Supporting Innovative Housing Solutions

NewCourtland's Community Homeownership Demonstration Project

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economics | strategy | insight

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Executive Summary

Philadelphia – like many other communities across the country – is entering a period of accelerating demographic and housing market changes. The city's population of aging adults is projected to grow, while millennial and gen-Z households are entering into their respective prime household formation ages and are increasing demand for homeownership opportunities. These shifts are occurring amid a persistent shortage of affordable housing, rising costs, and an aging housing stock that will become increasingly mismatched to the needs of current and future residents of all ages.

Although new housing supply has increased in recent years, production has not kept pace with household growth. Most housing units, particularly single-family and middle-density homes, were built prior to 1960 and lack the accessibility, efficiency, and affordability required by aging adults. At the same time, rising rents and home prices have placed homeownership out of reach for many working families. Traditional affordable housing tools – while a critical component in addressing the broader housing challenge – remain insufficient on their own to address citywide need at scale.

NewCourtland's Community Homeownership Demonstration seeks to provide a replicable and scalable approach to affordable homeownership, equitable senior housing and community revitalization. To do so, NewCourtland will build for-sale duplex- and triplex-style homes that will include a master-leased, ground floor senior housing unit – providing a pathway to homeownership that is supported by additional master-lease revenue and adding a new supportive senior housing unit to Philadelphia's housing stock – at approximately one-half or less than the cost of traditional subsidized housing construction. A key component of the pilot demonstration will rely on the construction of missing middle housing typologies or light density housing structures that are already allowable within the existing zoning of many of Philadelphia's neighborhoods and are generally shown to support community and neighborhood vitality from an economic and social perspective.

Given the challenges advancing and supporting affordable housing within the marketplace, solutions will require innovations that are financially pragmatic; compatible within existing land use frameworks; and are responsive to generational needs. NewCourtland's Community Homeownership Demonstration offers an actionable and replicable model that will allow other local stakeholders to explore further innovations across Philadelphia.

POLICY EFFICIENCY

NewCourtland's Community Homeownership Demonstration presents an innovative model that leverages by-right development without relying on additional tax credit subsidy – building a structure that provides both a pathway to attainable homeownership and supportive senior housing. Without relying on already-constrained sources, the approach has the potential to complement Philadelphia's current affordable housing toolkit.

SCALABILTY & REPLICABILITY

By focusing on a less capital-intensive approach offered through the development of duplex- and triplex-style homes, the model can be adopted by developers of all size – including for-profit developers, small-scale nonprofit developers and community organizations.

$300K - $500K

per unit cost of subsidized affordable multifamily housing

$200K - $400K

per unit cost of model approach

ADRESSING THE HOUSING SUPPLY MISMATCH

As the baby boomer generation sees increased longevity and a lack of housing options due to the broader housing shortage, aging adults will additionally contribute to the housing shortage as they age-in-place – holding on to homes that may not fit their needs and could otherwise suit a growing family from a younger generation. Even modest shifts in the housing choices of aging adults, while improving the supply of age-appropriate housing, can indirectly expand the supply without relying solely on new construction.

ECONOMIC & MARKET BENEFITS

Intergenerational, mixed-density development supports stronger retail demand, higher transit ridership, improved social cohesion, and more efficient land use – factors that contribute to long-term fiscal health and neighborhood vitality.

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1. Introduction

Following a broader national trend, Philadelphia's senior population (those aged 65 and older) is projected to grow significantly over the next three decades. According to the Pennsylvania State Data Center, Philadelphia's senior population is expected to represent 20 percent of the City's total population by 2050, up from 14 percent in 2020.[1] This demographic shift is set to occur as Philadelphia faces a shortage of housing options that are affordable for low- and middle-income residents. Recent data from Moody's and the Reinvestment Fund estimates that there is a current shortage of approximately 12,000 units in Philadelphia, while supply and demand factors have caused the cost of both renting and homeownership in the city to increase. This shortage affects not only low-income households, but also seniors, people with disabilities and first-time homebuyers – contributing to housing instability overall. This will be especially true as Philadelphia enters a period of some aging adults being 'over housed' in units larger than they need or can capably maintain, and younger households are 'underhoused' in units that do not allow for household growth or equity growth. Shifting this dynamic so that households are more appropriately housed for their generational needs will be a critical component of ensuring equitable housing outcomes for each respective cohort. To accomplish this shift within the market, Philadelphia's housing 'toolkit' will need to consider policy solutions and innovations that allow for appropriate housing production at scale. Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI) was engaged by NewCourtland to analyze these trends and scalable solutions to housing issues in Philadelphia.

1.1. Investing in Innovative Housing Solutions

The housing sector is at a critical inflection point. Facing significant demographic and generational shifts, the current housing stock – in Philadelphia, and many other urban and suburban communities – is not positioned to provide appropriate or affordable housing opportunities for growing families and aging adults. While current policies have shown the ability to incentivize and produce new unit construction, it comes at significant public and private cost and addresses only a fraction of the overall housing need. Providing equitable solutions to this problem will require exploring and investing in new policies, technologies and methods that have the ability or potential to scale across differing neighborhoods and communities, including those that have been historically disinvested in.

