

Chapter 3 – Housing

A strong economy coupled with falling interest rates created a favorable situation for new housing to be built within Van Buren County throughout the past decade (Figure 5). However, data from the 2000 Census indicate that the median years for home and rental unit construction (Table 9) in the county were 1971 and 1966, respectively, or more than 30 years ago. This demonstrates that the current housing stock remains quite old.

Figure 5

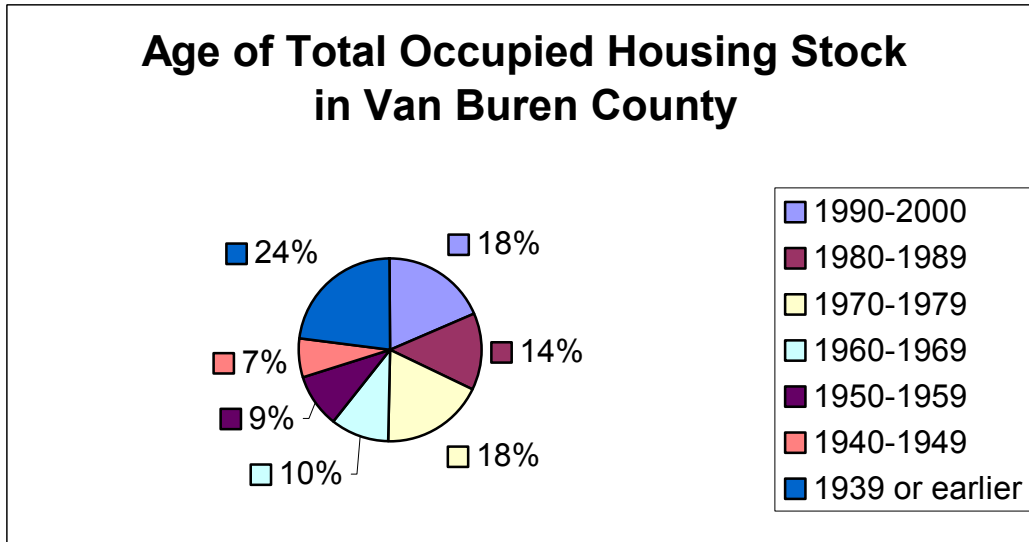


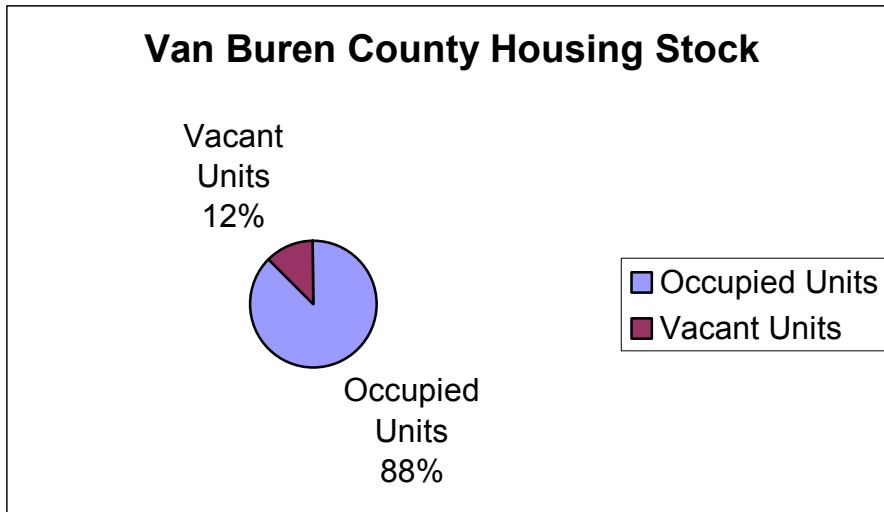
Table 9

Occupied Housing, 2000		
	Number	Percent
TENURE BY YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT		
Owner-occupied housing units	22,253	100
Built 1999 to March 2000	559	2.5
Built 1995 to 1998	1,870	8.4
Built 1990 to 1994	2,221	10
Built 1980 to 1989	2,915	13.1
Built 1970 to 1979	3,904	17.5
Built 1960 to 1969	2,236	10
Built 1950 to 1959	2,005	9
Built 1940 to 1949	1,466	6.6
Built 1939 or earlier	5,077	22.8
Median	1971	--
Renter-occupied housing units		
Renter-occupied housing units	5,729	100
Built 1999 to March 2000	30	0.5
Built 1995 to 1998	231	4
Built 1990 to 1994	260	4.5
Built 1980 to 1989	895	15.6
Built 1970 to 1979	1,210	21.1
Built 1960 to 1969	648	11.3
Built 1950 to 1959	590	10.3
Built 1940 to 1949	502	8.8
Built 1939 or earlier	1,363	23.8
Median	1966	--

