

Appendix A: What We Heard Report

This appendix includes a summary of the feedback from all engagement activities conducted while preparing the Othello Housing Action Plan. All draft and final documents were published on the project website at <https://www.othellowa.gov/HousingActionPlan>.

Council and Planning Commission

City Council and the Planning Commission were engaged throughout the project, including:

- **October 26, 2020:** An early briefing with the Planning Commission and City Council to share the grant agreement scope and preliminary housing needs assessment and housing policy framework.
- **May 10, 2021:** The draft Housing Action Plan was introduced to City Council.
- **May 17, 2021:** The draft Housing Action Plan was introduced to Planning Commission.
- **May 24, 2021:** A briefing at a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and City Council was conducted to share the current draft policies and solicit feedback on the materials.
- **June 21, 2021:** The final draft of the Housing Action Plan was presented to the Planning Commission for review and approval.
- **June 28, 2021:** The final draft of the Housing Action Plan was presented to City Council for review and approval.

About the Project Flyer: October 2020

An “About the Project” flyer in English and Spanish was mailed with October 2020 utility bills. The flyer included information about the project, a high-level project timeline, a link to participate in the online survey, and staff contact information. Exhibit 7 shows the flyer.

Exhibit 1. Project Flyer in English and Spanish

City of Othello
HOUSING ACTION PLAN

Othello is one of the fastest growing communities in the area, but there is a shortage of available and affordable housing. Rental vacancy rates are very low, sale prices have risen dramatically over the past two decades, and existing units are overcrowded. The community requires innovative strategies and strong public will to create enough housing options to meet the community need. Existing policy tools to encourage building and maintaining housing are no longer enough, and without an active response, the housing affordability crisis will increasingly burden our residents.

The City of Othello received a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce to create a Housing Action Plan. The plan will identify strategies, actions, and policy tools to generate additional housing, and will focus on four important questions:

- ▶ How much additional housing will be necessary to meet the diverse needs of Othello's current and future residents?
- ▶ How effective are the City's current policies at ensuring adequate housing options?
- ▶ How can the City, residents, and businesses work together to improve Othello's housing options?
- ▶ What are Othello residents' preferred strategies for increasing affordable housing?

Learn more and get involved!
www.othellowa.gov/HousingActionPlan
A survey and the Draft Existing Conditions and Needs Analysis will be posted online mid-October.

Planning Process & Timeline
The project started in mid-2020 and will continue through June of 2021.

- Fall 2020**
Precise Existing Conditions and Needs Analysis
Online Survey
- Winter 2020/2021**
Gather public input and prepare Draft Housing Action Plan
Targeted Outreach and Public Workshop
- Spring 2021**
City and community review
- Early Summer 2021**
Review and adopt Final Housing Action Plan by June 15, 2021

ANNE HENNING
City of Othello Community Development Director
✉ ahenning@othellowa.gov
☎ (509) 331-2710

← **Questions or comments?**

Ciudad de Othello
Plan de Acción de Vivienda

Othello es una de las comunidades de más rápido crecimiento en el área, pero hay falta de viviendas accesibles y disponibles. Viviendas de renta son muy bajas, los precios de venta de casas han aumentado drásticamente en los últimos dos decadas y las unidades existentes están supercongadas. La comunidad requiere estrategias innovadoras y una fuerte voluntad pública para crear suficientes opciones de vivienda para satisfacer las necesidades de la comunidad. Las herramientas de políticas existentes para fomentar la construcción y el mantenimiento de viviendas ya no son suficientes y, sin una respuesta activa, la crisis de viviendas accesibles de la vivienda agobiada cada vez más a nuestros residentes.

La Ciudad de Othello recibió una subvención del Departamento de Comercio del Estado de Washington para crear un Plan de Acción de Vivienda. El plan identificará estrategias, acciones y herramientas de políticas para generar viviendas adicionales y se centrará en cuatro preguntas importantes:

- ▶ ¿Cuánta vivienda adicional será necesaria para satisfacer las diversas necesidades de los residentes actuales y futuros de Othello?
- ▶ ¿Qué tan efectivos son las políticas actuales de la Ciudad para garantizar opciones de vivienda adecuadas?
- ▶ ¿Cómo puede la Ciudad, los residentes y las empresas trabajar juntos para mejorar las opciones de vivienda de Othello?
- ▶ ¿Cuáles son las estrategias preferidas de los residentes de Othello para aumentar la vivienda asequible?

¡Aprenda más y participe!
www.othellowa.gov/HousingActionPlan
Una encuesta y el Borrador del Análisis de Necesidades y Condiciones Existentes se publicarán en línea a mediados de octubre.

Proceso de Planificación y Cronograma
El proyecto comenzó a mediados de 2020 y continuará hasta Junio de 2021.

- Otoño 2020**
Precisar análisis de necesidades y condiciones existentes
Encuesta en línea
- Invierno 2020/2021**
Recopilar comentarios del público y preparar el Borrador del Plan de Acción de Vivienda
Foro público y de discusión dirigida
- Primavera 2021**
Revisión de la ciudad y la comunidad
- Principios del Verano de 2021**
Revisar y adoptar el Plan de Acción de Vivienda Final antes del 15 de Junio de 2021

ANNE HENNING
Directora de Desarrollo Comunitario de la Ciudad de Othello
✉ ahenning@othellowa.gov
☎ (509) 331-2710

← **¿Preguntas o Comentarios?**

Online Survey: October – November 2020

Overview

The City conducted a survey in Fall 2020 in English and Spanish. The City publicized the link by including it in the “About the Project” flyer mailed to utility billing customers (above) and posting it on the project website. City Council and Planning Commission members also distributed the link to their networks.

