

housing

Housing is both a critical and difficult issue within a community's life; especially in a community like Prattville where the majority of the developed land, at 72.5 percent, is dedicated to residential use. Since almost all residential development is produced by the private sector of the population, a municipal government has a very small voice in where and what types of houses are built. While it is not necessarily desirable to have over-regulation in residential development, there are some aspects of housing that would benefit from local government input. First, some coordination is needed to ensure that the housing demand is met for all income levels and needs. Second, the protection of property values and the construction of safe housing are best monitored through the local government's regulatory tools. And third, even though they have little input regarding the type and location of new residential development, most local governments accept the responsibility of providing infrastructure and utility services to these developments.

The intent of this housing element is to help the City of Prattville plan for

residential growth that is appropriate to meet demand and is desired by residents. These plans can then be shared with builders and developers to provide a guide for their business decisions. Regulatory control for residential development is available to the City in the form of zoning and subdivision regulations. These controls, however, are limited in persuading the private sector to build a certain type of home or to build in a certain area. Another approach that may be used to direct growth is incentive negotiation. The City of Prattville may offer something to a developer in exchange for building a type of housing that fits in with the City's growth plans. First though, the City must know what it wants so that it is able to negotiate effectively. The combined use of these tools, along with the guide provided by the comprehensive plan, will place the City of Prattville in a position to work with the private sector to ensure adequate housing for the city's entire population.

To determine how much and what type of housing is best for Prattville, several items have been reviewed and are discussed

in this element. Primary sources of information include a field survey conducted in March of 1994, the U.S. Bureau of Census, and the discussions and feedback from the Prattville Comprehensive Plan Housing Subcommittee.

housing characteristics

As with Prattville's population in general, the number of housing units in Prattville has seen a increased dramatically over the last 30 years. Since 1960 the number of housing units in Prattville has increased 275 percent. Although the number of housing units in Autauga County and in the State of Alabama has also increased over the last 30 years, the increase has not been nearly as great as in Prattville. In comparison, the number of housing units in Autauga County increased 165 percent from 1960 to 1990; and, the increase in the State was 73 percent for the same time period.

Most of Prattville's growth occurred during the 1960's, as shown in Figure 21. Although the amount of residential growth in Prattville between 1970 and 1980 was still considerably higher than that of Autauga County and the State, the difference was not nearly as large as in the previous ten years. And, between 1980 and 1990, residential growth in Prattville and the State both increased 15 percent, while Autauga County saw a 16 percent increase in housing units.

In the following section, the general characteristics of Prattville's housing resources are inventoried and discussed. In some cases, Prattville is compared to Opelika and Daphne, Alabama to get a

better understanding of the housing stock and what it means to Prattville's long-range growth picture. These cities were chosen because of their similarities to Prattville. Daphne has a 1990 population of 11,290 and Opelika has a 1990 population of 22,122. Daphne is currently experiencing the same type of growth explosion that Prattville has undergone. And, Opelika, like Prattville, is an industrially-based city located close to a major service center.

housing type

Approximately 83 percent of Prattville's housing stock is of a single family residential type. Multi-family housing units comprise 10 percent of the remaining 17 percent, while mobile homes comprise 7 percent. The portion of the housing stock which is single family housing in other Alabama cities and the State ranges from 61 percent to 73 percent, as seen in Figure 22. In comparison, the percentage of single family housing is much higher in Prattville.

Although multi-family housing is located throughout Prattville, most is found in apartment complexes located on Highway 14, Cobbs Ford Road, and McQueen Smith Road. Concentrations of mobile homes are found in New Moon Subdivision near Main Street, in the Allenville Road area, and in mobile home parks located along Highway 31 South.

housing occupancy

Prattville's housing occupancy since 1960 has remained stable, with only slight fluctuations between 93.8 and 95 percent of the total housing units being occupied. The

Figure 21

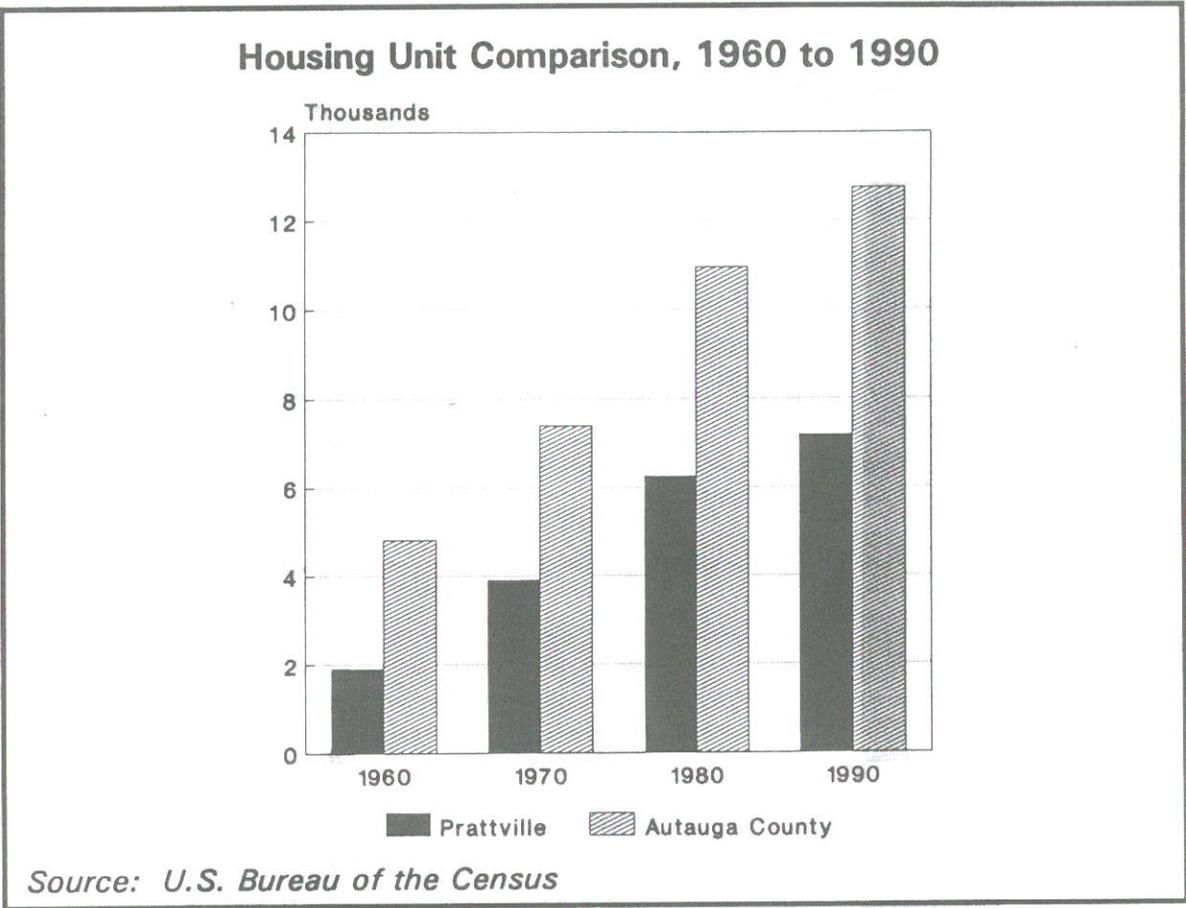
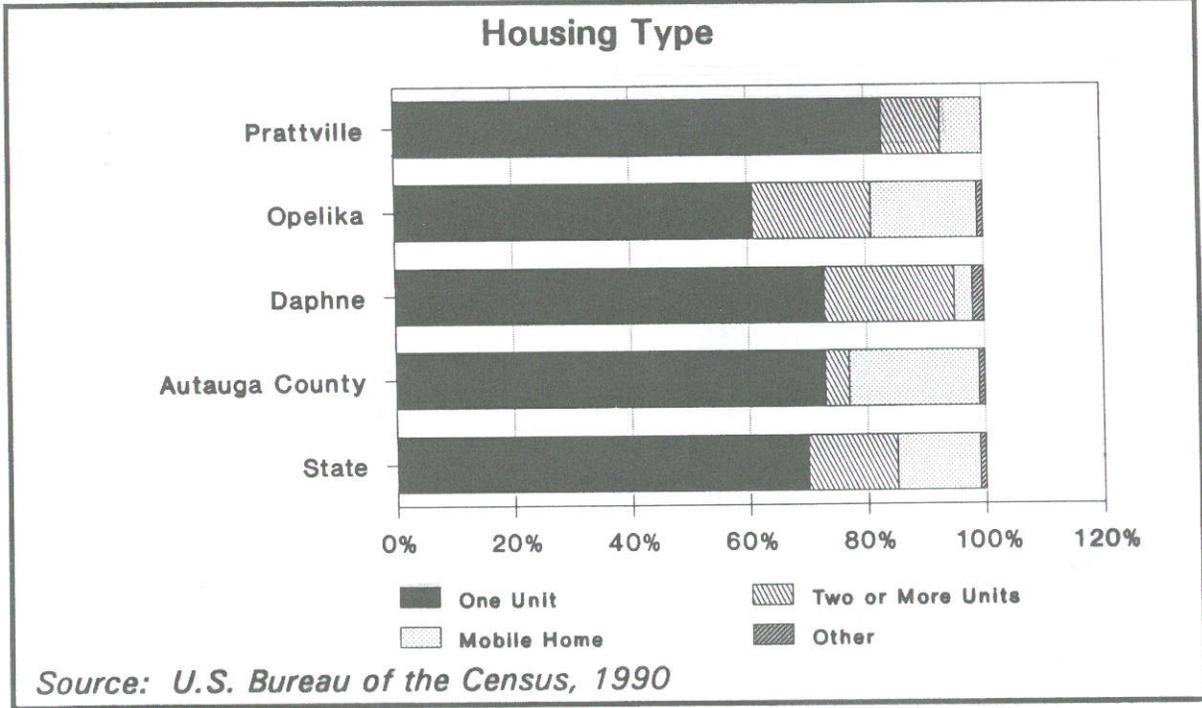