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

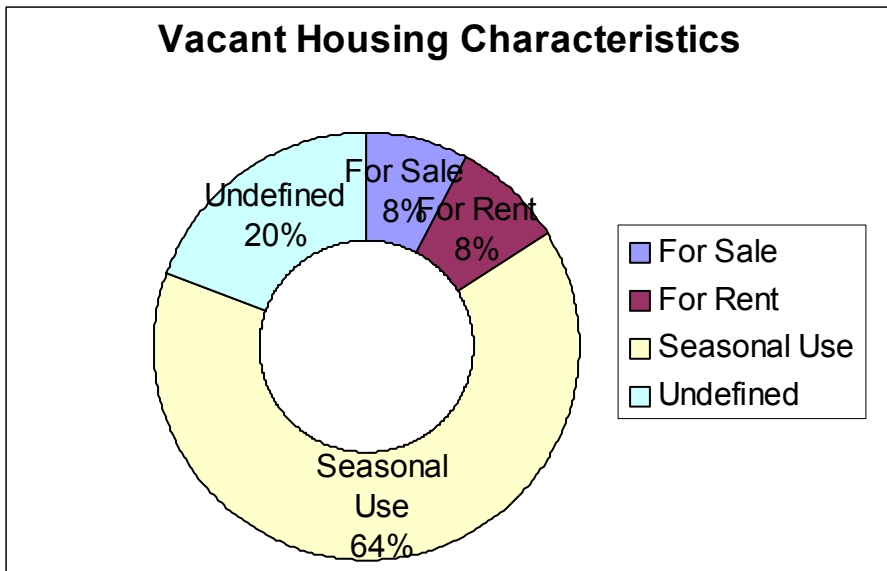
In accordance with the 2000 Census, there are 33,975 housing units in Van Buren County, of which 27,982 are occupied. The percentage breakdown of housing occupation is contained in Figure 6.

Figure 6



The statistic revealing that 12% of the housing in Van Buren County is vacant is actually misleading because vacant housing can be defined in many different ways. Though the vacant housing count in Van Buren County totals nearly 6,000, 64.4 % of these are deemed as seasonal use and an additional 16% of vacant homes are currently for sale or lease. Figure 7 represents the breakdown of vacant housing in Van Buren County. Through this breakdown, it can be seen that most vacant housing is not abandoned structures.

Figure 7



Despite the predominant aging housing stock, the past decade has witnessed the addition of over 2400 new housing units in Van Buren County. The greatest increase in housing occurred in Geneva Township (284 new units), while the greatest decrease was in Hamilton Township (loss of 147 units). However, these statistics should be interpreted with caution, as the reasons for the change are

unknown. The change in housing units as well as the average household size for each corresponding municipality can be seen in Table 10.

