COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Council Committee of the Whole met on March 10, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. with Council President Neil presiding. Members of Council present were Mr. Anderson, Ms. Arndt, Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Hall (via WebEx), Mr. Lewis (arrived at 6:18 p.m.), Dr. Pillsbury, and Mr. Rocha. Dr. Sudler was absent. Mayor Christiansen was also absent. Civilian members present for their Committee meetings were Mr. Iriowen *(Utility),* Mr. Garfinkel (via WebEx), and Mr. Shevock (via WebEx) *(Legislative, Finance, and Administration.* Mr. Wilson *(Utility)* was absent.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Dr. Pillsbury moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Anderson and unanimously carried.

Discussion on Affordable Housing (Michelle Williams, Executive Director, Fuller Center for Housing of Delaware)

Ms. Michelle Williams, Executive Director, Fuller Center for Housing of Delaware, reviewed the presentation entitled "Housing Snapshot: Dover and Kent County" **(Attachment #1)** and provided council with the Dover and Kent County Housing Snapshot (**Attachment #2**).

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Ms. Williams stated that the cottage houses are now commonly referred to as the "missing middle" in housing. She explained that the current housing stock primarily consists of single-family homes and large-scale developments, with a lack of housing options in between. She noted that, historically, smaller homes, such as approximately 1,000-square-foot houses accommodating families with children, served as starter homes, but such homes are no longer being constructed.

Ms. Williams further stated that developers often indicate they are building what the market demands. However, she suggested that market trends have shifted in recent years toward a preference for smaller, more manageable homes. She added that many individuals now prefer housing that is more affordable to maintain and furnish, which has contributed to her advocacy for smaller homes, including tiny homes and small-scale developments. She referred to a project in Georgetown that includes smaller housing units as an example of this approach.

She emphasized that housing types such as duplexes, quadplexes, and similar "missing middle" options are no longer commonly built. She also referenced historical housing trends, noting that following approximately the 1950s, housing development shifted toward larger suburban homes, particularly after returning veterans utilized VA loans.

Ms. Williams indicated that housing preferences have continued to evolve, with some individuals now expressing interest in alternatives such as mobile homes. She noted that no new mobile home parks have been developed in decades and stated that modern mobile homes differ significantly in appearance and quality from older models.

Responding to Mr. Anderson, Ms. Williams stated that one of the key findings of the task force was the need for smaller housing units. She noted that she was not alone in advocating for smaller units; however, current zoning regulations do not permit such development.

Ms. Williams explained that zoning limitations, including density requirements, restrict the number of units that can be developed on parcels of land (e.g., half-acre or one-acre lots). She stated that over time, lot sizes increased, land use patterns changed, and zoning regulations effectively limited housing density, thereby restricting the development of smaller housing options.

Mr. Anderson referenced the City of Dover's Planned Neighborhood Development (PND) as a mechanism intended to allow for smaller homes and similar housing types. He noted that there had been limited utilization of this option and inquired whether the ordinance may require revisions or whether the lack of participation was due to market conditions at the time.

Ms. Williams stated that multiple factors could have contributed; however, she suggested that, without reviewing specific locations and parcels, it was likely that developers were unwilling to assume the risk associated with non-traditional housing developments. She noted that projects such as tiny home or pallet home villages represent a departure from conventional development and therefore carry additional risk.

Ms. Williams further stated that there is a need for more developers willing to pursue such projects, including nonprofit organizations. She indicated that, despite her organization's willingness to move forward with development, they have encountered similar challenges. She referenced a property of approximately 20 to 25 acres in Frederica that is ready for development, but noted that regulatory constraints, including its designation within a growth zone, have limited progress.

She added that smaller-scale developments are feasible, citing a project in Georgetown on approximately 2.5 acres that includes 20 housing units ranging from approximately 500 to 1,000 square feet, with a mix of one, two, and three-bedroom units.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Ms. Williams stated that 3D models, video walkthroughs, examples, and full neighborhood drawings are available. She noted that such materials are necessary prior to presenting to the Planning Department, as it can be difficult for individuals to visualize higher-density development, such as 20 units on approximately one and a half acres, without a clear understanding of the scale of an acre.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Williams stated that one concern often raised is whether affordable housing decreases surrounding property values. She clarified that she prefers to describe such housing as "housing that is affordable relative to income." She noted that there is a common misconception that this type of housing negatively impacts property values.

