



# Orange County, North Carolina Consolidated Plan Program Years 2025–2029

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This document outlines Orange County’s strategic vision and funding priorities for affordable housing, homelessness, and community development over a five-year period.

Prepared by The Orange County HOME Consortium

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## Executive Summary

ES-05 Executive Summary - 24 CFR 91.200(c), 91.220(b)

### Introduction

The Orange County, North Carolina, HOME Consortium, also known locally as the Local Government Affordable Housing Collaborative, is a designated Participating Jurisdiction in the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development’s (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program. This program allows local governments to form a consortium to receive funding aimed at increasing affordable housing opportunities. The Orange County HOME Consortium comprises four members: Orange County, the Town of Carrboro, the Town of Chapel Hill, and the Town of Hillsborough, with Orange County serving as the lead entity. Additionally, the Town of Chapel Hill independently receives annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

The core objective of the HOME program is to expand the availability of affordable housing in the Consortium community. Participating Jurisdictions identify the housing activities that best address local needs. To achieve this, HOME-assisted properties are subject to an affordability period, ensuring they remain accessible to low-income households, alongside income eligibility requirements for tenants.

As a condition of receiving HOME and CDBG funds, HUD mandates that jurisdictions submit a Five-Year Consolidated Plan. This Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for leveraging federal and other resources to create affordable housing opportunities. It includes an analysis of community needs, available resources, housing priorities, and proposed activities under the HOME program for all of Orange County, as well as CDBG-specific initiatives for Chapel Hill. The Plan sets the

Consortium's goals for the next five years and details the initiatives to promote safe, decent, and affordable housing, improve living environments, affirmatively further fair housing, enhance public services, and expand economic opportunities, all primarily benefiting low- and moderate-income residents.

This Consolidated Plan reflects a collaborative effort, involving Consortium members, community residents, social service agencies, County and Town officials, housing providers, and other relevant stakeholders.

The consolidated planning process was conducted through public meetings, stakeholder interviews, resident surveys, statistical analysis, and a review of prior community development plans. Key elements of the process included analyzing HUD's latest Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, which offers detailed insights into housing needs, along with the 2018-2023 American Community Survey Estimates and the 2020 U.S. Census. This data provided the most current information to evaluate housing, homelessness, social services, economic development, and other related needs.

The Orange County HOME Consortium is allocated \$367,013.59 in HOME funds for FFY 2025 / PY 2026. This represents a decrease from the \$374,851 awarded at the beginning of the previous five-year planning period and a significant drop from the \$728,277 received in FFY 2010.

### **Summary of the objectives and outcomes identified in the Plan**

The Consolidated Plan will guide the Orange County HOME Consortium and the Town of Chapel Hill in the use of HOME funds for housing and community development initiatives. Based on the Housing Needs Assessment, Market Analysis, and community and stakeholder input received during the planning process, the Strategic Plan portion of the Plan establishes the following priorities:

- Expand Affordable Rental Housing for Low- and Moderate-Income Households (Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, Repair and Rehabilitation)
- Preserve and Rehabilitate Existing Affordable Housing Stock to Prevent Displacement (Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, Repair and Rehabilitation)
- Increase Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing for Special Needs Populations (Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, Acquisition/Development)
- Neighborhood Revitalization and Essential Community Services (CDBG only)

The goals and outcomes associated with each of these priorities are detailed in the Strategic Plan.

### **Evaluation of past performance**

The Orange County HOME program has regularly met the performance standards established by HUD, including submission of its Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) each year, which assesses the degree to which the County met the goals established in the prior year, and meeting the applicable HOME activity limitations, set-asides, and match requirements.

The Orange County HOME Consortium is working diligently to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its HOME program. The previous Consolidated Plan from 2020 reflected a broader set of activities; whereas this Consolidated Plan specializes resources to maximize impact and improve efficiency.

### **Summary of citizen participation process and consultation process**

The Orange County HOME Consortium, beyond compliance with its Citizen Participation Plan, advertised and held two Public Hearings and five community meetings that provided residents an opportunity to discuss the County's HOME Program and affordable housing needs in general:

## The Process -----

### PR-05 Lead & Responsible Agencies - 91.200(b)

#### **Describe agency/entity responsible for preparing the Consolidated Plan and those responsible for administration of each grant program and funding source**

Community meetings were held in conjunction with the Town of Chapel Hill's CDBG program to create a streamlined mechanism for community input on both HUD programs. In addition, the Orange County Consolidated Plan Resident Survey, a survey soliciting resident and stakeholder input, was distributed widely throughout the County. The Questionnaire was available in English and Spanish and included opportunities for both online and hard copy submission.

A Draft Plan was published on April 3, 2025 and posted on the County's website (<http://orangecountync.gov/2337/HOME-Consolidated-Plan>), on the Town of Chapel Hill's website (<https://www.chapelhillaffordablehousing.org/>), on the Town of Hillsborough's website (<https://www.hillsboroughnc.gov/>), and on the Town of Carrboro's website (<https://www.townofcarrboro.org/2280/Orange-County-Consolidated-Plan>). Summaries of the draft plan were available for review at the following locations:

- **Orange County Department of Housing and Community Development:** 300 W. Tryon Street, Hillsborough, NC 27278
- **Town of Carrboro Town Hall:** 301 W. Main Street, Carrboro, NC 27510
- **Town of Hillsborough Town Hall:** 101 East Orange Street, Hillsborough, NC 27278
- **Town of Chapel Hill Town Hall:** 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

An additional Public Hearing was held on May 20, 2025 to receive comments on the Draft Plan.

#### **Summary of public comments**

Comments received in the Public Hearing held before the publication of the Draft Plan, and the Public Hearing held after its publication to discuss the Draft Plan, are included in the Attachments at the end of the Consolidated Plan.

**Summary of comments or views not accepted and the reasons for not accepting them**

All comments that were received have been accepted and incorporated into the draft Plan.

## PR-10 Consultation - 91.100, 91.110, 91.200(b), 91.300(b), 91.215(l) and 91.315(l)

### Introduction

Engaging community stakeholders was a vital component in developing the FFY 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan. This collaborative consultation process enabled the Orange County HOME Collaborative to identify and prioritize community needs, devise effective strategies, and coordinate actionable plans. Additionally, it fostered the exchange of information about available resources and strengthened coordination among the Collaborative and its member jurisdictions.

The Consortium engaged with a diverse array of stakeholders, including social service agencies, service providers, community-based organizations, housing providers, local government agencies and boards, neighborhood leaders, and elected officials. To gather comprehensive input, the Orange County Consolidated Plan Resident Survey was distributed to both residents and stakeholders, aiming to identify key needs, gaps, and priorities for the upcoming five years. The survey was accessible online in English and Spanish, and Burmese—as well as hard copies available across the county.

Feedback from a series of in-person and virtual meetings, along with survey responses, informed the development of the strategies and priorities outlined in the Consolidated Plan. This inclusive approach ensured that the Plan reflects the diverse perspectives and needs of the community.

**Provide a concise summary of the jurisdiction’s activities to enhance coordination between public and assisted housing providers and private and governmental health, mental health and service agencies (91.215(l)).**

Orange County works with the following agencies to enhance coordination:

- **Orange County Housing Authority:** Housed within the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Housing Authority operates the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program for Orange County.
- **Town of Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community:** The Town of Chapel Hill manages public housing communities in Chapel Hill.
- **Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH):** Housed within the County government, OCPEH acts as the Continuum of Care (Coc) lead for Orange County and coordinates among local governments and service providers (including those providing

health services) to meet the housing and services needs of housing insecure Orange County residents.

- **Social Services Agencies:** The County provides funds to improve services to low- and moderate-income people.
- **Housing Providers:** The County provides funds to rehabilitate and develop affordable housing and provide housing options for low- and moderate-income households.

Each year, as part of the HOME and CDBG application planning process, local agencies and organizations are invited to submit proposals for funding eligible activities under these programs. These groups actively contribute to the planning process by attending public hearings, participating in informational meetings, and completing surveys. The planning process also includes outreach to other relevant entities, such as health service agencies, to ensure a broad spectrum of input.

This outreach effort fosters meaningful dialogue about affordable housing in Orange County and highlights how public and private agencies, along with community organizations, can collaborate to address the county's most pressing housing and community development needs. By engaging diverse stakeholders, the Consortium ensures that the planning process is inclusive and reflective of the community's priorities.

**Describe coordination with the Continuum of Care and efforts to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness (particularly individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness, families with children, veterans, and unaccompanied youth) and persons at risk of homelessness**

The Orange County HOME Consortium works closely with the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH), which serves as the Continuum of Care (CoC) for the county. The Consortium's four member jurisdictions—Orange County and the Towns of Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, and Carrboro—jointly fund OCPEH, with costs allocated based on population. Elected officials from each jurisdiction serve on the CoC board, and staff from the two jurisdictions with Public Housing Authorities hold ex officio board seats with full voting rights. This structure ensures that jurisdictions align their funding decisions and policy priorities to focus on ending homelessness.

OCPEH works closely with Orange County Housing and Community Development, meeting weekly with staff and regularly engaging with jurisdictional representatives. They present their work annually to the four elected boards, ensuring transparency and accountability. Since 2016, OCPEH has conducted an annual system map and gaps analysis of homeless services, with the latest update issued in December 2022. Additionally, OCPEH actively participates in the Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition, collaborating with housing developers, funders, and advocates to increase the supply of affordable housing. These efforts represent a comprehensive and coordinated approach to tackling homelessness and fostering long-term housing stability in the county.

OCPEH contributes vital information to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan updates and leads efforts to end homelessness in Orange County. These efforts include overseeing the biannual Plan to End Homelessness and coordinating seven standing monthly meetings with service providers. HOME Consortium members regularly participate in CoC workgroups, including care coordination through a by-name list.

OCPEH manages coordinated entry for individuals in housing crises, directing them to resources such as homelessness diversion, shelter referrals, and permanent housing solutions. The system prioritizes permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. OCPEH holds monthly meetings with veteran service providers to address veteran homelessness, maintaining a veterans-only by-name list for care coordination.

In its gaps analysis, OCPEH identifies areas for improvement, such as expanding Rapid Re-housing services for all, including families. OCPEH also organizes the annual Point-in-Time count with HOME Consortium members and works with youth service providers and LGBTQ advocates to ensure no unaccompanied youth are missed. A significant identified gap is the lack of a youth housing program. To address this, OCPEH partnered with the Central Pines Regional Council on a HUD Youth Homelessness Services Improvement grant in late 2024. This collaboration spans four regional CoCs to address youth homelessness comprehensively.

Through these coordinated efforts, OCPEH and the HOME Consortium continue to address system gaps, update the homeless gaps analysis, and work toward ending homelessness in Orange County.

**Describe consultation with the Continuum(s) of Care that serves the jurisdiction's area in determining how to allocate ESG funds, develop performance standards and evaluate outcomes, and develop funding, policies and procedures for the administration of HMIS**

HOME Consortium members actively participate in the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) Leadership Team, which serves as the CoC board responsible for determining Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) allocations each year. Consortium members also serve on the CoC Project Review Committee, which establishes program performance standards, evaluates outcomes, sets funding priorities, and formulates funding recommendations for both CoC and ESG programs for approval by the Leadership Team.

The Project Review Committee conducts quarterly reviews of program data to monitor outcomes and inform funding decisions during application periods. Each year, the Committee updates funding policies and procedures as part of the CoC and ESG grant competitions. The CoC partners with the statewide Coalition to End Homelessness, which serves as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead. HMIS administration is conducted in consultation with the Leadership Team, which includes representation from HOME Consortium members, ensuring integrated and data-driven decision-making.

Orange County has made significant progress in addressing gaps in its homeless service system. Service providers and local governments have expanded programs to support individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness, with additional funding and support from community members and other partners. However, the demand for homelessness prevention, services, and housing has

grown, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed existing inequalities and overwhelmed support systems. To address these challenges, the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) has identified fifteen critical gaps that must be filled to meet current needs and effectively end homelessness. Closing these gaps will enable the implementation of client-centered, evidence-based programs that make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time.

**Describe Agencies, groups, organizations and others who participated in the process and describe the jurisdictions consultations with housing, social service agencies and other entities**

**Habitat for Humanity of Orange County, North Carolina:** Habitat for Humanity partners with households to create healthier and more financially stable lives. With Habitat's help, Habitat homeowners achieve the strength, stability, and independence they need to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Habitat builds new homes for local families who already live or work in our community. Volunteer labor and donations of money and materials help to keep the homes affordable. Homes are sold with low-interest mortgages and homeowners make monthly payments, which are set at 30% or less of their income, making homeownership an affordable reality.

In addition to building new homes, Habitat also partners with homeowners who live in non-Habitat homes to assist them in making needed repairs.

**Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness:** The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) is a coalition of service providers, local governments, and community members who work together to coordinate funding and bring best practices to the work of ending homelessness in Orange County.

**Orange Co. Board of Commissioners:** Orange County is governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners has many duties and authorities, including:

- Adopting the county's annual budget by June 30 of each year
- Establishing the annual property tax rate
- Appointing the county manager, county clerk, county attorney and tax administrator
- Appointing various officials and representatives to advisory boards and commissions
- Providing funding for construction of public school facilities for both public school systems in the county
- Determining level of local current expense funding for both public school systems in the county
- Regulating land-use and zoning outside municipal boundaries
- Providing for safety and welfare of all Orange County residents
- Long-range planning for county needs (Capital Investment Plan)
- Enacting local ordinances
- Calling for bond referenda
- Entering into contracts

- Establishing new programs and departments
- Serving as liaisons to local, state and federal boards and commissions

**Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association:** The Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood is a historically African-American community, with origins dating back to the 1700s. By the late nineteenth century, the Rogers-Eubanks neighborhood was composed of black-owned family farms and sawmills from Homestead to Eubanks Roads to the north of Carrboro and Chapel Hill, NC.

This was still the case in the mid-twentieth century when RENA Executive Director, David Caldwell grew up in the neighborhood. In 2007, this socially cohesive and culturally rich community of approximately 85 households founded a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization — the Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association (RENA). This formalized a long term ad hoc community alliance and movement.

