

The questions of land use and housing are among the most intractable and controversial issues in Ventura County. On one hand, regulating and shaping development has been a longstanding goal of all of our local government agencies. On the other hand, an ample stock of available housing for people of all income groups is essential to the county's well being, especially given the fact that we have a diverse economy.

On land use issues, we sought to measure urbanization and density on an acreage basis. We found little change in the consistent patterns that have been occurring in the county over a long period of time.

In examining specific housing indicators, we sought to move beyond raw numbers such as housing cost and number of units added to the housing stock. These statistics are reported in the "snapshot" section in the front of the report, but, in and of themselves, they are not "indicators" of well being. Rather, the indicators we have chosen seek to show the *relationship* between the raw statistics and the population at large. So, instead of choosing raw housing cost as an indicator, we have chosen affordability.

Overall, we find that -- as in so many other areas -- while most people do well in the housing market, there are many pockets of distress.



Richard Slack

ACRES OF URBANIZED LAND

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

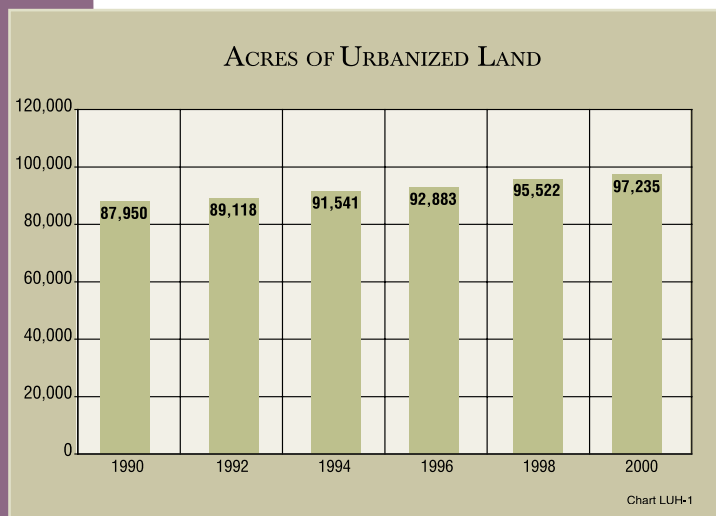
The measure is the amount of land in Ventura County devoted to urban purposes

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

As population and economic activity increase, the need for urbanized land will increase as well. However, as urbanization increases, pressure on farmland and open space increase.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County is urbanizing land at a lower rate than it is adding population. Between 1990 and 2000, the amount of urban land in the county increased from approximately 88,000 acres to approximately 97,000 acres, an increase of 9.5%. By contrast, the population of the county grew by 11.2% during this time.

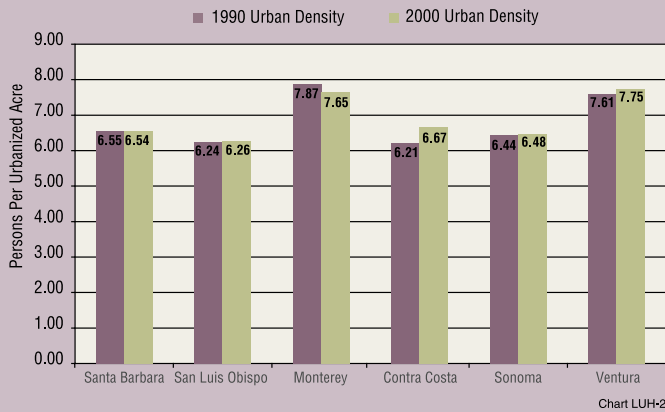


URBAN DENSITY

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of persons living in the county per urbanized acre.

URBAN DENSITIES, SELECTED CALIFORNIA COUNTIES, 1990 AND 2000



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

If we live at a higher persons-per-urbanized-acre density, we will be using land more efficiently. More efficient use of land will decrease urbanization pressure on farmland and open space. It may also open up opportunities for more walking, transit use, and alternative transportation opportunities in urban areas.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County is using urban land efficiently by almost all standards. However, we are not increasing our urban land efficiency very quickly.