Ms. Williams explained that, in some cases, development can increase property values, particularly when vacant or blighted lots are improved with new housing. She provided an example from Georgetown, where two condemned lots had remained vacant for approximately 20 years before being donated for development. She noted that, despite the longstanding vacancy, nearby residents expressed opposition once development was proposed.

Ms. Williams further stated that numerous studies conducted across the United States have found that affordable housing does not decrease property values.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Williams clarified that the type of housing she was referencing differs from high-end tiny homes often featured in the media and instead focuses on housing that is affordable relative to income. She provided an example from a current project in Georgetown, stating that rental rates are approximately $950 per month for a one-bedroom unit, including utilities and internet, and approximately $1,075 for a two-bedroom unit, both below market rate.

Ms. Williams explained that the units are intended for working individuals and are part of a broader continuum of care, whereby individuals transition into stable housing. She noted that the development will be professionally managed, with a standard application process in place. She further stated that the project is not currently utilizing housing vouchers and is instead focused on serving individuals within approximately 30% to 50% of Area Median Income (AMI), with the potential to extend up to 60% AMI, targeting those who can afford the stated rental rates.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Ms. Williams stated that studies comparing tiny home communities to homeless encampments have not identified similar safety concerns, particularly in cases where residents are homeowners. She noted that available research has not demonstrated a correlation between tiny home communities and increased safety issues.

Ms. Williams further stated that safety, property value, and overall suitability are important considerations for individuals when evaluating non-traditional housing options. She indicated that, based on the studies she has reviewed, there is no evidence linking tiny home communities, regardless of size, to negative safety outcomes.

Mr. Neil stated that while higher-income individuals can find various affordable housing options, his concern focused on low-income, workforce, and fixed-income residents who do not qualify under programs such as ALICE. He inquired whether the small houses Ms. Williams described were located on leased land or were traditional rentals.

Ms. Williams replied that two parcels were donated, and a third was purchased by the nonprofit for one dollar, establishing nonprofit ownership of the land.

Mr. Neil expressed concerns regarding leasehold communities, noting that although developers can borrow from Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac to provide affordable housing, the inability to control subsequent sales often results in higher rents for tenants. He explained that when developers sell properties, tenants may face increased payments, and there is no mechanism to ensure continued affordability.

Mr. Neil stated that the state has not addressed the grassroots problem of creating and maintaining affordable housing. He suggested implementing a rent justification system, like utility regulation, whereby developers are entitled to make a profit, but any sale must be to an entity that will maintain affordability. He explained that this approach could allow community members to gain greater control over their housing, whether through condominium conversion or common-interest communities.

He concluded that while small housing units, such as those provided by nonprofits, are beneficial, they do not fully address the shortage of affordable housing for workforce and fixed-income residents. Mr. Neil emphasized that a long-term solution requires mechanisms to maintain affordability and give residents a stake in the housing, rather than relying solely on rentals.

Responding to Dr. Pillsbury, Ms. Williams stated that the single-unit homes in Georgetown are built on site. She noted that two additional manufacturers are used for modular homes. Beracah, which can construct up to 12 homes in a row within 60 days, and Great Outdoor Cottages, which produces homes under 400 square feet. She clarified that, for purposes of her discussion, "tiny homes" are defined as any home under 400 square feet, rather than the smaller 200-square-foot models, and that the Georgetown units are stick-built by a nonprofit developer.

Responding to Dr. Pillsbury, Ms. Williams stated that all of the homes are single-family, reflecting the preferences of prospective residents, who desire smaller homes rather than large ones. She invited anyone interested to tour the homes and noted a proposal for a military organization involving "tiny home townhouses," consisting of three units on the bottom floor for disabled veterans and three units on the top floor for other working veterans. She observed that traditional townhouses average approximately 1,500 square feet, making these smaller units a viable alternative.

