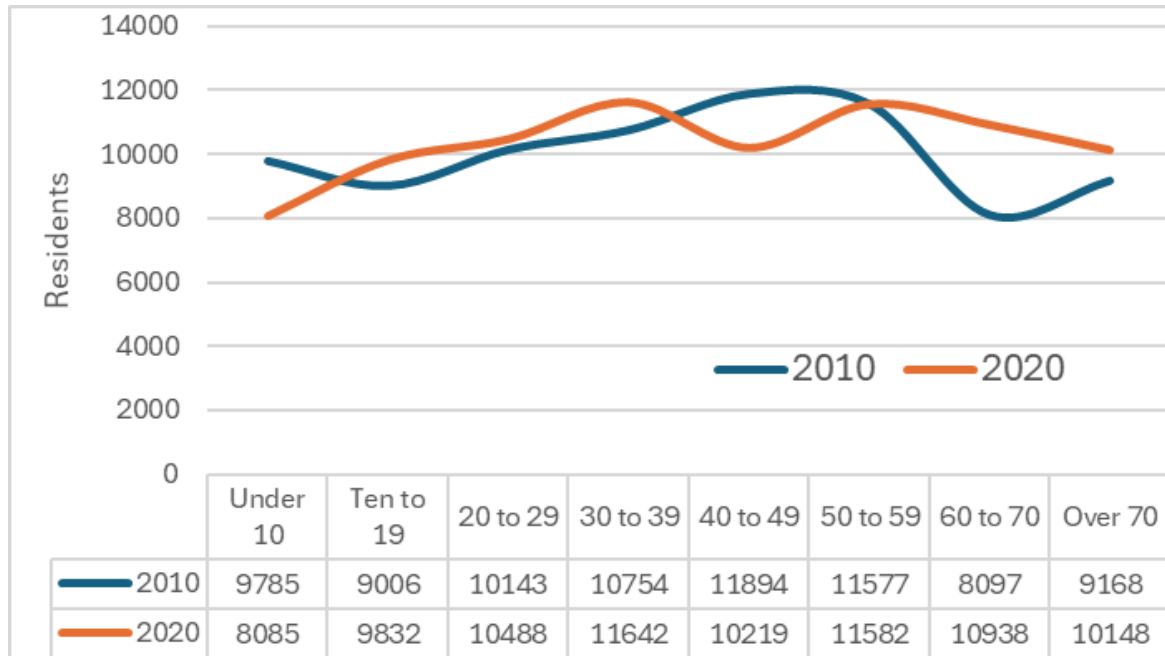
Figure 5.1. Cranston Population and Projections to 2046.



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

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. Cranston can expect to be home to approximately 80,000 residents in 2046 although the composition of households will continue to shift.