Figure 22

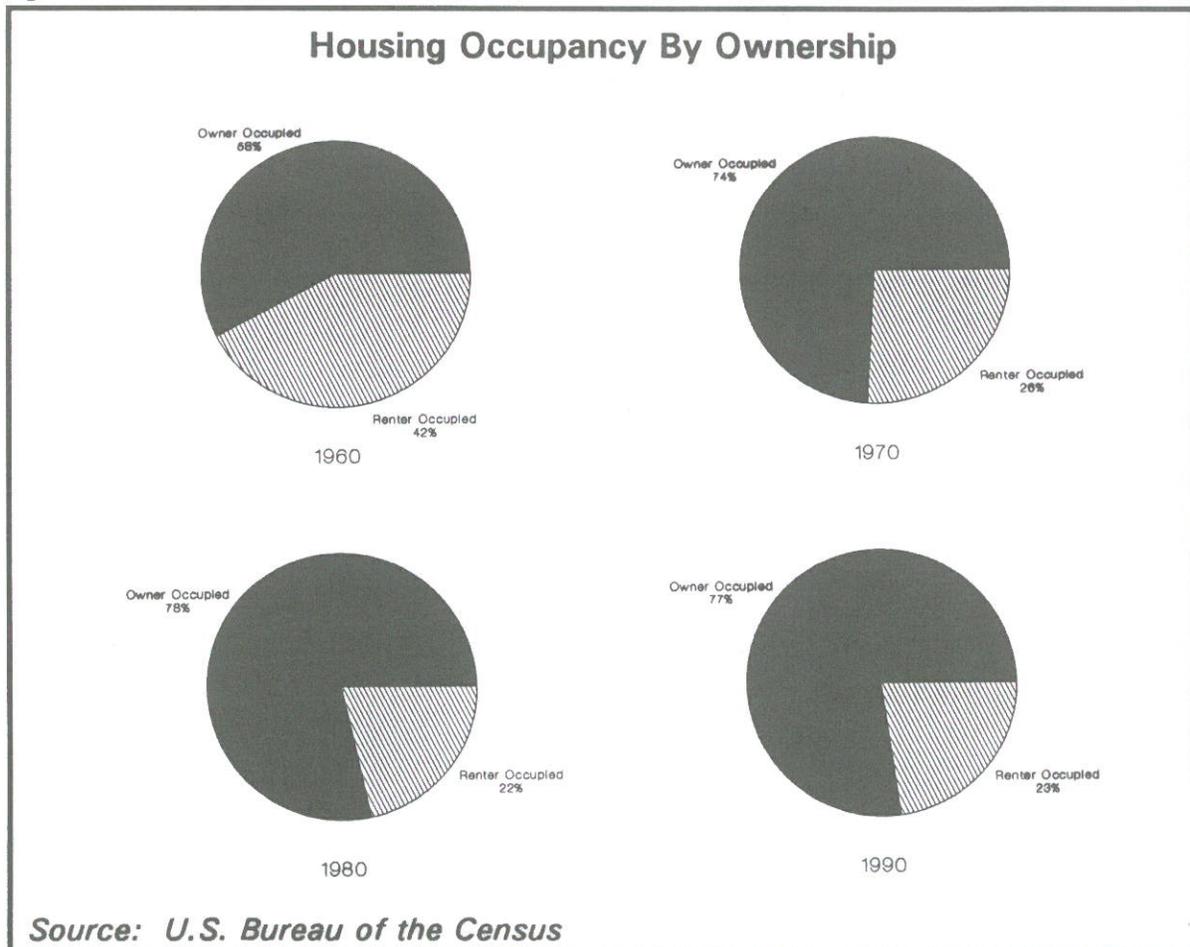


number of occupied housing units which are owner occupied, however, has increased from 58 percent in 1960 to 77 percent in 1990. Most of this increase occurred between 1960 and 1970 as shown in Figure 23. Since 1970, the percentage of occupied housing which is owner occupied has fluctuated between 74 and 78 percent. For owner and renter occupied housing, the racial breakdowns have remained consistent for the last ten years. Of the owner occupied housing, 90 percent is occupied by whites and 10 percent is occupied by blacks. Of the renter occupied housing, 80 percent is occupied by whites and 20 percent is occupied by blacks.

In comparison with other areas, Prattville appears to have a very high percentage of owner occupied housing. In the State, Opelika and Daphne, owner occupied housing varies between 61 percent and 71 percent of the total occupied housing units, as seen in Figure 24. Autauga County, however, has a slightly higher percentage, at 80 percent, of owner occupied housing than Prattville.

In 1990, of the total occupied housing units, 87 percent were occupied by whites, 12 percent were occupied by blacks, and 1 percent was occupied by persons of other races. The percentage of housing units occupied by non-white persons

Figure 23



decreased considerably from 22 percent in 1960 to 15 percent in 1970. Since 1970, however, the racial breakdowns have remained fairly consistent with the majority of the occupied housing, ranging from 85 to 87 percent, being occupied by whites.

A comparison of housing occupancy by race (Figure 25) shows that Prattville has a much higher housing occupancy by whites than the State, Autauga County, or some similar cities. In Autauga County, 82 percent of the occupied housing is occupied by whites and 18 percent black; across the State the breakdown is 77 percent white, 22 percent black, and 1 percent other.

housing condition

In 1990, approximately 3 percent of the occupied housing in Prattville was

designated as overcrowded, with more than 1.01 persons per room. This rate has drastically decreased from 1960 when approximately 19 percent of the housing units were overcrowded. Most of this decrease occurred between 1960 and 1970, when the percentage of overcrowded units dropped from 19 percent to 8 percent. The portion of overcrowded units has steadily decreased since. The statewide percentage of overcrowded housing units in 1990 was 3.5 percent.

Much of Prattville's housing stock is relatively new, with approximately 22 percent being built since 1980. The portion of the housing stock that is more than 40 years old, or was built before 1950 is 8.1 percent. It is probable, however, that the age of the housing stock has a direct