Ms. Williams further noted that the Georgetown development includes solar panels installed over a carport area, and that there are multiple proven models for ownership and property management. She explained that when evaluating a parcel of land, key considerations include the size of the lot, existing infrastructure, and what the parcel can sustain. She added that while the homes are generally standardized, some modifications are made to suit the land, and she expressed enthusiasm for assessing additional available sites.

Springboard Delaware Proposal to Partner with New City Church to Create a Facility with Shelter and Wraparound Services for Homeless Women and Children (Mike Osborne, Pastor, New City Church, and Judson Malone, Executive Director, New City Church Family Village)

Mr. Judson Malone, Executive Director, New City Church Family Village, reviewed the Springboard Delaware presentation.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Malone stated that an agreement had been reached with Davis, Bown, and Friedel, a design, architecture, surveying, and engineering firm based in Milford, to begin engineering work for the project. He explained that the goal is to minimize site impact so that the property remains pristine upon completion. He noted that lessons learned from the Georgetown project, including excessive ground disturbance and selection of a site lacking nearby infrastructure, informed their current approach. Mr. Malone emphasized that the objective is to ensure the site is returned to its original condition when the project concludes.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Malone stated that careful attention was given to ratios of residents to hygiene facilities to ensure adequate accommodations. He explained that a trailer on site provides both ADA-compliant and standard facilities. He noted that, at the Georgetown project, there were no issues with residents waiting in line. Based on his experience, he estimated that one five-unit hygiene facility would be sufficient for a population of 50 to 60 individuals and would be located on site.

Responding to Mr. Boggerty, Mr. Malone stated that the project is considering two potential populations: adults experiencing homelessness and women or families with children. He noted that each group represents different profiles and associated safety considerations. In either case, he explained that the site would include a perimeter fence and controlled access. Drawing from the Georgetown project, he stated that the facility's welcome center serves as a central checkpoint, and individuals are not permitted beyond that point unless they belong on the premises or have a legitimate reason to visit, ensuring tight security.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Malone explained that, based on lessons learned in Georgetown, relocating approximately 40 individuals from a traumatic and lawless encampment required significant initial resources, including 24-hour staffing and paid security, which proved to be very costly. He noted that over time, staff recognized that treating residents with respect encouraged them to take ownership of the community, shifting the focus from protecting against them to protecting them. He further stated that residents were provided stipends and, while the program maintained a low-barrier approach, participants serving as resident stewards were expected to demonstrate progress, including maintaining sobriety and compliance with testing. He added that the community was staffed at a welcome center 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Malone stated that if approval was not granted, they would withdraw the proposal. He explained that they were seeking a reasonable understanding of what would constitute success and indicated their willingness to enter into a licensed contractor agreement with the city. He noted that the agreement would include a comprehensive operations plan for the village, subject to city approval and oversight, and would provide the city with remedies if obligations were not met. He further stated that performance would be evaluated over time based on established metrics and outcomes, and if expectations were not met within a period of one to four years, the city would have the authority to terminate the arrangement.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Malone stated that the site would be fully enclosed with fencing, with access limited to a single-entry point through the welcome center. He noted that the remainder of the perimeter would be secure and inaccessible, and added that, similar to the Georgetown site, cameras would be installed facing the surrounding streets.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Malone stated that, under the program, the operational contract allows individuals to remain for 24 months. However, the average stay is about 4 to 6 months. Mr. Malone stated that the program did not allow participants to remain without expectations for an extended period; instead, it required adherence to a structured timeline. He explained that participants were required to develop both a housing plan and an income or employment plan. He noted that while other issues, such as health, were addressed with encouragement, participation in the program required a willingness to make meaningful life changes, accept assistance, and actively engage with staff.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Malone stated that approximately 40% of participants transitioned into permanent housing. He noted that other outcomes included placement into higher levels of care or relocation out of state, while less than 10% of individuals chose to return to unsheltered living conditions.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Malone stated that the proposed target population included either homeless adults or families with women and children, noting that the church expressed a greater level of comfort with serving families, although both options remained under consideration. He explained that insurance considerations indicated differing levels of risk between the populations, which would need to be factored into the decision, and added that Springboard would carry liability insurance. He acknowledged concerns from local businesses regarding theft, suggesting that serving the adult homeless population could potentially reduce such impacts, though not eliminate them, while noting that families were less likely to contribute to those issues but faced significant need. He emphasized that both approaches offered benefits and stated that the organization was seeking guidance from the community, the church, and the City Council to determine the most appropriate population to serve.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Malone stated that he had received reports that Target was not supportive of the project, though he was unsure whether the proposal had been fully understood. He noted that he had made an initial attempt to speak with store representatives and intended to follow up with management. He further stated that store staff reported issues with theft, including the need to secure certain departments such as men's clothing and cosmetics, and emphasized that these concerns were recognized and taken into consideration.