Approximately 202 people submitted survey responses, including 14 participants who took the survey in Spanish. Survey respondents had the following characteristics:

- **Nearly three-quarters of respondents both live and work in Othello.** 25 respondents work in Othello but live elsewhere, about one-third (8 respondents) of whom are actively looking for housing in Othello, and over one-half (13 respondents) of whom would consider living in Othello if they could find affordable and adequately-sized housing. See Exhibit 9.
- **Survey respondents are mostly Hispanic/Latino and/or White.** Over half of survey respondents identify as Hispanic or Latino. About 40% of respondents identify as White. See Exhibit 10.

- **Respondents have a balanced range of incomes.** No one income bracket represents more than one-quarter of respondents. See Exhibit 11.
- **The average and median household size of survey respondents is four people.**

All survey participants responded to the same base group of questions about community needs. The survey also provided topic-specific questions to participants who self-identified as:

1. Service providers (35 respondents).
2. Developers and builders (2 respondents).
3. Employers (11 respondents).

Summary of Findings

Respondents' current and desired housing situations

- **Most survey respondents own their homes.** Nearly two-thirds of respondents own a home in Othello, while just over one-quarter of respondents rent a home. See Exhibit 8.
- **Over 70% of respondents currently live in single-family homes.** More respondents live in mobile or manufactured housing (15% of respondents) than apartments (8% of respondents). See Exhibit 12.
- **Single-family housing is the most desirable housing type.** Nearly nine in 10 respondents selected single-family housing as one of their preferred types of living. Townhomes are the next most desired housing type, with 17% of respondents selecting this as a preferred housing type. See Exhibit 13.

Housing challenges faced by respondents

- **Over one-third of those surveyed report that they do not struggle to find affordable housing that meets their needs.** See Exhibit 14. The nearly two-thirds of respondents who struggle with housing face the following challenges:
 - Nearly one-third of respondents struggle to find suitable housing to meet their own needs or their family's needs.
 - About one in five respondents struggle to make the leap from renting to homeownership.
 - About one in five respondents struggles to afford housing.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted housing for nearly one in ten respondents.
- **When asked to identify the most needed housing options in Othello, over half of respondents indicated that Othello needs more apartments and other smaller rental housing.** As the next most frequently identified need, 45% of respondents identified a need for affordable or low-income housing. (See Exhibit 15.) These two needs were also the most identified by employers for their workforce and service providers for their service population. (See Exhibits 20 and 21.)
- **Prospective homebuyers are challenged by a limited number of homes for sale, according to over two-thirds of respondents.** Prospective homeowners also struggle to make a down payment, qualify for a mortgage, and afford mortgage payments. See Exhibit 16.
- **Over half of employers believe that housing availability or affordability affects their ability to recruit or retain workers.** See Exhibit 22.

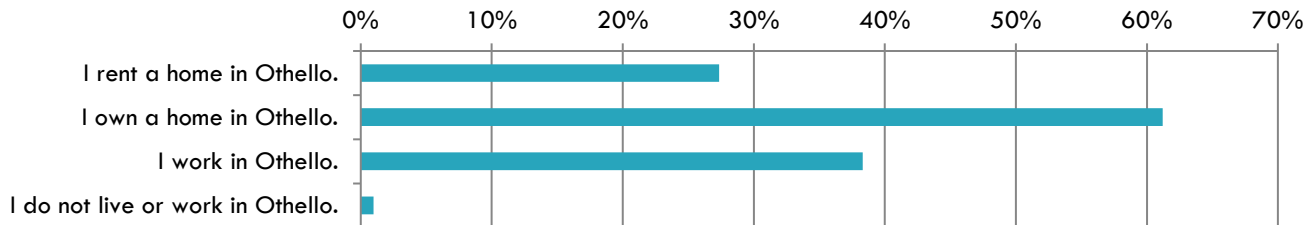
The following sections present detailed survey results. We present unedited, open-ended "other" responses when available only when respondents granted permission for us to publicly share their responses.

Community Needs

Where respondents live and work

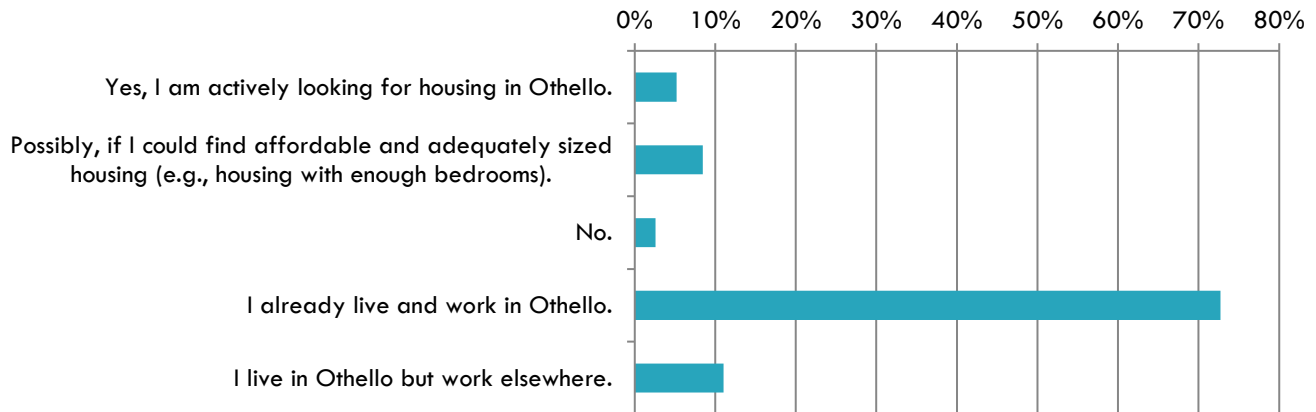
Residents commute an average of 11 miles and a median of 5 miles to work (n = 143).

