

Section 6g: Housing

Introduction

Housing represents one of the most essential elements of land use in the City of Lathrop. Available, affordable and safe housing is necessary for a community to accommodate the growth of all segments of the population. It provides a vital link between the community's population growth, financial wherewithal, economic development goals and its land use priorities. In order to encourage growth in the population and economy, housing will be needed in Lathrop for residents of differing income levels, multi-family and single-family units, and for purchase and rent. Lathrop has long embraced the small town ideal, where a person could live, work and interact with other residents to create a community.

Population

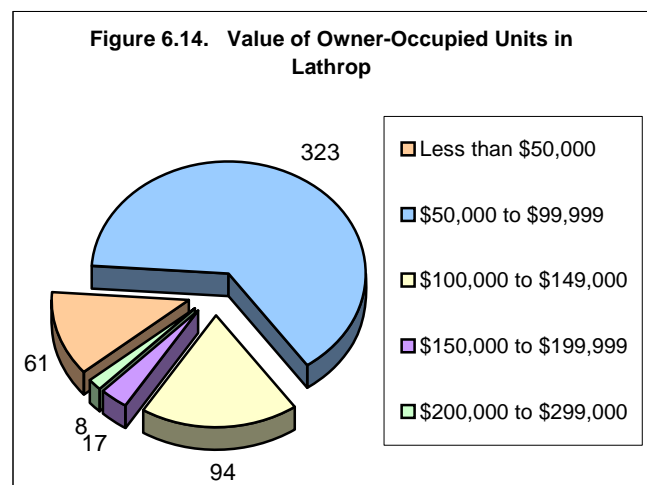
As previously noted, Lathrop's population has grown steadily since 1980. With this continual growth, the need for additional housing has increased and as such the number of building permits has shown steady improvements each year (184 new structures between 1990 and 2000). As indicated in Table 6.8, in 2001, 13 building permits were issued, this fell slightly in 2002 and 2003; however, increased to a five year high in 2004 (21 units including two multi-family housing units). Based on current population projections, one can ascertain that the demand for housing will continue at a sustained pace for the foreseeable future.

Table 6.8. Lathrop Building Permits

Building Permits Issued	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Single Family	12	11	9	20	14
Two Family	1				4
Three or More Family			1	2	

Condition of Housing Stock

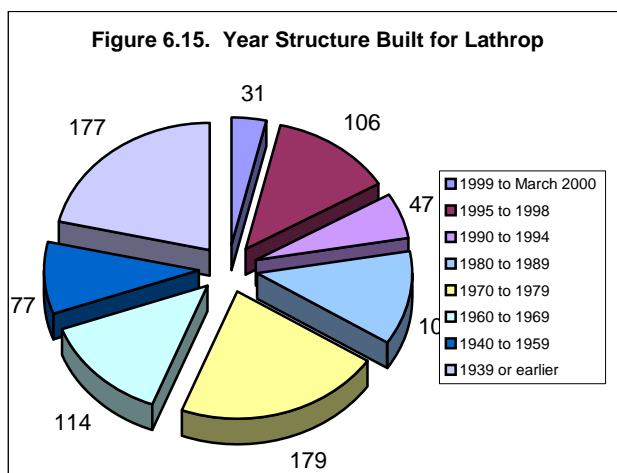
For many years, there was a noticeable decline in the condition of many single family structures in the city. (Figure 6.14 illustrates the value of owner-occupied units in Lathrop as reported by the 2000 Census.) This is a condition common in many rural communities. There are a number of possible reasons for this situation, but two explanations are absentee landownership and the development of new housing. Absentee landownership is becoming prevalent in rural America as younger family members leave the area for education and employment opportunities,



only later to inherit family property. These family members often are either reluctant to sell property (allowing it to become dilapidated), see it as potential investment real estate, or sell the assets at a reduced price. While the latter two occasionally results in improvements to the property, many times it does not. Other possible reasons for the decline in the condition of housing stock are the issue of new developments versus renovating older homes and first-time homebuyers. According to Mortgage News Daily, many older homes lack “flow”, expected amenities and the storage that the average consumer demands. In addition, substantially renovating an older home can be considerably more costly when compared to purchasing a new home. This demand for newer homes leaves additional older units vacant.