NewCourtland's demonstration projects are part of a broader approach to pursue and explore innovative ideas and approaches to intergenerational affordable housing development that can help meet the needs of the community it serves. In their next inclusive housing demonstration – the Community Homeownership Demonstration – NewCourtland will aim to build a "missing middle" housing option that blends the concepts of home equity accrual and affordable senior rental opportunities. [2] Through this pilot demonstration, NewCourtland will develop duplex- and triplex-style homes in the Allegheny West neighborhood – each of which will include master-leased affordable senior units. The blended approach provides housing choices for older adults while generating revenue for participating homeowners that

[1] PA State Data Center. Pennsylvania Population Projections: 2020 to 2050.

[2] Missing middle housing types refers to housing types that fall between single-family homes and mid-rise apartment buildings – typically, townhomes, duplexes and triplexes. Missing middle housing - Local Housing Solutions.

can be used to pay down mortgages and build generational wealth that can better contribute to community investment and revitalization.

The Community Homeownership Demonstration seeks to explore the application of missing middle housing stock, such as duplexes, triplexes and other comparable options, to support senior housing, affordable homeownership and community revitalization – all while directly addressing the current generational housing mismatch between aging adults and young households.[3] Research has shown that missing middle housing typologies can help expand supply at lower per-unit costs while more broadly supporting affordability, walkability, and mixed-age communities. By investing in this solution now, the demonstration will help to shape the delivery systems and identify barriers for those seeking to explore a comparable missing middle approach in the future.

1.2. Overview of Report

The sections of the report are organized as follows:

- **Section 2: The Impact of Generational Trends on Housing in Philadelphia** analyzes trends within Philadelphia's population and housing market, and how generational changes may impact the housing market.
- **Section 3: Innovative Solutions for Meeting the Housing Needs of Aging Adults and Working Families** provides an overview of the housing typologies that would help to meet the needs of aging adults and working families in Philadelphia, and overviews how the Community Homeownership Demonstration will address those needs.

[3] Pilot Program Seeks To Turn Working-Class Homebuyers Into Senior Housing Landlords

2. The Impact of Generational Trends on Housing in Philadelphia

The progression of the largest generational cohorts – baby boomers, millennials and gen Z – will have a significant impact on Philadelphia's housing demand in the coming years. The baby boomer generation, or those born between 1946 and 1964, will soon be entirely above the age of 65. Millennials, or those born between 1981 and 1996, are now in prime household formation and home-buying years, and gen Z households, or those born between 1997 and 2012, will follow in the coming decades. The following sections examine the current housing market and how these generational shifts may reshape demand across housing types.

2.1. The Current State of the Philadelphia Housing Market

Over the last five years, Philadelphia's housing market has been able to support growth in supply. Since 2019, Philadelphia's count of total housing units has grown by approximately 8 percent, driven by the addition of housing units in multifamily buildings with 20 or more units (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Housing Units by Building Type, Philadelphia[4]

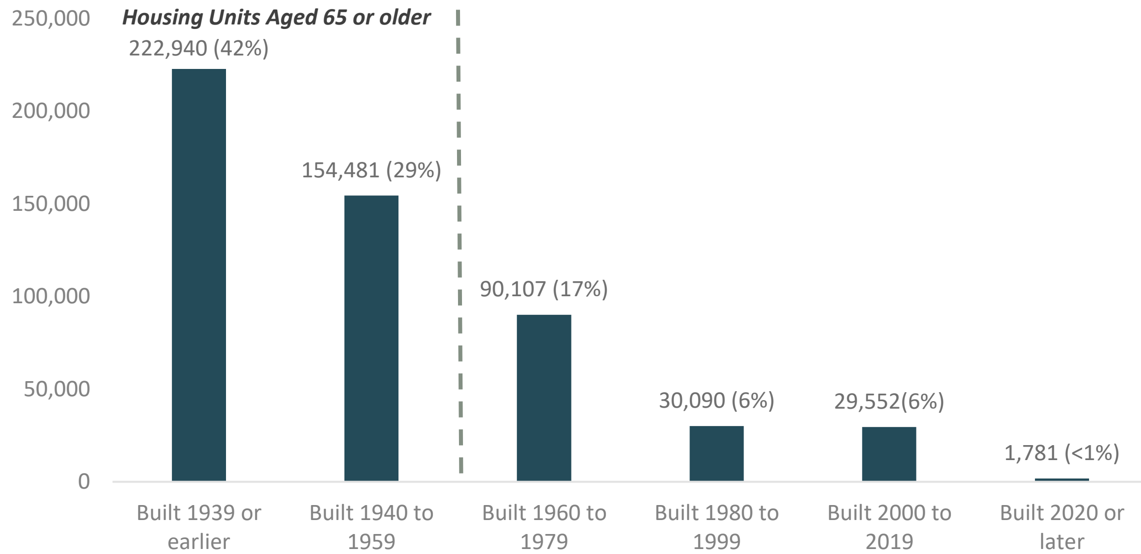
Building Type	2019	2023	Growth (2019-2023)	Share of Stock (2023)
Single Family, Detached	55,271	61,968	12%	8%
Single Family, Attached	400,564	417,516	4%	57%
Duplex to Quadplex (Middle Density)	97,832	104,358	7%	14%
Multifamily, 5 to 20 units	43,823	44,964	3%	6%
Multifamily, 20 to 49 units	20,742	26,778	29%	4%
Multifamily, 50 or more	65,884	81,400	24%	11%
TOTAL	**684,116**	**736,984**	**8%**	
Single Family	455,835	479,484	5%	65%
Middle Density	97,832	104,358	7%	14%
Multifamily	130,449	153,142	17%	21%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2019, 2023)

While new supply is a positive note, Philadelphia's housing stock continues to grow older, especially within unit typologies typically held for homeowners. As of 2023, approximately 70 percent of occupied single-family homes and middle-density housing (the predominate housing typology of many Philadelphia neighborhoods) were built prior to 1960. As a point of reference, the average lifespan of a house in the United States is between 50 and 63 years, from construction to demolition.[5] 70 percent of Philadelphia's single family housing stock now exceeds 65 years old (see Figure 2.2).