**Community Home Trust:** Community Home Trust’s vision is a world in which barriers are removed for those wanting a home they can afford, where the supply of those homes keeps pace with the demand, and all individuals have long term access to a safe home where they can thrive, work, and grow. In 1991, the Orange County Affordable Housing Task Force created the Orange Community Housing Corporation (OCHC). Over the next ten years and through several iterations, Community Home Trust (CHT) was born. By 2021, Community Home Trust had 332 permanently affordable homes in their inventory in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Our homeowners include nurses, university employees, teachers and others, who serve our community but otherwise could not afford to own a home here. Our tenants are of households earning less than 60% of the area median income; section 8 vouchers are accepted.

**Central Pines Regional Council:** The Central Pines Regional Council is a local governing body that oversees the management and development of the Central Pines region. Committed to enhancing the quality of life for its residents, the Council focuses on fostering sustainable growth, improving infrastructure, and promoting community engagement. It works in partnership with local businesses, stakeholders, and residents to address regional challenges, improve public services, and ensure the long-term prosperity of the area. The Council prioritizes transparency, accountability, and collaboration in its decision-making processes to meet the evolving needs of the community.

**PeeWee Homes:** Pee Wee Homes are a group of community members who have come together to be a part of answering this glaring call for deeply affordable housing in our community. Homes that individuals with fixed income; homes that allow elderly homeless individuals to age in place; homes that a single person earning minimum wage can afford; and, importantly, homes that support independence within the context of community. Pee Wee Homes was drawn to the tiny house movement because of the efficiencies of space, the creative green designs to keep bills low, and the opportunity for small amounts of money to go a long way towards building someone their own independent home.

**Self-Help:** Self-Help Credit Union was chartered in 1983 to build a network of branches that partner with working families and communities often underserved by the financial marketplace. With over \$1.86 billion in assets and serving more than 89,000 members in 37 branches – eight in Florida, one in Georgia, 23 in North Carolina, four in South Carolina, and one in Virginia - Self-Help

Credit Union is one of the fastest-growing community development financial institutions in the country. It is part of the Self-Help family of nonprofit organizations whose collective mission is to create and protect ownership and economic opportunity for all. For over 40 years, the national Center for Community Self-Help and its affiliates have provided more than \$11 billion in financing to help more than 168,000 borrowers buy homes, start and grow businesses and strengthen community resources.

**EMPOWERment Inc.:** EmPOWERment, Inc.'s mission is to empower individuals and communities to achieve their destiny through community organizing, affordable housing, and grass roots economic development. Over the years and through changes in community, leadership, and staff, EmPOWERment has remained vigilant in honoring the integrity of that mission and continues to focus on several key areas:

- Affordable living options through quality rental units
- Education surrounding pre and post home purchases
- 1-on-1 counseling for ownership preservation and foreclosure management
- Community building and organizing
- Grassroots economic development

**Justice United:** Justice United is committed to training and developing civil sector leaders so that they can change the economic and social structures that affect their lives. We believe in building for power: power that is reciprocal, that is tempered by our religious traditions, and that includes more people in the dynamics of public life.

**Hope NC:** HOPE NC was founded in 2018 by three parents, Dotty Foley, Orah Raia and Ginny Dropkin, who all have sons with autism, along with decades of collective experience in the disability field and their personal experiences of the challenging issues facing individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Laura Wells, Executive Director, joined the organization in 2022.

The driving force behind the creation of HOPE NC was the dilemma many families face: where will their adult children with I/DD live when aging caregivers can no longer care for them? Our mission expanded to include older adults when we realized that many older adults are isolated and want to stay connected to their communities and don't always want to be segregated by age. Families also want their loved ones to have options of where they can live and know that their loved one is valued and included.

**Orange County Home Preservation Coalition:** The Orange County Home Preservation Coalition (OCHPC) is a collaborative of organizations that provide home repairs and modifications to Orange County residents. Born from the Orange County Department on Aging Master Aging Plan process, the Coalition seeks to increase communication and collaboration among organizations to decrease burden on clients and service seekers, many of whom are older adults. The Coalition maintains an online database that allows for communication regarding cases as well as facilitates referrals among the various partners. Additionally, we meet on a monthly basis to update and discuss the details of these cases. Employing a unified assessment process, our goal is to provide comprehensive and efficient repairs to Orange County residents in need.

**Orange County Affordable Housing Advisory Board:** The Orange County Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB) was established in 2001, as recommended by the Affordable Housing Task Force. The purpose of the AHAB is to advise the Orange County Board of Commissioners regarding:

- Prioritizing housing needs
- Assessing project proposals
- Publicizing the County's housing objectives
- Monitoring the progress of local housing programs
- Exploring new funding opportunities, and
- Increasing the community's awareness of, understanding of, commitment to and involvement in producing attractive affordable housing

**Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition:** The Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition (OCAHC) is an association of non-profit housing developers, service providers, advocacy groups, and local government partners working together to provide housing opportunities for all in Orange County, North Carolina.

**Other local/regional/state/federal planning efforts considered when preparing the Plan**

Plan analysis included Hillsborough, Chapel Hill, and Carrboro housing plans and related documentation.

**Describe cooperation and coordination with other public entities, including the State and any adjacent units of general local government, in the implementation of the Consolidated Plan (91.215(l))**

The Orange County Housing and Community Development Department serves as the administrative agency for the HOME program, working closely with other County departments as well as the Towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. Similarly, the Town of Chapel Hill's Office of Housing and Community administers the Town's CDBG program. This office maintains strong coordination with various Town departments, including Economic Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Sustainability, as well as the local Police and Fire Departments. This collaboration ensures a unified approach to addressing housing and community development needs across the region.

**Narrative**

The Orange County HOME Consortium represents a collaborative effort involving Orange County and the Towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough. This cooperative venture aims to address the shared housing needs and promote affordable housing development throughout the region. The Consortium fosters strong intergovernmental collaboration, with a positive and productive working relationship between the four jurisdictions. This partnership ensures that resources and strategies are aligned to maximize the impact of housing initiatives across the area.

Additionally, the Consortium has built an excellent partnership with the local Continuum of Care (CoC), a network of organizations dedicated to addressing homelessness and housing instability. The relationship between the Consortium and CoC is based on mutual trust and a shared commitment to creating effective solutions for vulnerable populations. The strong relationship with

CoC members enables the Consortium to develop comprehensive, community-driven programs that support housing stability, homelessness prevention, and broader social services across Orange County.

## PR-15 Citizen Participation - 91.105, 91.115, 91.200(c) and 91.300(c)

Summarize citizen participation process and how it impacted goal-setting

Residents and community stakeholders were actively invited to provide input through a variety of public engagement sessions, as well as through a formal 30-day public comment period for the draft Consolidated Plan. These engagement opportunities were designed to ensure broad community participation and included five in-person sessions held at different locations throughout the county during afternoon and evening hours to accommodate various schedules.

A Resident Survey was also made available both online and in hardcopy format, enabling stakeholders and residents to identify priority areas and strategies that reflect the needs of the community. This comprehensive approach ensured that a wide range of perspectives were gathered to inform the planning process.

The Consortium adhered to the County's Public Participation Policy and Citizen Participation Plan, in line with the requirements set forth in 24 CFR 91.105, ensuring an open and inclusive process. A key focus of the Consortium was improving accessibility for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). To facilitate meaningful access, the Resident Survey was offered widely in English and Spanish, ensuring that LEP individuals could fully engage in the process. Additionally, materials on the project website were made available in both English and Spanish, further enhancing accessibility.

For one in-person engagement session, the Consortium also provided simultaneous translation services to Spanish-speaking participants, ensuring that language was not a barrier to participation.

The Outreach Plan was designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders, including service providers, community-based organizations, housing providers, local government agencies and boards, neighborhood leaders, and elected officials. A master list of contact information for these individuals and organizations was compiled to help spread the word about the outreach efforts. These contacts were instrumental in reaching additional community members and reaching residents and stakeholders the Consortium may not have been able to access on its own.

The Orange County Consolidated Plan Resident Survey was made available online through Orange County's website, as well as in hardcopy form at Town Hall meetings and public spaces. To reach a broad audience, the member jurisdictions of the Consortium used their social media platforms and encouraged word-of-mouth promotion. Property managers also helped distribute information about the survey by sharing leaflets and information sheets with tenants.

A summary of participant comments and the results of the questionnaire can be found in the Attachment Section of the Consolidated Plan.

# Needs Assessment -----

## ----- NA-05 Overview

### **Overview**

This section utilizes HUD’s Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data to assess changes in housing, social service, and economic development needs in Orange County. For tables using CHAS data, 2011–2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates serve as the ‘base’ year, and 2017–2022 ACS estimates serve as the most recent year. The CHAS data automatically populates the tables with the relevant ACS estimates.

The Needs Assessment relies on additional data sources beyond the CHAS data provided by HUD. Data from the 2020 Census and 2017-2022 American Community Survey was used to provide additional context. Data pertaining to homelessness was provided by the Director of the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness. Orange County is a part of the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness Continuum of Care. Data on public housing was provided by staff at the Orange County Housing Authority and Chapel Hill Department of Housing. This information was supplemented with figures from HUD’s Housing Authority Profiles data interface. Additional data was provided by Central Pines Regional Council on Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing and by the Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition on subsidized housing units held by service providers in the County.

### **Summary of Housing Needs**

According to ACS data, between 2016 and 2022, Orange County’s population grew by 4.37%, increasing from 139,807 to 145,919 residents, a net addition of 6,112 people. During the same period, the number of households grew at a faster rate of 7.3%, with 3,806 new households formed, reflecting a shift in household composition. Median income in the county saw a significant increase of 40%, rising from \$61,130 to \$85,785, which suggests an overall improvement in the local economy during the period of high growth.

However, despite these positive trends in population and wages, housing affordability remains a critical concern. Currently, 55% of renters in Orange County are cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Similarly, 18% of homeowners face the same financial strain. This disparity highlights the ongoing challenges in ensuring that the county’s housing supply and affordability keep pace with population and income growth, particularly for vulnerable groups such as lower-income households and renters. These dynamics emphasize the need for targeted strategies to address housing affordability and reduce the prevalence of cost-burdened households.

### **Describe the number and type of single person households in need of housing assistance.**

According to the 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS), there were 16,632 single-person households, including an estimated 8,299 one-person owner households and 8,317 one-person renter households in Orange County. These one-person households made up 23% of homeowner households and 37% of renter households, respectively. While 70% of renters living alone (70%) are under 55, more than 75% of homeowners living alone are age 55 or older.

While specific data on housing costs for senior homeowners living alone in Orange County is not readily available, national trends indicate that housing affordability is a significant concern among older adults. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, as of 2022, approximately 27.4% of homeowners aged 65 and over were considered housing cost-burdened, meaning they spent more than 30% of their income on housing-related expenses. This suggests that many older homeowners in Orange County may face financial challenges in maintaining their homes.

### **Estimate the number and type of families in need of housing assistance who are disabled or victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.**

- **People with Disabilities:** Based on the 2016 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data, an estimated 5,485 or 27% of renter households and 9,940 or 31% of homeowner households have a member with a disability. Among renters with a disability, 72% are considered low-income, meaning they earn no more than 80% of the County's area median income (AMI), and 45% of homeowners with a disability are low-income. The majority of these low-income households with a disability, both renters and owners, also have one or more housing problems, such as housing cost burden, substandard facilities, or overcrowding.
- **Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking:** According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, there were 15 reported cases of rape in Orange County in 2023.

### **What are the most common housing problems?**

Housing cost burden is the most prevalent housing issue for both renters and homeowners in Orange County. According to 2017-2022 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 22% of homeowners face a housing cost burden, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. Among these homeowners, 12% allocate between 30-50% of their income toward housing costs, while 10% spend more than half of their income on housing, indicating a severe cost burden.

In comparison, renters in Orange County experience significantly higher rates of housing cost burden. Approximately 45% of renters are cost-burdened, more than double the rate for homeowners. Of these renters, 19% spend 30-50% of their income on housing, and 26% face a severe cost burden, dedicating more than 50% of their income to housing expenses. This disparity underscores the greater financial strain renters face in maintaining affordable housing.

### **Are any populations/household types more affected than others by these problems?**

Senior households and those including a person with a disability are disproportionately affected by the high cost of housing in Orange County. These populations often rely on fixed or limited incomes, such as Social Security or disability benefits, which fail to keep pace with rapidly rising housing costs. This economic strain leaves many older adults and individuals with disabilities vulnerable to housing instability, forcing them to make difficult trade-offs between essential needs, such as healthcare, food, and housing.

In addition, individuals and families experiencing homelessness or those at risk of becoming homeless are especially impacted by the county's housing affordability crisis. These individuals often face a combination of insufficient income, high housing costs, and systemic barriers to accessing stable housing, such as limited affordable housing stock and restrictive rental requirements. For people in these circumstances, even modest rent increases or unexpected expenses can push housing entirely out of reach, perpetuating cycles of homelessness and instability.

The intersection of limited income, high housing costs, and systemic barriers underscores the need for targeted interventions and providing supportive services to help vulnerable populations secure and maintain stable housing. Addressing these disparities is essential to promoting housing equity and improving the quality of life for all residents, particularly those most at risk.

### **Describe the characteristics and needs of Low-income individuals and families with children (especially extremely low-income) who are currently housed but are at imminent risk of either residing in shelters or becoming unsheltered 91.205(c)/91.305(c). Also discuss the needs of formerly homeless families and individuals who are receiving rapid re-housing assistance and are nearing the termination of that assistance**

The imminent risk of homelessness in Orange County is reflected in the households served by our Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) Program and Eviction Diversion Program (EDP), both of which provide critical support to individuals and families facing housing instability. Each year, we process approximately 400 EDP cases for tenants navigating eviction proceedings and 400 EHA applications for households seeking emergency rental assistance, with significant overlap between the two programs. Based on these figures, we estimate that between 600 and 700 unique households experience a severe risk of displacement annually. Furthermore, estimates show that up to 70% of these households include children, highlighting the urgent need for family-focused eviction prevention strategies. Strengthening data tracking efforts, expanding early intervention resources, and integrating wraparound services—such as legal aid, financial counseling, and tenant protections—will be essential in mitigating homelessness risk and promoting long-term housing stability for vulnerable families.