Figure 24

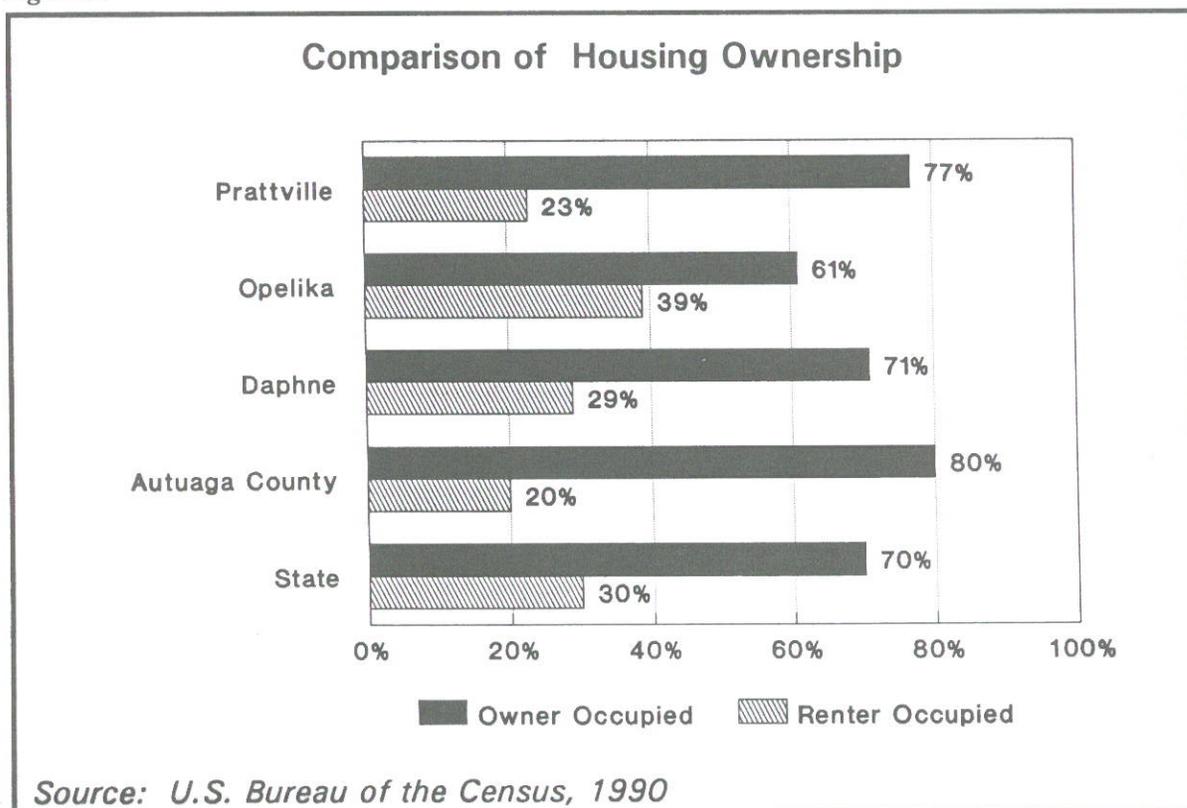


Figure 25

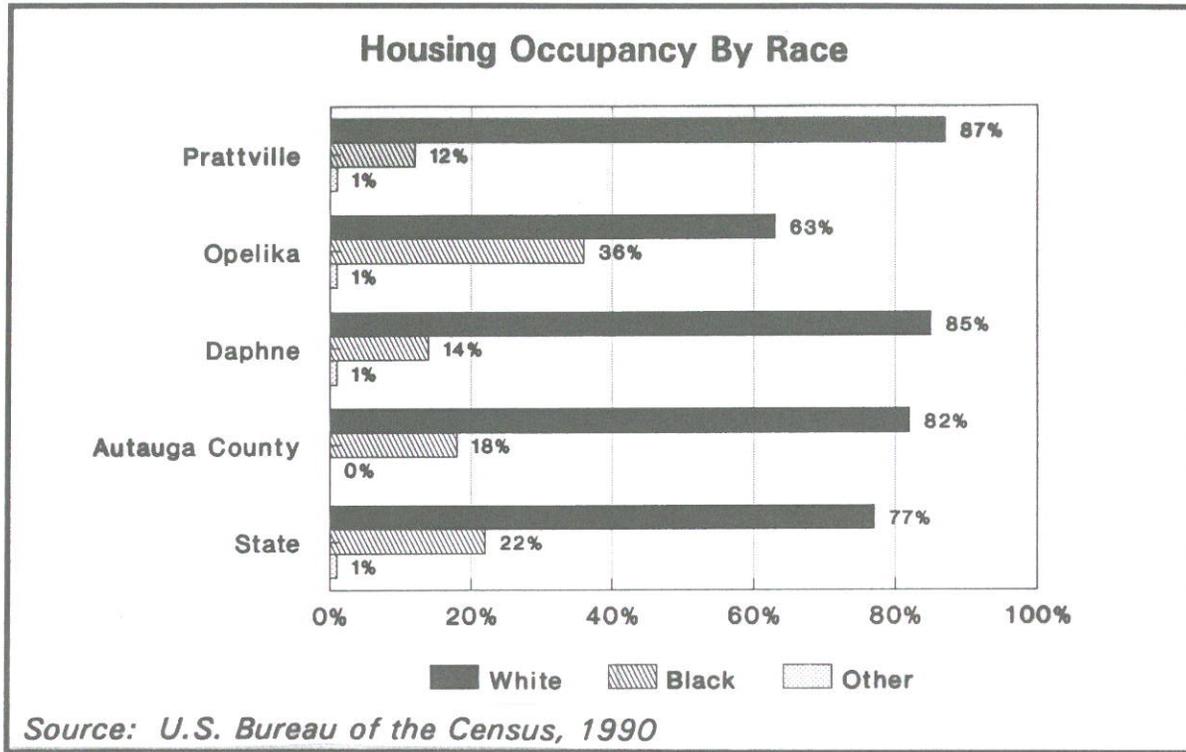
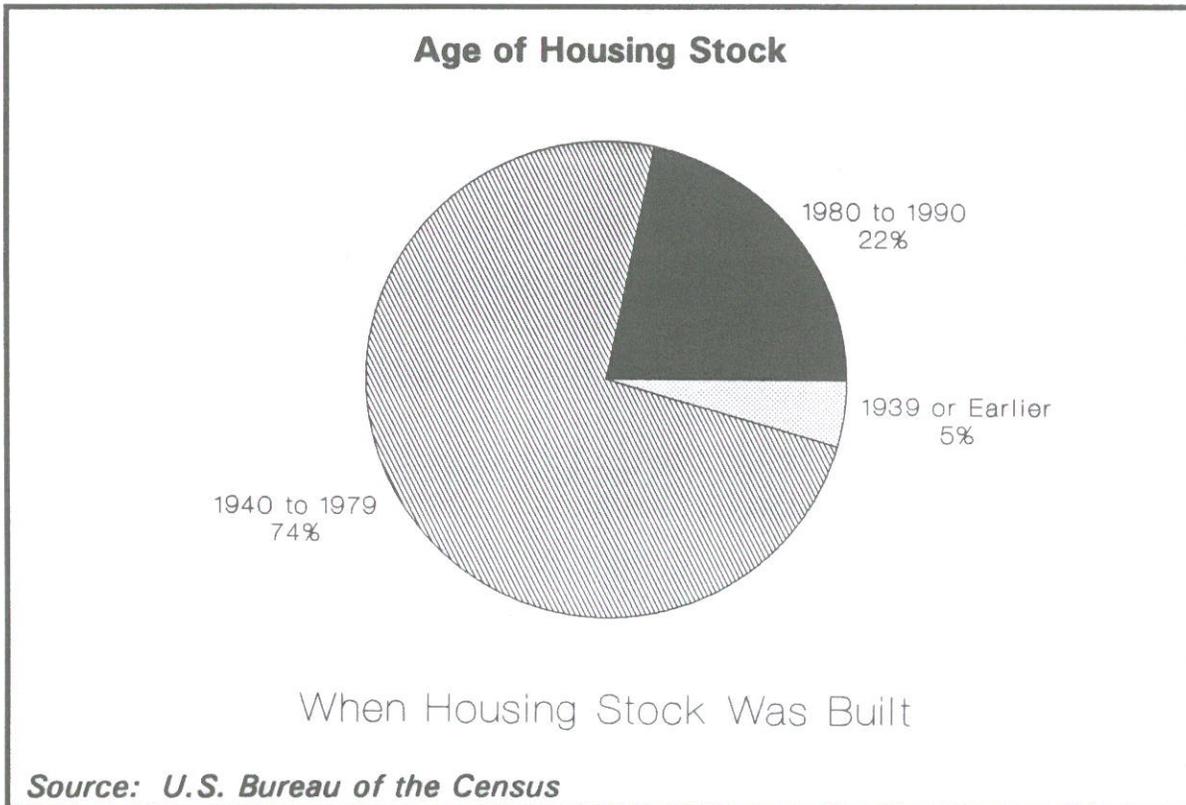