Exhibit 2. Responses to survey question: “Please select the descriptions below that best describe you (check all that apply).” Total responses = 201.



Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 3. Responses to survey question: “If you work in Othello but live elsewhere, would you consider living in Othello?” Total responses = 154.

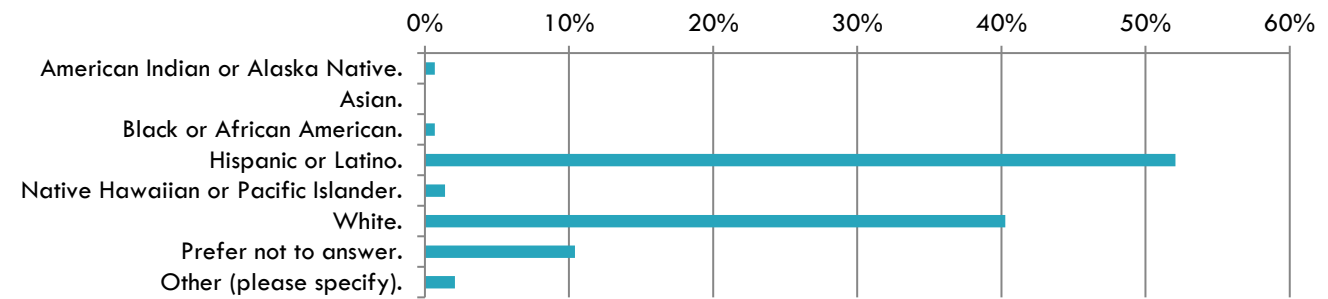


Source: BERK, 2021.

Respondent Demographics

Average and median household size is 4 people (n = 151).

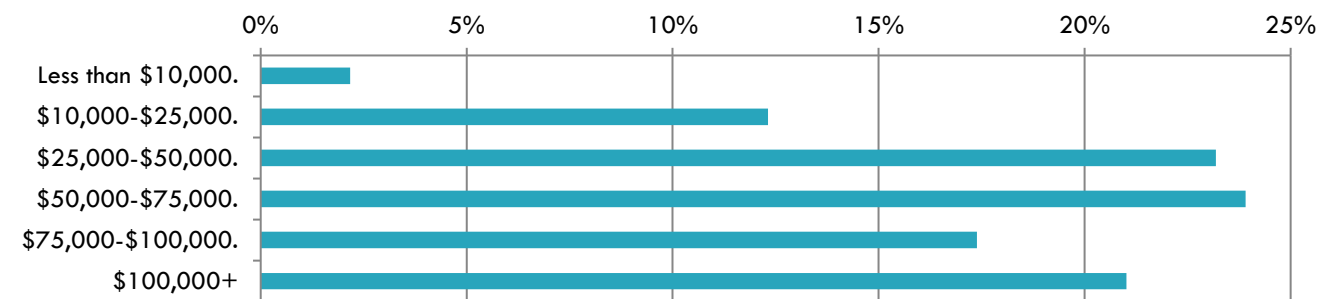
Exhibit 4. Responses to survey question: “What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Optional. Choose all that apply.)” Total responses = 144.



“Other” responses (unedited)
 Doesn't matter. Racists

Source: BERK, 2021.

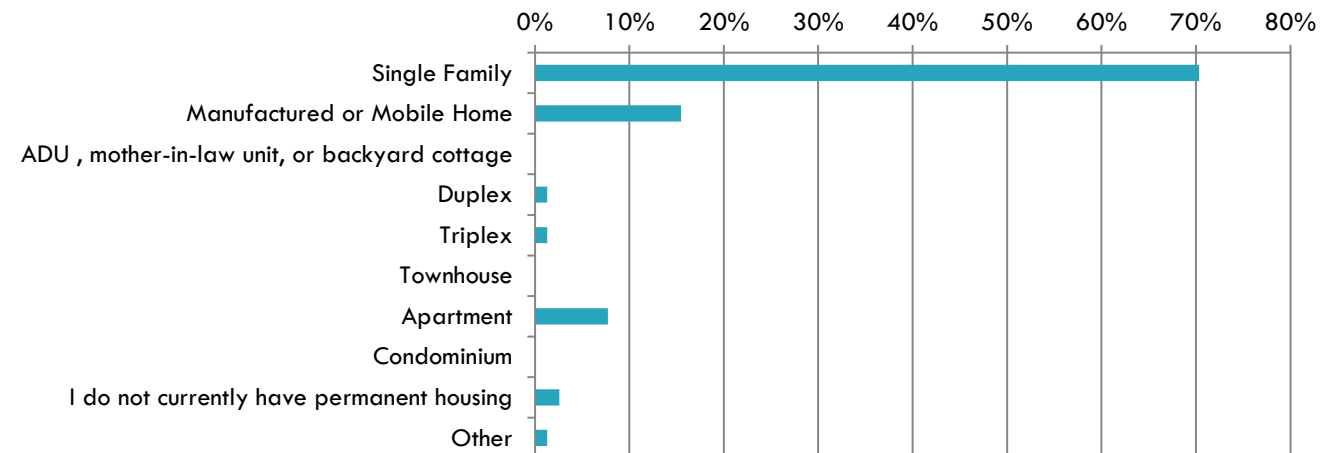
Exhibit 5. Responses to survey question: “What is your annual household income before taxes? (Optional.)” Total responses = 138.