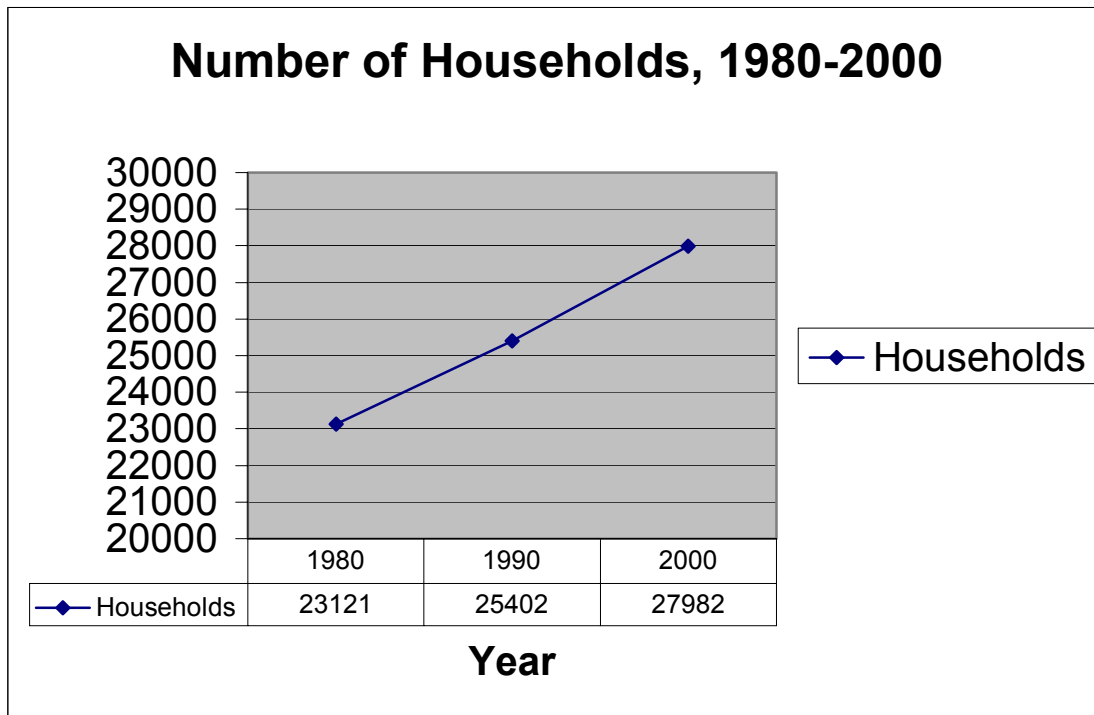
Table 10

Change in Total Units and 2000 Average Household Size				
Area	1990 Total Units	2000 Total Units	Change in Total Units	2000 Avg. Household Size
Van Buren County	31,530	33,975	2,445	2.66
Arlington Twp.	924	943	19	2.77
Bangor City	822	804	-18	2.66
Bangor Twp.	920	942	22	2.83
Bloomingtondale Village	206	206	0	2.92
Bloomingtondale Twp.	1,078	1,255	177	2.7
Breedsville Village	80	85	5	3.22
Columbia Twp.	1,349	1,348	-1	2.65
Covert Twp.	1,644	1,683	39	2.78
Decatur Village	754	792	38	2.49
Decatur Twp.	772	819	47	2.82
Geneva Twp.	1,283	1,567	284	2.77
Gobles City	304	333	29	2.57
Hamilton Twp.	870	723	-147	2.76
Hartford city	913	1,023	110	2.64
Hartford Twp.	1,215	1,183	-32	2.78
Keeler Twp.	1,544	1,562	18	2.71
Lawrence Village	392	434	42	2.68
Lawrence Twp.	1,059	1,082	23	2.77
Paw Paw Village	1,390	1511	121	2.28
Paw Paw Twp.	1,733	1,787	54	2.7
Pine Grove Twp.	982	1,123	141	2.72
Porter Twp.	1,278	1,380	102	2.57
South Haven City	2,819	2,958	139	2.3
South Haven Charter Twp.	1867	1,890	23	2.43
Waverly Twp.	845	991	146	2.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

The number of households has also continued to increase throughout the past two decades as illustrated in Figure 8:

Figure 8



In terms of household breakdown, Table 11 is a more specific summary of the householder population in Van Buren County. Primarily, the county consists of family households, and those who own their own homes tend to be married.