[4] Figure counts do not include units classified as 'Other' – a classification representing less than 1 percent of total units.
[5] Architectural Longevity: What Determines a Building's Lifespan? | Architecture

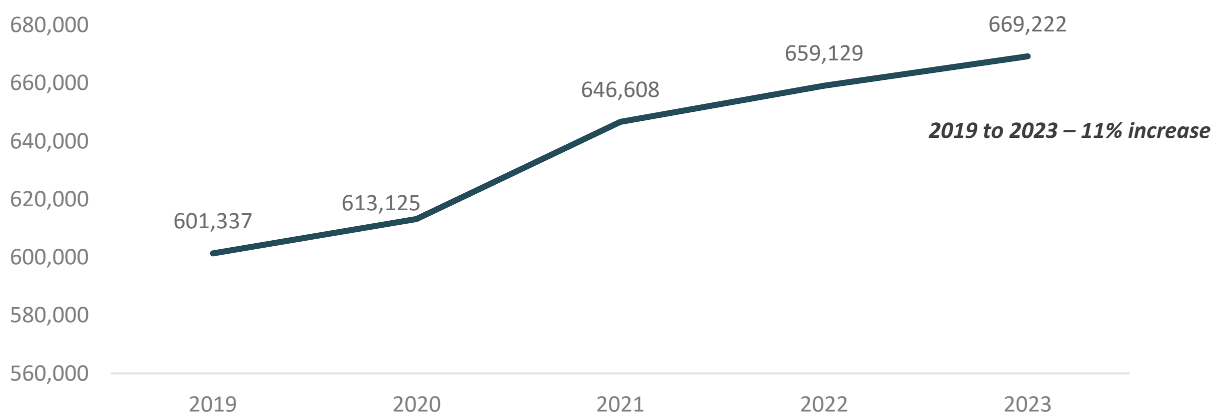
Figure 2.2: Occupied Single-Family and Middle-Density Housing Units by Year Built, Philadelphia



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2023)

Despite this growth in supply and the age of the housing stock, affordability has remained a challenge for some households in Philadelphia – as demand for housing has increased significantly over the same period. Since 2019, the household population of Philadelphia has grown by approximately 11 percent – outpacing the rate of growth in the supply of total housing units (8 percent) as household formation and changes in living arrangement compositions increased during the pandemic period (see Figure 2.3).[6]

Figure 2.3: Household Population, Philadelphia



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2019 - 2023)

This mismatch between household growth and unit growth has led to an imbalance within the housing market that has – in combination with other capital market factors, such as interest rates and inflation – pushed prices higher within both the homeownership and rental markets. From 2019 to 2023, median home sale prices for single-family residences rose from $301,000 to $385,000 (28 percent), while median

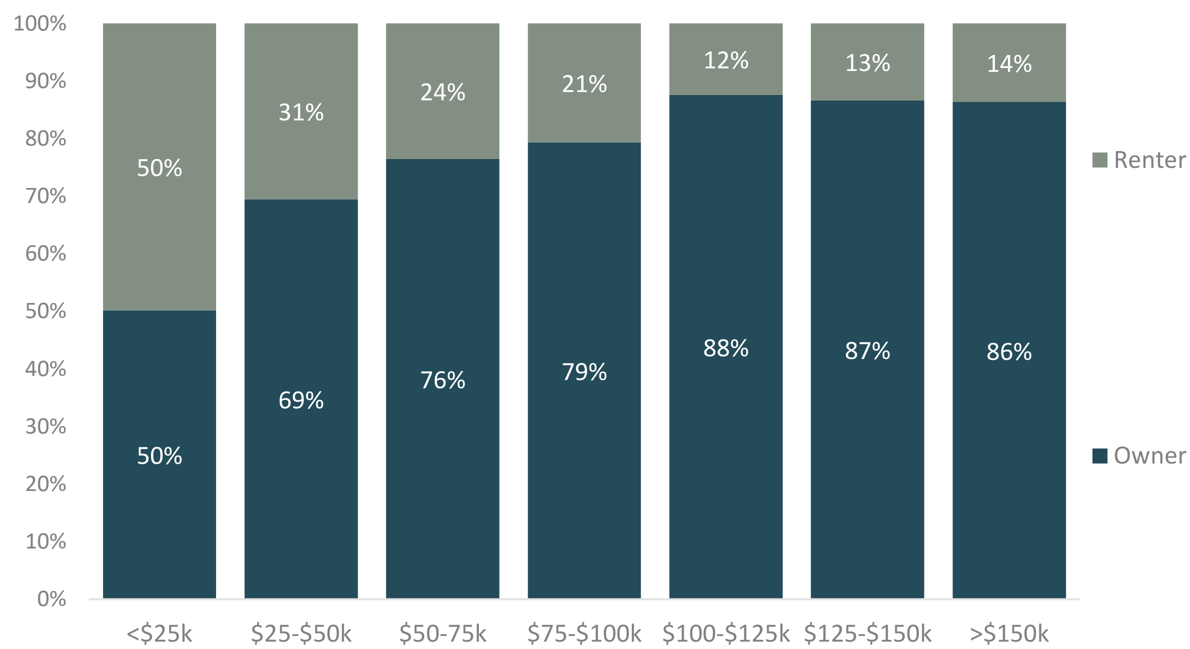
[6] The Fed - The Remarkable Recent Rebound in Household Formation and the Prospects for Future Housing Demand