Responding to Dr. Pillsbury, Mr. Malone stated that potential populations included women and children as well as complete family units, including husbands, wives, and children. He emphasized that there was no single predetermined population, noting that each group had demonstrated need. He explained that, while they could not serve all populations simultaneously, they were seeking guidance and input to make an informed decision in partnership with the city, the church, and the broader community.

Mr. Anderson thanked Mr. Malone for the discussion and stated that it raised important considerations for further research. He referenced a property previously considered by an unsheltered working group as potentially more suitable for an adult homeless population and suggested it could be evaluated for a future phase of the project. He expressed the opinion that the current neighborhood may be better suited for a family-focused program, noting concerns about impacts to neighborhood character and emphasizing the importance of preserving intact families as a key factor in poverty reduction and crime prevention. He further stated that a family-centered approach may require more complex and costly infrastructure, but addressed an important need. He added that a separate site could potentially be identified for an adult-focused program in the future and encouraged continued coordination with city staff to explore available property options.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Malone stated that accurately estimating the size of the homeless population is challenging without conducting extensive street outreach, noting that point-in-time counts offer limited information. He explained that in Georgetown, a lengthy outreach effort was carried out over several months, providing more detailed data but also revealing fluctuations in the population due to people moving in and out of visibility. He added that during a recent cold weather event, coordination with nonprofit partners, the Red Cross, and the town led to temporary shelter for individuals in a community center, where about 20 people were housed, and roughly 70 additional individuals sought shelter outdoors because of unsafe conditions. He suggested that these observations indicate the homeless population might be larger than the current number being served.

Mr. Malone further stated that while the proposed model could be successful if implemented properly, it would not address the full scope of need. He acknowledged that the initial effort in Dover would not eliminate homelessness but would provide a humane and structured approach that could demonstrate a path forward. He concluded by stating that meaningful progress in addressing homelessness requires providing individuals with safe and stable housing.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Mr. Malone stated that they were not seeking funding from the city, noting that in prior presentations in Newark, Milford, and Georgetown, the same position was communicated that such operations should be funded through state contracts. He explained that they had obtained a contract in Georgetown, though he believed the level of funding was insufficient to meet operational needs. He further stated that their model was for their nonprofit organization to operate and manage the project, with funding to be secured through state contracts for operations and private sector contributions for capital costs, including cottages.

He noted that they had a time-limited capital budget of approximately $1.4 million available for the project, but acknowledged that expansion would require addressing both capital and operating expenses. He further stated that municipalities are often not structurally equipped to fund or manage this level of social service responsibility, despite being directly impacted by the issue.

Responding to Mr. Neil, Mr. Malone stated that the property's zoning is institutional office zoning, which includes language permitting emergency shelters and transitional housing as a use. He noted that this would be further reviewed to determine what is allowable under the code.