The other reason is the rapid increase in the price of housing in the region, which has placed a new home out of the reach of modest income persons. This has encouraged the purchase and rehabilitation of many homes that might otherwise be expected to be demolished, or allowed to deteriorate further. This lower price lends itself to many first time homebuyers. Fannie Mae, the nation’s largest foundation devoted to affordable housing, notes that first-time homebuyers typically have less income than a second or third time homebuyer. One can presume if the household income for a first time homeowner is modest, then there would be less disposable income for home maintenance, which increases the likelihood of the housing unit falling into disrepair. Additionally, this trend has reduced the expected conversion of single family units to more dense uses, such as apartments in areas which were considered to be transitional.

A factor not as apparent when assessing housing conditions is functional obsolescence that occurs due to the age of the structure. Outmoded kitchens and bathrooms, limited storage space, deterioration of plumbing and electrical systems, lack of air conditioning, inadequate space for garages, and driveways having room for only one car are clear examples of obsolescence. If interior obsolescence is considered in addition to exterior deterioration, more housing units would be added to the substandard category. While age may be the major factor in deteriorated housing conditions, other factors contribute to the situation, such as out of town owners, low-income homeowners or elderly homeowners.

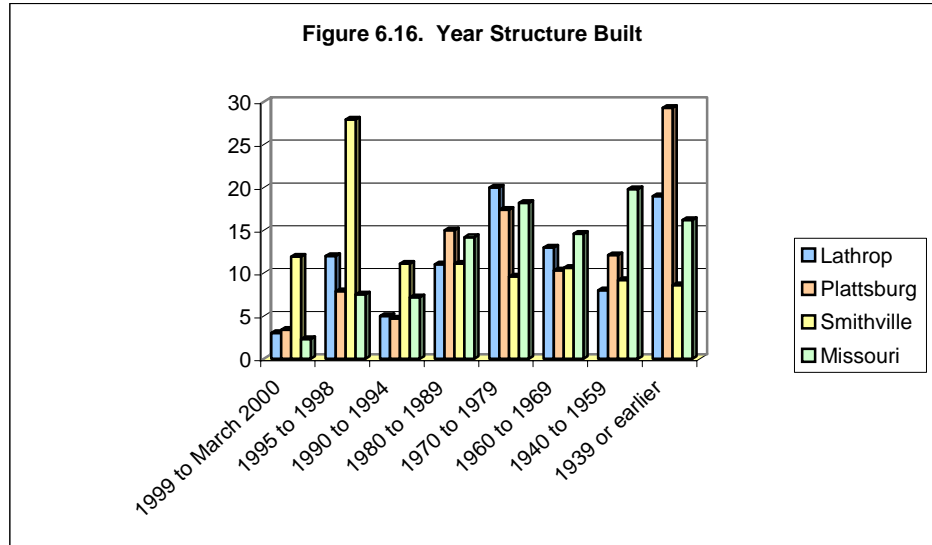


Housing Age

Lathrop's existing housing stock includes structures dating back nearly a century to the early 1900's. This range in age is typical for many smaller, rural communities. Even though Lathrop is experiencing growth in new housing, the city still has aged housing. This is illustrated in Figure 6.15. Of the 909 residential structures in Lathrop, the median age for housing is between 1970 and 1979.

Seventy-one percent (547) of the buildings were built before 1980, 19% (177) of which were built before 1940. Growth trends are characterized in Figure 6.15 as well. As indicated, 109 (12%) of the structures have been built since 1999.

This housing age range is fairly common in rural Missouri. Figure 6.16 compares housing development trends in Lathrop, Plattsburg, Smithville and the state of Missouri. As indicated, since 1960, Lathrop mirrors patterns similar to Plattsburg and the state. Other communities not listed in Figure 6.16 share



similar characteristics. For example 76.6% of the housing stock in the city of Richmond, Missouri was built before 1980. In addition, 80.6% of Bethany, Missouri’s housing stock was built before 1980. The city of Smithville is one of the exceptions to this trend.