rents for 2-bedroom units have increased from $1,650 to $2,260 (37 percent). Over the same period, incomes grew at a slower rate – approximately 16 percent – negatively impacting affordability.[7] Current listings have shown these prices have continued to increase into 2025 – with median sale prices at approximately $426,000, and median asking rents of $2,420 – prices affordable to those households making $100,000 or more.[8]

Existing Housing Conditions for Aging Adults

In Philadelphia, more than two-thirds of aging adult households are homeowners. HUD data indicates that as of 2023, approximately 130,000 Philadelphia households aged 62 or older were homeowners, compared to approximately 60,000 renter households aged 62 or older.[9] This distribution varies by income level, with the ownership share increasing as income grows (see Figure 2.4). Still, 50 percent of elderly households with incomes below $25,000 are homeowners – representative of more than 32,000 households – as well as 69 percent of households with incomes between $25,000 and $50,000 – representative of an additional 29,000 households.

Figure 2.4: Homeownership Share Among Philadelphia Households Age 62+ by Household Income



Source: HUD Office of Policy Development and Research (2023)

Household composition is also related to household income. Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6 below show the composition of 62+ owner (Figure 2.5) and renter (Figure 2.6) households by income level. The lower income bands are composed primarily of 1-person households, with 71 percent of aging homeowners and 82 percent of aging renters with incomes under $25,000 living alone. As incomes increase, elderly households are much more likely to be comprised of multiple members.

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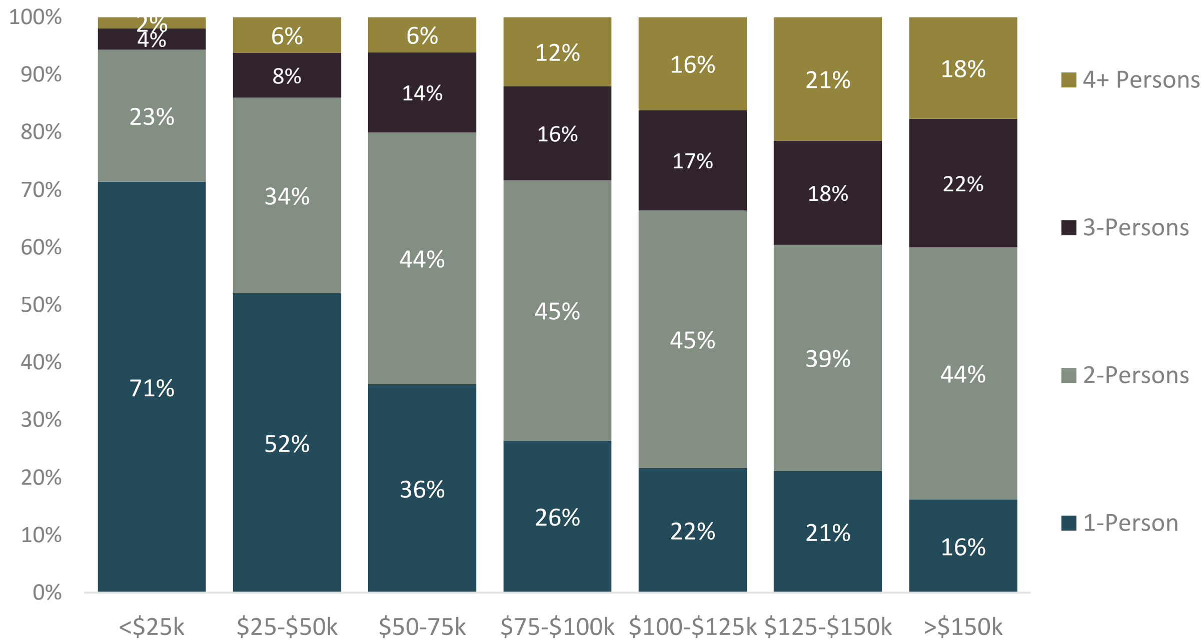
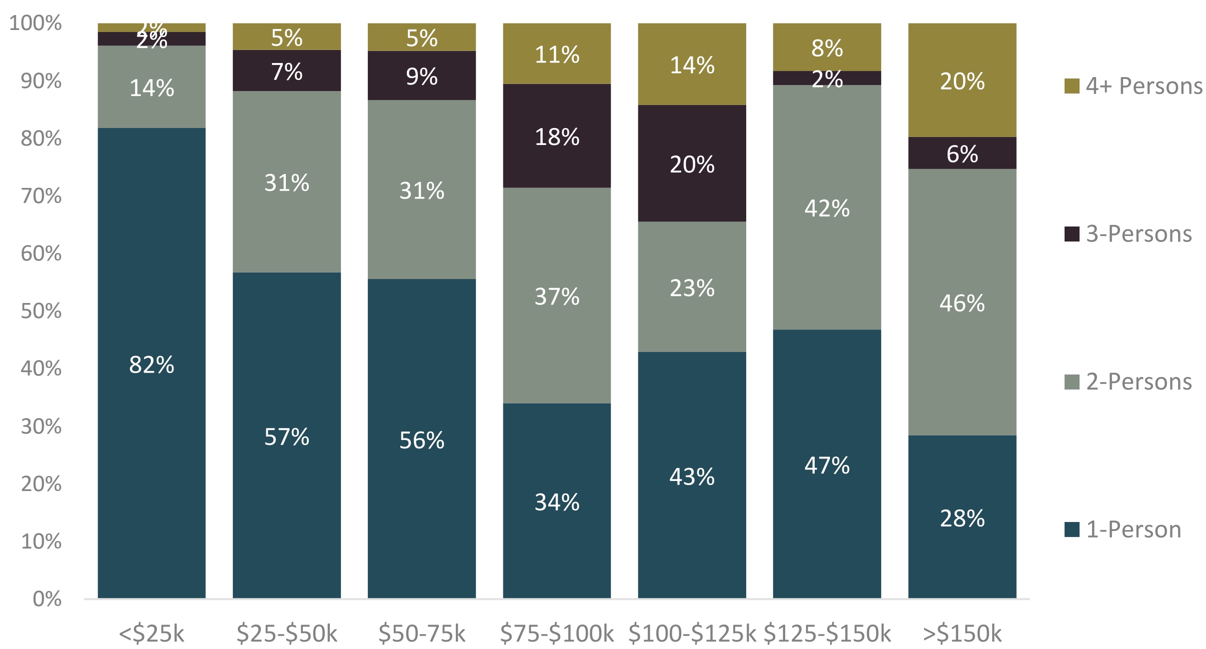
[7] Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Cost Index, Tables : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
[8] Redin Data Center, Downloadable Housing Market Data - Redfin
[9] Special Tabulations of Households, HUD Office of Policy Development and Research