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

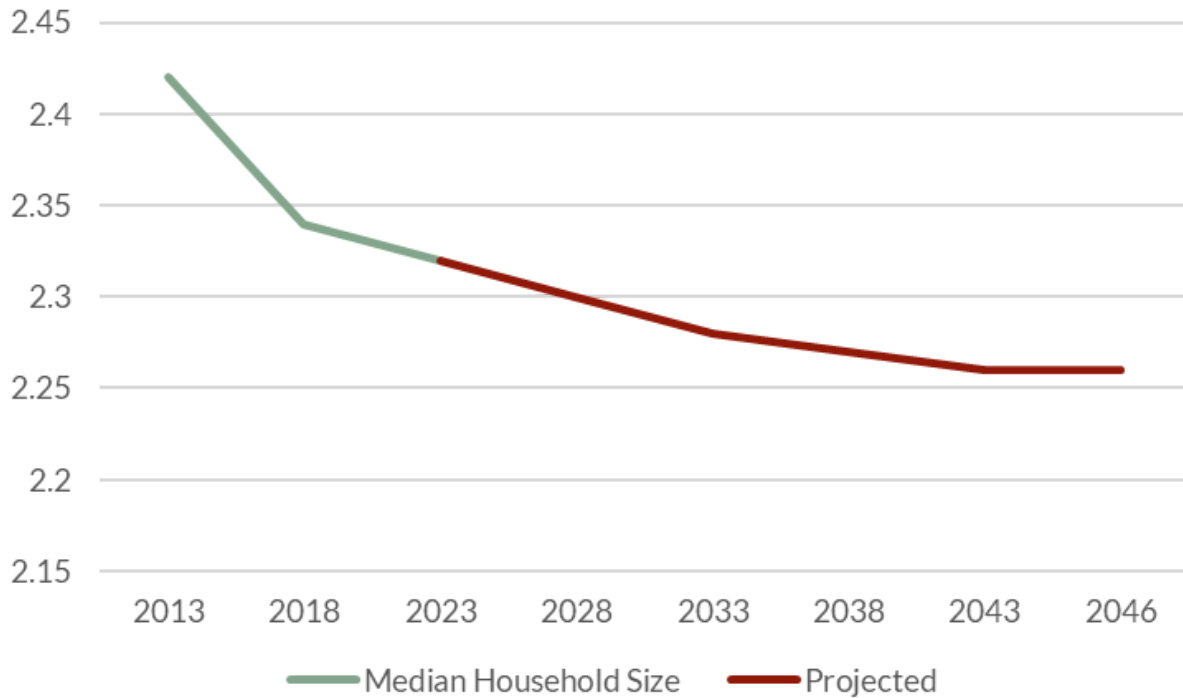


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. 2010 and 2020 Census.

Major national demographic shifts are reflected in Rhode Island. Younger adults have become more likely to live with roommates or parents and less likely to form a new household, trends attributed to the high cost of housing and a cultural shift toward more years of education and later age of first marriage (2024 JCHS). Simultaneously the oldest age groups are maintaining separate households into advanced age rather than residing in care facilities, group quarters or with family.

Cranston’s population skews older than the nation as a whole. Individuals 65 and older represent 16.8% of the City’s population. Residents 30 and younger represent 33.8% of the City’s population, which is about 5% less than their share of the national population. This population distribution is representative of an aging population, which will significantly shape housing needs over the course of the next 20 years.

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

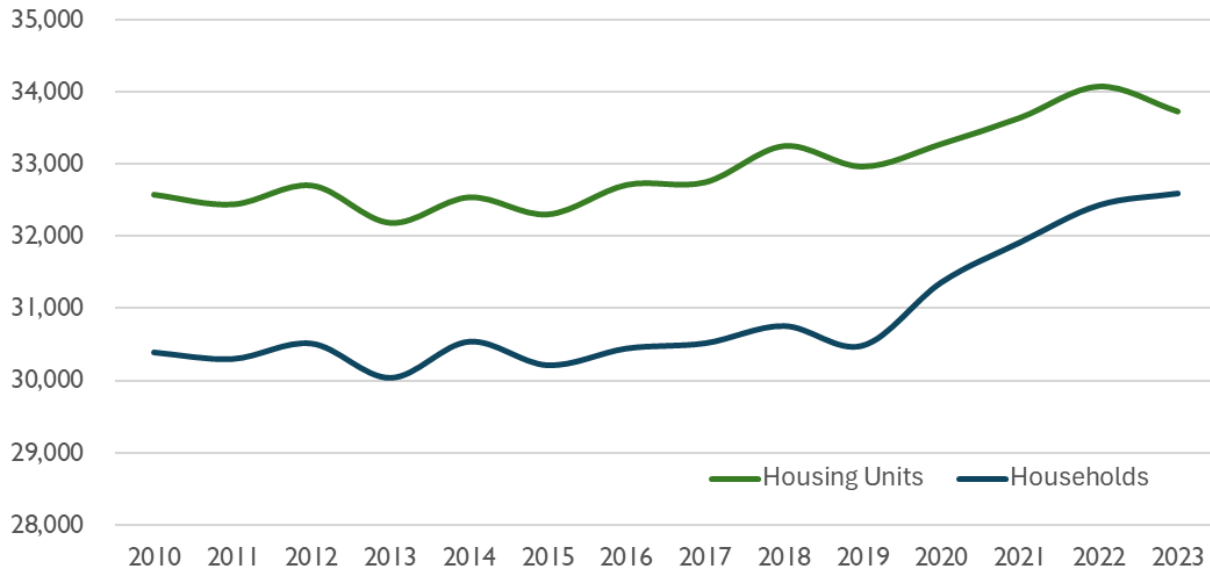


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. Projections by Cranston Planning Department.

The median household size in Cranston is 2.32 individuals and the median household income is \$92,795. Household size has been trending downward with the aging population, so the demand for housing units is growing faster than the overall population.