Source: BERK, 2021.

Current and Desired Housing

Exhibit 6. Responses to survey question: “What type of housing do you currently live in?” Total responses = 155.

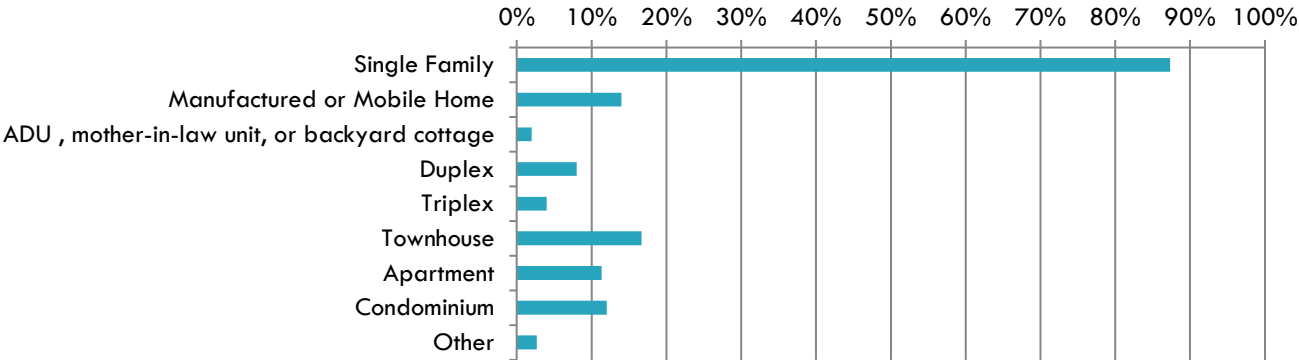


“Other” responses (unedited)

House
Live with parents

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 7. Responses to survey question: “What types of housing would you most like to live in?” Total responses = 150.



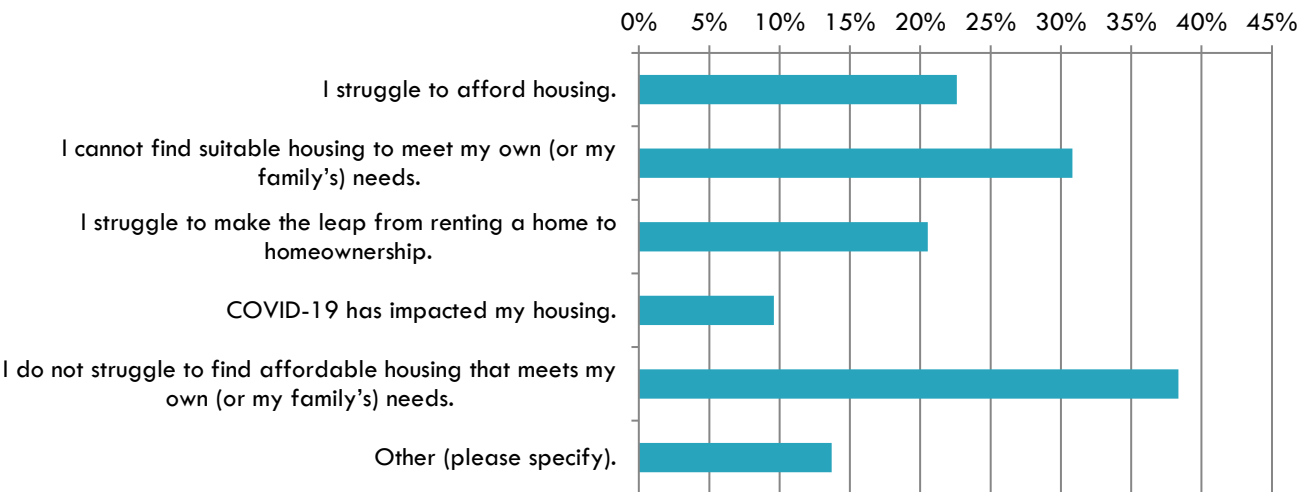
“Other” responses (unedited)

To me I think any should be fine but Othello has nothing
A condo to rent
En una casa 🏠

Source: BERK, 2021.

Housing challenges and needs

Exhibit 8. Responses to survey question: “What challenges, if any, have you faced in finding safe and affordable housing that meets your needs? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 146.



Open-ended responses (unedited)

Rising home cost

Open-ended responses (unedited)

Own my own house

family members trying to find housing in town too expensive from owners or renters

Pet friendly

Before I bought a house there was nothing to rent for yrs, which is why I chose to buy or I'd still be living at home with my parents. All apartments here are low income & if not you have to know someone to even find an apt or the waiting list is so long you still wouldn't have a chance to rent. The costs for apartments & even house is so ridiculous it makes it almost impossible to rent or buy. It's like you have to stay low income to get any type of housing here, not everyone is low income & not everyone can afford a \$1,500 rent if we have a decent job.