Orange County has seen success in implementing a homeless diversion program, and have moved the following number of vulnerable households each year presenting for a shelter bed into housing a mix of strengths-based guided conversation plus flexible funding:

- 2020 – 87
- 2021 – 145

- 2022 – 141
- 2023 – 178

**If a jurisdiction provides estimates of the at-risk population(s), it should also include a description of the operational definition of the at-risk group and the methodology used to generate the estimates:**

OCPEH has not developed a CoC-specific definition of an "at-risk group" beyond "At risk" of homelessness as defined under § 576.2 of the ESG Program Interim Rule and § 578.3 of the CoC Program Interim Rule.

**Specify particular housing characteristics that have been linked with instability and an increased risk of homelessness**

Between 2016 and 2022, Orange County experienced a significant rise in housing costs, contributing to increased housing instability. Median household income grew by 40%, from \$61,130 in 2016 to \$85,785 in 2022. However, this increase was erased by the sharp rise in housing costs. Median gross rent increased by 35.7%, from \$970 to \$1,316, while the median home value surged by 40.4%, jumping from \$281,700 to \$395,600. These escalating costs place a disproportionate burden on lower-income households, particularly renters, who often face stagnant wages relative to rising housing expenses. As rents and home values climb, affordability becomes a pressing issue, making it increasingly difficult for residents to secure and maintain stable housing, especially for vulnerable populations such as seniors, people with disabilities, and those at risk of homelessness. This data underscores the urgency of addressing housing affordability to ensure long-term stability for all residents.

## **Discussion**

The data discussed above highlights Orange County's most pressing housing challenge: the high cost of housing and the lack of affordability for extremely low-income and very low-income households—those earning under 30% and between 30–50% of Area Median Income (AMI), respectively. Extremely low-income households make up 13.71% of all households in the county but bear a disproportionate housing cost burden. They account for 44% of all cost-burdened households, and a staggering 66% of extremely low-income households pay more than half of their income toward housing costs, amounting to nearly 4,957 households. This level of cost burden leaves many families financially vulnerable and at risk of housing instability.

Very low-income households face similar challenges, with 69% spending more than 30% of their income on housing and over one-third (35%) paying more than half. Renters are particularly affected, as they make up 70% of households earning less than 30% HAMFI and a majority (59.3%) of households earning less than or equal to 80% HAMFI. This indicates that renters are disproportionately impacted by housing affordability issues, especially given the limited availability of affordable rental units. While homeowners are concentrated in higher-income brackets, their relative financial stability does little to offset the broader housing affordability crisis. Addressing these disparities requires targeted policy measures, including the preservation and expansion of

affordable housing options, rental assistance programs, and initiatives that promote long-term housing stability for low-income households.

## NA-15 Disproportionately Greater Need: Housing Problems - 91.405, 91.205 (b)(2)

### Introduction

This section assesses whether specific racial or ethnic groups in Orange County experience housing problems at rates significantly higher than the county average. A "disproportionately greater need" is identified when the rate of severe housing problems for a group exceeds the countywide figure by more than ten percentage points. This analysis is based on data from the 2017–2022 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) and examines results across different income levels.

For households earning 0–30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), those with no or negative income but no other identified housing issues are excluded to ensure a more accurate representation of actual housing needs. The analysis considers four housing problems as defined by HUD: (1) a lack of complete kitchen facilities, (2) a lack of complete plumbing facilities, (3) overcrowding (more than one person per room), and (4) cost burdens where housing costs exceed 30% of household income. This structured approach provides a clear understanding of how housing challenges impact various racial and ethnic groups across income brackets.

### Discussion

The data presented above underscores Orange County's most urgent housing challenge: the high cost of housing and the lack of affordability for extremely low-income and very low-income households—those earning under 30% and between 30–50% of the Area Median Income (AMI), respectively.

Extremely low-income households (0–30% AMI) make up 13.71% of all households in the county, yet they bear a disproportionate housing cost burden. This group accounts for 44% of all cost-burdened households, with 66% of extremely low-income households paying more than half of their income toward housing costs, representing nearly 4,957 households. This severe cost burden leaves many families financially vulnerable, forcing difficult trade-offs between housing, food, healthcare, and other essential needs, and putting them at risk of housing instability or homelessness.

## NA-20 Disproportionately Greater Need: Severe Housing Problems - 91.405, 91.205 (b)(2)

### Introduction

This section examines whether any racial or ethnic groups in Orange County experience disproportionately high rates of severe housing problems. These problems include lacking complete kitchen facilities, lacking complete plumbing facilities, overcrowding (defined as more than 1.5 persons per room), and extreme cost burdens (housing costs exceeding 50% of income). A "disproportionately greater need" is identified when the rate of severe housing problems for a group exceeds the countywide average by more than 10 percentage points.

The analysis uses data from the 2017–2021 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) and categorizes findings by household income levels. For households earning 0–30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), those with no or negative income but no other severe housing problems are excluded to ensure a clearer focus on housing-related challenges. The tables below detail the prevalence of severe housing problems across groups, providing insight into how these issues affect different racial and ethnic populations in the county.

## **Discussion**

Based on the most recent data, we observe that severe housing problems in Orange County decrease as income increases, following expected trends. Among households earning  $\leq 30\%$  of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI), 42.3% experience at least one severe housing problem, compared to just 6.1% of households earning  $>80\%$ – $100\%$  HAMFI. This underscores the acute housing challenges faced by extremely low-income households, many of whom struggle with severe cost burdens, overcrowding, or inadequate housing conditions.

Renters are significantly more likely than homeowners to face severe housing problems, particularly among low-income households ( $\leq 50\%$  HAMFI). 67% of renter households in this income range report at least one severe housing problem, compared to 44.38% of owners. Still, the absolute numbers show that housing problems exist at all income levels and impact the residents on a large scale.

## **NA-25 Disproportionately Greater Need: Housing Cost Burdens - 91.405, 91.205 (b)(2)**

### **Introduction**

This section examines whether any racial or ethnic group in Orange County experiences a disproportionately high housing cost burden. A disproportionate burden is defined as a racial or ethnic group having a housing cost burden rate that exceeds the countywide average by more than ten percentage points.

In Orange County, approximately 45% of households are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Based on this threshold, none of the largest racial or ethnic groups in the county meet the criteria for being disproportionately cost-burdened. This suggests that, while housing affordability remains a significant challenge across the county, the burden is distributed relatively evenly among the major racial and ethnic groups.

## Discussion

None of the major racial or ethnic groups in Orange County meet the criteria for being disproportionately cost-burdened; it is notable that over 45% of households in the county spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Among these, African American households are more likely to experience cost burdens compared to other racial or ethnic groups. In contrast, White and Asian households are the least likely to be cost-burdened in Orange County, highlighting disparities in housing affordability across different demographic groups. These findings underscore the need for targeted strategies to address housing affordability challenges, particularly for populations more likely to face financial strain from housing costs.

## NA-30 Disproportionately Greater Need: Discussion - 91.205 (b)(2)

### **Are there any Income categories in which a racial or ethnic group has disproportionately greater need than the needs of that income category as a whole?**

As discussed above, we find the following racial/ethnic groups have disproportionately greater needs than Orange County's population as a whole (analysis limited to the four largest racial/ethnic groups in the county: Whites, African-Americans, Asians, and Hispanics):

- **Housing problems:** Hispanics earning below 30% AMI
- **Severe housing problems:** Hispanics earning 50–80% AMI

### **If they have needs not identified above, what are those needs?**

There are no additional needs not previously discussed in this section.

### **Are any of those racial or ethnic groups located in specific areas or neighborhoods in your community?**

According to the most recent American Community Survey estimates (2014–2018 ACS estimates), Orange County's racial composition is 70.5% White, 10.6% African-American, 7.9% Asian, and 10.6% Hispanic. African American residents are concentrated in Chapel Hill, and East and West of Hillsborough. Hispanics are concentrated in four areas in Orange County: in the Town of Carrboro and in three block groups located west and east of Hillsborough. Asians are concentrated in three block groups located southwest, north, and northeast of Chapel Hill.

## NA-35 Public Housing - 91.405, 91.205 (b)

### **Introduction**

Public housing in Orange County is provided by two entities—the Orange County Housing Authority (OCHA) and the Town of Chapel Hill's Office of Housing and Community. OCHA oversees 687 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV, commonly known as Section 8), all of which are tenant-based. OCHA also oversees 18 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), 5 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI),

and 41 Veterans and Supportive Housing (VASH). OCHA does not manage any public housing units. OCHA is overseen by a seven-member Board of Commissioners.

The Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community manages a total of **296 public housing units** located in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. These units provide affordable housing to a diverse community of residents. Notably, the office does not administer any Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), focusing exclusively on public housing management.

Among the residents, **54% are working families**, reflecting a population that actively contributes to the local economy while benefiting from stable, affordable housing. The resident population is linguistically diverse, with English being the primary language spoken. Additionally, several other languages are represented, including **Karen, Arabic, Burmese, Spanish, and Mandarin**, highlighting the multicultural nature of the community.

The demographic composition of the public housing residents shows a wide range of ages:

- **Residents aged 65 and older:** 77 individuals, indicating the presence of senior households that may require supportive services.
- **Residents aged 18 and older:** 230 individuals, including many working adults and independent young residents.
- **Residents under the age of 18:** 310 individuals, reflecting a significant population of children and youth, emphasizing the importance of family-oriented services, educational support, and recreational opportunities within these housing communities.

This diversity and range of ages underscore the need for tailored resources, from workforce development for adults to supportive services for seniors and youth-focused programs. These housing units not only provide essential shelter but also serve as a foundation for fostering a thriving, inclusive community.

**Section 504 Needs Assessment: Describe the needs of public housing tenants and applicants on the waiting list for accessible units:**

The Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community reports that households on its waiting lists for accessible units request first floor units, handrails in bathrooms, accessible kitchens (maneuverable with wheelchair or walker, counters that residents in wheelchairs can reach), wider hallways, lower keyholes and eye holes on front doors. Waitlist data for the Orange County Housing Authority shows 160 households with needs for 1 and 2 bedroom units.

**What are the number and type of families on the waiting lists for public housing and section 8 tenant-based rental assistance? Based on the information above, and any other information available to the jurisdiction, what are the most immediate needs of residents of public housing and Housing Choice voucher holders?**

The Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community report 351 households on the waiting list (171 for one bedroom, 90 for two-bedroom, 64 for three-bedroom, 20 for four-bedroom, and 6 for five-bedroom). They also report that they need additional one-bedroom units to meet the needs of those on the waiting lists.

Currently, there are approximately 160 individuals on the OCHA waitlist. However, the waitlist has remained closed for several years, and no general selections have been made due to the county's policy of allocating units exclusively through the OCPEH HOME Committee for those with the highest needs. The greatest demand continues to be for affordable 1- and 2-bedroom units, which remain in short supply. This shortage highlights the ongoing need for expanded housing options to accommodate individuals and families seeking stable, affordable living arrangements.

### **How do these needs compare to the housing needs of the population at large?**

The needs of public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) clients closely mirror those of the broader population, particularly in the demand for more accessible and affordable housing options. This need is especially critical in neighborhoods of opportunity, where housing access can significantly impact economic mobility and quality of life. The OCHA waitlist is composed of 940 Black individuals, 300 White individuals, 11 American Indian or Pacific Islander (AIPI) individuals, and 10 Asian individuals currently awaiting housing assistance. This data underscores the pressing demand for equitable and expanded housing solutions to serve diverse communities

### **Discussion**

Public housing in Orange County is administered by two entities—the Orange County Housing Authority (Housing Choice Vouchers throughout the county) and the Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community (public housing units in Chapel Hill and Carrboro). While waitlist data on accessibility for OCHA are not available, Chapel Hill reports a need for additional accessible units on the first floor and additional one-bedroom units to meet their waitlist needs.

The needs of both public housing and HCV families mirror the needs of Orange County's broader population with respect to the need for more accessible units and more affordable units.

## **NA-40 Homeless Needs Assessment - 91.405, 91.205 (c)**

### **Introduction**

The 2021 Homeless System Gaps Analysis for Orange County identifies 15 critical gaps in addressing homelessness, with a focus on housing, temporary housing services, connection services, and dignity services. Key housing needs include more income-based rental units, rapid re-housing programs, youth housing, and landlord incentives, as well as support for housing navigation and furnishings for those exiting homelessness. Temporary housing services require accessible shelters, medical respite beds, and bridge housing for individuals transitioning from incarceration. Connection services highlight the need for expanded Housing Helpline staffing, an integrated service center, and a crisis/diversion facility. Dignity services call for 24-hour bathroom access and memorial service funding. While three gaps—housing access coordination, diversion funding, and street outreach—have been filled, significant work remains to meet the growing demand and ensure homelessness in the county becomes rare, brief, and one-time.

## **the number and type of families in need of housing assistance for families with children and the families of veterans.**

2023 Point-in-Time Count data provided by OCPEH 13 individuals in families with children experience homelessness on a given night in Orange County. All of those individuals are sheltered.

### **Describe the Nature and Extent of Homelessness by Racial and Ethnic Group.**

According to the 2023 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count data from OCPEH, African Americans are the largest racial/ethnic group experiencing homelessness in Orange County, with 70 individuals identified, making up 56% of the total homeless population. This stark disparity is particularly concerning given that African Americans represent only 12% of the county's overall population, highlighting a significant overrepresentation in homelessness. White individuals constitute the second-largest group, with 54 individuals experiencing homelessness. Other racial and ethnic groups account for a smaller portion of the homeless population, including Hispanic individuals, with only five reported cases. These findings underscore deep racial disparities in housing stability, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions, equitable housing policies, and expanded support services to address the systemic factors contributing to homelessness in Orange County.