Cranston is designated as a “strategic growth” municipality in Housing 2030 because it is a job center in the state with more transit options and access to employment than most Rhode Island communities. As such it is likely that Cranston will not experience the population decline forecast for communities with fewer jobs, fewer transit options, and few working-age people.

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

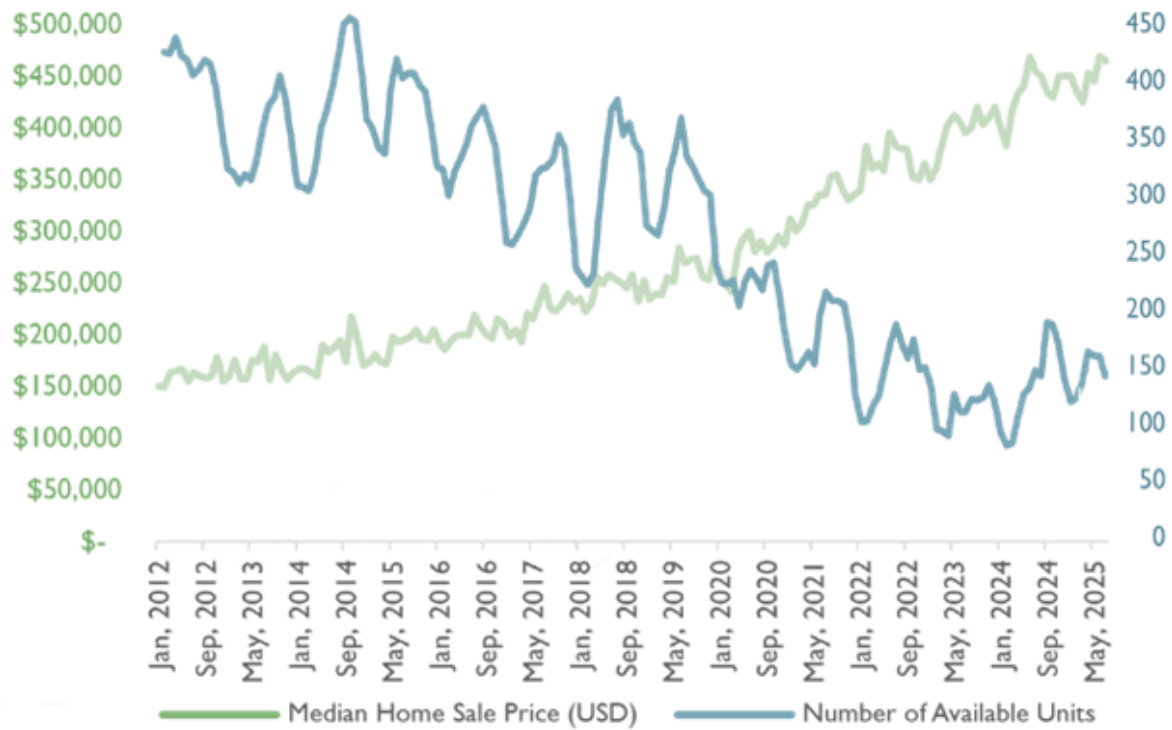


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 5 year data,

5.2.2 Housing Stock Characteristics

The 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) reported a total of 33,733 housing units in the City of Cranston. Of these units, 1,137 were reported as vacant, reflecting an incredibly tight housing market, with a homeownership vacancy rate of just 0.2% and a rental vacancy rate of 1.6%. A healthy vacant rate for homeownership would be between 5% and 8%, while a healthy rental vacancy rate would be between 5% and 10%.