Figure 2.5: Distribution of Philadelphia Owner-Occupied Households Age 62+ by Household Income and Household Size



Source: HUD Office of Policy Development and Research (2023)

Figure 2.6: Distribution of Philadelphia Renter-Occupied Households Age 62+ by Household Income and Household Size



Source: HUD Office of Policy Development and Research (2023)

While homeownership is the right fit for some aging adults, some within this population face the twin challenges of deteriorating home conditions and declining physical capacity. Older homes can be a challenge for many households – regardless of age and income, but especially for those with declining physical capacity and limited financial resources. Deteriorating housing conditions can drive additional costs that can burden a monthly income – which for some aging households is fixed to Social Security or retirement savings. It is estimated that 68 percent of the homeowner households aged 62 and older and earning less than $30,000 – approximately 26,000 households – face at least one of the following conditions: lacking plumbing facilities, lacking complete kitchen facilities, or hold monthly housing costs greater than 30 percent of their household income.[10] Unfortunately, the housing market offers few housing opportunities that are dedicated to serving lower-income aging adults. Since 2019, the Philadelphia market has only added approximately 540 new age-restricted units – far below the estimated need.[11]

Existing Housing Conditions for Working Families

Similarly, working families face complicated housing choices in Philadelphia. As of 2023, 37 percent of family households aged younger than 35 – approximately 27,600 households – are already homeowners.[12] For those working families that have been able to enter homeownership, it is a costly endeavor – mortgage costs (along with other housing-related costs) for homes bought at the median price can reach $3,000 monthly and require an annual household income of approximately $120,000 or more to affordably own the property. For those working families that have not been able to enter the homeownership market, it remains difficult to do so. Not only would the household need a $120,000 annual household income to affordably own that median priced home but would also need savings amounting to $14,000 to reach a 3.5 percent down payment on an FHA loan product.[13] While homeownership may be expensive, it holds a number of meaningful benefits – including consistent monthly payments and a wealth-building asset.

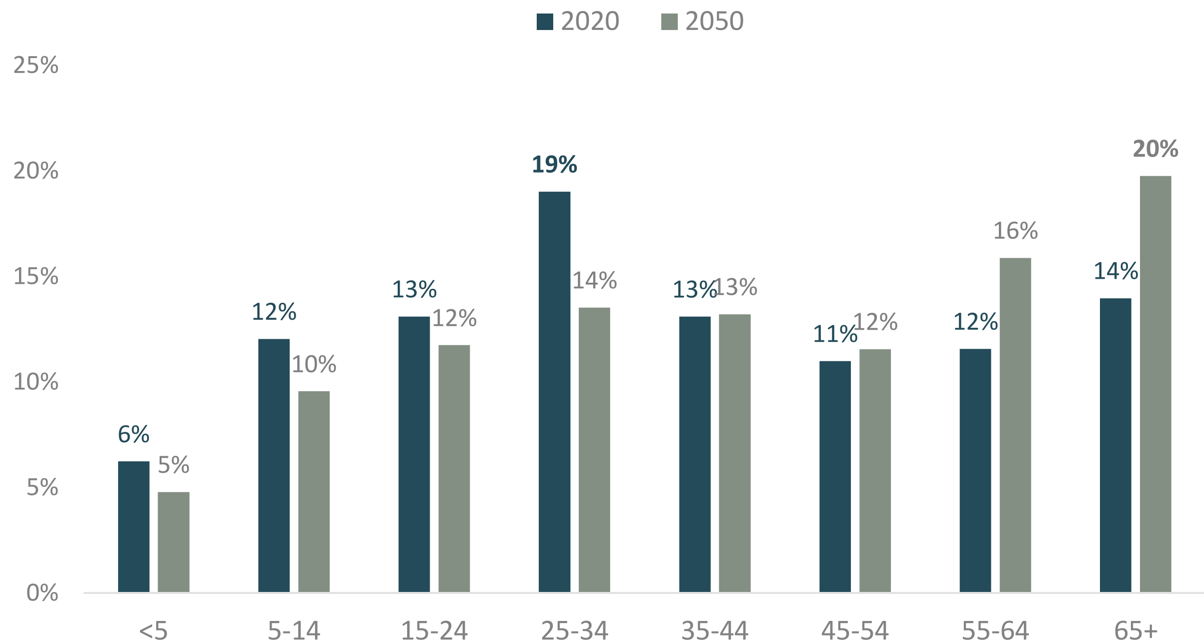
Meanwhile, for those renting families that cannot enter the homeownership market, renting has become increasingly burdensome. As of 2023, 47 percent of renting households aged younger than 35 were housing cost burdened – or paid more than 30 percent of their household income on rent.[14] Over time, heightened cost burden can negatively impact a household's ability to save for a down payment, or other wealth-accruing assets.