He explained that while the proposed model may appear similar to a "deconstructed hope center," there are distinctions, and described the hope center model as a facility that provides tiered levels of service, beginning with emergency shelter, followed by short-term stays, respite care, and potentially permanent supportive housing. He cited medical discharge situations as an example of the need for respite care, noting that individuals may be too ill for unsheltered conditions but not eligible to remain in a hospital setting. He added that some facilities have adapted by dedicating space for respite care and, in response to ongoing housing shortages, expanding into permanent supportive housing.

He further stated that the effort is intended to be collaborative, noting coordination with local and regional partners, including representation from New Castle County's Department of Community Development on the organization's board.

Council Reports – February 2026

First District
Dr. Pillsbury reported attending the Quarterly Joint Pension meeting.

Mr. Rocha reported attending internal meetings with Council President Neil, the Quarterly Joint Pension meeting, and the St. Patrick's Day Parade committee meetings. He also reported working with the City Manager's office on constituent complaints.

Second District
Ms. Hall reported that her district experienced multiple complaints related to snow removal and stated that she and Councilman Lewis had been actively addressing those concerns. She thanked city staff for their assistance in responding to those issues.

She further stated that she had been conducting research regarding the potential development of a data center in the area and was gathering information to help the city be proactive in its response should such a facility choose to locate in Dover. She noted that she had also been engaged in conversations regarding additional community initiatives involving children.

Ms. Hall further stated that she was appreciative of discussions related to affordable housing and reported that she had been researching a national opportunity related to housing affordability. She indicated that she would share additional information as it became available.

Mr. Lewis reported, in line with Ms. Hall’s comments, that he had been addressing numerous constituent concerns involving code enforcement issues and crime in his district. He stated that he referred most matters to Ms. Duca, Assistant City Manager, and Chief Code Enforcement Officer Eddie Kopp for follow-up.

He further stated that he had spoken briefly with the Chief regarding the potential installation or restoration of a surveillance camera in the alleyway between Stoney Creek Development and Barrister, noting that the area was experiencing significant issues, including trash accumulation and frequent complaints of suspected drug transactions and parking-related concerns, with approximately three to four constituent calls per week.

Mr. Lewis stated that he intended to continue discussions with the Chief and possibly schedule a meeting with Councilwoman Hall to explore solutions, including the possibility of securing a camera through collaboration with another state agency if funding was limited.

Third District
Ms. Arndt reported that she had attended several constituent meetings, including most recently the Downtown Dover Partnership Board meeting. She stated that she had received constituent concerns regarding trash along roadways, particularly along curbs and in the medians on Route 13, noting that the issues had become more visible following the melting of snow. She indicated that she would look into the matter moving forward to see if additional cleanup efforts could be arranged.

Fourth District
Mr. Anderson reported that he wanted to thank all participants in a recent community trash pickup event organized by Booted and Suited, noting that it was a success with approximately 40 community members and partners participating. He stated that he was unable to attend due to prior work obligations but expressed appreciation for those who organized and participated in the effort. He further reported that he had spoken with several individuals following the event and noted overall positive community engagement.

Mr. Anderson stated that there were ongoing concerns regarding potential drug-related activity in the alley between North Governors Avenue and New Street, as well as other neighborhood issues that had been referred to staff for review. He thanked city staff for their work and noted that there had been significant positive feedback regarding snow removal efforts across the district, commending staff for their professionalism and hard work.

He further reported that residents along Silver Lake Boulevard had expressed appreciation for the replacement of a barrier in that area, noting minor delays due to weather conditions. Mr. Anderson concluded by noting that additional matters had been forwarded to staff for follow-up and expressed anticipation for the upcoming St. Patrick's Day parade, thanking volunteers for their efforts in organizing the event.

Dr. Sudler was absent; no report was given.

At-Large
Mr. Boggerty reported that he attended and spoke at the rescheduled Black History program at the Modern Maturity Center and noted that the event was well-received. He further reported that he attended a meeting with Councilman Rocha and Council President Neil. He also stated that he continued his duties, including participation in a Construction and Property Maintenance Code Board of Appeals meeting.

Council President Neil
Mr. Neil reported that he attended a Disabled Students poster contest at the George Mason Station near the Duncan Building. He stated that he also attended an appeals hearing with Chairman Boggerty and Councilman Rocha.