Recent Gang activity making it feel unsafe

Need more housing for rent that ISN'T for low-income only

No inventory to upgrade or downsize. We bought our home because it was the ONLY one big enough for us on the market. But it's high priced and we struggle

Not enough housing available to meet demand

We currently own a home in Othello and feel very lucky we found and purchased it when we did. There were at least two other bidders and had to pay above the asking price. Someday we would like to expand and buy property to be more self sufficient but houses and property like that are not available in any reasonable price range, even with both my spouse and I employed.

Houses sell too quick and the ones available are too small and expensive.

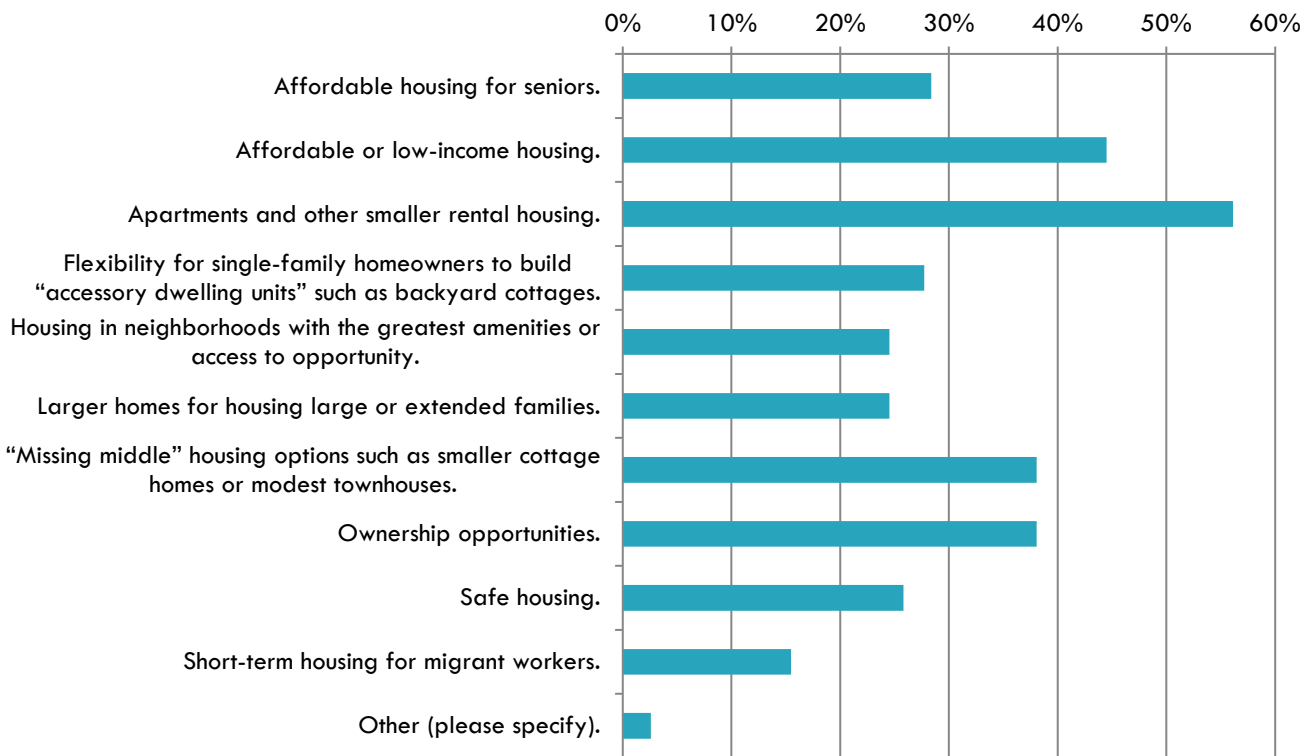
My friend who lives me was unable to find housing in Othello will be moving out of state.

The quality and availability of housing is low, and I live in a new build. It's too small and low quality.

Struggle to find an upgrade from my current house

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 9. Responses to survey question: “What kind of housing options do you think are in greatest need in Othello? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 155.



“Other” responses (unedited)

need a cap for on rent dollars

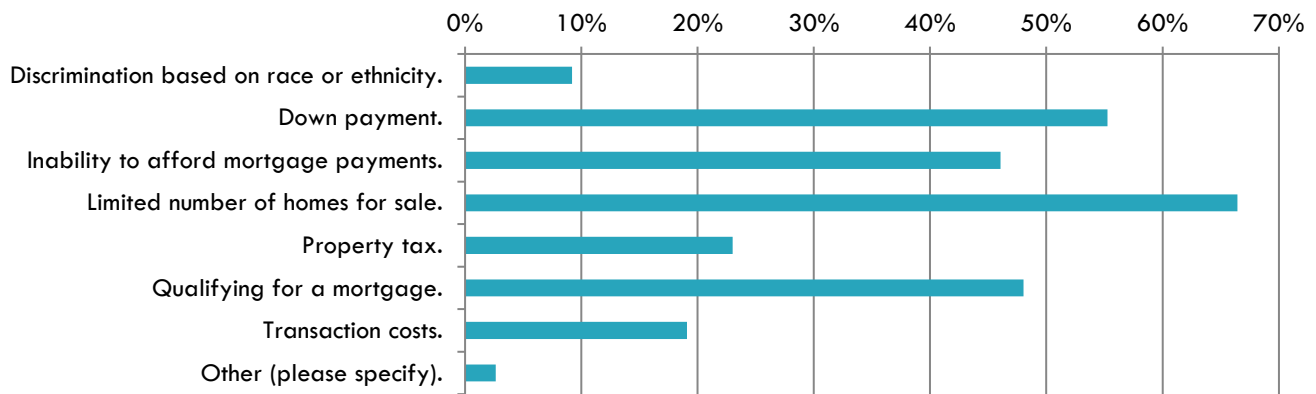
Housing that is affordable for people who are not low income and not rich. Pet friendly housing.