2.2. Anticipating the Impact of Generational Shifts

By 2050, it is projected that the share of Philadelphia's population that is older than 65 will grow to 20 percent, up from approximately 14 percent in 2020. By contrast, the working age population will shrink, with the large 25- to 34-year-old cohort falling from 19 percent of the population in 2020 to a projected 14 percent in 2050 (see Figure 2.7).

[10] Special Tabulations of Households, HUD Office of Policy Development and Research
[11] CoStar Analytics, Dedicated Senior Housing Estimates
[12] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2023)
[13] Analysis assumes a $400,000 FHA home purchase with a 6% interest rate and 3.5% down payment, with annual property taxes of $5,600 and home insurance of $1,500
[14] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2023)

Figure 2.7: Projected Philadelphia Population Distribution by Age, 2020-2050



Source: Pennsylvania State Data Center (2025)

While actual trends may not match projections perfectly, the direction is clear – Philadelphia is growing older and prime-homebuying and working-aged households will be a smaller portion of the overall population. This shift will have multiple impacts on the City, including reducing its tax base while increasing public service needs. Notably, this shift will see an increase in the population of those entering retirement age – when wages fall off – and a decrease in the population of households entering prime earning years.

As noted, some of these generational shifts have already started to occur. The baby boomer cohort has begun to reach ages where caregiving and physical capacity assistance may be needed – which may require a move to a new age-appropriate home or in-home modifications to live comfortably or safely with ease. An additional nuance for some of these households is a lack of a reliable family or community network. While some aging adults may be able to rely on younger family or living spouses for caregiving assistance, a significant number of aging adult households live alone in one-person households who may struggle to afford assisted living or in-home care.[15] Of the approximate 130,000 homeowners aged 62 and older in Philadelphia, 55,800 are in one-person households – within this population, approximately 48 percent – or 26,700 households – earn less than $30,000 annually.[16] As baby boomers see increased longevity and a lack of housing options, aging adults will additionally contribute to the housing shortage as they age-in-place – holding on to homes that could otherwise suit a growing family.[17] As this subset of

[15] Housing America's Older Adults 2023
[16] Special Tabulations of Households, HUD Office of Policy Development and Research
[17] Supply Mismatch – AARP Future Of Housing

the population grows, Philadelphia will need additional housing solutions and new housing opportunities that provide a mix of affordable living, built-in community and accessible caregiving.

Meanwhile, the younger millennial and gen Z cohorts have begun aging into their prime household formation and home-purchasing period. However, and as noted earlier, the home purchasing market remains difficult to access. From a housing standpoint, stock remains limited, especially in the neighborhoods with strong schools and amenities – keeping prices higher and affordability out-of-reach. From a financial perspective, mortgage interest rates and heightened prices have pushed up down payments and monthly mortgage payments. While the macroeconomic dynamics are subject to change, additional homeownership opportunities across structure types and through the movement of aging households into more appropriate housing would help to accommodate the demand and further help to keep these generational cohorts within Philadelphia. Even a subtle shift in the current tenure dynamic for aging adults could produce meaningful changes in how generationally appropriate housing stock is distributed.

For example, HUD data reviewed earlier in this chapter indicates that there are approximately 56,000 1-person aging (62+) households in Philadelphia as of 2023 – of which approximately 24,000 face an adverse housing condition. If 10 percent of these households in adverse housing conditions were to move from their existing to a better calibrated housing solution, an additional 2,400 units of housing stock would be available for purchase by younger generations. As the population ages, this increment will become even larger over time. The Pennsylvania State Data Center projects Philadelphia's elderly population to grow by approximately 60 percent from 2020-2050. Holding all else equal, this growth would indicate that shifting even 10 percent of aging, 1-person household homeowners facing adverse housing conditions to more appropriate housing could open nearly 4,000 housing units by 2050.

3. Innovative Solutions for Meeting the Housing Needs of Aging Adults and Working Families

To address the current and future housing needs of aging adults and working age families in Philadelphia, housing solutions will need to focus on affordability, accessibility and community amenities. Research has shown that middle-density housing typologies blend many of the features needed to address these issues. The Community Homeownership Demonstration draws on these typologies to make homeownership more attainable for younger households while supporting community-oriented housing for aging adults.