He further reported that he met with the Mayor and citizens interested in establishing a City of Dover museum. He noted that he addressed constituent emails regarding proposed pedestrian safety issues and sent a Third District snow alert on behalf of Councilwoman Arndt and himself to Third District HOA presidents and civic leaders, as well as responding to additional snow removal concerns.

Mr. Neil stated that he participated in email discussions with residents in the historic district regarding sidewalk repair needs, involving coordination with Mark Nowak, Public Works, and Councilman Anderson. He further noted discussions regarding the potential use or acquisition of the former Dover Sheraton Hotel owned by Delaware State University by the state for conversion into a Hope Center. He also reported receiving a call from a hotel owner expressing concerns and stated that he encouraged the individual to visit the Hope Center in New Castle County to better understand its operations.

UTILITY COMMITTEE

The Utility Committee met with Chairman Rocha presiding.

Adoption of Agenda
Mr. Lewis moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Boggerty and unanimously carried.

Dedication of Water Infrastructure – S. Bay Road (Jason Lyon, Director of Water and Wastewater)
Mr. Jason Lyon, Director of Water and Wastewater, reviewed the background and analysis of the dedication of the water infrastructure for South Bay Road.

Staff recommended acceptance of water infrastructure within the right-of-way of Bay Road. Dedication is to include all of the referenced water infrastructure.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Lyon stated that the city would not be spending any money on the project and that all associated costs would be borne by the developer. He clarified that the request was strictly for approval and that the city had not made any payment toward the project. He further acknowledged that the city would be responsible for ongoing maintenance moving forward.

Mr. Anderson moved for acceptance of the water infrastructure within the right-of-way of Bay Road and that the dedication includes all of the referenced water infrastructure, as recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arndt and unanimously carried.

Dedication of Water and Wastewater Infrastructure – Oak Shadows (Jason Lyon, Director of Water and Wastewater)
Mr. Jason Lyon, Director of Water and Wastewater, reviewed the background and analysis of the dedication of the water and wastewater infrastructure for Oak Shadows.

Staff recommended acceptance of the water and wastewater infrastructure within the right-of-way of the Oak Shadows development. Dedication is to include all of the referenced water and wastewater infrastructure.

Ms. Arndt stated that she had met with the community on site on several occasions and attended an HOA meeting with Mr. Lyon. She expressed appreciation for his continued collaboration with the community and thanked him for working with residents. She noted that the community had expressed concern about securing funding to complete the work necessary to bring the project up to city standards for dedication. She further thanked Mr. Lyon for his commitment and for assisting in guiding the process to its current stage.

Ms. Arndt moved to recommend acceptance of the staff recommendation for the dedication of the infrastructure. The motion was seconded by Dr. Pillsbury and unanimously carried.

Mr. Rocha moved for adjournment of the Utility Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE, FINANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee met with Chairman Anderson presiding.

Adoption of Agenda
Mr. Shevock moved for adoption of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Rocha and unanimously carried.

Update from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) on Membership Priorities (Matt Carey, President of the AFSCME Union)
Mr. Matthew Carey, President of the AFSCME Union, presented the committee with membership priorities.

This item was informational; committee action was not required.

Mr. Carey stated that he serves as the Emergency Communications Manager for the Dover Police Department and as President of AFSCME Local 2356. He thanked the Council for its support of city employees and stated that the relationship between the Council and employees had been positive overall.

He reported that the union currently has a 14.58% vacancy rate and expressed concern regarding employee retention, noting challenges related to pay structure, including the city's 5% pay increase limitation under the Pay Plan. He suggested the Council consider reviewing the policy to provide additional flexibility, stating that it may help address pay compression and improve retention, particularly among mid-tenured employees.

Mr. Carey further stated that the union has a strong interest in reinstating the pension system and referenced prior discussions held with the HR Director, City Manager, and union presidents regarding an educational process and employee survey. He stated that follow-up information had not yet been distributed since a meeting in early December and requested that the city move forward with providing the materials so employees could better understand and complete the survey.