### **Describe the Nature and Extent of Unsheltered and Sheltered Homelessness.**

2023 Point-in-Time Count data provided by OCPEH there were 126 people experiencing homelessness in Orange County. Of those, 90 (71%) were sheltered while 36 (29%) were unsheltered.

### **Discussion**

Homelessness in Orange County remains a persistent challenge, though recent estimates indicate a slight decline compared to previous years. However, the numbers continue to reflect significant housing instability, with high and rising housing costs serving as a major driver. Limited access to essential services, as identified by OCPEH in its most recent report, further exacerbates the issue. At the same time, income-based rental assistance remains insufficient, as both the Orange County Housing Authority and Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community continue to maintain long waitlists for Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing units. Addressing these gaps through expanded housing assistance programs, enhanced service coordination, and evidence-based interventions will be crucial to further reducing homelessness in Orange County.

## **NA-45 Non-Homeless Special Needs Assessment - 91.405, 91.205 (b,d)**

### **Introduction**

This section analyzes the housing needs for people who are not experiencing homelessness but have unique service and housing needs. Specifically, we analyze the presence and housing needs of four populations: elderly (aged over 65), the disabled, elderly disabled, and persons with HIV/AIDS. Data in this section come from the American Community Survey (2019–2023 estimates), North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Orange County Department on Aging, and other reports.

**Describe the characteristics of people with service/housing needs in your community:**

- **Elderly:** According to 2019–2023 American Community Survey estimates, there are 23,101 individuals in Orange County over 65 years old. This comprises 15.7% of the population. In addition, there are 8,625 persons in Orange County over 75 years old, comprising 5.9% of the total population.
- **People with disabilities:** According to 2019–2023 American Community Survey estimates, there are 8,203 disabled individuals under 65 living in Orange County.
- **Elderly people with disabilities:** Within the disabled population, 5,203 are also elderly (over the age of 65). This figure represents 29% of the entire elderly population.

**What are the housing and supportive service needs of these populations and how are these needs determined?**

**Elderly:** According to the 2022–2027 Orange County Department of Aging Master Plan, the focus of efforts should be on the following eight domains of livability that influence the quality of life for older adults:

1. **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**
2. **Transportation**
3. **Housing**
4. **Social Participation**
5. **Respect and Social Inclusion**
6. **Civic Participation and Employment**
7. **Communication and Information**
8. **Community and Health Services**

These goals suggest the housing needs for elderly adults include (1) providing additional affordable units specifically for the elderly, (2) retrofitting existing units to make them accessible, and (3) increasing support to change non-housing conditions in the community (e.g., transportation) to allow Orange County adults to age in place.

**People with disabilities:** A 2024 report by the ncIMPACT Initiative highlights a significant shortage of decent, secure, and affordable housing across North Carolina's urban, suburban, and rural communities. This shortage disproportionately affects low-income households, with many renters spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs, indicating a severe cost burden. It highlights that the lack of affordable housing in the region (which includes Orange County) exacerbates challenges faced by persons with disabilities in searching for housing.

**Elderly people with disabilities:** According to 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, the most prevalent disabilities among the elderly disabled population in Orange County are ambulatory difficulty, hearing difficulty, and independent living difficulty. These challenges highlight the growing need for expanded supportive services to assist older adults with daily activities, such as grocery shopping, running errands, and accessing healthcare appointments, which may become increasingly difficult due to mobility limitations. Additionally, the prevalence of these disabilities underscores the urgent need for more accessible housing options throughout the county. Increasing the supply of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant units, home modifications, and age-friendly housing designs will help ensure that seniors can age in place safely and comfortably.

**Discuss the size and characteristics of the population with HIV/AIDS and their families within the Eligible Metropolitan Statistical Area:**

Orange County is part of the Durham-Chapel Hill Metropolitan Statistical Area, which comprises five counties. According to the 2018 North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services HIV/STD/Hepatitis Surveillance report, the most recent report, the number of individuals living in those counties diagnosed with HIV is:

- ☐ Chatham County: 130
- ☐ Durham County: 1,845
- ☐ Granville County: 206
- ☐ Orange County: 318
- ☐ Person County: 94

**Discussion:**

The figures cited in this section show that Orange County has a substantial population of people who are not experiencing homelessness but have unique housing needs, including the elderly, disabled, elderly disabled, and persons with HIV/AIDS. While these individuals have unique housing and supportive service needs, they are all exacerbated by a lack of quality, affordable housing near transit options that allow them to get where they need to go in a reasonable amount of time.

## NA-50 Non-Housing Community Development Needs - 91.415, 91.215 (f)

**Describe the jurisdiction’s need for Public Facilities:**

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and 911 Communications:** A comprehensive assessment revealed the necessity for enhancements in EMS operations and 911 communications infrastructure to improve response times and service delivery.

**Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services:** There is a significant need for accessible mental health and substance abuse treatment facilities to address the growing demand for these services within the community.

**Community Health Facilities:** The Community Health Assessment identified the need for expanded public health facilities to address issues such as chronic diseases, environmental health, and maternal and infant health.

**Water and Sewer Infrastructure:** Certain areas have experienced challenges related to water contamination and inadequate sewer services, indicating a need for improved infrastructure to ensure safe and reliable utilities.

**School Facility Modernization and Accessibility:** Assessments have highlighted the need to update school facilities to meet current educational standards and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**Enhanced Accessibility in Public Facilities:** Beyond schools, there's a broader need to ensure all public facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities, as emphasized in the 2020-2025 Consolidated Plan.

**Climate Resilience of Public Facilities:** As climate change poses increasing risks, it's essential to bolster the resilience of public facilities by implementing sustainable practices and infrastructure improvements.

### **How were these needs determined?**

These needs were determined through analysis of plans from jurisdictions in Orange County and public comments on facility needs.

### **Describe the jurisdiction's need for Public Improvements:**

The following were identified as needs for public improvements:

- Transportation for seniors to get to medical appointments, pick up prescriptions, and other essential travel
- Water and sewer access improvements
- Intersections, public buildings, and facilities should be made ADA-compliant and handicap accessible.
- Roads, curbs, and sidewalks should be improved where needed.
- Additional sidewalks and bike lanes should be provided.
- Additional bus shelters should be provided.
- Storm water management systems should be improved.

### **How were these needs determined?**

These needs were determined through analysis of plans from jurisdictions in Orange County and public comments on facility needs.

### **Describe the jurisdiction's need for Public Services:**

The following were identified as needs for public services:

- Mental health services for veterans and individuals experiencing homelessness
- Public services should be improved in more rural parts of the county
- Rapid Re-Housing program should be established for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Transportation and mobility services provided for seniors and people with disabilities

### **How were these needs determined?**

These needs were determined through analysis of plans from jurisdictions in Orange County and public comments on facility needs.

## **Housing Market Analysis**

### **MA-05 Overview**

#### **Housing Market Analysis Overview**

Orange County is located in central North Carolina, within the Piedmont region, and is part of the Durham-Chapel Hill Metropolitan Area and the larger Raleigh-Durham-Cary Combined Statistical Area. This area, often referred to as the "Triangle," is anchored by the cities of Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, which are home to prominent institutions of higher education: North Carolina State University, Duke University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Together, these cities and universities form a vibrant and interconnected economic and cultural hub.

Orange County is characterized by a mix of expansive rural areas and three urban centers: Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. In recent years, residential development has increasingly expanded into formerly rural areas, driven by population growth and the demand for housing. These developments serve not only the needs of Orange County's growing population but also commuters working in neighboring counties, particularly in Research Triangle Park, a major employment center in the region.

This section provides an analysis of the Orange County housing market, utilizing data from the 2017-2022 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) to assess trends and challenges in housing affordability and availability.

- **Pre-1970 Construction:** A significant portion of the housing units were constructed before 1970, indicating an aging segment of the housing stock that may require maintenance or upkeep
- **1970-1999 Construction:** A substantial number of homes were built between 1970 and 1999, reflecting periods of residential development that have shaped the current housing landscape.
- **Post-2000 Construction:** Recent decades have seen continued growth, with new housing units constructed since 2000, contributing to the county's expanding residential infrastructure.

We find that the housing market in Orange County struggles to meet the needs of its population, particularly for low- and moderate-income households. While there has been growth in housing development, much of it is not affordable for those earning less than 80% AMI. Renters and extremely low-income households are the most vulnerable, often experiencing severe cost burdens. Approximately 44% of households in Orange County are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Extremely low-income households are disproportionately affected, with over **66% paying more than half their income** on housing. Renters, especially those earning less than 30% HAMFI (Household Area Median Family Income), face the greatest affordability challenges.

## MA-10 Number of Housing Units - 91.410, 91.210(a) & (b)(2)

### Introduction

According to the 2023 ACS data, there are 62,553 total housing units, of which an estimated 56,456 are occupied. This corresponds to a vacancy rate of about 9% (5,671 units). Most owner-occupied homes (83%) have three or more bedrooms, while the majority of rented units (69%) have one or two bedrooms.

### Describe the number and targeting (income level/type of family served) of units assisted with federal, state, and local programs.

- **Public Housing:** 296 units in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. These are targeted toward households earning below 50% AMI, though some households earn more than that.
- **Housing Choice Vouchers:** Orange County Housing Authority has 687 Housing Choice Vouchers, 18 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), 5 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), and 41 Veterans and Supportive Housing (VASH).
- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC):** LIHTC properties in Orange County have 592 known units for a mix of LMI households and elderly/disabled households.
- **HOME:** 45 developments in Orange County constructed with HOME funding.
- **Community Home Trust:** 342 permanently-affordable homes in Orange County through a community land trust model. Units targeted to households earning below 80% of AMI.

### Provide an assessment of units expected to be lost from the affordable housing inventory for any reason, such as expiration of Section 8 contracts.

There is one LIHTC development with a contract ending in 2028. This development offers 124 units of subsidized housing .

### **Does the availability of housing units meet the needs of the population?**

Housing remains largely unaffordable for many residents, particularly low- and moderate-income households. There is a critical shortage of quality, affordable, and accessible housing units, leaving many individuals and families cost-burdened and struggling to find stable housing

### **Describe the need for specific types of housing.**

The need for quality, affordable, and accessible housing is particularly acute in the urban centers of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. These areas serve as the county’s economic, educational, and cultural hubs, offering proximity to employment centers, healthcare facilities, and essential services. However, rising housing costs and limited affordable options have created significant barriers for low- and moderate-income households, making it difficult for many to live in the very communities where they work, study, or receive essential services.

### **Discussion**

While the total number of market-rate housing units in Orange County may appear sufficient to accommodate the county’s growing population, market forces alone have not produced enough housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households. The disparity between income levels and housing costs has left many residents struggling to find housing within their means, particularly in the county’s urban centers of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough—where employment opportunities and public transit access are most concentrated.

The high cost of market-rate housing in these areas creates significant barriers for low-income workers, seniors on fixed incomes, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations. Many households earning below the county’s median income are forced to spend a disproportionate share of their income on housing costs, often exceeding HUD’s affordability threshold of 30% of gross income. As a result, these households face increased financial instability, risk of displacement, and limited access to essential services.

## **MA-15 Cost of Housing - 91.410, 91.210(a)**

### **Introduction**

As highlighted throughout this plan, Orange County has experienced a significant rise in housing costs in recent years, leading to a critical shortage of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. Median gross rent has surged by 35.7%, increasing from \$970 to \$1,316, while the median home value has risen even more sharply, by 40.4%, from \$281,700 to \$395,600. These escalating costs disproportionately affect lower-income households, particularly renters, whose wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of housing.

The growing affordability gap makes it increasingly challenging for residents to secure and maintain stable housing, with vulnerable populations—including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those at risk of homelessness—facing the greatest strain. The steep increases in both rental and homeownership costs highlight the urgent need for targeted policies and investments to address

housing affordability. Without decisive action, many residents may face housing instability, undermining the county's long-term economic and social well-being.

### **Is there sufficient housing for households at all income levels?**

The data clearly indicate that Orange County does not have an adequate supply of housing units for households earning below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) (extremely low-income) and those earning below 50% of AMI (very low-income). These income groups face the most significant barriers in securing stable, affordable housing, as the private market does not produce enough units at rents they can afford without substantial subsidies.

### **How is affordability of housing likely to change considering changes to home values and/or rents?**

In recent years, housing prices in Orange County have risen at a much faster rate than incomes, further compounding the county's ongoing affordability crisis. This growing disparity has made it increasingly difficult for low- and middle-income workers to find housing within the communities where they work. With housing stock remaining low and new development not keeping pace with demand, this trend is expected to persist over the next five years, leading to a further reduction in the number of housing units affordable to local workers.

The limited availability of housing—particularly affordable housing—combined with rising costs is already forcing more individuals and families to seek housing in surrounding rural counties, where housing remains more affordable.

### **How do HOME rents / Fair Market Rent compare to Area Median Rent? How might this impact your strategy to produce or preserve affordable housing?**

As of Fiscal Year 2024, Fair Market Rents (FMRs) in the Durham-Chapel Hill HUD Metro FMR Area, which includes Orange County, have increased significantly, with rents set at \$1,385 for efficiencies, \$1,418 for one-bedroom units, \$1,631 for two-bedroom units, \$2,051 for three-bedroom units, and \$2,510 for four-bedroom units. These figures represent a substantial increase from previous years, with the FMR for a two-bedroom unit rising by 24.03% from 2023.

Comparatively, the median gross rent in Orange County during 2019-2023 was \$1,387, reflecting a widening gap between affordable rent levels and market-rate costs. Furthermore, HOME Rent Limits remain considerably lower than current FMRs, with Low HOME Rents ranging from \$927 for an efficiency to \$1,536 for a four-bedroom unit, and High HOME Rents between \$1,185 and \$1,940, making it increasingly difficult for low-income households to secure stable housing. This trend highlights growing affordability challenges in Orange County, as rising rents continue to outpace both median incomes and existing affordability programs, placing a greater burden on low- and moderate-income residents.