Figure 26



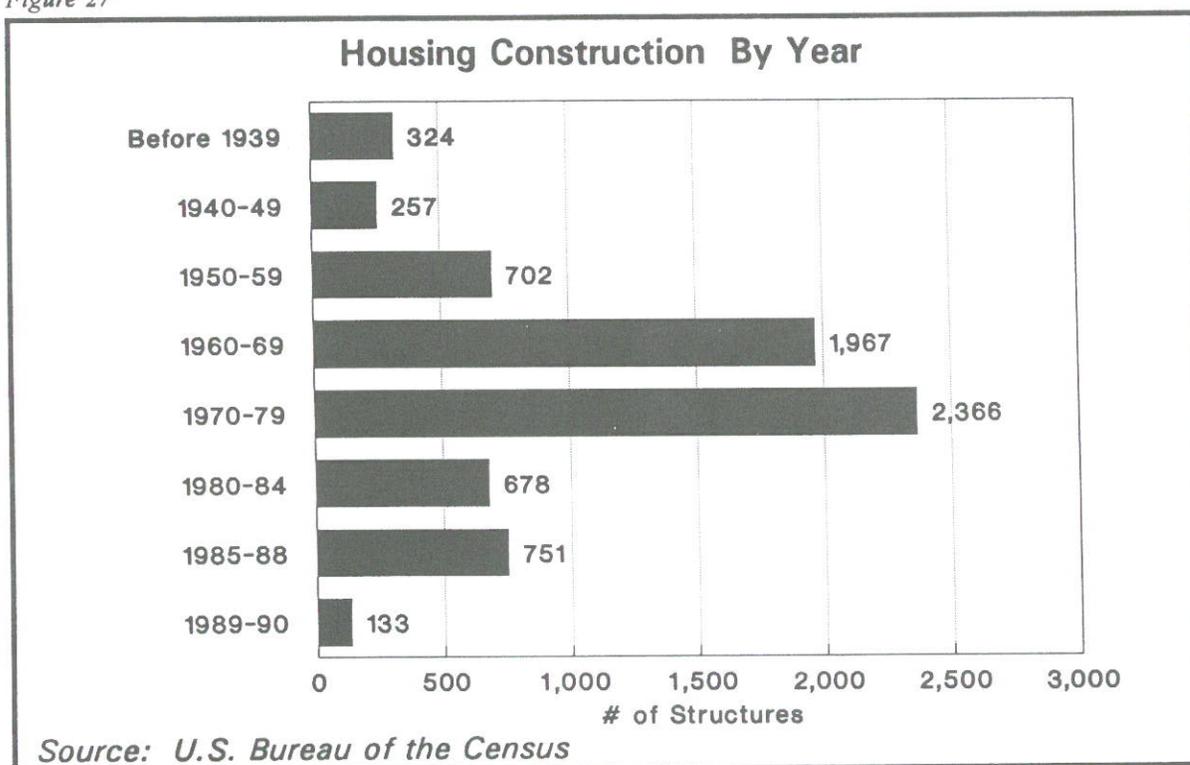
correlation to the overall physical condition of housing units. The majority of Prattville's housing is between 20 and 30 years old, being built between 1970 and 1979. Structures will begin showing some deterioration at this age, if not very well-maintained.

According to the U.S. Census, housing conditions (which are based on plumbing facilities) have greatly improved over the last 30 years, with most of the improvements occurring between 1960 and 1970. In 1960, 38 percent of Prattville's housing stock was considered substandard. That number dropped to 9 percent in 1970, and has dropped to 1 percent in 1990. The physical condition of the housing stock was determined through a field survey in March of 1994. Based on structural conditions, houses were placed into one of three categories: sound, deteriorated or

dilapidated. The sound category includes units which have been well maintained or rehabilitated. Generally, mobile homes fall into this category unless obvious defects are noted. Deteriorated housing include units with deficiencies that can be economically rectified with proper repair, and are usually economically suitable for rehabilitation. The third category, dilapidated, includes housing units which have several major structural deficiencies and are most likely unsuitable for rehabilitation. These units provide unsatisfactory living conditions and should, theoretically, be removed from the city's housing stock.

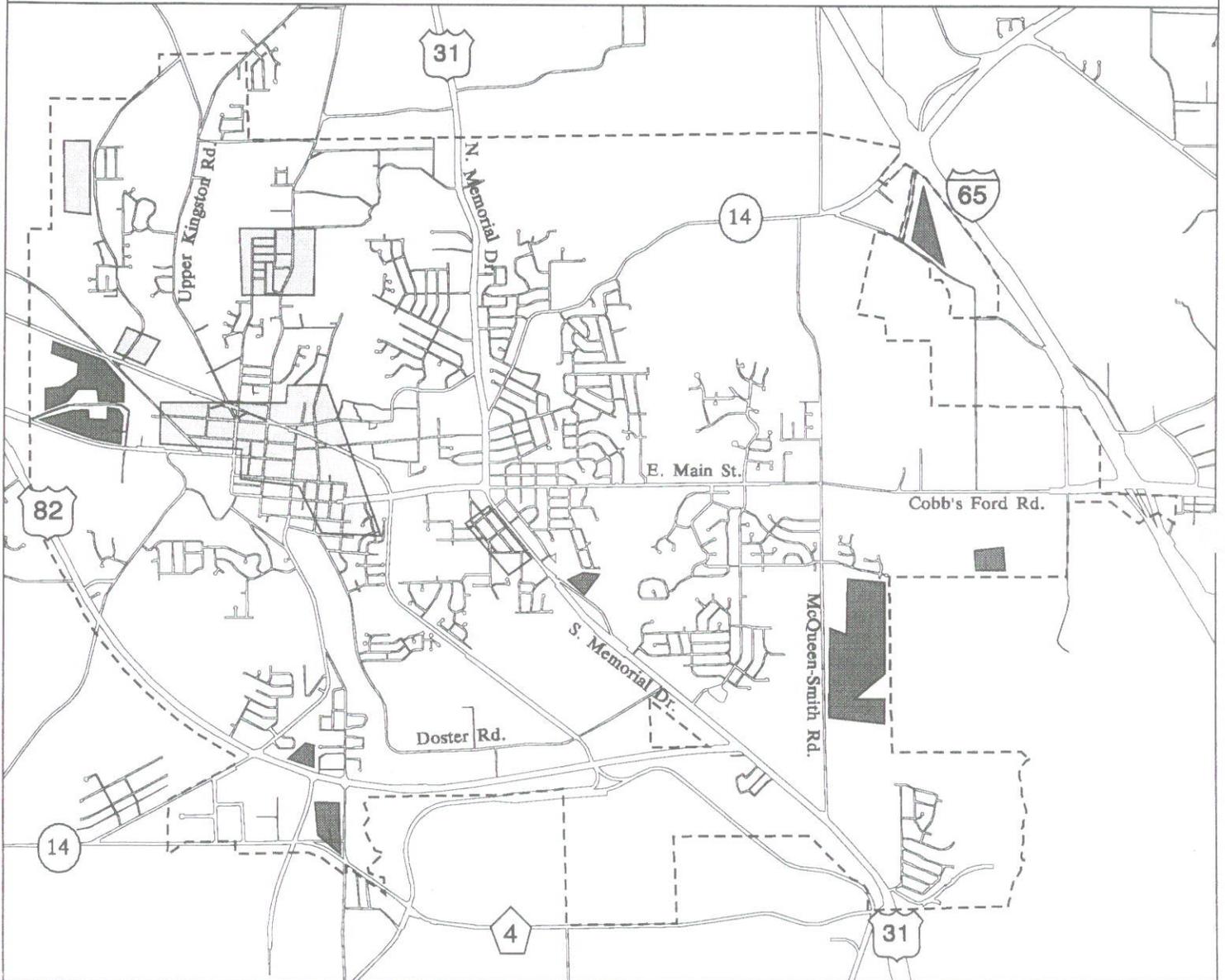
The field survey revealed that of the total housing stock in Prattville, 82 percent was found to be in sound condition. The remaining 18 percent of the housing stock is considered to be substandard, with 10 percent or 728 units in deteriorated

Figure 27



CONCENTRATIONS OF SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

Prattville, Alabama



LEGEND



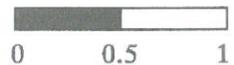
High Concentration of Substandard Housing



Medium Concentration of Substandard Housing



Miles



condition, and 8 percent or 566 units in dilapidated condition. (See Figure 28.) Although substandard housing can be found in almost all sections of the city as seen in Map 16, the majority of the substandard housing stock is located in the older parts of Prattville, primarily west of Memorial Drive. The proportion of housing with substandard plumbing facilities, however, has greatly improved since 1960 when 38 percent of the housing units were considered to have substandard facilities to 1990 when only 1 percent of the units had substandard plumbing facilities.

housing value

Prattville housing has continued to increase in value over the last 30 years. Since 1960 the median housing value has increased almost five times. The 1990 median value of owner occupied housing in Prattville was \$62,000 as compared with a 1990 median value of the State at \$53,000, and \$59,100 in Autauga County. In this same year, the median value of renter occupied housing in Prattville was \$53,600, as compared with \$45,200 in the State, and \$54,000 in Autauga County. The median value of housing in Prattville is relatively