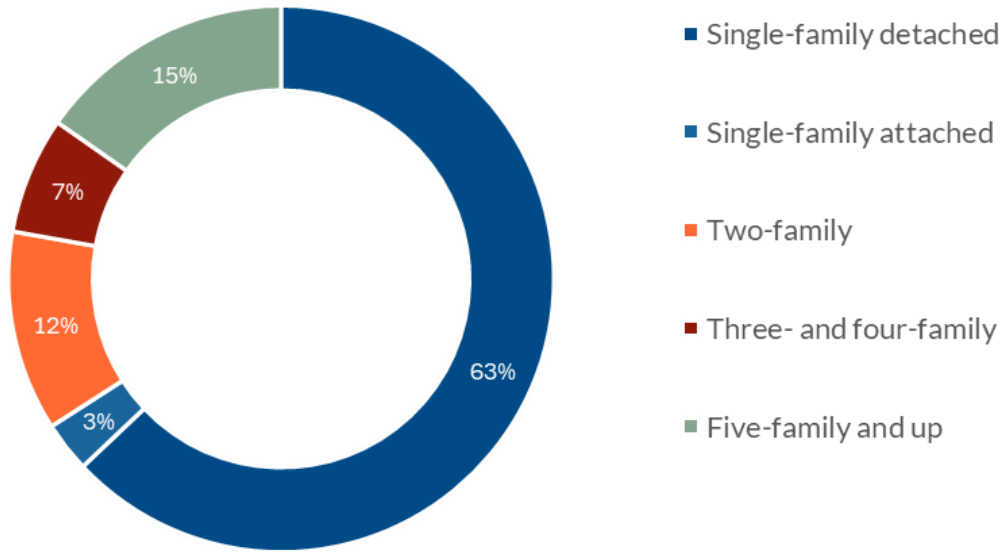
Figure 5.5. Home Sale Prices and Housing Vacancy in Cranston 2012-2025.



Source: Redfin.

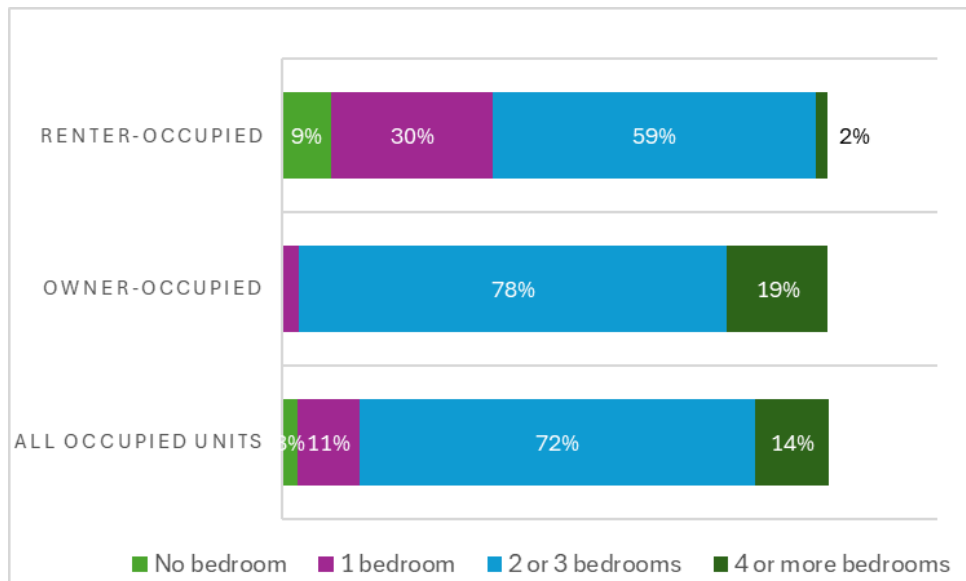
The housing stock in Cranston is predominantly composed of single-family homes. Specifically, 21,152 units, or 62% of the total housing stock, are single-family detached (1-unit detached). There are 1,006 single-family attached (1-unit attached) units, 4,002 two-unit structures, and 2,338 three or four-unit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

Figure 5.6. Housing Unit Types in Cranston 2023.