### **Discussion**

One of the persistent challenges Orange County faces is that, even when Fair Market Rents (FMRs) are competitive with market rates, many landlords continue to refuse Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs). This reluctance stems primarily from the perceived concerns about bureaucratic hurdles, delayed payments, and additional inspection requirements associated with the program. As a result, simply ensuring that FMRs align with market rents is not enough to increase housing access for voucher holders.

The unwillingness of landlords to participate in the program severely limits the housing options available to low-income renters. In a market where vacancy rates are already low and demand is high, voucher holders often struggle to find landlords who will accept their vouchers, leading to longer housing searches, increased housing instability, and in some cases, voucher expiration before placement is secured.

## MA-20 Condition of Housing – 91.410,91.210(a)

### **Describe the need for owner and rental rehabilitation based on the condition of the jurisdiction's housing.**

Many owner-occupied housing units in Orange County need rehabilitation, yet many homeowners lack the financial resources necessary to make critical repairs and improvements. Unfortunately, the availability of local, state, and federal funding for housing rehabilitation remains insufficient to meet the growing demand. Even where assistance programs exist, they often come with complex eligibility requirements, extensive paperwork, and long waiting periods, making it difficult for homeowners—especially those with low or fixed incomes—to access the support they need. For renter-occupied housing, the challenges are different but equally pressing. Many rental units are owned by institutional investors or out-of-state landlords, who are often unresponsive to tenant concerns about maintenance and housing conditions. Without local oversight or incentives for responsible property management, tenants in low-income and older rental properties frequently face substandard living conditions, including deteriorating structures, outdated utilities, and health hazards such as mold or pest infestations.

A significant number of the county's existing affordable housing units require rehabilitation and accessibility modifications to remain habitable and inclusive. These needs are particularly urgent given that:

- 67% of renters earning below 50% of AMI report experiencing at least one housing problem, such as cost burden, overcrowding, or inadequate living conditions.
- 44.4% of homeowners under 50% of AMI also report facing at least one housing-related challenge, often due to the inability to afford necessary repairs and modifications.

### **Estimate the number of housing units within the jurisdiction that are occupied by low or moderate income families that contain lead-based paint hazards. 91.205(e), 91.405**

Based on updated estimates, the total number of housing units in Orange County with possible lead paint is 18,638, representing a significant portion of the county's older housing stock. Within that number, it is estimated that approximately 8,000 of these housing units have children present, putting them at greater risk of lead exposure. Additionally, 41.7% of Orange County's population

earns below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Assuming that this population is evenly distributed across all housing units by age of construction, a substantial portion of these 18,638 older housing units are occupied by low- and moderate-income families, further emphasizing the need for targeted lead abatement efforts and home rehabilitation programs. To address this issue, Orange County must continue investing in lead hazard control programs, home repair initiatives, and community outreach efforts to ensure that vulnerable residents—especially families with young children—are protected from lead exposure risks.

## **Discussion**

A significant portion of Orange County’s housing stock has been constructed since 2000, resulting in relatively low rates of physical deterioration and substandard housing conditions compared to older housing markets.

Although reported cases of lead poisoning in the county remain low, an estimated 4,500 low- and moderate-income households with children reside in homes that may contain lead-based paint hazards. However, this figure may underrepresent the true risk, as low- and moderate-income households are more likely to reside in older housing stock that has not undergone lead mitigation or modernization efforts. Given that lead-based paint hazards are most prevalent in pre-1978 homes, targeted lead remediation efforts, education programs, and financial assistance for home rehabilitation remain essential to reducing health risks for vulnerable families.

## **MA-25 Public and Assisted Housing - 91.410, 91.210(b)**

### **Introduction**

Public housing and rental assistance in Orange County are administered by two entities: the Orange County Housing Authority (OCHA) and the Town of Chapel Hill’s Office for Housing and Community. Each organization plays a distinct role in providing affordable housing options for low-income residents.

### **Orange County Housing Authority (OCHA)**

The Orange County Housing Authority (OCHA) oversees approximately 687 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs), commonly known as Section 8 vouchers. All OCHA-managed vouchers are tenant-based, meaning they are tied to the individual renter rather than a specific housing unit, allowing greater mobility for voucher holders within the private rental market.

Additionally, OCHA administers:

- 18 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) – Dedicated to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
- 5 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Vouchers – Targeted for young adults aging out of foster care who are at risk of homelessness.

- 41 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Vouchers – Designed to assist homeless veterans by providing rental subsidies along with case management and support services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

OCHA operates under the oversight of a seven-member Board of Commissioners, which guides policy decisions and program administration. A map illustrating the distribution of OCHA voucher holders throughout Orange County is included in this plan to provide insight into geographic access to voucher-supported housing.

#### Town of Chapel Hill Office for Housing and Community

The Town of Chapel Hill’s Office for Housing and Community manages 296 public housing units across 12 developments in Chapel Hill and one in Carrboro. Unlike OCHA, the Chapel Hill Office does not administer any Housing Choice Vouchers. Instead, its focus is on maintaining and improving public housing communities, ensuring compliance with HUD standards, and supporting residents through affordable housing initiatives, property management, and resident services.

#### **Describe the number and physical condition of public housing units in the jurisdiction, including those that are participating in an approved Public Housing Agency Plan.**

The Town of Chapel Hill Office of Housing and Community provides 296 public housing units in Orange County at 13 developments. Of these, 12 are located in Chapel Hill and one is in Carrboro. For HUD’s purposes, these are divided into two AMPs. Both AMPs were inspected in 2018 and scored relatively low amounts on their physical inspections.

#### **Describe the restoration and revitalization needs of public housing units in the jurisdiction.**

Over the past decade, the Town of Chapel Hill has undertaken comprehensive renovations across much of its public housing stock to improve living conditions and maintain compliance with HUD standards. However, recent inspection scores indicate that further modernization efforts are needed to ensure that public housing units remain safe, sustainable, and accessible for residents.

A more extensive and strategic modernization plan is required to address structural deficiencies, aging infrastructure, and outdated facilities in the town’s 296 public housing units. In addition to general improvements, expanding the number of ADA-compliant and accessible units is a critical priority, as many current units do not meet the needs of elderly residents and individuals with disabilities. As discussed earlier in this plan, ensuring that more units incorporate universal design features—such as wider doorways, step-free entries, and accessible bathrooms—will be essential to meeting the growing demand for barrier-free housing.

#### **Describe the public housing agency’s strategy for improving the living environment of low- and moderate-income families residing in public housing.**

The Town of Chapel Hill is committed to enhancing the management and physical conditions of its public housing developments while fostering greater accessibility and socioeconomic diversity. As part of these efforts, the town aims to increase the number of accessible units to better serve individuals with disabilities, ensuring that public housing meets the needs of all residents.

Additionally, Chapel Hill is actively working to deconcentrate poverty within its public housing communities by promoting mixed-income housing opportunities, enhancing resident services, and implementing strategies that encourage economic mobility. These improvements will not only modernize and maintain public housing units but also create a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable living environment for current and future residents.

## **Discussion**

As emphasized throughout this plan, the demand for affordable housing in Orange County continues to outpace supply, leaving many low-income and extremely low-income households struggling to find stable housing. Despite this persistent need, the number of public housing units and Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) in the county has seen only marginal growth over the past five years, failing to keep pace with rising housing costs and an increasing number of cost-burdened households. Additionally, federal relief funding, such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), is set to expire in 2026, further limiting financial resources available for affordable housing initiatives.

## **MA-30 Homeless Facilities and Services - 91.410, 91.210(c)**

### **Introduction**

The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) serves as the lead entity for Orange County's Continuum of Care (CoC), playing a pivotal role in coordinating efforts to prevent and combat homelessness across the county. OCPEH works collaboratively with local governments, service providers, and community organizations to develop and implement evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing homelessness and improving housing stability. A key function of OCPEH is its data collection and analysis efforts, which are essential for tracking progress and informing policy decisions. The organization conducts and analyzes data from the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, a federally mandated survey that provides a snapshot of homelessness in the county. Additionally, OCPEH manages and evaluates data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which captures real-time information on individuals and families receiving homelessness services. These data sources allow OCPEH to monitor the effectiveness of funded projects, identify service gaps, and optimize resource allocation to ensure that housing assistance and support services are reaching those most in need.

### **Describe mainstream services, such as health, mental health, and employment services to the extent those services are used to complement services targeted to people experiencing homelessness**

Orange County provides a comprehensive network of healthcare, behavioral health, and employment services to support residents, particularly those experiencing homelessness or financial hardship. Healthcare services are available through UNC Healthcare hospitals in Chapel Hill and Hillsborough, as well as Piedmont Health Services clinics, including an on-site clinic at IFC Community House for emergency shelter guests. The Orange County Health Department offers low-cost medical care, while the Formerly Incarcerated Transition (FIT) Program connects individuals with chronic illnesses and a history of incarceration to essential healthcare services. Behavioral health services are provided through UNC Healthcare, Freedom House Recovery Center, and Cardinal Innovations (Vaya Health LME/MCO), ensuring access to mental health counseling,

substance use treatment, and crisis support. Survivors of violence can access free therapy and advocacy through the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and Compass Center for Women and Families. Employment support is available through the Orange County Department of Social Services (DSS), Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), and NC Works Career Center/Job Link, offering job training, vocational programs, resume assistance, and financial coaching. These agencies collaborate frequently with homeless service providers through case conferencing and a by-name list system, ensuring that high-need individuals receive coordinated support. By integrating healthcare, behavioral health, and workforce development, Orange County strengthens its safety net and promotes long-term stability and self-sufficiency for vulnerable residents.

**List and describe services and facilities that meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, particularly individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth. If the services and facilities are listed on screen SP-40 Institutional Delivery Structure or screen MA-35 Special Needs Facilities and Services, describe how these facilities and services specifically address the needs of these populations.**

Orange County provides critical emergency shelter and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. There are currently two emergency shelters in the county: Inter-Faith Council (IFC) HomeStart, which offers 49 beds for women and families, and IFC Community House, which provides 52 beds for single men. During cold weather emergencies—when temperatures drop below 40 degrees—an additional 40 cots are made available: 3 beds for single women at IFC HomeStart and 17 beds for single men at IFC Community House.

Beyond emergency shelter, several organizations provide wraparound services to help individuals transition out of homelessness. The Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) offers one-on-one, client-directed support to help individuals experiencing chronic homelessness secure income, disability benefits, and stable housing. Families with children receive assistance through IFC HomeStart and Orange County Department of Social Services (DSS), while UNC Horizons provides residential and outpatient substance use recovery services specifically for pregnant women and mothers in recovery. Veterans experiencing homelessness have access to dedicated housing and support programs. The Durham VA Medical Center, which serves Orange County, operates the HUD-VASH program, offering housing assistance and case management for veterans with high service needs

## MA-35 Special Needs Facilities and Services - 91.410, 91.210(d)

### Introduction

Orange County has identified the following populations as priorities for services and facilities: elderly, people with disabilities, homeless with mental health needs, and public housing residents.

**Including the elderly, frail elderly, persons with disabilities (mental, physical, developmental, behavioral), people with HIV/AIDS and their families, public housing residents and any other categories the jurisdiction may specify, describe their supportive housing needs**

- **Elderly:** Increase the availability of accessible and age-friendly housing by rehabilitating existing units to include universal design features and constructing new affordable housing with built-in accessibility accommodations.
- **Frail Elderly:** Expand housing options that integrate accessibility features and on-site supportive services, such as assisted living facilities, home health services, and transportation assistance, to enable seniors to age in place safely.
- **People with Disabilities:** Prioritize funding for home modifications and rehabilitation to improve accessibility, increase enforcement of reasonable accommodation policies in rental housing, and promote the new construction of affordable, fully accessible units that meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities.
- **People with Substance Use Disorder:** Expand permanent supportive housing and transitional housing options that integrate case management, recovery services, and peer support programs to promote long-term housing stability and recovery.
- **People with HIV/AIDS and Their Families:** Increase the supply of permanent supportive housing with wraparound services, including medical care, mental health counseling, and case management, to ensure stable housing and improved health outcomes.
- **People Residing in Public Housing:** Enhance supportive services to promote economic self-sufficiency, provide rental assistance and relocation support for those seeking affordable private-market housing, and develop new high-quality, affordable rental housing to address ongoing demand.

**Describe programs for ensuring that persons returning from mental and physical health institutions receive appropriate supportive housing**

The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness oversees the Continuum of Care for Orange County, ensuring a coordinated and strategic approach to addressing homelessness. As part of its efforts, the partnership has implemented a robust Coordinated Entry System designed to assess the unique needs of individuals transitioning from mental health and physical care institutions. This system prioritizes these individuals for Permanent Supportive Housing, ensuring they receive the necessary resources and support to achieve stability and long-term housing security.

**Specify the activities that the jurisdiction plans to undertake during the next year to address the housing and supportive services needs identified in accordance with 91.215(e) with respect to persons who are not homeless but have other special needs. Link to one-year goals. 91.315(e)**

N/A

**For entitlement/consortia grantees: Specify the activities that the jurisdiction plans to undertake during the next year to address the housing and supportive services needs identified in accordance with 91.215(e) with respect to persons who are not homeless but have other special needs. Link to one-year goals. (91.220(2))**

The Orange County HOME Consortium intends to address the housing and supportive services needs of people who are not experiencing homelessness but have other service needs by:

- Increasing the number of accessible housing units through repair and rehabilitation of existing housing units and construction of new housing units that are affordable and accessible.
- Facilitating rehabilitation and development of housing options for older adults to age in place.
- Providing support for services, programs, and facilities for the elderly, peoples with disabilities, people with substance use disorder, and other populations with service needs.

## MA-40 Barriers to Affordable Housing - 91.410, 91.210(e)

### **Describe any negative effects of public policies on affordable housing and residential investment**

The affordable housing crisis in Orange County is driven by high housing costs, limited subsidized housing options outside urban areas, and restrictive zoning policies that limit density and affordability. Addressing these barriers requires policy changes, expanded financial incentives for affordable housing development, and community-driven solutions that balance the need for affordability with sustainable growth. Without targeted interventions, rent burdens will continue to rise, and low-income households will face increasing difficulty securing stable, affordable housing in Orange County.