3.1. Housing Typologies for Aging Adults and Working Families

Aging Adults

As older households age, accessibility, affordability and community are key components for housing that can appropriately meet their needs. From a health perspective, aging adults are more likely than younger households to face difficulties with mobility, vision, hearing, cognition, or independent living.[18] From a structural perspective, accessibility features – such as single-floor living, step-free entrances, wide hallways and grab bars or handrails – will be key to supporting these households.[19] In addition, some of these households require long term in-home care – requiring additional space and costs. Research has also shown that walkability and accessibility to amenities – such as transportation hubs and other third places – can materially improve older adults' physical and mental health outcomes and help to improve a sense community and belonging.[20] Unfortunately, few homes hold these exact features in-tandem – available survey data estimates that fewer than five percent of homes offer the combination of single-floor living, no-step entries and wide hallways and doorways.[21]

To combine these features effectively for Philadelphia's aging adults will require a housing typology that can be built within the existing neighborhoods in which many reside – often residential areas with gentle density, where single-lot, infill development is common and zoning requirements can be more restrictive to larger multifamily options. This could include townhouses, duplexes, triplexes or cottage courts – each of which allow for placement within Philadelphia's existing residential neighborhoods and would allow for the accessibility and community features needed to ensure equitable outcomes for aging populations. In addition, housing units within these typologies are often more affordable – both to construct and to live within. Townhomes and duplexes – relative to detached single-family residences – are more efficient to build on a per-unit basis, and lead to more affordable rental and ownership opportunities for those households within them.[22]

[18] Housing America's Older Adults 2023
[19] Homes for All Ages: Older Adults Support Universal Design
[20] Influence of Neighborhood Walkability on Older Adults' Walking Behavior, Health, and Social Connections in Third Places | Published in Findings
[21] Housing America's Older Adults 2023
[22] Market - Missing Middle Housing

Working Families

As the millennial and gen Z cohorts age into prime household formation and peak earning years, the demand for homeownership within this population will increase. This will be especially true for families with children, who will seek attainable and affordable homeownership opportunities in starter homes that have connections to schools, childcare, transit and jobs.

In Philadelphia, this means building out attainable homeownership opportunities in existing residential neighborhoods – particularly in those that are walkable and within proximity of transit. Noted earlier, middle housing typologies can provide an affordable and attainable option for those seeking a homeownership option. These smaller homes can offer a lower cost to entry compared to comparable options outside of the City, and within duplex or triplex options, offer the amenity of additional space that can be filled by an aging family member or a tenant.

3.2. Meeting Housing Needs through the Community Homeownership Demonstration Model

As aging adults and growing family households face changing needs with each passing year, creating housing choices that are suitable to diverse household configurations and are affordable across the income spectrum will be key to supporting both populations in the coming years. Critically, both populations can benefit from the other when living together in close-knit communities, providing the social connections and interactions that support a connected neighborhood within a medium density – or missing middle – framework.

Figure 3.1: Missing Middle Housing Typologies

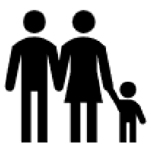
Source: Missing Middle Housing / Opticos (2025)

The Community Homeownership Demonstration aims to leverage the commonalities between the housing needs of these generational cohorts to provide a housing model that can be reproduced at scale. Through this approach, aging adults will see a community-centric, age-appropriate and affordable housing option, while working families will see a community-centric, attainable homeownership option – both through the build-out of new units, as well as the aging-out and movement of older homeowners.

The Community Homeownership Demonstration in Practice

To support the healthy communities and housing opportunities that allow seniors to thrive, the demonstration will support the construction of single-family, duplex and triplex homes that will be sold and marketed to families. Through sale proceeds, prospective buyers will be supported with access to capital for down payments and closing costs through soft mortgages; financial education to help overcome poor credit histories; and low-risk financing solutions that align with Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Affairs mortgage standards. Accessible units within these respective structures – such as bottom-floor units in duplex homes – will be converted into affordable senior apartments, master-leased and operated by senior housing providers which will help owning families with monthly rental payments and overall property maintenance. In practice, this will allow for the addition of newly constructed units for multiple generational cohorts within a single structure built to support community and match existing neighborhood character at a per unit development cost lower than per unit costs of mid-rise or high-rise affordable developments.

Figure 3.2: Demonstration Project in Practice



Young Families

Housing Needs

- Attainable and Affordable Homeownership
- Public Amenities
- Community

Aging Adults

Housing Needs

- Accessible and Affordable Housing
- Support Services
- Community

The Community Homeownership Demonstration

- Community-Oriented Design
- New Housing Supply for Multiple Generational Cohorts
- Financial Support for Attainable Homeownership
- Age-Appropriate Senior Living with NewCourtland Support

Source: Econsult Solutions, Inc. (2026)

3.3. Providing a Scalable Solution for Housing Opportunities

Beyond the direct goal of creating alternative housing options for seniors, the Community Homeownership Demonstration aims to explore how this model and approach can be replicated by peer community development nonprofit organizations. As such, a key component within this demonstration – and the affirmative case for its scalability – is to enable the most impact for the least cost. Notably, the current suite of policy options supporting the production of new affordable housing – primarily LIHTC – is costly and does not have the ability to scale. From 2020 to 2023, approximately 1,000 LIHTC units were placed in service in Philadelphia – a small portion of the overall affordable housing shortage.[23] Of these 1,000 units, only a fraction was dedicated for senior residents.