With 753,000 persons living on 97,000 acres of urban land in 2000, our urban density was 7.75 persons per urbanized acre. This figure is lower than Los Angeles and Orange Counties; but it is typical of California. However, it is interesting to note that urbanized density in Ventura County increased by less than 2% (from 7.61 to 7.75) between 1990 and 2000.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the percentage of households that can purchase the median-priced home. In a healthy market, at least 50% of households (that is, all households at or above the median household income) should be able to afford the median-priced home.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

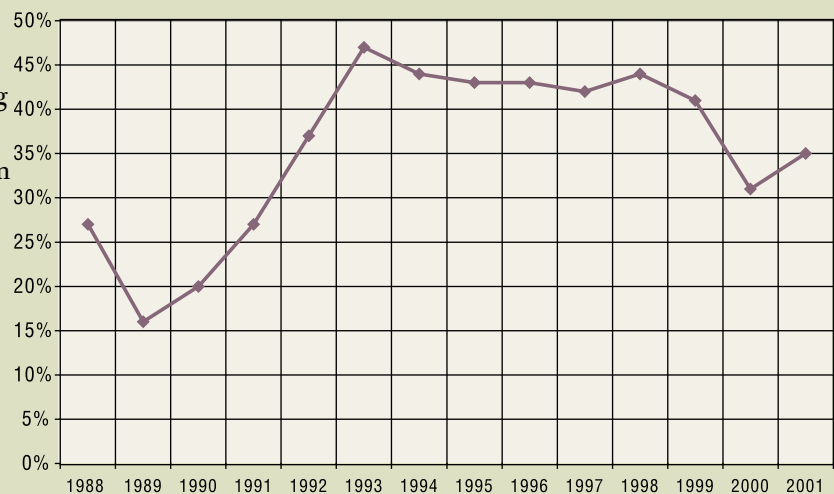
Housing in all parts of coastal California is very expensive by national standards. Yet if housing is not affordable -- for working families, for the elderly, or for other sub-markets -- then it puts a financial strain on the whole region, often leading to overcrowding or increased commuting or both.

We believe that the housing affordability index is the best measurement of the relationship between the supply and demand of housing. The price of housing in and of itself is not meaningful. More important is the price of housing units in relation to the incomes of the county's residents. By focusing specifically on median price and median income, we can obtain a quick snapshot of whether the mismatch between cost and income is widespread or localized.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2001, only 35% of the households in Ventura County could afford the median-priced home. This was an increase of four percentage points over 2000, but a significant drop from previous years, when the index ranged between 44% and 47%.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



HOUSING OVERCROWDING

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the percentage of households that include more than one person for each room in the housing unit they occupy, except for kitchens and bathrooms.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Eliminating housing overcrowding has been a national housing goal since the Great Depression. Housing overcrowding is often associated with crime, disease, and other social ills.

There are many ways to depict the complicated relationships among housing unit types, household types, household income, and housing cost. We believe housing overcrowding is the best measure of the relationship between the housing units available and the households seeking housing. It also reflects the affordability of different housing units for different types of households.

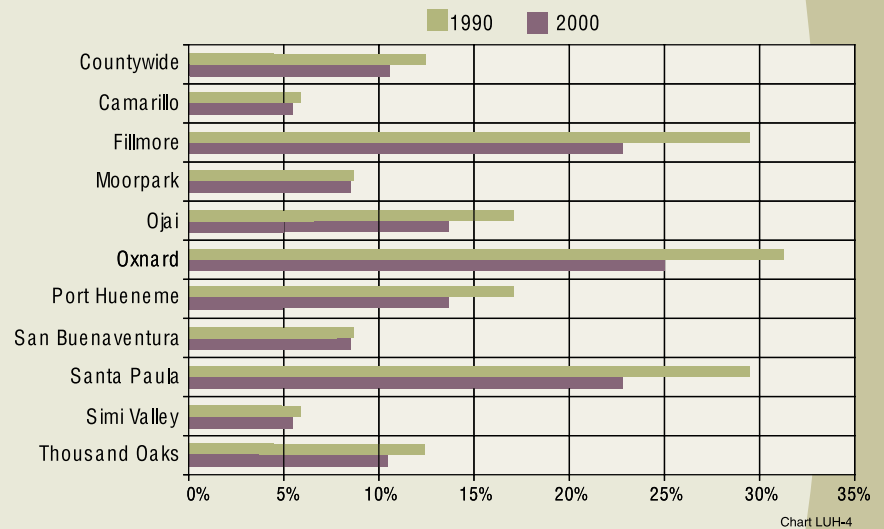
HOW ARE WE DOING?

According to the Census, 12.4% of the county's households were overcrowded in 2000. This is not a high number compared to other areas, but it does represent a significant increase from 10.5% in 1990 in Ventura County. As with so many other indicators, overcrowding is a serious problem – and one that is getting measurably worse – in cities with large Latino populations.

Overcrowding in the three mostly Latino cities in the county (Oxnard, Fillmore, and Santa Paula) ranged from 28% to 31% in 2000. In each case this represents an increase of 5 to 8 points from 1990. Port Hueneme also has higher-than-average overcrowding (17.1%, up from 13.7% in 1990).

Elsewhere in the county, overcrowding rates range from 5% to 9% and did not increase dramatically between 1990 and 2000.