- **Affordability-** The lack of affordable housing in Orange County has resulted in severe rent burdens, particularly for low- and moderate-income renters. A majority of renters in the county are rent-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their household income on rent and utilities. This problem is most severe among lower-income households
- **Zoning and permitting-** Zoning regulations across Orange County present significant challenges to the development of higher-density, affordable housing. High land costs in service-rich areas like Chapel Hill and Carrboro make it financially challenging to develop affordable housing in locations where residents can easily access jobs, transit, healthcare, and other critical services. Without zoning reforms that allow for increased density, it will remain difficult to develop affordable housing at a scale sufficient to meet demand. Accessory dwelling unit (ADU) policies, missing middle housing initiatives, and inclusionary zoning requirements could help expand affordability in high-demand areas while reducing barriers to development.
- **Minimal Housing Subsidies-** The geographic distribution of subsidized rental housing is a major barrier to affordability in Orange County. Currently, the only public housing developments in the county are located in Chapel Hill, and the majority of subsidized rental properties are concentrated in Chapel Hill and Carrboro. This lack of affordable housing options outside Chapel Hill and Carrboro disproportionately affects low-income residents in more rural parts of the county, where access to jobs, public transit, and social services is more limited. Expanding affordable housing options across the county is critical to ensuring equitable access to stable, affordable homes.

## MA-45 Non-Housing Community Development Assets - 91.410, 91.210(f)

### Introduction

Orange County has experienced sustained economic growth over the past few decades, driven by a diverse and highly skilled workforce. The county is home to major employers that require a well-educated labor force, including UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC Health Care, and two local school districts, which collectively employ a significant portion of residents. Educational services and healthcare and social assistance remain the county's largest employment sectors, reinforcing the demand for a highly educated workforce, with 62% of residents aged 25 and over holding a bachelor's degree or higher.

At the same time, the county's economy is supported by a robust retail and service industry, which caters to both the local population and the university community. These businesses rely on a workforce with varied educational backgrounds, providing opportunities for workers with lower formal educational attainment. As a result, Orange County benefits from a balanced economic landscape, combining high-skilled industries with a thriving service sector that supports its growing and diverse population.

### **Based on the Business Activity table above, what are the major employment sectors within your jurisdiction?**

The largest employment sectors for Orange County are educational services (29.0%) and healthcare and social assistance (24.8%). The county's strong emphasis on education ensures a well-qualified labor force to support these critical industries.

### **Describe the workforce and infrastructure needs of the business community:**

The three economic sectors with the greatest workforce shortages relative to available jobs in Orange County are education and healthcare services, other services, and retail trade. These industries are critical to the local economy, yet they face persistent hiring challenges. As highlighted throughout this plan, Orange County's shortage of affordable housing continues to be a significant barrier for workers in these sectors. The high cost of housing limits the ability of educators, healthcare workers, service employees, and retail staff to live within the community they serve, further exacerbating workforce shortages. Addressing housing affordability will be essential to ensuring a stable and sustainable workforce for these key industries.

### **Describe any major changes that may have an economic impact, such as planned local or regional public or private sector investments or initiatives that have affected or may affect job and business growth opportunities during the planning period. Describe any needs for workforce development, business support or infrastructure these changes may create.**

The Triangle Region continues to experience robust economic development, with global tech giants like Meta and Google expanding their footprint in the area. These companies are drawn to the region's exceptional talent pool, bolstered by the high educational attainment of its residents and

proximity to leading institutions such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), Duke University, and North Carolina State University. The Triangle's reputation as a hub for innovation, research, and cutting-edge industries positions it as a magnet for firms seeking to grow or establish operations in a thriving, knowledge-driven economy.

Orange County's healthcare sector is undergoing significant growth, led by key institutions like UNC Health Care and Duke Health. UNC Health Care's construction of a state-of-the-art surgical hospital tower will increase the demand for healthcare professionals, while Duke Hospitals is advancing several projects in response to the region's healthcare needs. With an aging population in Orange County, the demand for supportive living facilities with integrated healthcare services is also expected to grow. These developments underscore the region's economic dynamism, fueled by both technological innovation and the expansion of essential healthcare infrastructure.

**How do the skills and education of the current workforce correspond to employment opportunities in the jurisdiction?**

Orange County's workforce remains highly educated, with 62% of residents aged 25 and over holding a bachelor's degree or higher, reflecting a slight increase from previous years. This high level of educational attainment aligns with the county's workforce demands, as educational services (29.0%) and healthcare and social assistance (24.8%) remain the largest employment sectors. The county's strong emphasis on education ensures a well-qualified labor force to support these critical industries.

**Describe any current workforce training initiatives, including those supported by Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges and other organizations. Describe how these efforts will support the jurisdiction's Consolidated Plan.**

NCWorks Career Center in Chapel Hill - Located in Chapel Hill, the NCWorks Career Center provides a comprehensive range of employment and training services at no charge. Services include:

- Career Assessment & Counseling: Personalized guidance to help individuals identify suitable career paths.
- Workshops: Both on-site and virtual sessions covering job search strategies, resume writing, and interview preparation.
- Training & Education Information: Access to information on educational programs and certifications to enhance employability.
- Community Resource Referrals: Connections to various support services and partner programs.
- Unemployment Claims Assistance: Help with filing and managing unemployment benefits.

Durham Technical Community College – Orange County Campus- Situated just south of Hillsborough, Durham Technical Community College's Orange County Campus offers a variety of academic and continuing education programs. The campus provides a Health and Wellness curriculum, serving as a foundation for students aiming to pursue healthcare-related degrees. Programs include:

- Associate Degree Nursing: Prepares students for licensure and practice as registered nurses.
- Clinical Trials Research Associate: Trains students to manage and oversee clinical research trials.
- Medical Assisting: Equips students with skills for administrative and clinical roles in healthcare settings.
- Respiratory Therapy: Focuses on training students to care for patients with respiratory disorders.
- Occupational Therapy Assistant: Prepares students to assist occupational therapists in rehabilitative services.
- Practical Nursing: Offers training for students to become licensed practical nurses.

These programs are designed to address the growing demand for healthcare professionals in the region. The Orange County Campus is expanding to better serve its students, with plans to add 14,000 square feet of space, including classrooms, labs, and student collaboration areas.

**Does your jurisdiction participate in a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?**

Yes. This process is led by Central Pines Regional Council, Orange County's regional Council of Governments.

**If so, what economic development initiatives are you undertaking that may be coordinated with the Consolidated Plan? If not, describe other local/regional plans or initiatives that impact economic growth?**

Orange County is part of Central Pines Regional Council (CPRC), which coordinates economic development planning for a seven-county region (Moore, Lee, Chatham, Orange, Durham, Wake, and Johnston). The goals of the CPRC's CEDS are to:

- Build on the Region's Competitive Advantage and Leverage the Marketplace
- Establish and Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure
- Create Revitalized and Vibrant Communities
- Develop Healthy and Innovative people

Furthermore, CPRC has identified the following priorities for 2023-2024:

- CEDS Strategy Refinement and Outreach
- Technical Assistance
- Housing
- Resiliency
- Workforce Development

Given that housing is one of the priorities for CPRC, it appears that there are many areas for potential coordination between the Orange County HOME Consortium and the CPRC

## **Discussion**

Orange County's economic base is anchored in the healthcare, education, and professional services sectors, supported by a strong retail and service industry that caters to these high-skilled industries. With 62% of residents aged 25 and over holding a bachelor's degree or higher, the county boasts a highly educated workforce and a low unemployment rate.

However, workforce shortages persist in lower-wage sectors such as retail, food service, and other essential support industries, which rely on employees with lower formal educational attainment. A key contributing factor is the high cost of housing, which may prevent these workers from living within the county. Addressing affordable housing challenges will be critical to ensuring a sustainable workforce across all economic sectors.

## **MA-50 Needs and Market Analysis Discussion**

### **Are there areas where households with multiple housing problems are concentrated? (include a definition of "concentration")?**

Households experiencing multiple housing problems—such as cost burden, overcrowding, and inadequate housing conditions—are expected to be found throughout the county, with concentrations in areas where there are substantial numbers of extremely low- and very low-income households. Traditionally, cost burden has been most severe in urban areas, such as Chapel Hill and Carrboro, where housing costs are highest. However, the affordability crisis is no longer confined to urban centers and is increasingly spreading into rural parts of Orange County, where historically lower housing costs are rising due to increased demand, limited housing supply, and regional market pressures. As urban housing costs continue to climb, many low- and moderate-income households are being pushed into rural areas, only to find that affordable housing options remain limited due to insufficient rental stock, lack of multi-family housing development, and fewer public transportation options. This shift is further exacerbated by gentrification and displacement pressures, as lower-income households struggle to secure stable, affordable housing near employment opportunities, schools, and services.

### **Are there any areas in the jurisdiction where racial or ethnic minorities or low-income families are concentrated? (include a definition of "concentration")?**

There appear to be three block groups in Orange County where racial/ethnic minorities and low-income households are concentrated:

- Northwest of Hillsborough, in an area with a mix of rural and suburban development.
- West of Carrboro, where a historically lower-income population resides amid increasing housing pressures.

- Northeast of Chapel Hill along US Route 15/501, an area experiencing both economic disparities and affordability challenges due to rising housing costs.

These areas highlight the geographic disparities in housing affordability and economic opportunity, emphasizing the need for targeted investments in affordable housing, infrastructure, and community services to support residents facing disproportionate housing burdens.

**What are the characteristics of the market in these areas/neighborhoods?**

The housing market in Orange County’s urban centers, particularly Chapel Hill and Carrboro, remains highly competitive, driven by strong employment opportunities, a thriving commercial sector, and a vibrant entertainment scene. This demand has also extended to suburban and semi-rural areas surrounding these urban hubs, where substantial residential development has taken place in recent years. As a result, housing availability remains tight across the county, making affordability and accessibility key concerns for both existing and prospective residents.

**Are there any community assets in these areas/neighborhoods?**

The urban centers of Orange County, particularly Chapel Hill and Carrboro, offer the most established community and public facilities, including public transit, entertainment venues, shopping districts, and parks, making them key hubs for economic and social activity. Meanwhile, the rural areas of the county are rich in environmental assets, providing access to natural spaces, conservation areas, and outdoor recreation. These areas also benefit from strong community networks, supported by numerous local organizations that enhance social cohesion and cultural engagement.

**Are there other strategic opportunities in any of these areas?**

Neighborhoods in Orange County’s urban centers, such as Chapel Hill and Carrboro, provide convenient access to key community amenities, including entertainment venues, shopping districts, and public transit. However, housing in these areas is often unaffordable, particularly for low- and moderate-income households, creating a need for more affordable and accessible housing options. In contrast, rural neighborhoods tend to offer more affordable homeownership opportunities, but they often lack quality rental housing and proximity to essential services and employment centers. Expanding the availability of affordable rental housing in both urban and rural areas can help address these disparities and create a more balanced housing market.

**MA-60 Broadband Needs of Housing occupied by Low- and Moderate-Income Households - 91.210(a)(4), 91.310(a)(2)**

**Describe the need for broadband wiring and connections for households, including low- and moderate-income households and neighborhoods.**

As of the 2019-2023 American Community Survey estimates, 93.6% of households in Orange County, North Carolina, have a broadband internet subscription, reflecting an increase from previous years.

While overall broadband adoption has improved, disparities persist among different demographic groups:

- **Minority Populations:** Historically, African American (78%) and Hispanic (87%) households have had lower subscription rates compared to White and Asian households.
- **Income Levels:** Households with lower incomes continue to have lower broadband subscription rates. For instance, households earning less than \$20,000 annually are less likely to have broadband access compared to higher-income households.

These disparities suggest that while the majority of Orange County is equipped with broadband infrastructure, affordability and digital literacy remain barriers for certain populations. Additionally, rural areas of the county may face challenges related to broadband availability and adoption.

Efforts to address these gaps are ongoing. For example, North Carolina has awarded \$30 million in Digital Champion grants to various organizations to help residents access and effectively use high-speed internet, aiming to bridge the digital divide across the state. In summary, while broadband internet access in Orange County has increased, targeted initiatives are necessary to ensure equitable access for all residents, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities, low-income households, and rural communities.

**Describe the need for increased competition by having more than one broadband Internet service provider serve the jurisdiction.**

In Chapel Hill and Carrboro, residents have access to multiple broadband internet providers, including Spectrum, AT&T, Google Fiber, EarthLink, and Frontier. These providers offer a range of high-speed internet services, with options such as fiber-optic connections delivering speeds up to 5 gigabits per second. In contrast, the more rural areas of Orange County have historically faced challenges with broadband accessibility due to fewer service providers. In 2022, Orange County approved a contract with NorthState Communications to further develop broadband infrastructure, targeting nearly 28,000 addresses to enhance internet accessibility across the county. These initiatives reflect Orange County's commitment to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that both urban and rural residents have access to reliable, high-speed internet services.

## MA-65 Hazard Mitigation - 91.210(a)(5), 91.310(a)(3)

**Describe the jurisdiction's increased natural hazard risks associated with climate change.**

Since its formation in September 2019, the Orange County Climate Council—comprising Orange County, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, and Carrboro—has actively pursued collaborative strategies to address climate change. In May 2024, the Council reconvened with a renewed mission to exchange information on climate justice, mitigation, resiliency, and adaptation, and to maintain an updated inventory of climate initiatives. On November 2, 2023, the Orange County Board of County Commissioners adopted the county's first Climate Action Plan, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Local municipalities have also intensified their efforts; for instance, Carrboro joined the Intergovernmental Climate Council in April 2024 to enhance regional collaboration. Additionally, the Chapel Hill Town Council has been

actively discussing and implementing its Climate Action Plan, reflecting a strong commitment to sustainability and resilience.