We need more then low income housing here. We need affordable housing for middle class who aren't low income who don't fit into the low income housing & who can't afford \$1,500 rent for renting a 2 or 3 bedroom.

Rural housing closer to fields

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 10. Responses to survey question: “What do you see as significant obstacles prospective homebuyers face in Othello? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 152.



“Other” responses (unedited)

Bad credit or not a good income

There's too many houses here that are way over priced or asking too much. Most people can't afford that. They're building all these expensive houses which only a very small percent can buy. There are way more middle class people who live in othello then the people who are well off. We need to accomadate the middle class more & sell houses that are in range from \$100,000-\$130,000

The space where future development can take place due to encroachment on farmland and crop lands.

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 11. Responses to survey question: “Do you have any additional comments or concerns about housing in Othello?”

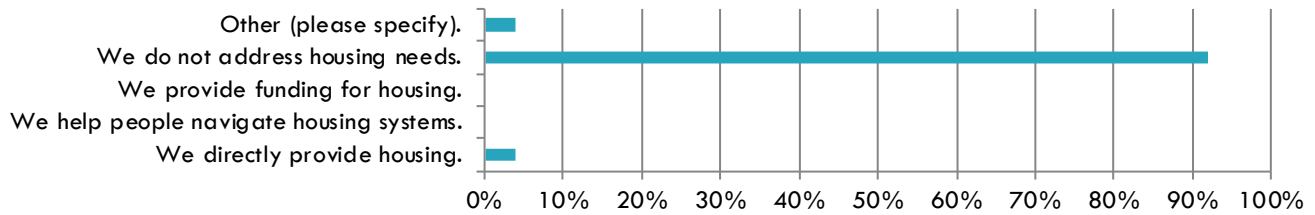
Open-ended responses (unedited)
Not enough homes, single house homes are being over priced at 200K+
people who offer rentals charge way to much need to be a cap on this, Taking advantage of theses renters, Also too many people/families living together just to make ends meet or have somewhere to live. Landlords not keeping up to date with things that need to get fixed because afiad they will be kickec out.
Yes need aparments all the aparments in Othello their all low income I don't think is fair for people when they want rent they don't qualified
We need to accomadate the middle class more, students who are in college, single men or women, etc. These people want a home but don't qualify because the prices are outrages or there simply is nothing here. Not everyone has a family & kids & want a family home & not everyone has kids or are single & are low income. All the housing here is mainly low income but what about everyone else? The housing here is either low income or the rich. If people have a home there's usually 3 families living in it just so they can pay the payment or because they want to move out but can't find anything.
Our migrant workers deserve better housing options that are affordable.
Othello also need fiber or reliable high speed internet
We need apartments that are not low income!!!
It would be nice if the housing market wasn't so inflated.
Allow more housing in rural othello
We need more multifamily apartments in othello. There is simply not enough to meet the demand of the community who struggle to find a place to live. Please consider conctructing more apartments in othello.
We need more opinions for low income housing.
Buying a house is extremely expensive in othello. A home here costs 50k+ more than a home in Moses or tricities.
Yes. The city is 3.98 square miles and surrounded by fields and farmland that is privately owned. I don't know if there is room to grow given that unless it has to be leased between farmers and the city of Othello. There needs to be more apartment complexes built since there is limited housing in the city for those who can't afford housing.
One thing I love about Othello is the nice city planning that has helped stop the rural sprawl. I would like a home and some affordable property in the country but I would like to be thoughtful about how that affects the esthetics and functionality of the land around our beautiful town.
Better options for having 2 homes on parcels of land that are less than 20 acres.
Not enough nice housing that can be afforded on minimum wage. Not everyone want a yard yet the only housing options are houses with yards or low income housing that is sketchy or apartments that are full and/or sketchy.
Less low income/ assisted housing and more regular apartments.
It would be nice to have housing that is not subsidized. Somewhere that everyone pays the same rent. Some nice apartment buildings
We've struggled in the last 5 years to find affordable, and available housing. Othello lacks in housing for people who are NOT low income. No apartments available for them, only private rentals but the private rentals typically cannot be afforded.
My family is an low income basis and I struggle to being able to afford buying a house in Othello because they are way over priced and can't get approved for enough to buy a house. My back up would be to buy a mobile home but their are not a lot of options in Othello we would have to move to other surrounding towns which is a the last thing we want to do because we love living in Othello. I think if the city develop maybe 1 or 2 more mobile home parks that would be awesome and beneficial for migrant families to finally own a home. It would definitely change lifes!
There needs to be more properties available. The best use of space would be townhomes or condos. There is no higher end rentals in town. Let alone low income housing available.
We need to open up ADU's
I believe the City should own a large area where they can receive grants/monies and build townhomes that are affordable.
Si aveces son muy caras las rentas

Source: BERK, 2021.

Service Provider Perspectives

35 respondents identified as service providers.

Exhibit 12. Responses to survey question: “What is your organization’s role in addressing community or housing needs in Othello? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 25.