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

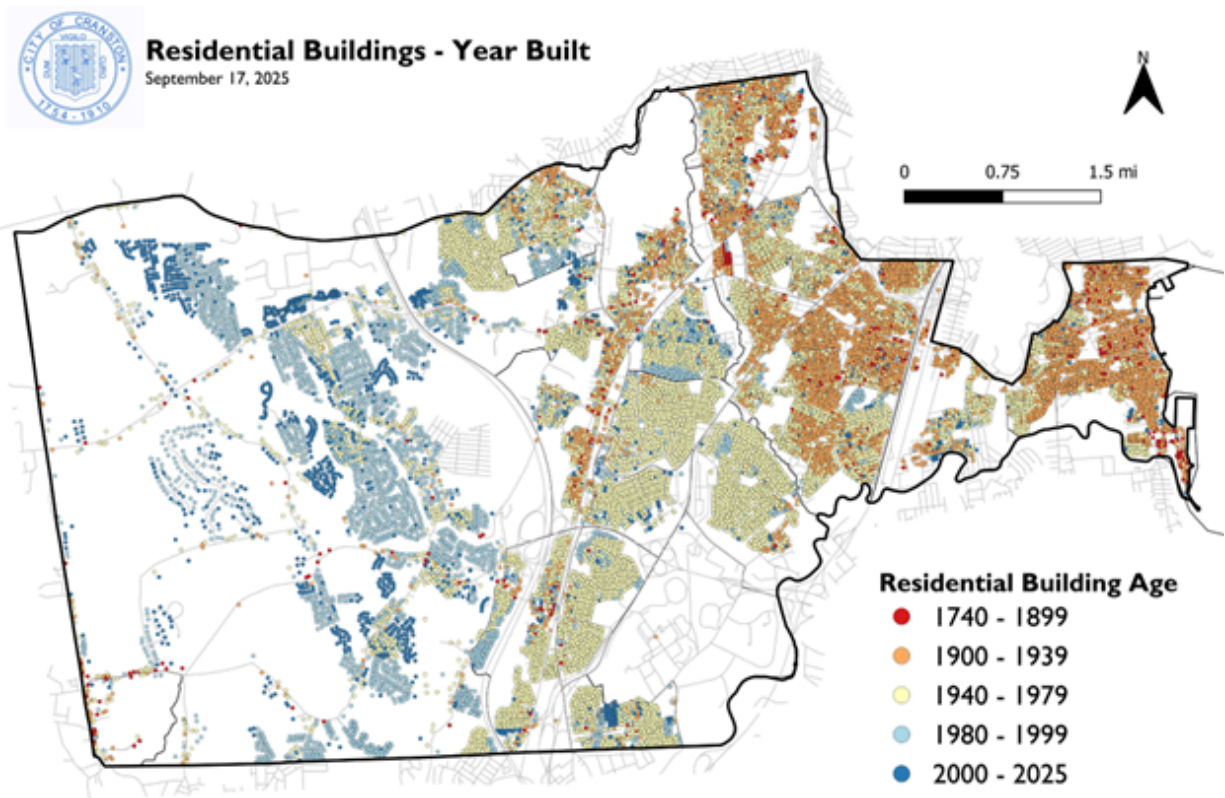
Figure 5.7. Occupied Housing Units in Cranston by Number of Bedrooms, 2024.



Source: US Census Bureau. ACS. 2024 1 year average.

A significant portion—78 percent—of the housing stock in the City of Cranston was built prior to 1980, indicating a mature housing inventory. This age marker presents a need to be vigilant about lead abatement, given that the sale of lead paint was banned in 1978. Older homes also tend to be less energy efficient, raising 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 5.8. Residential Buildings by Year Built.



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

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.

5.2.3 Housing Affordability

Cranston is a city of homes in an economy where houses are out of reach for most working to buy a first home. While Cranston’s population growth is 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 \$92,795, meaning they would have to spend 46% 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 significant 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.

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. 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
Cranston	2,122	1,348	518	256	6.23%

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

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. 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.

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 Place	Elderly	Rental	70 Lincoln Ave	51	HUD 202	50%
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		

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 outlines a plan for implementing the City's goal to permit the identified 3,700 market-rate housing units and 1,600 LMIH units by 2046. 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 are 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 5.2 quantifies the number of housing units required and Table 5.3 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 (but not necessarily at affordable price points).

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 deals, the City will work to support affordable housing developers to minimize costs and speed up approval processes.

Table 5.2. Cranston Population and Housing Units and Projections to 2046.

	2025 Actual	2030	2035	2040	2046
Population	84,012	84,792	85,116	84,901	84,901
Household size	2.49	2.42	2.36	2.30	2.27
Occupied Housing Units	33,733	35,100	36,131	36,982	37,401
LMIH units existing/projected	2,122	2,327	2,798	3,269	3,740
Percent LMIH units	6.29%	6.63%	7.74%	8.84%	10.00%

As highlighted in Table 5.3, Cranston needs to identify strategies to create roughly 1,600 additional LMIH units by 2046 to meet community needs above where we stand in 2026. The estimations in tables 5.2 and 5.3 leave a gap of over 600 LMIH units needed by 2046 that will require policies and actions beyond those detailed in this plan. 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. We will be working with national experts to identify locally-appropriate strategies to increase the LMIH units.