Figure 28

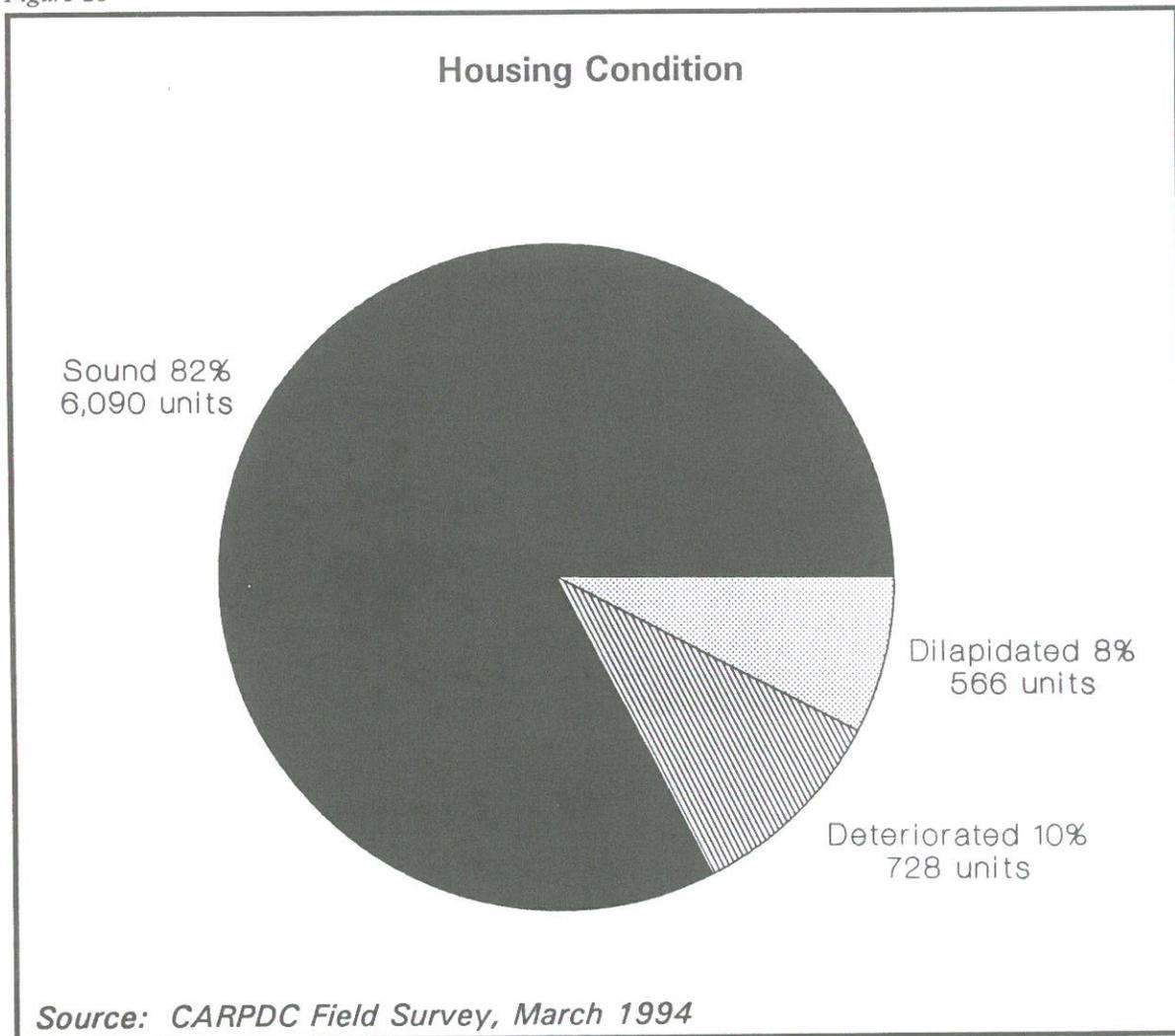


Figure 29

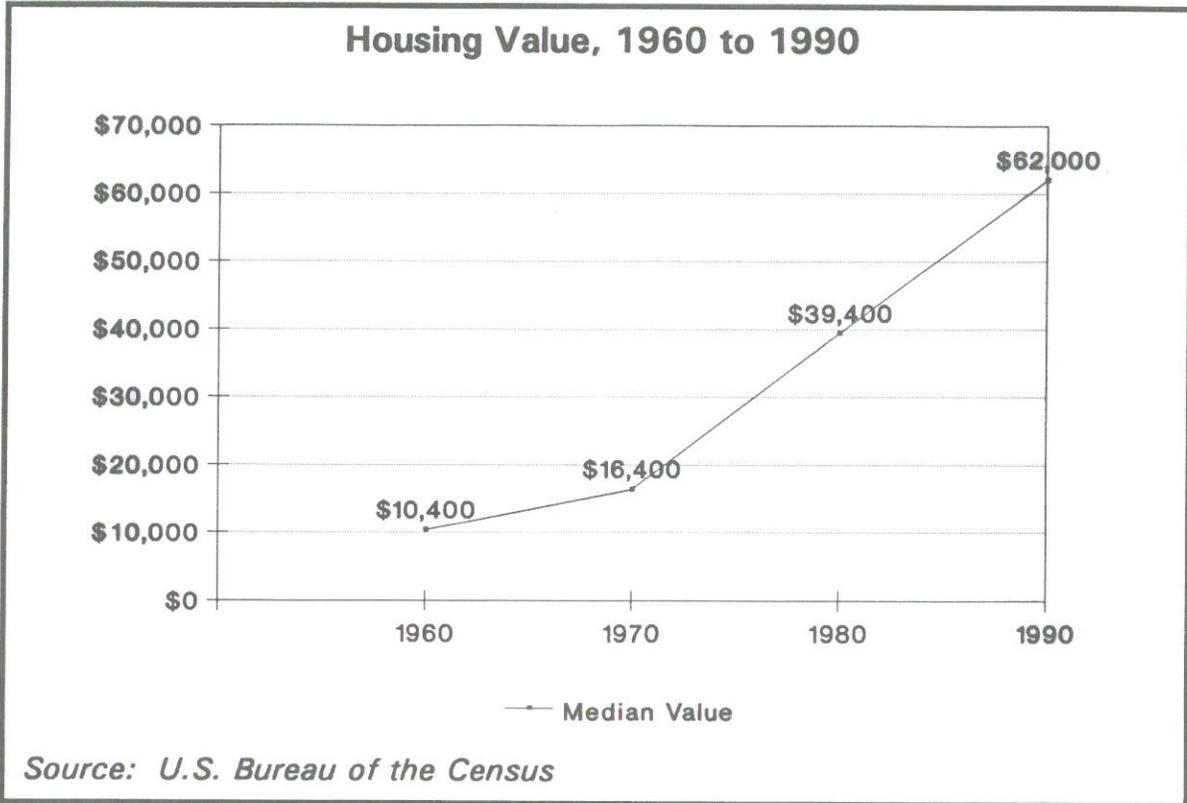
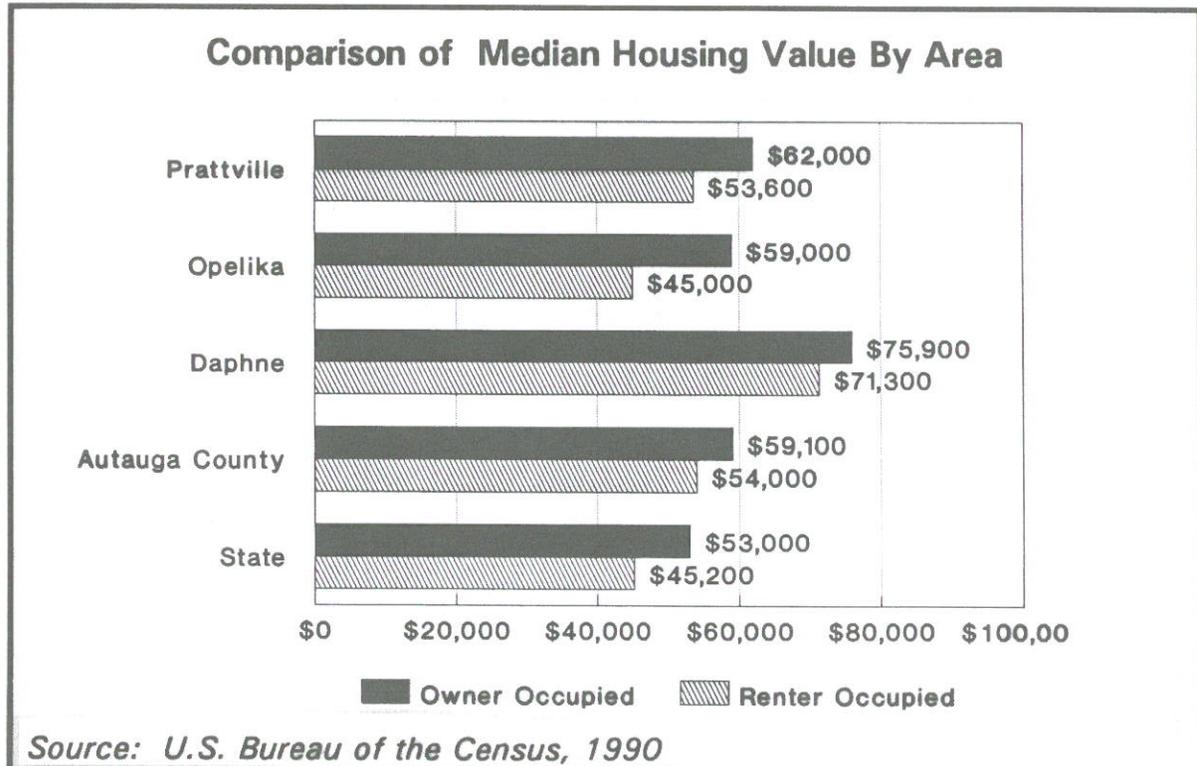