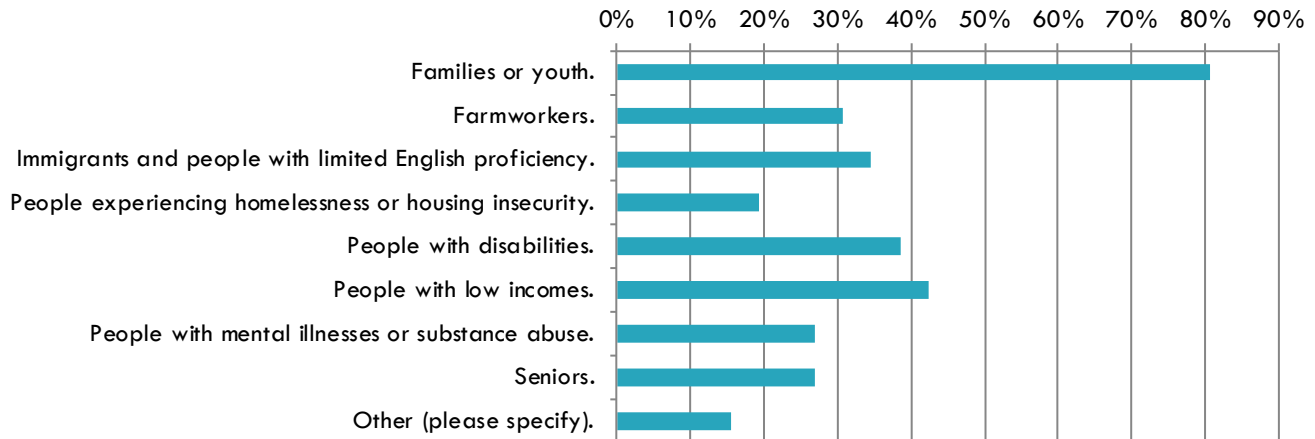


“Other” responses (unedited)

Help with animal protection

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 13. Responses to survey question: “Which population(s) do you serve? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 26.



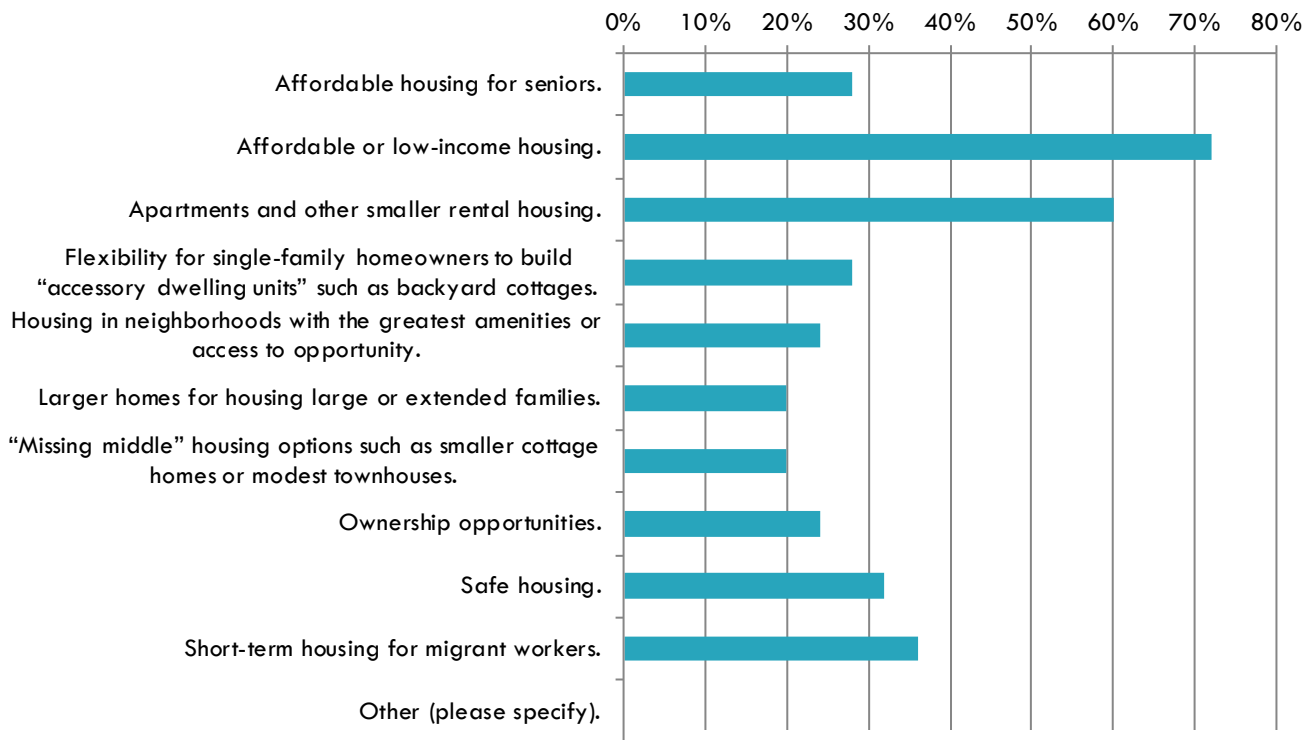
“Other” responses (unedited)

Animal rescue

Everyone

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 14. Responses to survey question: “What kinds of housing needs do you most commonly see among your service population? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 25.



Source: BERK, 2021.

Developer and Builder Perspectives

Two respondents build or develop housing in Othello:

- Both develop market-rate single-family housing, and one also develops ADUs, manufactured housing, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes.
- Neither develops townhomes or low-, mid-, or high-rise multifamily housing.
- Both develop ownership housing, and one develops rental housing.