Table 5.3. Housing Production Potential

Policy Changes / Actions	Unit Total		LMIH Units		Approval Stage
	2030	2046	2030	2046	
Small Lots & Splitting Oversized Lots	250	800	0	0	
Warwick / Broad / Elmwood Corridor	250	1400	38	210	
Independence Way - 15 acre rezone	192	265	192	265	
Inclusionary Zoning	90	300	90	300	
Main Street / Neighborhood Mixed Use	60	120	5	9	
Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)	50	200	0	0	
Adaptive Reuse	50	100	4	15	
Rezones to Residential in Appendix A	40	76	3	11	
City-Owned Parcels	30	91	30	91	
Baseline Trend Housing Production					
	240	960	0	0	
Projects Permitted or in Permitting					
1746 Cranston St Rezone	30	30	5	5	zone change approved
Legion Bowl on Park Ave	69	69	10	10	Master Plan
Knights Corner, Cranston St	160	160	24	24	Master Plan
Cranston Print Works	100	100	0	0	Final + Building Permits
The Residences at Oaklawn Ave	12	12	1	1	Final
Meridian Point Phase I		90		0	Final
Meridian Point Phase II		152		37	Prelim
TOTAL YIELD	1623	4925	402	978	
Planning targets	1367	3,668	205	1,618	

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 or parking reductions, 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. 2024 State enabling legislation expands 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 and consider offering incentives, such as reduced costs for the provision of surplus municipal property. Providing incentives for the adaptive reuse of existing vacant buildings into LMIH units, presents another avenue for expanding the LMIH inventory. 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

Many older lots and whole neighborhoods of Cranston do not conform to lot size requirements in zoning. One of the most common development requests made in Cranston is to build a house on a substandard lot of record – an existing lot recorded in the City land records that is smaller than the minimum lot size prescribed in zoning. 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 legalize by-right construction of housing that is of the same type and scale as is predominant in the local neighborhood context. These efforts will be driven primarily 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. There are an estimated 408 such lots that are as large as at least half the developed lots in their neighborhood and unconstrained by water or flood hazard.

The state mandated process for dividing “oversized lots” and allowing building on “substandard lots of record” uses a custom analysis of the lots within 200’. Just getting an answer as to whether a lot is buildable under state law costs applicants thousands of dollars and the result can factor in lots beyond the neighborhood. 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. This dovetails with the plan to allow development that is consistent with existing neighborhood fabric. Within these neighborhoods, defined by the City, construction of new housing will be allowed with minimum dimensional regulations set according to the median dimensions of existing house lots. Developing these standards will

enable neighborhoods to maintain their historic character and provide clarity about where new houses may be constructed on small lots. Applicants who don't like the City's neighborhood standards can apply through the more complicated state mandated 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 with housing growth in recent decades putting expanding the population in western Cranston. This plan deliberately encourages housing where it can utilize existing infrastructure.

5.3.6 Redevelopment through Mixed Use Zones

A key strategy for meeting housing goals is to identify areas where greater flexibility and density can bring new investment to areas with potential for further growth. By allowing for a combination of residential, commercial, and other uses within a single building or a defined area, mixed-use zoning reduces reliance on automobiles, fosters a strong sense of place, and promotes economic vitality. The Future Land Use Map includes two types of mixed-use districts: Low-Rise Neighborhood Mixed Use, which has long existed as the C1 and C2 zones, and a new Transit Supportive Neighborhood Mixed Use Zone depicted along Elmwood Avenue, Warwick Avenue, and Broad Street.

In October 2025, Cranston received a 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.

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 reduce traffic congestion, support business owners, and promote economic vitality.

5.3.7 Conservation Development

Conservation Development is primarily addressed in the Land Use Element. The Plan proposes conservation development zoning in remaining sparsely developed areas of Western Cranston - maintaining the same number of allowable housing units but requiring designs to prioritize the conservation of 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 and maintain 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. Currently, nearly 25% of Cranston's housing units fall into the 2-4 unit category with the greatest concentration in neighborhoods developed in the street car era. The City will investigate revising its zoning ordinances to permit two-, three-, and four-family homes in neighborhoods where at least 25% of homes have multiple units. 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 without the time consuming process of securing variances. These actions will provide a flexible and incremental approach to increasing housing density guided by the historic pattern of each neighborhood.