Figure 30



high when compared to other cities and with the State. This fact is somewhat surprising, given the large percentage of substandard units.

housing supply and demand

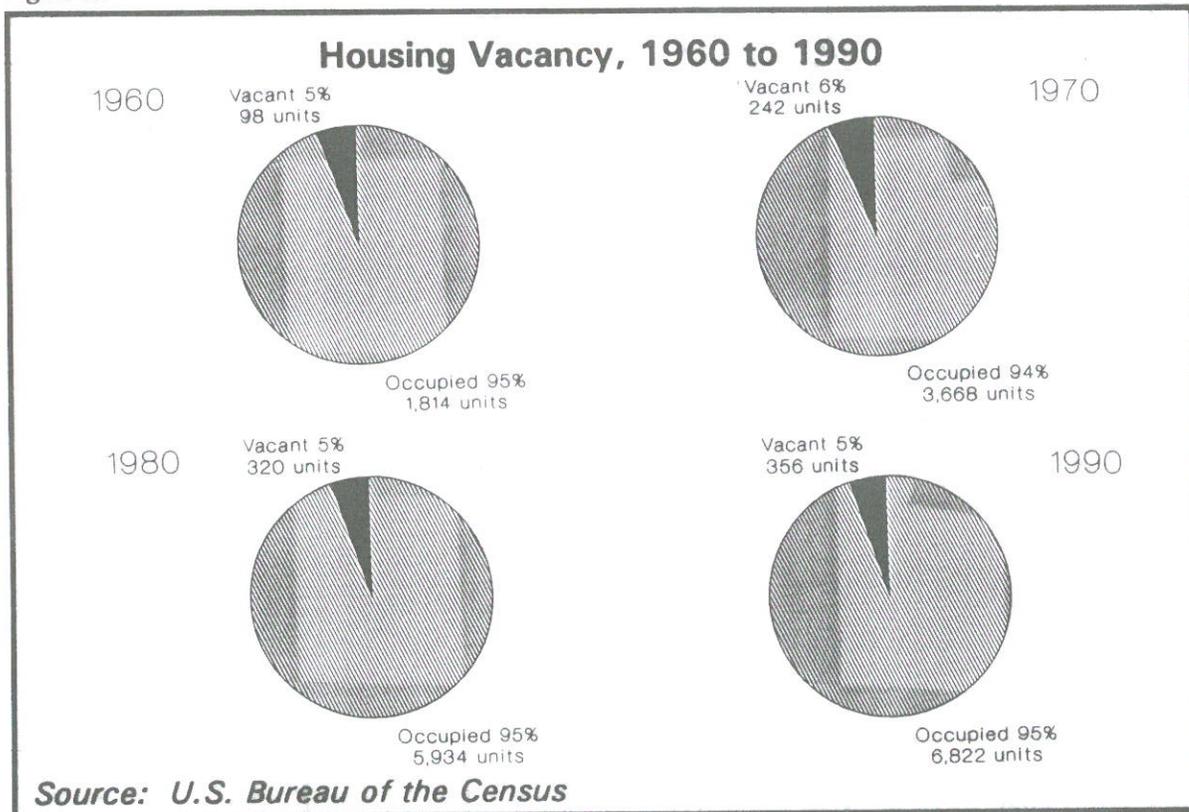
There are several factors which can affect a city's supply of housing, including both local and national trends. As stated, there has been a strong demand for additional housing in Prattville with the continued population growth. Local developers and builders are meeting this demand by increasing the housing supply. Also, as family units become smaller, the need for additional housing has grown. For instance, the population per housing unit in

Prattville has steadily decreased from 3.46 persons per unit in 1960 to 2.59 persons per unit in 1990. The decrease in family size and the increase in the number of single family households has changed what type of house is in demand as well.

housing vacancy

Some housing vacancy is desirable to provide a choice in housing types and styles, and to promote a reasonable market for sales. A vacancy rate that is too low tends to force prices up, while a vacancy rate that is too high brings prices down. A comfortable vacancy rate is between 4 percent and 5 percent. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Prattville has an absolute vacancy rate of 4.9 percent, however, not all of the vacant housing is available for

Figure 31



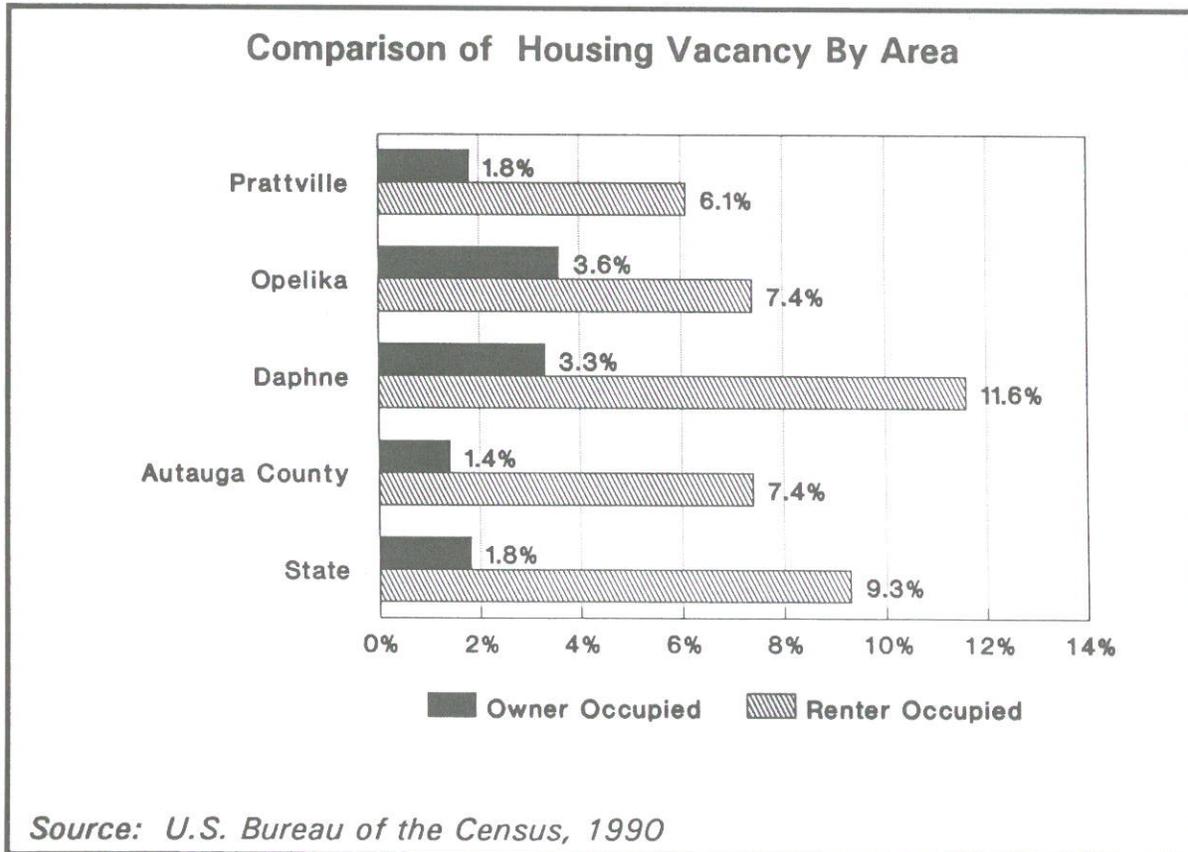
occupancy. As seen in Figure 31, Prattville's overall vacancy rate has remained stable, ranging between 4.9 percent and 6.2 percent, since 1960 even with the sharp increase in the number of housing units over this time period. Although the overall vacancy rate is within a comfortable range, in 1990 the amount of vacant housing which was actually available for use was much lower at 2.7 percent.

Rental vacancy is much higher, at 6.1 percent, than homeowner vacancy at 1.8 percent. While Prattville's owner-occupied vacancy rate is the same as the State, the rental vacancy rate is considerably lower than the statewide 9.3 percent. When compared to Opelika and Daphne, Prattville has a lower vacancy rate in both the owner and rental categories.

public and assisted housing

The Prattville Housing Authority operates three sites: Pratt Court, located at Doster Road and Water Street; Highland Court, located off North Chestnut Street; and, Malone Court, located on U.S. Highway 82. Combined, the three complexes provide 104 housing units to low and moderate income persons. The Prattville Housing Authority sites are the only public housing available in Autauga County. The Authority, which was created in 1961, serves only the City of Prattville. According to the Autauga County Housing Opportunity Study which was produced in 1993, the available public housing resources are not sufficient to meet the needs of

Figure 32



Prattville residents. At that time there were 187 families on a waiting list, with a waiting period of 12 to 24 months.

