



Vacancy Rates and Tenure

The vacancy rate is an indicator of the general availability of housing. It also reflects how well available units meet the current housing market demand. A low vacancy rate suggests that households may have difficulty finding housing within their price range; a high vacancy rate may indicate either an imbalance between household characteristics and the type of available units, or an oversupply of housing units. The availability of vacant housing units provides households with choices on different unit types to accommodate changing needs (e.g., single persons, newly married couples and elderly households typically need smaller units than households with school age children). A low vacancy rate may contribute to higher market rents and prices, and may limit the choices of households in finding adequate housing. It may also be related to overcrowding, as discussed later.

Table H-19 provides 1990 occupancy and tenure characteristics for the unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The data indicated a 35% vacancy rate in the eastern county area and a 12% vacancy rate in the western county area. These figures combine to give the entire unincorporated area of Riverside County an 18% vacancy rate in 1990. According to 1999 Department of Finance (DOF) estimates, the vacancy rate has dropped to 15% in the unincorporated area. DOF's estimates, however, still indicate a disproportionately high vacancy rate in the eastern county area when compared to the western county area, with some eastern county cities experiencing vacancy rates as high as 58%.

In 1990, vacancy rates were higher in rental units (12%) than in owned units (5%). Owned units are more prevalent in both planning areas and particularly in the western county area, where owned units represent over three-quarters of occupied units. The unusually high vacancy rate in the eastern county area is due primarily to the large number of vacation homes. Only 12% of rental units were actually available for rent.

**Table H-19
Housing Inventory by Tenure
Riverside County Unincorporated Area 1990**

Planning Area	Total Units	Occupied Units		Vacant Units		
		Rental	Owner	For Rent	For Sale	Other
Western County Area	86982	18,346 (21%)	58,003 (67%)	1,980 (2%)	2,986 (3%)	5,668 (7%)
Eastern County Area	29951	6,600 (22%)	12,835 (43%)	933 (3%)	742 (2%)	8,842 (30%)
TOTAL	116933	24,946 (21%)	70,838 (61%)	2,912 (2%)	3,727 (3%)	14,510 (12%)

Source: 1990 Census.

Age and Condition of Housing Stock

Age is one measure of housing stock conditions and a factor for determining the need for rehabilitation. Without proper maintenance, housing units deteriorate over time. Thus, units that are older are more likely to be in need of major repairs (e.g., a new roof or plumbing). As a general rule of thumb, houses 30



years or older are considered aged and are more likely to require major repairs. In addition, older houses may not be built to current standards for fire and earthquake safety.

The housing stock in unincorporated areas is relatively new, with about 43% of all units built after 1980 (Table H-20). According to the 1990 Census, only 0.7% of all Riverside County housing units lacked complete kitchen facilities and only 0.5% lacked complete plumbing facilities. There may also be units that require rehabilitation or replacement despite possessing complete kitchen and plumbing facilities. The California Statewide Housing Plan estimates that 10% of the housing stock is in need of rehabilitation or replacement. The 1999-2004 Consolidated Plan estimates that there are 483,847 housing units in Riverside County (1990 Census). Therefore, approximately 48,384 units countywide are estimated to be in need of repair or replacement. Of those, 9,562 units are located in the unincorporated county.



It should be noted, however, that over one-quarter of all housing units in the unincorporated county and nearly half of all units in the eastern county are mobile homes. Experience has shown that these structures age much more rapidly than traditional construction and therefore assumptions regarding housing condition based solely on age may not be valid for mobile homes. The County has paid particular attention to the illegal and unsafe mobile home parks in the Coachella Valley. Approximately 200 illegal housing facilities, containing up to 2,000 unpermitted and potentially substandard mobile home units are within the Coachella Valley. The County has addressed the issue by assigning at least four agency staff, developing an array of programs, and allocating millions of dollars of redevelopment funds to assist the park owners and residents in bringing the parks and residences up to code.

**Table H-20
Age of Housing Stock
Riverside County Unincorporated Area**

Planning Area	Total	Pre-1940	% of Total	1940-1960	% of Total	1961-1980	% of Total	1980 or Newer	% of Total
Western Co. Area	76188	2543	3%	8452	11%	31573	41%	33620	44%
Eastern Co. Area	19431	559	3%	2128	11%	8960	46%	7784	40%
TOTAL	95620	3102	3%	10580	11%	40533	42%	41405	43%

Source: 1990 Census

Housing Costs and Rents

New Home Price Trends

Table H-21 shows median sales prices by community based on a survey of both new and resale home prices in November 1999. The median sales price for all units was \$135,750. This table shows that home prices were substantially higher in the communities of Canyon Lake and Rancho Mirage than in other portions of the county. This is attributable to the popularity of resort communities with a high level of amenities (such as golf courses, tennis courts and lush landscaping). The least expensive areas were Desert Hot Springs, Indio, Perris, Sun City and Beaumont, which all had median prices below \$90,000.