He emphasized the importance of communication between the city and the union, noted he had recently sent correspondence to council through the City Clerk's Office, and requested continued dialogue to advance discussions and improve coordination. He concluded by thanking the Council and stating that his experience with the city over his 19-year tenure had generally been positive.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Carey stated that a survey distributed to union members in the fall received inconsistent responses, noting that some members did not receive it, did not understand it, or left questions unanswered. He explained that he, along with the IBEW President and DOE President, met with the Assistant City Manager, the HR Director, and staff on December 1st to address these issues. He stated that all parties agreed to develop an informational packet, such as a slideshow or short video, to provide clear and concise information for employees.

He further stated that the group was expected to reconvene in January to review and approve the messaging before distribution; however, that follow-up meeting had not yet occurred. He explained that the intent of the process was to ensure clarity in communication regarding union questions and proposals so employees could better understand the issues and determine whether further action or advocacy was needed.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Anderson stated that the 5% pay limitation appeared to relate to promotional increases, including situations where employees assume interim or supervisory roles. He noted that the cap may not provide sufficient compensation for the additional responsibilities. He further stated that there may be provisions allowing for higher increases under certain conditions.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Carey stated that the 5% pay limitation was creating broader challenges across the city, affecting employees moving between departments, unions, and non-bargaining positions. He explained that the restriction limited the city's ability to offer competitive increases, even for highly qualified employees, which discouraged advancement and contributed to employees remaining in their current roles rather than accepting promotions.

He noted that this situation contributed to pay compression and reduced interest in leadership positions, as employees could earn comparable or greater compensation through overtime without taking on additional responsibilities. He further stated that this issue impacted multiple groups across the city and led to retention challenges, with some employees leaving their positions within a short period for better opportunities.

Mr. Carey confirmed that employees were gaining valuable training and managerial experience with the city and then leaving for other opportunities. He stated that the current pay limitations restricted the city's ability to negotiate or offer competitive increases, which hindered retention efforts. He acknowledged that not all employees may warrant increases beyond the existing cap, but emphasized that, in many cases, the limitation was preventing the city from appropriately compensating and retaining qualified personnel.

Mr. Rocha stated that he was interested in evaluating the pay gap between employees receiving a 5% increase and the salaries of those previously in the position. He noted that, in cases where there is a significant disparity, the limited increase may not provide adequate incentive for employees to assume additional responsibilities or pursue the position. He indicated that this issue warranted further review.

Mr. Lewis emphasized the need for continued discussions but reiterated the current budget constraints.

Responding to Mr. Lewis, Mr. Rocha stated that, in his view, the budget may already account for higher salaries associated with certain positions. He explained that if a higher-paid employee leaves and a lower-paid employee assumes the role, even with a 5% increase, there may still be unused funds within the existing budget allocation. He suggested that this could allow for greater flexibility in compensation without necessarily creating additional budgetary strain.

Responding to Mr. Rocha, Mr. Lewis stated that he had previously raised concerns regarding the use of funds from unfilled positions, noting that while those funds may be used temporarily, the positions remain budgeted and will eventually need to be filled. He questioned how utilizing those funds in the interim could impact the budget in the future and whether doing so could result in a deficit once the positions are filled. He emphasized the need for clarity on how this practice affects long-term budgeting.

Mr. Neil stated that the matter would need to be considered during upcoming budget discussions or in future budget cycles, noting that it involved broader issues such as pensions and challenges with recruitment and retention. He indicated that additional review was necessary to better understand the underlying causes, including long-standing vacancies.

He stated that the issue would be addressed moving forward, though specific outcomes could not yet be determined, and emphasized the need to evaluate it alongside other human resources concerns. He added that prior efforts had been made to adjust salaries and improve compensation structures and that further review would be conducted to find an appropriate balance.

Bob Murphy stated that he is a resident of Milford and a landowner of the proposed Little Living Project, noting that he and his wife are partners in the effort. He commended council for its engagement and discussion on the issue of affordable housing.