In addition to the public housing units, there are four private apartment complexes that are either rented to low income persons or, have some income limitations and rent caps to provide housing opportunities to low and moderate income persons.

building permits

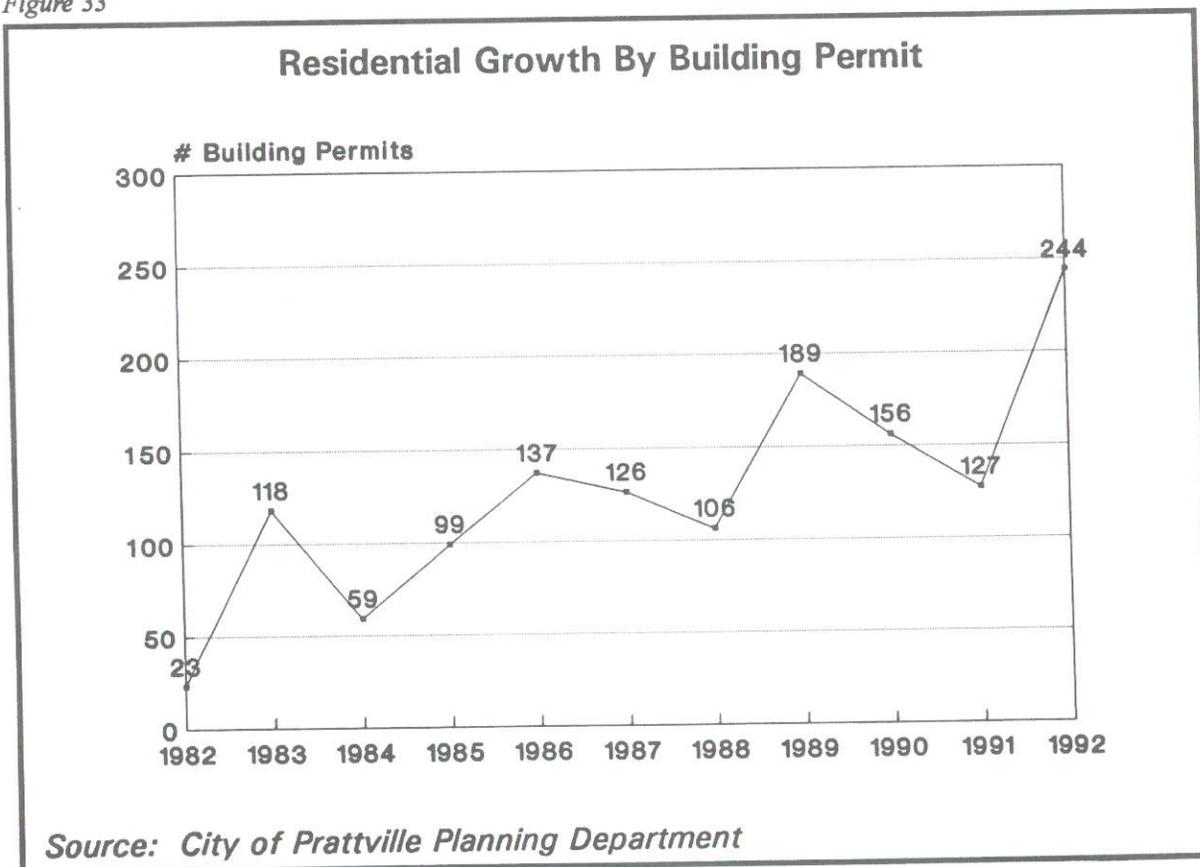
Figure 33 shows the trend of Prattville's residential growth by the number of building permits issued by the City. Prattville's total housing units in 1990 represents a 13 percent increase from 1980 and a 54 percent increase from 1970.

According to residential building permits provided by the Prattville Planning Department, residential growth in Prattville has increased since 1982. The City of Prattville has experienced three peak growth periods: in 1983 with an 81 percent increase, in 1989 with a 44 percent increase, and in 1992 with a 48 percent increase.

projected housing demand

Using simplistic, straight-line projection methodology, it is possible to obtain a rough estimate of the number of housing units that will be needed to meet housing demand through 2010. The projected housing demand, shown in Figure 34, uses the CARPDC population

Figure 33

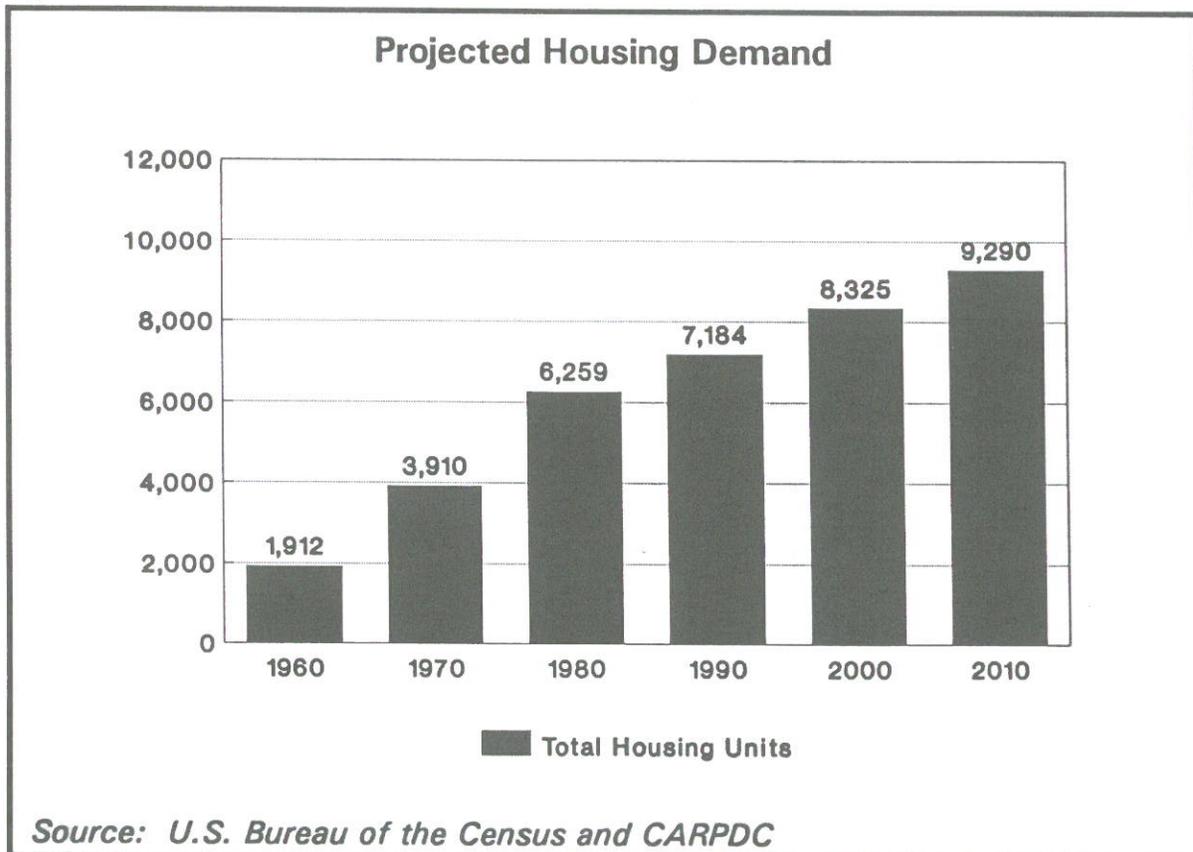


projections that were presented earlier in this plan, along with a projection of the decreasing population per unit to arrive at the projected housing demand. These projections show that Prattville will need an additional 1,141 housing units by 2000 and another 965 units by 2010. Meeting this demand will require the construction of approximately 105 housing units per year from 1990 to 2010. The City of Prattville has not issued less than 100 residential building permits per year since 1985; therefore, meeting this projection demand appears very feasible in this simplistic format.

Another indicator of housing demand is the percentage of households that are spending more than 25 percent of their annual income on housing. According to

the 1990 U.S. Census, approximately 22 percent of owner occupied households and 45 percent of renter occupied households at all income levels spend more than 25 percent of their annual income on housing. These high percentages of the population spending a major portion of their income on housing indicates a high need for additional housing units. It must also be recognized, however, that the need for moderate income housing is greater than that of high income housing. Again, the 1990 U.S. Census reports that for households with annual income levels less than \$20,000 the median percentage spent on housing is 26.6 percent for owner occupied households and 40 percent for renter occupied housing. In comparison, at income levels between \$20,000 and \$34,999, the median

Figure 34



percentage spent on housing is 19.3 percent for owner occupied and 20.2 percent for renter occupied housing.

