

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING

Housing Characteristics

The housing stock in Byron is generally in good condition and helps create a positive living environment in town. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Byron's housing is a little older than average. However, unlike other communities in the area, all housing units in Byron have complete plumbing facilities (hot and cold running water, toilet and bath).

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau estimates the number of housing units in Byron and collects a variety of information on housing characteristics. According to Census reports, the year 2000 Byron had:

216	Total housing units
195	Occupied housing units
21	Vacant housing units

Byron's housing units consisted of the following numbers and types:

156	Single-unit homes
1	Two-unit home
59	Mobile homes

There is no multifamily housing, apartment buildings, or institutional housing in the town.

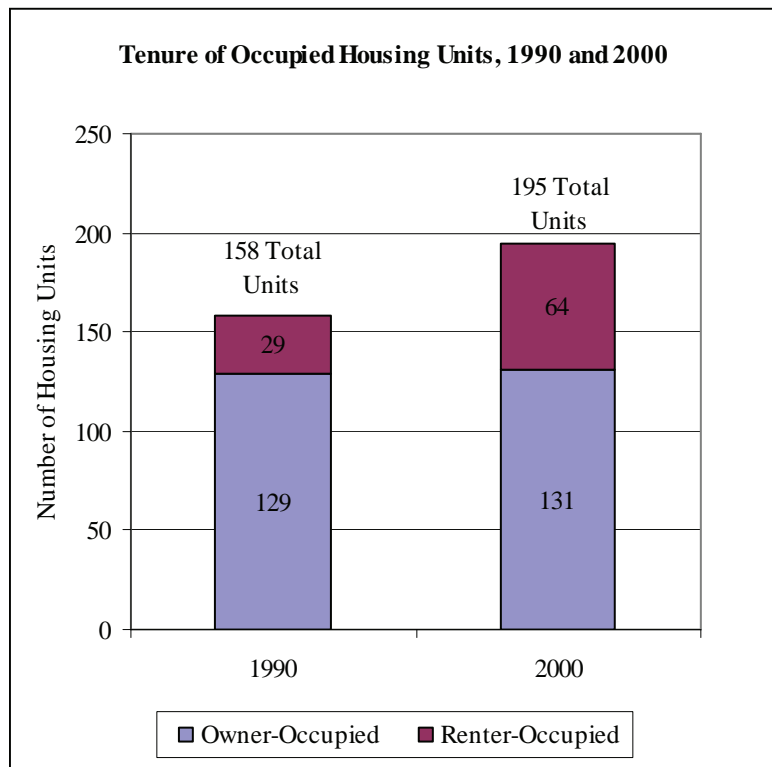
In Byron, 131 of the occupied housing units are "owner-occupied". This yields a homeownership rate of 67%, which is higher than the state and national rates (60% and 65%, respectively).

Housing Trends

A side by side comparison of the 1990 and 2000 Census reports shows trends in Byron's housing.

In terms of total housing units, a modest 10 units were added to the housing stock between 1990 and 2000. However, the number of occupied units increased by 36 units, from 158 to 195, a 23% increase. In 1990, nearly a quarter of the housing in Byron was vacant. In the 1990's, the town added 87 people many of whom took residence in formerly vacant units.

Another trend that is apparent is the increase in mobile homes. The number of mobile homes in town increased from 40 to 59 in the 1990s. At the same time, the number of single family homes and two unit homes decreased slightly. Mobile homes

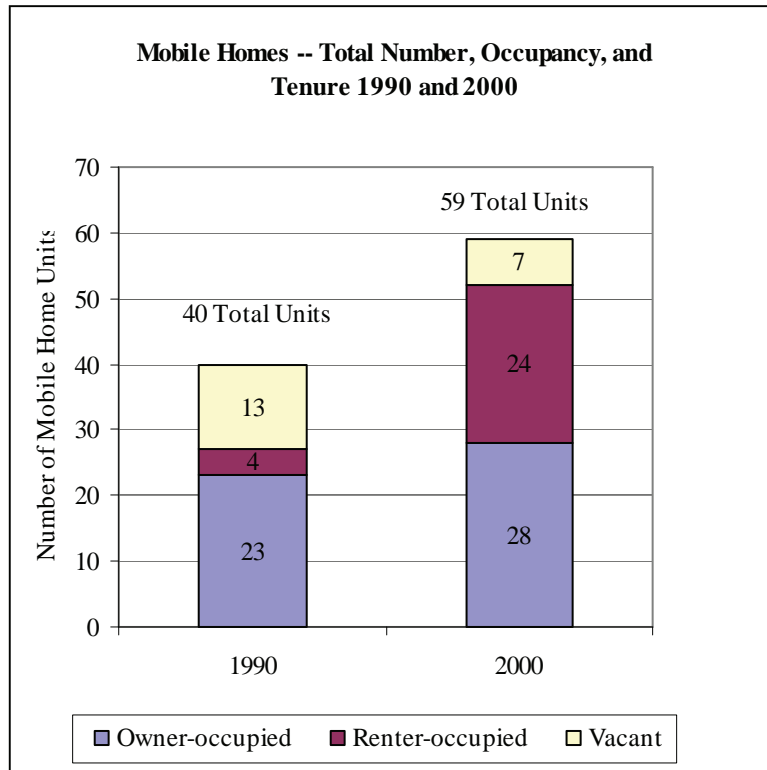


constituted 20% of the housing stock in 1990 and increased to become 27% of the housing stock in 2000.

Renter-occupied mobile homes have accounted for most of the increase in housing units. In 1990, there were only 7 actively-rented mobile homes (an additional 14 mobile homes were vacant). By 2000, renter-occupied mobile homes increase to 24 units.

Household Characteristics

A household is an individual or group of related or unrelated people living together in a single housing unit. Changes in household characteristic usually have a big impact on a community's housing situation.