The relatively limited LIHTC production over this period is a byproduct of the program's federal allocation design – which has an annual tax credit cap per state and is structured to support affordable housing production across Pennsylvania. On top of being a finite resource, LIHTC construction and property maintenance is more costly than by-right, market development – which may not require the same permitting processes, design and size requirements, or other associated fees relating to compliance and approval.[24] While LIHTC and other comparable tax credit programs have proven a useful tool in incentivizing development, these programs alone will not meet the scale of Philadelphia's affordable housing shortage.

Given that most housing organizations and supporting nonprofits are often working with limited financial resources, smaller community organizations and local development teams are often at a disadvantage when trying to successfully leverage scarce public sources. As such, future housing solutions that want to scale to provide impact will need to consider approaches that expand the policy toolkit and increase supply at less cost. By focusing on smaller and middle-density options that can build more units within permissible, by-right neighborhood frameworks, a comparable approach to the Community Homeownership Demonstration may allow additional community organizations to support development, as well as higher unit counts, within the neighborhoods they serve.

3.4. Understanding the Benefits of Intergenerational, Mixed-Density Communities

An additional benefit of the Community Homeownership Demonstration is that it will support a range of downstream benefits – not only to residents, but to the broader community. Research broadly supports this approach to support neighborhood vitality, inclusive growth and the decentralization of poverty.

Resident Benefits

Residents of intergenerational, mixed-density communities see several benefits. For aging adults, embedded affordable units within existing communities can reduce stresses that may be associated with moving to a new location. For working families, homeownership and surrounding community offers a chance to build equity within a growing market. This intergenerational proximity – within the same structure, and within the same neighborhood – can go on to support the informal support networks (such

[23] HUD LIHTC Database
[24] Why is it so expensive to build affordable housing?

as childcare swaps and wellness checks) that are often associated with communities built to support residents of all ages and incomes.[25]

Community and Social Benefits

Not only do residents benefit from intergenerational, mixed-density communities, but the community itself often sees significant downstream benefits. Research has shown that gentle increases in density – shifting away from detached, single-family residences to mixed-use, middle-density designs – can strengthen retail demand, support transit ridership and improve fiscal outcomes with improved property values.[26,27] Such efforts and spillovers can go on to support new economic and employment efforts – pulling the neighborhood up with the direct investment. Perhaps most importantly, intentional and community-centric intergenerational housing can help to improve cross-age engagement – which has been linked to higher social cohesion and capital, mutual aid and overall well-being.[28] At scale, these impacts can help to fend off trends that can amplify inequalities in economic and housing opportunity.[29]

[25] The Future of Aging in Place: Bridging Infrastructure Gaps and Building Intergenerational Support
[26] "Gentle" density can save our neighborhoods | Brookings
[27] The economic value of walkable neighborhoods | URBAN DESIGN International
[28] Intergenerational Public Space Design and Policy: A Review of the Literature
[29] Big cities fuel inequality within and across generations | PNAS Nexus | Oxford Academic

4. Conclusion

In the coming decades, Philadelphia's housing market and population will see significant changes. Demographic trends, marked by a rapidly aging population and younger generations entering prime household formation years, will add to housing challenges for those in the baby boomer, millennial and gen Z cohorts. Without intervention, this dynamic will exacerbate housing insecurity for aging adults and limit homeownership opportunities for working families, threatening neighborhood stability and long-term economic vitality across the income distribution.

Innovative solutions like the Community Homeownership Demonstration offer a forward-looking solution. By leveraging missing middle housing typologies and integrating affordable senior units within family-owned homes, this model addresses two pressing needs simultaneously: enabling aging adults to remain in their communities with dignity and providing working families and younger households with attainable pathways to homeownership. More than a housing solution, this approach fosters intergenerational connections, strengthens neighborhood resilience, and promotes inclusive growth. Investing in innovative, community-centered housing solutions today will help Philadelphia build a more inclusive, sustainable housing ecosystem, one that supports residents across generations and income levels while reinforcing the social fabric of its neighborhoods.

Appendix

About Econsult Solutions, Inc.

This report was produced by Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI). ESI provides businesses and public policy makers with consulting and thought leadership services in urban economics, real estate, transportation, public infrastructure, economic development, public policy and finance, strategic planning, as well as expert witness services for litigation support.

ESI combines robust quantitative analysis with trusted expert insights to create sustainable solutions. The firm works collaboratively with its clients, and draws in expertise, when necessary, from our network of experts and partners across industries, regions, and management practices. Based in Philadelphia, the firm supports clients nationwide.

About NewCourtland

NewCourtland is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization with a 150-year legacy of serving the city's most vulnerable populations, particularly low-income seniors, veterans, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Originally founded as the Presbyterian Hospital in the 1860s, NewCourtland has evolved into a dynamic network that integrates affordable housing, healthcare, and supportive services. The organization operates more than 800 affordable housing units; three senior centers; and the Germantown Home, a 180-bed nursing and rehabilitation facility.

Through its work to provide housing opportunities, NewCourtland reimagines what dignified, accessible living can look like. Its mission is to accelerate access to coordinated health, housing, and social services, ensuring that underserved Philadelphians can live with stability, dignity, and opportunity. It does this in part by pursuing innovative projects like the Tower at Henry, a vibrant, mixed-income intergenerational development which transformed the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute into a 258-unit multifamily complex.

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