HOUSING OVERCROWDING



HOUSING QUALITY

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the percentage of housing units with substandard conditions such as a lack of complete plumbing facilities, lack of heat, visible structure dilapidation, and/or extreme overcrowding (1.5 persons per room or more).

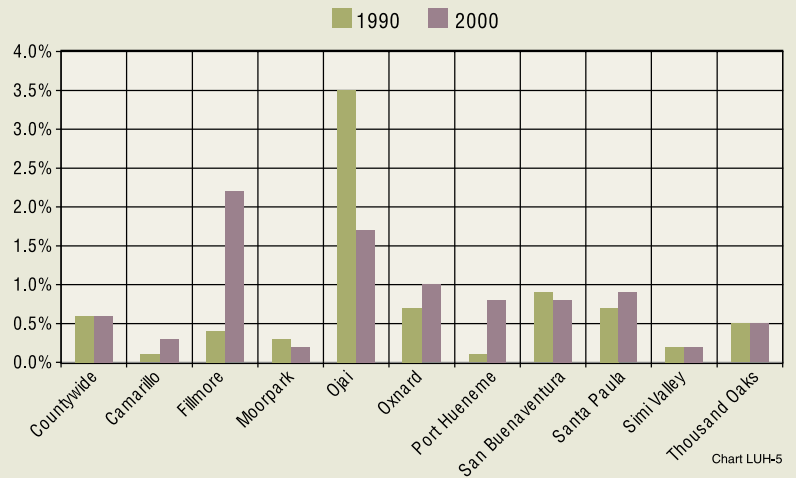
WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

As with overcrowding, the elimination of substandard units has been a national housing goal since the Great Depression. Quite apart from cost, the availability of safe and decent housing is a necessary condition for a community's well being in order to sustain its residents' health, quality of life, and fitness as a workforce.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Housing quality in Ventura County is high. Countywide, only 0.6% of all housing units were defined as substandard by the 2000 Census. This figure did not vary much from city to city. The only city where substandard housing was much higher than the county average was in Ojai, where the substandard housing percentage dropped from 3.5% in 1990 to 1.7% in 2000.

HOUSING QUALITY



HOUSING TENURE

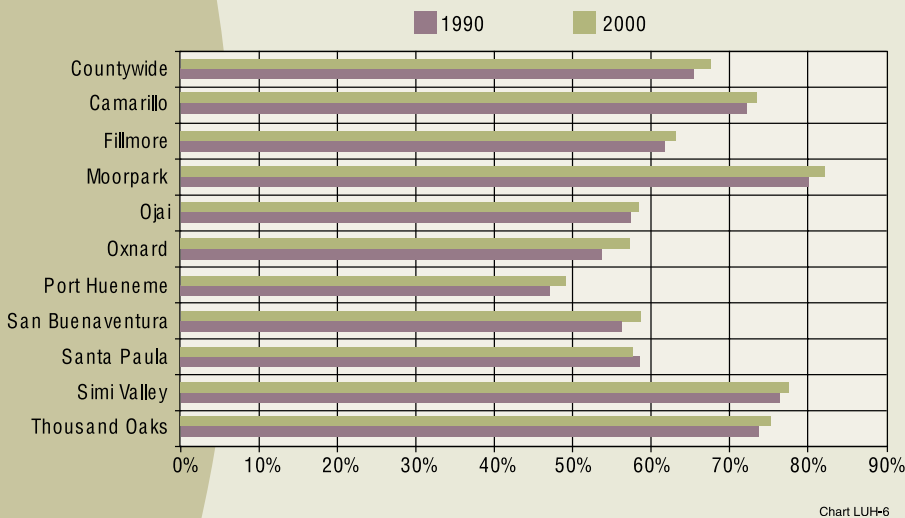
WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the percentage of housing units that are owner-occupied.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Home ownership is a cherished American goal that is regarded throughout Ventura County and elsewhere as a desirable component of community well being. Homeowners often feel more connected and committed to the communities and neighborhoods where they live, and they also have a level of financial and lifestyle security unavailable to renters. Especially in California, home ownership has also been an important way for the working poor and working-class families to accumulate enough wealth to ascend into the middle class.

HOUSING TENURE - PERCENT OF OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS



HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2000, 67.6% of the county's housing units were owner-occupied. This figure is higher than regional and statewide averages and is about the national average. It represents a slight increase from 65.5% in 1990.

Again, however, there are noticeable differences from city to city, and particularly between the west and east county. Home ownership rates were lowest in Port Hueneme (49.1%). They were also below average in Ojai, Oxnard, Ventura, and Santa Paula, all of which had home ownership rates between 55% and 60%. Fillmore was close to the countywide average (63%). The figure was between 73% and 78% in Camarillo, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks. The highest home ownership rate was in Moorpark (82%).