Source: 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 supports this goal by facilitating amendments to the zoning ordinance in order to permit the construction of smaller dwelling units on smaller lot sizes and missing middle housing, offering more manageable and affordable housing options that cater to the needs of seniors and small households. Starter home, senior cottage communities, or cottage court zoning

ordinances are options that make it financially feasible for new small single family homes for this market niche.

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 Warwick Avenue, Broad Street, and Elmwood Avenues for transit-oriented development is the largest redevelopment opportunity. These corridors already have 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. Height restrictions would vary based on the surrounding area and distance from homes. Four to six story height limits could be considered on Elmwood Avenue echoing the large brick mills that still stand today.

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 residential developments or residential conversions to include deed-restricted LMIH housing units. This established 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.

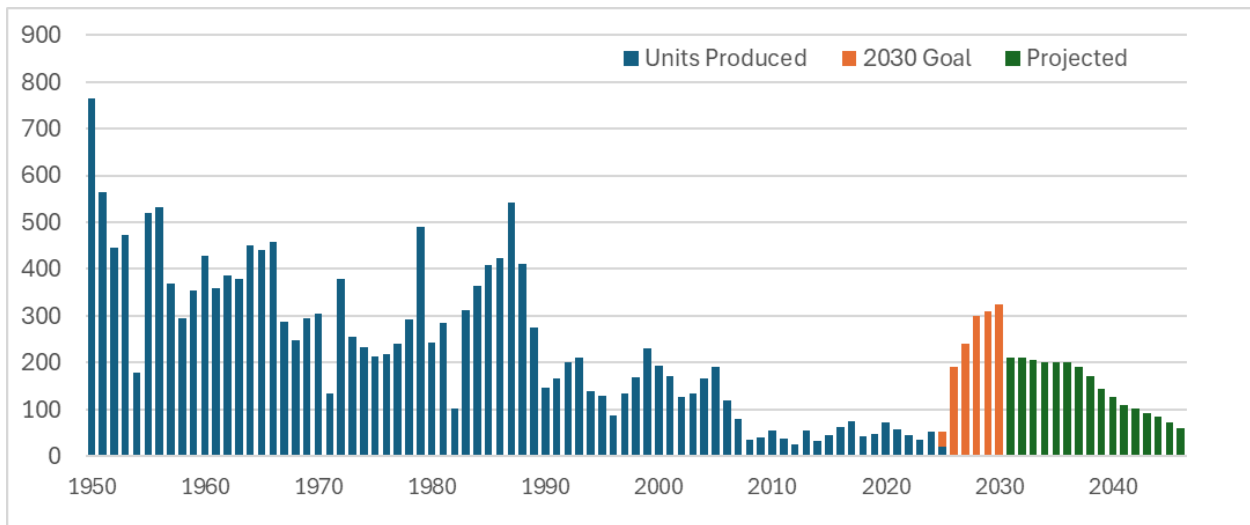
In addition to creating new units—both market-rate and LMIH—the City of Cranston is committed to preserving and enhancing its existing housing units. Maintaining the quality of the existing housing stock supports health and neighborhood stability. To support the Housing 2030 goal, Cranston will maintain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

Table 5.2 summarizes the potential for additional housing productions from actions summarized in this chapter. There are two columns, one with the long-term “build-out” capacity of these initiatives, and one labeled “2030” tallying how many units need to be built by 2030 to reach or exceed the 2030 goal. Actual housing production by category will vary and even projects in the pipeline today may be modified or delayed.

Figure 5.9. Annual Housing Unit Production, Cranston.



Source: 2025. City of Cranston. Building Permit Data. Number of housing units. Projections by the City Planning Dept as shown in Table 5.2.