**Describe the vulnerability to these risks of housing occupied by low- and moderate-income households based on an analysis of data, findings, and methods.**

A significant portion of low- and moderate-income housing in Orange County is located in flood-prone areas, making these communities particularly vulnerable to the increasing risks associated with climate change. As extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, flooding risks will intensify, potentially leading to widespread displacement of low-income households who may lack the resources to recover or relocate. Beyond the immediate risk to residents, repeated or severe flooding could result in the permanent loss of affordable housing units, further reducing the already limited supply of housing for low- and moderate-income families. As affordable units become uninhabitable or too costly to repair, property owners may opt to convert them into higher-cost housing or abandon them altogether, exacerbating the county's housing affordability crisis.

## Strategic Plan

### General Allocation Priorities

HOME funds will be used for housing activities. These funds will be targeted to low-income persons and projects designed to provide affordable housing to low-income persons through preservation, development, acquisition, and tenant based rental assistance.

The Town of Chapel Hill will allocate its CDBG funds to those geographic areas whose population is over 51% low- and moderate-income. At least 70% of all the Town's CDBG funds that are budgeted for activities will principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons. The following guidelines for allocating CDBG will be used during the FY 2026-2030 Five Year Consolidated Plan:

- Housing activities have income eligibility criteria, therefore the income requirement directs funds to low- and moderate-income households throughout the County.
- The public services activities are for social service organizations whose clientele have a low income or in certain cases, a limited type of clientele with a presumed low- and moderate-income status.
- The public facilities activities are either located in a low- and moderate-income census tract/block group or have a low- and moderate-income service area benefit or clientele over 51% low- and moderate-income.
- The acquisitions and demolition of structures are either located in a low- and moderate-income census area or these activities are eligible by preventing or eliminating slums and blight on a spot basis or area basis.
- Economic development projects will either be located in a low- and moderate-income census tract/block group, or a poverty tract greater than 20%, or part of a redevelopment plan, or making 51% of the jobs available to low- and moderate-income population.

## Narrative (Optional)

The priority ranking of needs for housing, homelessness, other special needs, community development, economic development, and anti-poverty are as follows:

- **High Priority** - Activities are assigned a high priority if the County or Chapel Hill expects to fund them during the Five Year Consolidated Plan period.
- **Low Priority** - Activities are assigned a low priority if the activity may not be funded by the County or Chapel Hill during the Five Year Consolidated Plan period. The County or Chapel Hill may support applications for other funding if those activities are consistent with the needs identified in the Five Year Consolidated Plan.

## SP-35 Anticipated Resources - 91.420(b), 91.215(a)(4), 91.220(c)(1,2)

### Introduction

The Orange County HOME Consortium anticipates receiving \$375,000 in HOME funds for FFY 2024/PY 2025. Based on funding from the past five years, we expect the Orange County HOME Consortium will receive about \$375,000 each year over the next five-year period. The following represents the County's anticipated resources for future years:

- FFY 2020 = \$374,851 HOME Funds
- FFY 2021 = \$ 378,743.00 HOME Funds
- FFY 2022 = \$443,498 HOME Funds
- FFY 2023 = \$429,446 HOME Funds
- FFY 2024 = \$367,013 HOME Funds
- Total = \$1,993,551 HOME Funds
  
- FFY 2025 = \$375,000 HOME Funds
- FFY 2026 = \$375,000 HOME Funds
- FFY 2027 = \$375,000 HOME Funds
- FFY 2028 = \$375,000 HOME Funds
- FFY 2029 = \$375,000 HOME Funds
- Total = \$1,875,000 HOME Funds

The accomplishments of these projects/activities will be reported in the FFY 2025 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

### **Explain how federal funds will leverage those additional resources (private, state and local funds), including a description of how matching requirements will be satisfied**

The Orange County HOME Consortium will leverage additional funds from a variety of sources to address the needs identified in this plan. Orange County is the recipient of the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency Essential Single-Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool (ESFRLP) and Urgent Repair Program (URP) funds. Each recipient of SFRLP funds is awarded \$190,000 to conduct moderate rehabilitation for owner-occupied homes belonging to households earning below 80%

AMI. For URP, the County has typically received \$162,000 each year to provide emergency repairs to address threats to life, health, and safety for owner-occupied homes belonging to households earning below 50% AMI.

The Orange County HOME Consortium uses cash as its local match for HOME funds. It is estimated that this match will be 25% of total HOME funds for program year 2025, or \$93,750. These funds will be used for tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) in the newly created countywide Housing Help Rapid Re-Housing program administered by the Orange County Department of Housing and Community Development.

## SP-40 Institutional Delivery Structure - 91.415, 91.215(k)

Explain the institutional structure through which the jurisdiction will carry out its consolidated plan including private industry, nonprofit organizations, and public institutions.

<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>Responsible Entity Type</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Geographic Area Served</b>
Orange County	Government	Ownership Planning Public Housing Rental	Jurisdiction
Chapel Hill	Government	Economic Development Housing for People with Service Needs Ownership Planning Public Housing Rental neighborhood improvements public facilities public services	Jurisdiction
Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness	Continuum of care	Homelessness	Jurisdiction

**Describe how the service delivery system including, but not limited to, the services listed above meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness (particularly individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth)**

Orange County benefits from a community health clinic within the UNC Hospital System, which provides essential healthcare services to many low-income and housing-insecure residents. However, gaps in care remain, particularly in free healthcare access for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Additionally, there is a critical need for expanded mental health and substance use treatment, as well as case management services, to support individuals struggling with chronic homelessness, addiction, and co-occurring disorders. The Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) plays a vital role in bridging service gaps by providing relationship-based, client-centered support in areas such as job readiness, job search assistance, and life skills development. CEF operates an integrated service center in Chapel Hill, where clients can access employment support, financial education, and connections to other essential services, helping individuals build long-term stability and self-sufficiency. Expanding these healthcare and support services will be essential to addressing the complex needs of Orange County's most vulnerable residents.

**Describe the strengths and gaps of the service delivery system for people with service needs and persons experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited to, the services listed above**

The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) serves as a strong and effective lead agency for the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC), ensuring a coordinated and data-driven approach to addressing homelessness in the county. Through strategic partnerships and best-practice models, the CoC has implemented several key initiatives to enhance housing stability and streamline access to critical services for people experiencing homelessness.

- **Coordinated Intake and Assessment:** The CoC has implemented a coordinated entry system for both families and individuals experiencing homelessness, ensuring that housing and services are distributed fairly and efficiently based on need rather than a first-come, first-served basis.
- **Prioritization for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** The CoC prioritizes people with disabilities, chronic health conditions, and long-term homelessness for placement in permanent supportive housing (PSH) units using the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). This ensures that those with the most urgent and complex housing needs receive assistance first.
- **Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Preference for Vulnerable Populations:** The Orange County Department of Housing and Community Development offers a preference within its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program for certain highly vulnerable subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness. This targeted approach improves access to long-term rental assistance for individuals facing the highest barriers to stable housing.

- **Regular Outreach to Unsheltered Individuals:** The CoC conducts proactive, consistent outreach to people living unsheltered, building relationships and connecting them to housing resources and supportive services. This engagement helps reduce barriers to housing entry and ensures that people who have been chronically homeless receive the intensive support they need to transition into permanent supportive housing.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making via Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):** The CoC operates a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is coordinated through the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH). This system tracks service utilization, monitors performance metrics, and informs policy decisions to improve the effectiveness of homelessness response programs across the county. Performance data from HMIS is actively used to evaluate program effectiveness and inform continuous improvements.
- **OC Connect: A Centralized Resource Hub for Housing and Social Services:** In collaboration with the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), OCPEH has developed OC Connect, a free online database that consolidates all available housing, social services, and nonprofit resources in Orange County. For local social service providers, OC Connect also serves as a coordinated assessment tool, helping to route individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness to appropriate solutions. The platform also administers a prioritization and coordination tool to ensure that vulnerable individuals receive the right level of care and support.

According to the gap analysis done in 2022 by OCPEH, there are fifteen current system gaps preventing the County from effectively ending homelessness. The total annual cost to fill these gaps is estimated at a minimum of \$2.6 million per year. The identified gaps are:

- **Housing:** Affordable rental units, rapid re-housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, youth housing, landlord incentives, housing locator, furniture/household goods.
- **Temporary Housing Services:** Accessible shelters, medical respite beds, bridge housing.
- **Connection Services:** Housing Helpline staffing, integrated service center, crisis/diversion facility.
- **Dignity Services:** 24-hour bathrooms, memorial service funding.

**Provide a summary of the strategy for overcoming gaps in the institutional structure and service delivery system for carrying out a strategy to address priority needs**

OCPEH has thoroughly analyzed the institutional structure and service delivery system, identified fifteen gaps in the system, and calculated the costs of filling those gaps. OCPEH has either identified existing programs and partners, or worked to set up the necessary infrastructure, through which to fill most of these gaps, and some funding has already been secured. Of the estimated \$2.6 million yet to be secured, OCPEH has approached Orange County and the Towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough to ask each jurisdiction to contribute a portion of the funds. In addition to filling the homeless system gaps, OCPEH also aims to improve existing projects and processes and improve the quality of homeless service delivery.

## SP-45 Goals - 91.415, 91.215(a)(4)

Goal Name	Outcome (5-Year Target)	Funding Sources	Impact
<b>Expand Affordable Rental Housing</b>	Provide households with Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	HOME, CDBG, Local Funds	Reduce rent burden for low-income renters
<b>Preserve and Rehabilitate Affordable Housing</b>	Rehabilitate rental units & owner-occupied homes	CDBG, HOME, LIHTC	Prevent displacement & maintain affordability
<b>Increase Permanent Supportive Housing</b>	Develop supportive housing for homeless & special needs populations	HOME, ESG, LIHTC, HUD-VASH	Reduce chronic homelessness
<b>Neighborhood Revitalization &amp; Community Services</b>	Improve infrastructure in low-income neighborhoods, support community facilities	CDBG only	Improve quality of life & economic opportunities

## SP-60 Homelessness Strategy - 91.415, 91.215(i)

Describe how the jurisdiction's strategic plan goals contribute to:

### **Reaching out to people experiencing homelessness (especially unsheltered) and assessing their individual needs**

The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) is the lead for the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC). OCPEH's HOME Committee (no relation to the HOME Investment Partnerships Program) consists of about 20 housing and service providers that interact with people who are experiencing chronic and/or particularly vulnerable homelessness, many of whom have disabilities. Service providers involved include nonprofits, DSS and other county departments, UNC Hospitals, veterans' organizations, law enforcement, private attorneys, and more. The Committee meets monthly to collaborate on finding housing and services (e.g., medical, mental health, substance use, and legal services) for these people. The CoC uses its Coordinated Entry system to assess people's needs, score their level of need, and prioritize them for permanent supportive housing, and conducts street outreach program to reach people who are living unsheltered. However, OCPEH has focused efforts on street outreach to connect homeless individuals with resources and housing.

### **Addressing the emergency shelter and transitional housing needs of people experiencing homelessness**

Orange County's only emergency shelter is run by the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC). IFC also offers a transitional housing program for men. The Freedom House Recovery Center provides residential mental health and substance use services for men, women, children, and families (in addition to outpatient and crisis services), and there are several Oxford Houses in the county that provide transitional housing for people in recovery from substance use disorder. The county does not have a domestic violence shelter.

**Helping people experiencing homelessness (especially people and families experiencing chronic homelessness; families with children; veterans and their families; and unaccompanied youth) make the transition to permanent housing and independent living, including shortening the period of time that individuals and families experience homelessness, facilitating access to affordable housing units, and preventing individuals and families who were recently homeless from becoming homeless again.**

The Continuum of Care (CoC) in Orange County operates a Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) program, which provides short-term rental assistance and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. However, the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) has identified significant gaps in funding and service alignment, noting the need for more flexible, individualized support that includes financial assistance, case management, and housing navigation. Expanding these components and integrating best practices into the RRH program would improve housing stability outcomes and ensure that clients receive the level of assistance they need to remain housed long-term. In Fiscal Year 2023, 198 individuals and families exited homelessness, with a relatively low return-to-homelessness rate of 6.5% within two years. This success reflects the strength of case management services provided by organizations such as Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC), the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), and Cardinal Innovations (the LME/MCO for Orange County). These agencies work closely with clients to navigate the housing process, connect to supportive services, and stabilize their living situations. Orange County has also seen success in its homeless diversion program, which prevents homelessness for approximately 25% of households seeking emergency shelter. This program uses a strengths-based, guided conversation approach, coupled with flexible financial assistance, to help households identify immediate alternative housing solutions without entering the shelter system.

**Helping low-income individuals and families avoid becoming homeless, especially extremely low-income individuals and families and those who are: being discharged from publicly funded institutions and systems of care (such as health care facilities, mental health facilities, foster care and other youth facilities, and corrections programs and institutions); or, receiving assistance from public or private agencies that address housing, health, social services, employment, education, or youth needs.**

Orange County administers an Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA) program designed to support individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity by providing financial assistance to prevent homelessness and eviction. The fund helps cover rent and utility arrears, security and utility deposits, first month's rent, and other essential one-time expenses that enable at-risk households to secure or maintain stable housing. By intervening before eviction or displacement occurs, the

program plays a crucial role in preventing homelessness and reducing housing instability in the county.

The county also operates an Eviction Diversion Program (EDP), which provides legal assistance and case management to tenants facing eviction. Through legal representation, mediation services, and emergency financial aid, the program helps tenants negotiate with landlords, resolve disputes, and remain housed whenever possible.

Together, the EHA and EDP programs assist approximately 700 households annually, with many clients utilizing both services. Each year, around 400 individuals apply for EHA support, while another 400 tenants seek assistance through the EDP, with a significant overlap between the two programs. According to estimates from the county's Eviction Diversion Program attorney, well over half of EDP clients have children, with as many as 70% of households including minors.