The two respondents rated possible changes to Othello's policies, codes, regulations, and permitting/review processes for their potential to encourage more housing production or lower development costs. In aggregate, the respondents rated the potential changes as follows:

Highest potential:

- Changes to zoning such as building heights, density limits, or allowable uses.
- Revising development standards such as off-street parking requirements or building setbacks.

Moderate potential:

- Reducing fees.
- Addressing infrastructure gaps or inadequate infrastructure.
- Expediting permit review for projects that provide affordable housing or infill development.

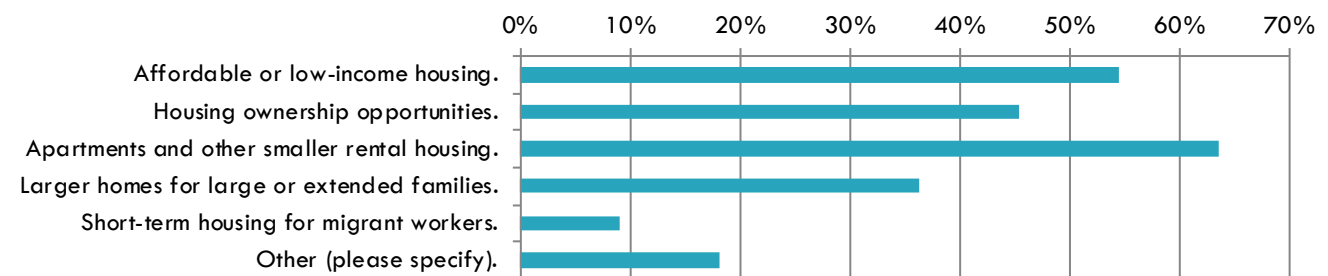
Lowest potential

- Modifying environmental review procedures.
- Providing incentives, such as height or density bonuses for affordable housing.
- Streamlining the permitting or development approval process.

Employer Perspectives

11 respondents own or manage a business in Othello.

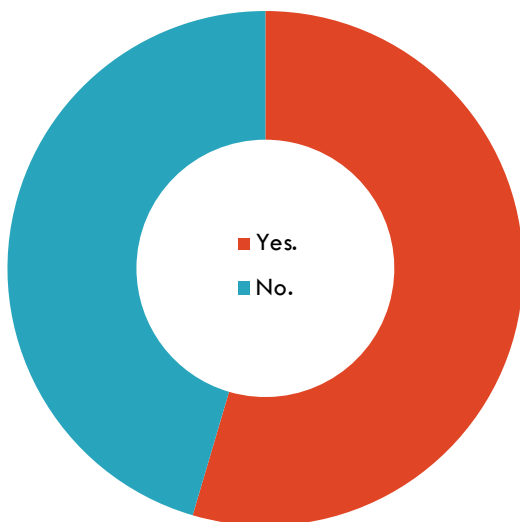
Exhibit 15. Responses to survey question: “What are your workforce’s housing needs? (Check all that apply.)” Total responses = 11.



“Other” responses (unedited)
Not enough homes, people leave to work in Moses lake or Tri cities area

Source: BERK, 2021.

Exhibit 16. Responses to survey question: “Does housing availability or affordability affect your ability to recruit or retain workers?” Total responses = 11.



Source: BERK, 2021.

Stakeholder Meetings

Two stakeholder meetings were coordinated for the review of draft HAP policies on May 10th and 12th. Stakeholder representatives from the community were invited to this meeting, including local developers, realtors, community affordable housing agencies, local business, and community members at large.

A preliminary draft of the document was provided in advance, and a short presentation about the meeting was coordinated to solicit feedback on the policies and strategies included in the HAP. Major feedback included the following:

- **There is a critical overall need for housing.** As a group, there was common agreement that the housing situation in Othello was critical. Rents have been increasing, vacancy rates and available housing are down, and there are clear indications that businesses in the community are looking to expand further. Some potential buyers have been prevented from moving to Othello by the lack of available options.
- **Lack of opportunities to build in the community.** Although there is a significant need, there are few places left to build in the city. Developers in these discussions expressed frustration that existing serviced areas were largely built out, and new areas that could be used for growth have challenges for servicing in the long term. Limitations on the availability of water were highlighted.
- **Need for more diverse and affordable housing types.** Many participants recognized that the community needed a more diverse range of housing types, especially housing that was affordable to a wider range of households. While low vacancies were indicative of challenges in the community overall, this crunch was especially true with more affordable formats of housing. Lot design requirements, especially lot coverage ratio requirements, were often seen as a limiting factor for denser development.
- **Amenities versus denser development.** The participants expressed general support for the development of denser alternatives, including ADUs and homes on smaller lots. One area of concern expressed, however, was with the presence of neighborhood amenities, and that maintaining green space in the community and reducing impervious surfaces shouldn't be lost as a matter of course in trying to densify existing areas. This should be considered hand-in-hand with efforts to changing site design requirements.
- **Affordable housing in the community.** Developing affordable housing in Othello is a significant challenge, in part for the same reasons that market rate development is an issue. Increasing housing costs are straining households, however, and some people are even looking for affordable/subsidized housing options that are not qualified by income for local affordable housing programs.
- **Parking is a complex issue in the city.** Many of the benefits of changing parking requirements were recognized, and some participants pointed to certain areas in and out of the city as examples of how new neighborhoods could be designed to reduce parking while still meeting local needs. However, there was some concern expressed about both on- and off-street parking availability if requirements were changed. The community is very auto-oriented, and houses may include multiple adults that all have cars to get to work. Suggestions that this should be reduced may be faced with significant opposition.