Many communities throughout Wyoming and adjoining states have experienced some major changes in household characteristics that have impacted housing. These include: reduced average household size (fewer people living in each housing unit); increases in the number of “single-person households” (one person living alone); and increases in the number of households without children. These trends indicate a greater future need for smaller housing units, typically including apartments and retirement housing.

Interestingly, none of these trends appear to be significant in Byron. During the 1990’s Byron’s average household size decreased slightly, from 3.0 persons per household to 2.9. The percentage of households with children dropped by less than one percent. Single person households decreased from being 22% of all households in 1990 to only 20% in 2000. Byron may have been immune to the statewide household trends because virtually all the town’s housing is single-family housing. The town’s housing units are conducive to families and may attract them. The absence of apartments, townhouses, and senior housing complexes may make it harder for smaller-sized households to move to town.

Housing Affordability

Housing prices in Byron are relatively low. The Census Bureau reported the median value of owner-occupied homes was \$60,300 in 2000, while the figures were \$71,800 for Big Horn County and \$96,600 for Wyoming. Rents in Byron in 2000 were relatively higher, at \$350 compared to \$277 for the county. However, the state median rent was higher at \$437 per month in 2000.

In terms of recent price increases, the Big Horn County Assessor has reported a 11% increase in housing values over the four years, 2000-2004. Statewide, the increase was over 32% during the same time.

Using sample data, the Census estimated the number of households in Byron experiencing a “cost bur-

den” or “severe cost burden” with respect to housing costs. A cost burden is when a household spends more than 30% of household income on housing and a severe cost burden is when 50% is spent on housing. It is generally considered as financially stressful for a household to pay more than 30% of its income on housing.

In Byron in 2000, 22 percent of renters had a cost burden and an additional 17 percent had a severe cost burden. For household that own their homes and pay a mortgage, 25 percent had a cost burden and another 3 percent had a severe cost burden. This means that 39% of all renters and 28% of homeowners with mortgages had a cost burden or severe cost burden.

Byron’s housing situation appears similar if not a bit more difficult than in nearby communities. In Powell, for example, about half of all renters and about one-third of homeowners with mortgages had a cost burden or severe cost burden. Lovell and Cody both have about one third of renters and one-fifth of homeowners (with a mortgage) with a cost burden or severe cost burden. (All these figures are based on 2000 Census data.)

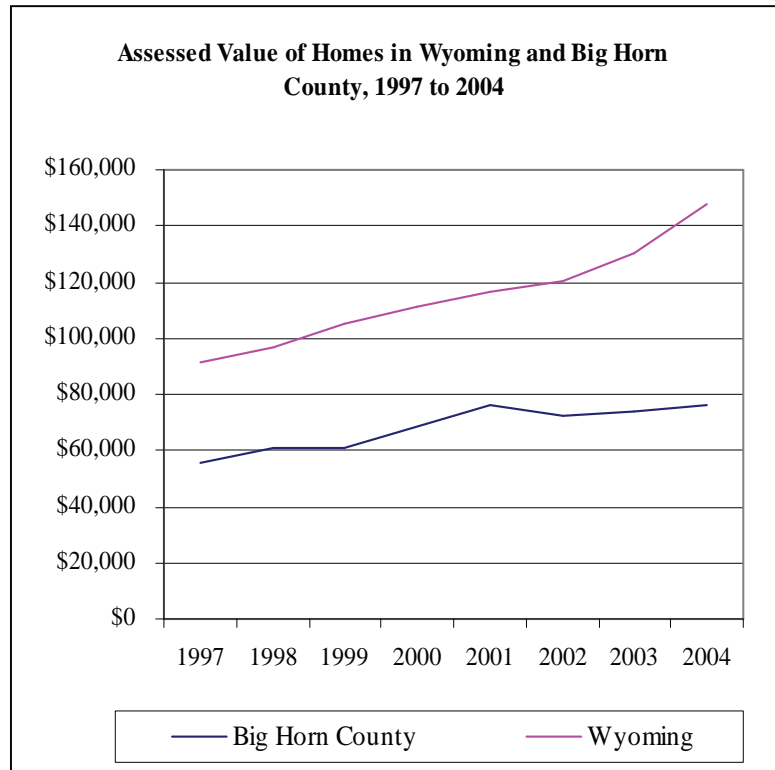
For all of these communities, the proportions of households with cost burdens has probably significantly increased since 2000 as the housing market has tightened up in the past few years while income growth has not kept pace.

Future Housing Needs

The State of Wyoming publishes projections of future housing demand for each county. These projections are variable being based on “moderate”, “strong”, and “very strong” projections of future population growth, as discussed in Chapter 5. Based on those projections, Byron can be expected to add the following numbers of new households:

Projections of New Households Added to Byron		
	2020	2030
Moderate	19	*
Strong	32	60
Very Strong	53	99

* No projection is available for moderate growth for the year 2030



The number of new households that are added in the future will roughly equal the number of new housing units that will be needed.

Housing Recommendations

The Town of Byron should use the strong growth projection and plan on accommodating about 32 new housing units by 2020 and 28 more to 2030 (60 total units between 2000 and 2030).

The town should ensure that planning and zoning regulations allow a wide variety of housing types. Apartments, multi-family housing, and independent or assisted living housing for seniors are not present now but will likely be needed in the future. Town regulations should allow these housing types.

The town should assist residents and property owners in using the State of Wyoming's housing rehabilitation programs to upgrade or replace substandard housing units. There are many benefits to participating in a housing rehabilitation program:

- the program would create work for local contractors;
- it extends the economic life and therefore the value of homes;
- it can help senior citizens stay in their own homes longer; and
- it can assist with home additions which can be beneficial to growing families.