## SP-65 Lead-based Paint Hazards - 91.415, 91.215(i)

Actions to address LBP hazards and increase access to housing without LBP hazards

Lead-Based Paint (LBP) hazards are a concern for low-income households living in older, substandard housing and who may not have the financial resources to make their homes lead-safe. To address this concern, the Orange County HOME Consortium has developed the following strategy to increase the number of homes that are made lead-safe and reduce the number of child lead poisoning cases:

- Ensuring that County rehabilitation staff and the contractors they work with are knowledgeable about LBP requirements of all federal housing programs
- Distributing information on LBP hazards to all households that participate in County housing programs
- Conducting LBP inspections and assessments as necessary
- Implementing environmental control or abatement measures (for both LBP and asbestos) as applicable in all federally-funded projects

This strategy will allow Orange County to: be in full compliance with all applicable LBP regulations; control or reduce, to the extent feasible, all LBP hazards in housing rehabilitated with federal funds; and reduce the number of incidences of elevated blood lead levels in children.

How are the actions listed above related to the extent of lead poisoning hazards?

Recent studies have highlighted potential gaps in lead screening protocols. A 2022 study revealed that current North Carolina lead screening strategies might miss over 30% of children with subclinical lead poisoning, suggesting that the actual prevalence of EBLLs could be higher than reported. The Orange County Health Department emphasizes the significance of lead poisoning prevention, particularly for children under six years old, who are more susceptible to its harmful effects. Lead exposure in children can lead to serious health issues, including behavioral problems, reduced IQ, and developmental delays. To mitigate these risks, Orange County has implemented measures such as educational programs, lead hazard assessments, and collaborations with state

agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of its residents. However, the need for enhanced screening, public awareness, and preventive interventions remains critical to effectively address and reduce lead exposure among children in the county.

How are the actions listed above integrated into housing policies and procedures?

In Orange County, lead-based paint (LBP) risk assessments are conducted on a case-by-case basis for housing units, with particular attention given to homes that were built before 1978. Under federal regulations, any home purchased or rehabilitated with federal funding assistance must undergo a thorough Environmental Review, which includes a comprehensive LBP assessment. If the assessment reveals the presence of lead-based paint hazards, lead abatement measures are prescribed to ensure the safety of residents.

As part of this process, tenants living in assisted housing units are also informed about the potential hazards of lead-based paint and the importance of maintaining a safe living environment. This ensures that residents are aware of the risks and can take appropriate precautions to protect their health and well-being.

In addition to these assessments, Orange County offers a variety of housing repair programs aimed at improving the safety and livability of homes, particularly for low-income families. These repair programs may address issues such as structural repairs, plumbing, electrical systems, and environmental hazards like lead-based paint. The goal of these programs is not only to improve the quality of housing but also to reduce the risks posed by environmental hazards and enhance the overall safety of the community.

The Orange County Health Department plays a crucial role in supporting these efforts by providing expert consultation to County housing staff. Through this partnership, the Health Department helps ensure that housing repairs and rehabilitation efforts align with public health standards, particularly in homes where lead-based paint may be a concern. This collaborative approach helps to protect vulnerable populations, such as children and pregnant women, from the harmful effects of lead exposure.

By combining comprehensive LBP risk assessments, lead abatement measures, and housing repair programs, Orange County is committed to creating safer and healthier living environments for all residents, particularly those in homes built prior to 1978, where the risk of lead-based paint remains a concern.

## SP-70 Anti-Poverty Strategy - 91.415, 91.215(j)

Jurisdiction Goals, Programs and Policies for reducing the number of Poverty-Level Families

In addition to housing challenges, individuals and families living in poverty often face a range of other critical social service needs. Many struggle with limited access to the resources and skills required to secure and maintain living-wage employment. Others, particularly single mothers, face the challenge of finding affordable childcare while they seek or maintain employment. Some individuals need access to physical or behavioral health services, while others, particularly

children, could greatly benefit from educational programs, recreational opportunities, and initiatives that support the development of their self-esteem and social skills.

The Orange County Family Success Alliance (FSA) continues its commitment to addressing poverty through a holistic, community-centered approach. Drawing inspiration from successful national models like the Harlem Children's Zone and the Promise Neighborhoods Institute, FSA recognizes that poverty is a multifaceted issue requiring collaborative solutions. The initiative emphasizes that transforming the impact of poverty on children and communities necessitates a collective, comprehensive effort. FSA's mission focuses on building a system that actively involves families, communities, and institutions in supporting children's healthy development, with particular attention to education and health.

Staffed by the Orange County Health Department, FSA operates with the support of workgroups composed of staff from participating advisory council organizations. Initial funding for the initiative was provided by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners through the Social Justice Fund, aiming to catalyze efforts to reduce poverty by addressing immediate needs and creating sustainable, long-term solutions for families.

The FSA's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan outlined three key goals:

1. Ensuring children are healthy and prepared for school
2. Supporting the health and academic success of children and youth
3. Fostering environments where families, neighborhoods, and institutions collaborate to promote children's healthy development

These goals were pursued through four strategic areas:

- Family Empowerment: Evolving the "navigator" model into a comprehensive family empowerment approach that brings families together to learn, share strengths, and collectively navigate systems, ultimately driving systemic change.
- Partnership: Collaborating with cross-sector agencies while centering the voices and priorities of parents to shift power dynamics, enabling parents to co-create community programs addressing their needs.
- Systems Change: Engaging community members affected by poverty in leadership and decision-making roles to dismantle institutionalized racism and systemic barriers perpetuating inequality.
- Community-Driven Solutions: Emphasizing lasting, community-led solutions responsive to local needs and aspirations, ensuring relevance and sustainability.

Through these combined efforts, FSA aims to create a more equitable and supportive environment for families in Orange County, reducing the cycle of poverty and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

How are the Jurisdiction poverty reducing goals, programs, and policies coordinated with this affordable housing plan?

The high costs of housing in Orange County remain a significant challenge, particularly for low-income families. Renter households, in particular, face multiple barriers, including escalating rental prices, a limited supply of affordable housing, and fierce competition for available units, especially from university students. This competition exacerbates the difficulty low-income renters face in securing stable housing. These housing affordability issues were consistently raised during public consultations and feedback sessions, where residents expressed frustration over the lack of affordable rental options and the difficulty of competing with a transient student population for available units.

In addition to affordability, residents identified walkability and access to transportation as significant concerns, especially in areas outside of Chapel Hill and Carrboro. While these two towns offer more walkable environments and better access to public transportation, rural and suburban areas in the county face significant gaps in transportation infrastructure. Survey feedback revealed that many low-income families are constrained in their housing choices due to the lack of reliable public transportation, making it difficult to access jobs, healthcare, and essential services. This lack of connectivity outside of urban areas was highlighted as a critical barrier to housing security during community engagement efforts.

These housing challenges were raised throughout the consultation process, where residents, service providers, and community stakeholders shared their firsthand experiences and concerns. The feedback from surveys and community meetings underscored the urgent need for affordable housing, particularly for renters and low-income families who face barriers to accessing safe, stable, and affordable homes.

In response to these pressing issues, both Orange County and the Town of Chapel Hill have strategically targeted significant resources, including HOME and CDBG funds, toward low-income neighborhoods. These investments are aimed at increasing housing security by improving the quantity and quality of affordable housing. Additionally, the funds are expected to catalyze further public and private investment, creating a broader economic impact that extends beyond housing development to include services that support low-income families.

By addressing these concerns directly in their housing strategies, the county and town hope to alleviate poverty, promote economic stability, and ensure that all residents, regardless of income, have access to affordable and accessible housing options.

## SP-80 Monitoring – 91.230

**Describe the standards and procedures that the jurisdiction will use to monitor activities carried out in furtherance of the plan and will use to ensure long-term compliance with requirements of the programs involved, including minority business outreach and the comprehensive planning requirements**

To ensure compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations, the Orange County HOME Consortium and the Town of Chapel Hill, as recipients of HOME and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, implement a robust monitoring strategy. This strategy involves a

thorough review of subrecipient activities and the provision of technical assistance to proactively address and prevent potential compliance issues.

The Orange County HOME Consortium employs a risk analysis matrix to monitor all appropriate HOME subrecipients each Program Year. This matrix is developed in accordance with guidance from CPD Notice 04-01 and CPD 02-11, which outline the factors used to assess the risk level of HOME recipients. Once projects are approved and HOME Awardees have signed Written Agreements, staff will document these projects in a HOME Project Monitoring spreadsheet. This spreadsheet incorporates a scoring system that evaluates the risk of each project based on various criteria, including the type and amount of funding, the capacity and track record of the HOME Awardee, and the size and scope of the project. Subrecipients are then categorized as low, moderate, or high risk based on their scores.

The Consortium uses these risk scores to establish an annual monitoring schedule. As a standard practice, on-site monitoring is conducted annually for all high-risk HOME Awardees to ensure compliance and identify areas for improvement. For moderate and low-risk subrecipients, on-site monitoring is conducted every other Program Year, with desk reviews carried out throughout the year to maintain oversight and provide timely guidance.

During project development, HOME Awardees are required to submit quarterly progress reports using a standardized template provided by the Orange County Housing and Community Development (OCHCD) department, available on its website. These reports detail the progress of the project and any challenges encountered. Upon project completion, a final report must be submitted, summarizing the project's accomplishments, the number of beneficiaries served, and a detailed account of how the awarded funds were utilized.

Additionally, OCHCD conducts an on-site inspection of each completed project to verify that it meets all applicable property standards. This inspection is performed before marking the project as complete in HUD's Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS).

For comprehensive details on monitoring practices and requirements, refer to the Orange County HOME Consortium Policies and Procedures Manual.

## ATTACHMENTS

### Public Hearing 1 input:

One comment was received during the first public hearing.

- There is a need to protect and expand Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing which provides valuable affordability to renters across the Orange County.

## Community Input and Feedback

Orange County held five community engagement and input sessions across the County at community centers throughout February. Staff engaged over 50 residents through the public input process and guided conversations around HOME eligible uses, County needs, and resident issues. Additionally, the County distributed a resident survey to understand the needs and funding priorities of community members. 133 survey responses were received and 55 people attended in-person community feedback sessions.

## Engagement Session Feedback

The community engagement sessions highlighted critical housing challenges in Orange County, particularly for low-income homeowners and renters. Across all meetings, concerns revolved around housing affordability, home repairs, displacement, infrastructure, and access to program funding. Below is a summary of key themes and takeaways, contextualized within the broader housing landscape.

- Housing Preservation
  - Home repair programs are essential to prevent displacement and maintain affordable homeownership.
  - Targeted funding for repairs, particularly for low-income and elderly homeowners, should be prioritized.
  - Simplifying application processes and providing technical assistance can improve program accessibility.
  - Contractors in low-income neighborhoods should be included in bids for repair work.
  - Landlord engagement is needed to ensure rental properties are maintained, as renters lack access to home repair funding.
- Affordability
  - Rising rents and lack of affordability are displacing long-term residents and low-income renters.
  - The current definition of "affordable" (80% AMI) may be too high—suggestions to redefine affordability for households at 60% or even 30% AMI.
  - Stronger tenant protections and incentives for affordability restrictions could mitigate displacement.
  - Down payment assistance programs should be expanded to help renters transition to homeownership.
  - Infrastructure improvements should be prioritized for low-income areas, ensuring equitable access to essential utilities.
- Community
  - Ongoing community engagement is essential to build trust and ensure programs reflect community needs.
  - Smaller organizations that provide impactful community-driven housing solutions should not be overlooked.
  - Public meetings should be more accessible, including evening and weekend scheduling, virtual options, and multilingual support.

- Transparent reporting on housing initiatives and funding utilization can improve accountability.
- Funding allocation should balance large-scale development with community-driven initiatives.

## Survey Responses

- Funding Priorities (Top 4)
  - Increase supply of affordable housing
  - Preserve existing affordable housing
  - Provide rental assistance to LMI households
  - Provide services for homeless residents
- Unmet Needs (Top 3)
  - Lack of affordable housing for LMI households
  - Lack of services for homeless residents
  - Lack of affordable housing for seniors
- Most Needed Supportive Services (Top 3)
  - Mental health
  - Services for people with disabilities
  - Childcare

## Housing Needs & Affordability Challenges

- **Housing Cost Burden:**
  - **55% of renters** and **18% of homeowners** in Orange County are cost-burdened (spending more than 30% of income on housing).
  - Extremely low-income households (**≤30% AMI**) are most affected, with **66%** paying over 50% of their income on housing.
  - Rising housing costs have **outpaced wage growth**, exacerbating affordability issues.
- **Homeownership Challenges:**
  - Median home value increased **40.4% (from \$281,700 to \$395,600)** from 2016 to 2022.
- **Rental Market Pressures:**
  - Median rent increased **35.7% (from \$970 to \$1,316)** over the same period.
  - 30% AMI in Orange County is \$31,770
  - 50% AMI in Orange County is \$52,950
  - 2-bedroom Fair Market Rent costs \$1,631
  - The annual income needed to afford a 2-bedroom is \$65,240
- **Housing Supply Issues:**
  - Demand for **affordable rental units** outpaces supply.
  - A shortage of **1- and 2-bedroom units** persists for renters and Housing Choice Voucher holders.
  - Many existing affordable units require **rehabilitation and accessibility modifications**. With 67% of renters and 44.4% of owners under 50% AMI report at least one housing problem.

- **Seniors & People with Disabilities** face **higher financial strain** due to fixed incomes and increased housing maintenance costs.
- **Public Housing & Vouchers:**
  - **296 public housing units** in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, targeted at households earning **≤50% AMI**.
  - **687 Housing Choice Vouchers** (Section 8), with demand significantly outpacing availability.
- **Homelessness**
  - **126 individuals experiencing homelessness** were counted in 2023, with **71% sheltered and 29% unsheltered**.
  - **Homeless individuals & families** are disproportionately **African American (56%)**, despite making up only **12% of the county population**.
- **Housing Stock Composition:**
  - **Aging Housing Stock:** A significant portion of homes were built **before 1970**, requiring maintenance and rehabilitation.
  - **Post-2000 Growth:** Continued residential development has added newer housing options but at market-rate prices.
  - **Vacancy Rate:** Estimated at **6% (3,804 units)**, with most vacancies concentrated in the rental market.