Table 11

Households by Family Type			Households by Family Type		
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Units	%	HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Units	%
Owner-occupied housing units	22,266	100	Renter-occupied housing units	5,716	100
Family households	17,118	76.9	Family households	3,209	56.1
Householder 15 to 64 years	13,975	62.8	Householder 15 to 64 years	2,997	52.4
Householder 65 years and over	3,143	14.1	Householder 65 years and over	212	3.7
Married-couple family	14,239	63.9	Married-couple family	1,639	28.7
Male householder, no wife present	917	4.1	Male householder, no wife present	396	6.9
Female householder, no husband present	1,962	8.8	Female householder, no husband present	1,174	20.5
Nonfamily households	5,148	23.1	Nonfamily households	2,507	43.9
Householder 15 to 64 years	3,192	14.3	Householder 15 to 64 years	1,848	32.3
Householder 65 years and over	1,956	8.8	Householder 65 years and over	659	11.5
Male householder	2,524	11.3	Male householder	1,217	21.3
Living alone	1,961	8.8	Living alone	901	15.8
65 years and over	538	2.4	65 years and over	124	2.2
Not living alone	563	2.5	Not living alone	316	5.5
Female householder	2,624	11.8	Female householder	1,290	22.6
Living alone	2,309	10.4	Living alone	1,114	19.5
65 years and over	1,312	5.9	65 years and over	514	9

Not living alone	315	1.4	Not living alone	176	3.1
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The median housing value and median household income are both important tools that help to analyze development within the county. At \$57,014, Antwerp Township has the highest median income level in the county, while Covert Township has the lowest median income at \$22,829. Overall, the county median household income is \$39,365, while the median value of a home in the county is \$94,200. In order to determine the extent to which housing is affordable, the affordable unit price statistic is calculated by multiplying the household median income by 2.5. Based on the overall county median household income, an affordable home costs \$98,412.50 or less. Therefore, a home valued at the median home value, \$94,200, is considered affordable. However, because the median home value indicates the middle value of homes in the county, we know that over half of the homes are valued at greater than \$94,200, and many of these will be valued over \$98,412.50, substantiating the need for more affordable housing in Van Buren County. Table 12 below provides the median household income, median house value, and affordable housing statistics for the individual municipalities in the county:

Table 12

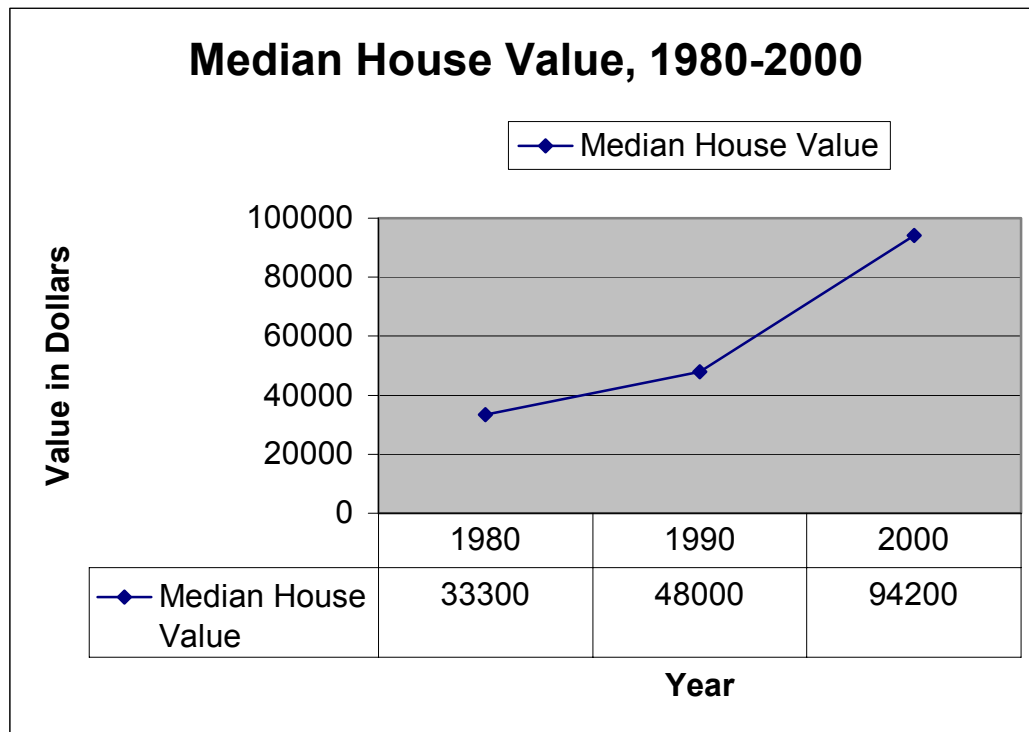
Median Household Income and Median House Value in Dollars				
	Median Household Income in 1999 (dollars)	Median Value of Owned Home (dollars)	Affordable Housing Price	Occupied housing units
Van Buren County	39,365	94,200	98,412.50	27,982
COUNTY SUBDIVISION AND PLACE				
Almena township	51,027	118,500	127,567.50	1,551
Antwerp township	50,556	110,200	126,390.00	3,731
Lawton village	36,250	84,300	90,625.00	613
Mattawan village	42,241	95,700	105,602.50	954
Paw Paw village (part)	26,964	56,900	67,410.00	42
Remainder of Antwerp township	57,014	124,000	142,535.00	2,122
Arlington township	36,847	84,100	92,117.50	736
Bangor city	28,165	60,600	70,412.50	722
Bangor township	35,375	81,800	88,437.50	727
Bloomington township	40,488	89,400	101,220.00	1,183
Bloomington village	35,714	70,800	89,285.00	172
Remainder of Bloomington township	41,031	95,000	102,577.50	1,011
Columbia township	34,389	73,200	85,972.50	989
Breedsville village	32,917	43,300	82,292.50	73
Remainder of Columbia township	34,615	79,800	86,537.50	916
Covert township	22,829	63,800	57,072.50	1,118
Decatur township	35,754	69,800	89,385.00	1,452
Decatur village	30,550	65,800	76,375.00	700
Remainder of Decatur township	39,800	83,300	99,500.00	752
Geneva township	34,900	97,800	87,250.00	1,395
Gobles city	26,917	69,000	67,292.50	310
Hamilton township	37,434	88,600	93,585.00	568
Hartford city	32,879	62,600	82,197.50	945
Hartford township	35,741	79,900	89,352.50	1,094
Keeler township	42,955	85,900	107,387.50	870
Lawrence township	36,944	82,200	92,360.00	1,185
Lawrence village	29,583	70,600	73,957.50	379
Remainder of Lawrence township	40,991	90,700	102,477.50	806
Paw Paw township	43,802	98,500	109,505.00	2,804
Paw Paw village (part)	39,336	87,700	98,340.00	1,367
Remainder of Paw Paw township	48,208	122,700	120,520.00	1,437
Pine Grove township	47,060	106,000	117,650.00	1,018
Porter township	48,491	141,900	121,227.50	934
South Haven city (part)	35,731	123,000	89,327.50	2,096
South Haven charter township	35,000	88,300	87,500.00	1,640
Waverly township	51,100	99,100	127,750.00	914

PLACE				
Bangor city	28,165	60,600	70,412.50	722
Bloomington village	35,714	70,800	89,285.00	172
Breedsville village	32,917	43,300	82,292.50	73
Decatur village	30,550	65,800	76,375.00	700
Gobles city	26,917	69,000	67,292.50	310
Hartford city	32,879	62,600	82,197.50	945
Lawrence village	29,583	70,600	73,957.50	379
Lawton village	36,250	84,300	90,625.00	613
Mattawan village	42,241	95,700	105,602.50	954
Paw Paw village	38,750	86,800	96,875.00	1,409
South Haven city (part)	35,731	123,000	89,327.50	2,096

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3

In spite of a demonstrated need for affordable housing in Van Buren County, the median house value has increased by over \$60,000 since 1980 as seen in Figure 9. This increase is somewhat correlated with increased income levels, as shown in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Figure 9



While the continued development and renovation of affordable housing in Van Buren County remains important, the county encourages low impact development strategies such as those described in the section on *Agricultural Lands, Open Space, and Farmland Preservation* in order to preserve farmland and natural features throughout the county.