As the Prattville population growth begins to stabilize, the demand for additional housing may not be as sharp as predicted. Rising land costs and more stringent development controls may also play a part in tempering the demand for new housing to some degree.

issues and conclusions

During the preparation of this housing element, many issues were identified by the Housing Committee as items to be addressed. The identified issues were compared with issues which were identified in earlier Prattville and Autauga County plans from 1972, 1980 and 1993. This comparison is shown in Figure 35. Several common themes existed over the years, such as insufficient low and moderate income housing resources, poor housing maintenance, lack of sound planning and development controls, and a lack of home ownership education and information. Major housing issues with which Prattville is now faced include the following:

- condition of existing housing stock,
- housing occupancy,
- meeting housing demand,
- conservation of neighborhood character, and
- education about home ownership.

Public sewer and water is not provided to all parts of Prattville, lending to some potentially unsanitary housing conditions. Approximately 44 housing units, according to the 1990 Census, use

some method other than public sewer or septic tank for sewer purposes and approximately 11 households use a method other than public water, such as a drilled well or a dug well, for water resources. This lack of infrastructure contributes to substandard housing conditions. Most of the substandard housing, however, can be attributed to either lack of maintenance or age of the housing units.

In Prattville, heavy concentrations of substandard housing are found in the downtown area, along Chestnut Street, along Allenville and Durden Roads, and in the Spring Hill area. All of these areas are located in the western and older portion of the city. Moderate concentrations of substandard housing are found in the neighborhoods in the Prattmont area, along North Memorial Drive and in the Scenic Hills subdivision. There is a correlation between the age of the housing units and the amount of substandard housing which exists in the areas with both heavy and moderate concentrations of substandard housing. Poor housing conditions can affect an entire area, not just isolated housing units, making improvement a community issue. It will take group efforts, along with individual home repairs, to restore some neighborhoods. It is possible, however, through neighborhood groups to make such improvements.

With the growth that Prattville is experiencing, it would be very unfortunate to lose established and stable neighborhoods through deterioration. If improved, these neighborhoods could help provide additional housing resources as an alternative to new housing. As stated earlier, Prattville's vacancy rate is slightly

Figure 35

Comparison of Area Housing Issues: 1972, 1980, 1993 and 1995				
Issue	1972	1980	1993	1995
Low Income Levels/High Housing Costs/ Lack of Financing	X	X	X	X
Poor Job Training and Employment Opportunities	X			
Scarcity of Detailed and Current Housing Market Data	X			X
Fragmented and Complex Housing Production System	X	X	X	
General Apathy/Lack of Commitment to Progressive Housing and Community Development	X	X		
Lack of Sound Planning and Development Controls	X	X	X	X
Lack of Public Housing	X	X	X	X
Few Opportunities for Low and Moderate Income Persons			X	X
Lack of Housing Maintenance and/or Rehabilitation Assistance		X	X	X
Unavailability of Lots and Construction Skills	X			
Need for Rental Housing		X		X
Need for Single Family Housing		X		
Lack of Home Ownership Education			X	X
Poor Distribution of Housing Information and Marketing Practices	X		X	X
Inadequate Infrastructure			X	
Over-crowding				X

SOURCES:
 Recommended Regional Housing Program, 1972
 Housing Opportunity Plan, 1980
 Autauga County Housing Opportunity Plan, 1993
 Prattville Comprehensive Plan, 1995

low to encourage a well-rounded market. Buying a new house is not a viable option for everyone, therefore, new construction cannot be the only answer to increasing the housing stock.

Meeting housing demand also involves supplying appropriate types of housing. Even though the rental vacancy rate is considerably higher than the home owner vacancy rate, there is a stated need for rental housing in Prattville. Part of the high rental vacancy may be due to rental property that is not suitable for living and to unaffordable rental prices. Prattville has very little low to moderate income housing, as well as very little high density housing.

Prattville's current zoning map is not conducive to the development of high density housing in areas which would best be able to handle the increased traffic. A hierarchy of residential land uses is important to discourage high volume traffic in low density neighborhoods and to preserve neighborhood character and safety. Even with the tremendous growth that Prattville has experienced, the city has maintained its "small-town, home-like" atmosphere. One reason for this is the established neighborhoods which should be well protected. The neighborhood atmosphere is also important to the attraction of new residents.

Some of the recent commercial

growth has begun to erode residential areas, as small offices and retail commercial establishments take over older homes for business purposes. In an effort to encourage commercial growth, the City of Prattville has allowed the cohesiveness of some neighborhoods to become endangered. As commercial uses enter residential areas, remaining residents may begin selling their property, often to additional commercial establishments. When this occurs in a neighborhood or even along one street, it becomes increasingly difficult to sell property for residential use at its previous value. The result is vacant and deteriorating housing units surrounding semi-commercial areas that do not have adequate infrastructure and circulation to support commercial development.

The idea of buying a house is often confusing and frightening, especially to the first-time home buyer. These emotions are sometimes deterrents from home ownership. A solution to this problem is education about home ownership responsibilities and the buying process. This education process will help encourage home ownership, which helps encourage resident stability and better maintenance of housing units. Several entities within Prattville provide educational material and workshops, however, there is no central resource to find out about these programs.

goals and objectives

After defining the issues, it was possible to establish goals and objectives to direct the City's plans for housing. The last part of this section provides specific recommendations to help the City of Prattville attain its goals and fulfill its purpose and vision statements.

goal

Provide Prattville residents with adequate and appropriate housing opportunities to insure that current housing demand is met at all income levels and to encourage quality residential growth.

objectives

Maintain and improve the unique assets and opportunities which make Prattville a desirable place to live and work.

Preserve the image and character of Prattville through neighborhood conservation and the elimination of substandard housing.

Provide additional housing for low and moderate income households by increasing rental housing opportunities.

Provide housing financing education and information through a central source.

Utilize commercial and residential growth in conjunction with one another to establish an atmosphere of cohesive and controlled growth patterns.

recommendations

Prattville should work to maintain the neighborhoods which gave the city its image/appearance and character. One way to do this is to make efforts to develop vacant lots within established neighborhoods. This is also a means to increase low to moderate housing resources.

The majority of the structurally substandard housing is due to lack of maintenance and can be remedied with minor repairs. Most of these households are not eligible for any type of housing rehabilitation assistance. Therefore it is up to the private sector to encourage housing maintenance through neighborhood projects and programs.

Enforce Prattville's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to protect and preserve established neighborhoods.

Absentee ownership should be discouraged whenever possible, so that the potential for property decline is not as prevalent.

Additional housing opportunities should be provided for low and moderate income households. Rental housing opportunities should be increased.

The high percentages of income spent on housing reflect a high need for additional housing units, particularly affordable housing units for households with income levels less than \$20,000.

As opportunities arise, existing older housing units should be converted to rental units, so that affordable rental opportunities

are available, and rental housing is not necessarily congregated in one area. The spread out characteristic of rental properties may help deter blight and crime.

Much of the residential growth has been geared towards the moderate to high income households of commuter employees from Montgomery or other areas. While this is an asset and encourages growth within the city, housing resources are not being maintained for the moderate to low income households of Prattville. Therefore, the present trend for moderately high income housing should not be deterred, however, efforts should be made to accommodate lower income households as well.

Provisions should be made to encourage controlled development of mobile home parks and manufactured housing. Design requirements should be established for mobile home parks, as well as for maintenance and upkeep requirements.

Zoning districts for mobile home parks should be located in areas with sewer service, or at the least, where sewer service is easily accessible.

A working partnership with Habitat for Humanity should be formed to encourage the development of low income housing.

The possibility of an additional housing authority development should be considered as a means to relieve the existing housing authority resources and accommodate some of the present waiting list.

Establish a Prattville Housing Committee to bring all housing information to a central source so that the information may be disseminated as a collective resource.

Develop housing information packages that can be distributed from a number of location/information points. These packages should contain a list of available contacts for various housing opportunities.

Initiate housing education programs in local schools so that Prattville children are aware of both housing opportunities and housing responsibilities upon graduation.

Combine housing educational programs with economic development programs in vocational education curriculums.

Work with local resources like realtors and mortgage companies to develop seminar programs to inform home buyers of opportunities and responsibilities.

Utilize commercial and residential growth in conjunction with one another to establish an atmosphere of cohesive and controlled growth patterns.

Encourage planned residential growth to the north of Prattville along with a commercial node between Prattville and Interstate 65 at Pine Level.

Develop moderate to high end residential uses west of Prattville to encourage vehicular circulation through the downtown area and not further increase traffic congestion on Cobbs Ford Road.

Encourage economic growth through the provision of housing opportunities which are attractive and affordable.

Maintain and improve the unique assets and opportunities which make Prattville a desirable place to live and work.

The City of Prattville should continue its efforts to provide infrastructural services to all residents through the extension of water and sewer lines, and utility upgrades as necessary.

Encourage development of recreational amenities to attract residential growth.

Maintain the downtown commercial area without hurting the growth potential in other parts of Prattville.

Maintain Prattville's industrial heritage as a means for encouraging future growth, both economic and residential.

Continue to improve Prattville's educational system as a primary means to attract new residential growth.