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
Adaptive Reuse	Adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance to permit streamlined redevelopment of disused municipal buildings and	S

	underutilized commercial, industrial, and religious buildings	
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 Low-Rise Neighborhood Mixed Use Zone and Transit Supportive Neighborhood Mixed Use Zone	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
Update Zoning and Building Fees	Align zoning and building fees accordingly to incentivize denser construction in areas that are already served by water, sewer, and roads	S
Existing non-conforming building maintenance	Enables pre-existing nonconforming two and three-family unit dwellings to be modified, maintained and improved to reduce burden of zoning and building regulations.	S
Accessory Dwelling Units	Establish basic performance standards for ADUs in the Zoning Ordinance. Align with RIGL 45-24.	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
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Section 5.6: Estimation Methods

Population projections

We worked with the most recent ACS data (2023 five year data) and the Rhode Island Population Projections Summary Tables 2013-2023 from RI Statewide Planning. A simple aging model with the assumption of constant fertility results in a population peaking and declining. We chose to dampen the projected decline based on the probability of migration into Cranston.

Housing Unit projections

The demand for market rate and affordable housing shown are taken directly from Housing 2030, and the years beyond 2030 are computed from the population and household size projections. We chose to do this for consistency with Housing 2030, the Statewide Housing Guide Plan.

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.

Small Lots & Splitting Oversized Lots

As of 2025, RIGL allows small lots that are as large as at least half the lots within a 200’ foot radius to be separate buildable lots. Our yield analysis 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 small lots that could be buildable lots under this criteria. These lots are not spread throughout the city, but are rather concentrated in specific zones in neighborhoods developed before zoning, mostly in areas zoned A6 or B1.

Table 5.4 Neighborhood Median Residential Lot Size by Zone Where Median is below Zone Minimum.

Zone	A6	A8	A12	A20	B1	B2
Arlington					4170	
Auburn	3200				5000	
Auburn/Friendly Community	5000				5000	
Eden Park	5000				4000	4000
Edgewood	5000				5000	
Forest Hills	5000					
Garden Hills	4500					
Knightsville					5000	
Laurel Hill					5000	
Meshanticut	5000					
Northern Edgewood					4184	3826
Oak Lawn/Brookfield			8022			
Park View/South Elmwood	4373					5000
Pawtuxet	5000		9989		5799	
Spectacle	4400				4500	
Stadium	4000				3200	
Thornton	3913	4000			5000	3261
Village					5735	
Minimum Lot Size in Zoning	6000	8000	12000	20000	6000	6000

Source: City of Cranston GIS. August 2025.

Mixed-Use Centers and Corridors with Regular Transit Service

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 densities of the TOD zones.

There are 96 acres of property on Elmwood Avenue above the flood plain. If they were all to be built with 15 units of housing per acre, this street alone could yield 1440 housing units. In reality, we expect a mix of continued industrial and commercial activities mixed with housing developments that individually exceed 15 units per acre, but this figure is used as an overall estimate. A yield estimate has not been made for other segments of the TOD study area.

Inclusionary Zoning

The proposed inclusionary zoning ordinance requires 15% affordable 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. While mixed-uses are allowed, most of these areas feature only limited existing mixed-use buildings and little new construction. The existing dimensional regulations such as parking requirements and setbacks have significantly limited the construction of new mixed-use buildings. There is a historic mixed use building in Knightsville sitting partially vacant that has been repeatedly denied zoning permission to lease all their space because of inability to meet parking requirements. Reforming the zoning code to permit more mixed-use construction in our main streets and neighborhood mixed use areas could allow for more growth.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

Cranston is receiving an uptick in inquiries and applications to create ADU. We estimate approximately 10 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.

Residential Units vulnerable to Floods

There are 343 residential units in Cranston in structures that intersect with the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). It is assumed that 300 of these homes will need to be replaced in the 20 year planning horizon. Some of these homes will be razed as part of the FEMA buyout program. The SFHA rules limit the reconstruction of these homes after flood damage. If the cost of post-flood reconstruction exceeds half the value of the property, then repairs have to bring the property into compliance with the new-construction rules for building in the floodplain. The "Replacement cost less depreciation" in the tax assessor's data for these structures totals \$91.4 million.

Rezoning to Residential in Appendix A

The 2024 City adopted Comprehensive Plan has a 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. 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. Second we made sure to exclude 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. Table 5.3 shows all housing development developed on municipal land as 100% LMI.

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. For the purposes of this estimate we have assumed that one medium size permitted project will not get built by 2030. Given the time that has elapsed since some of these approvals and the financial environment, we think it is not reasonable to count on all of them to be built in the next five years. Of course we cannot predict which projects will get modified or delayed.