He referenced prior planning efforts and public input supporting affordable housing initiatives and stated that the city was taking proactive steps in coordination with agencies such as the Delaware State Housing Authority and other municipalities. He emphasized the importance of clear and accurate information, noting that misinformation could hinder progress.

Mr. Murphy explained the financial challenges associated with developing affordable housing, including land and construction costs, and described the concept of "little living" or cottage-style homes as a way to increase housing opportunities. He compared traditional density calculations to smaller home models, stating that higher unit counts could still be consistent with overall land use when considering total livable space.

He encouraged council to consider a pilot or "proof of concept" approach to demonstrate the viability of such developments. He also expressed concern about zoning and development inconsistencies, noting that higher-cost developments are often permitted while affordable housing projects face barriers. He concluded by reiterating his support for the initiative and encouraging continued progress in addressing housing needs for underserved populations.

Jeanie Anderson, Dover, expressed concerns regarding ongoing crime in her area and suggested the possibility of establishing a mobile or temporary police presence, potentially utilizing existing facilities such as the People's Church or the nearby fire department. She stated that increased police presence in the area may help reduce crime and noted that available space in the community could potentially be used for this purpose.

She further raised concerns about unsanitary conditions in the neighborhood, stating that individuals were relieving themselves outdoors, and inquired about the possibility of installing portable restroom facilities to address the issue and provide a more dignified solution.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment of the Legislative, Finance, and Administration Committee meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Mr. Neil moved for adjournment of the Council Committee of the Whole meeting, hearing no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Fred A. Neil
Council President

Attachments

Attachment #1 - Presentation entitled "Housing Snapshot: Dover and Kent County."

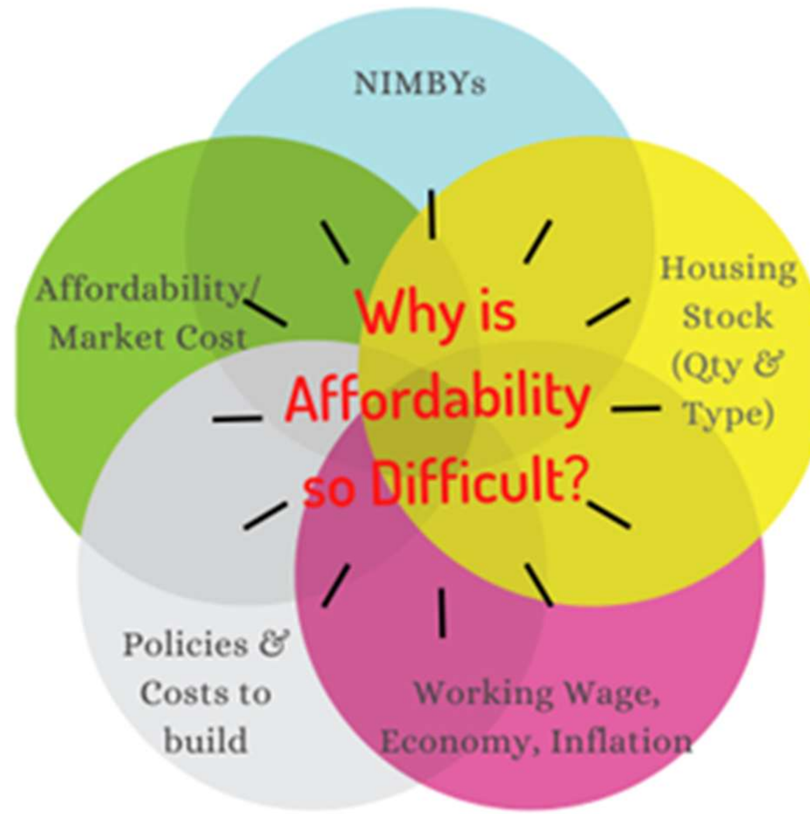
Attachment #2 - Dover and Kent County's Housing Snapshot

Housing Snapshot: Dover and Kent County

Dr. Michele Williams, aka Dr. Tiny
Fuller Center for Housing of Delaware

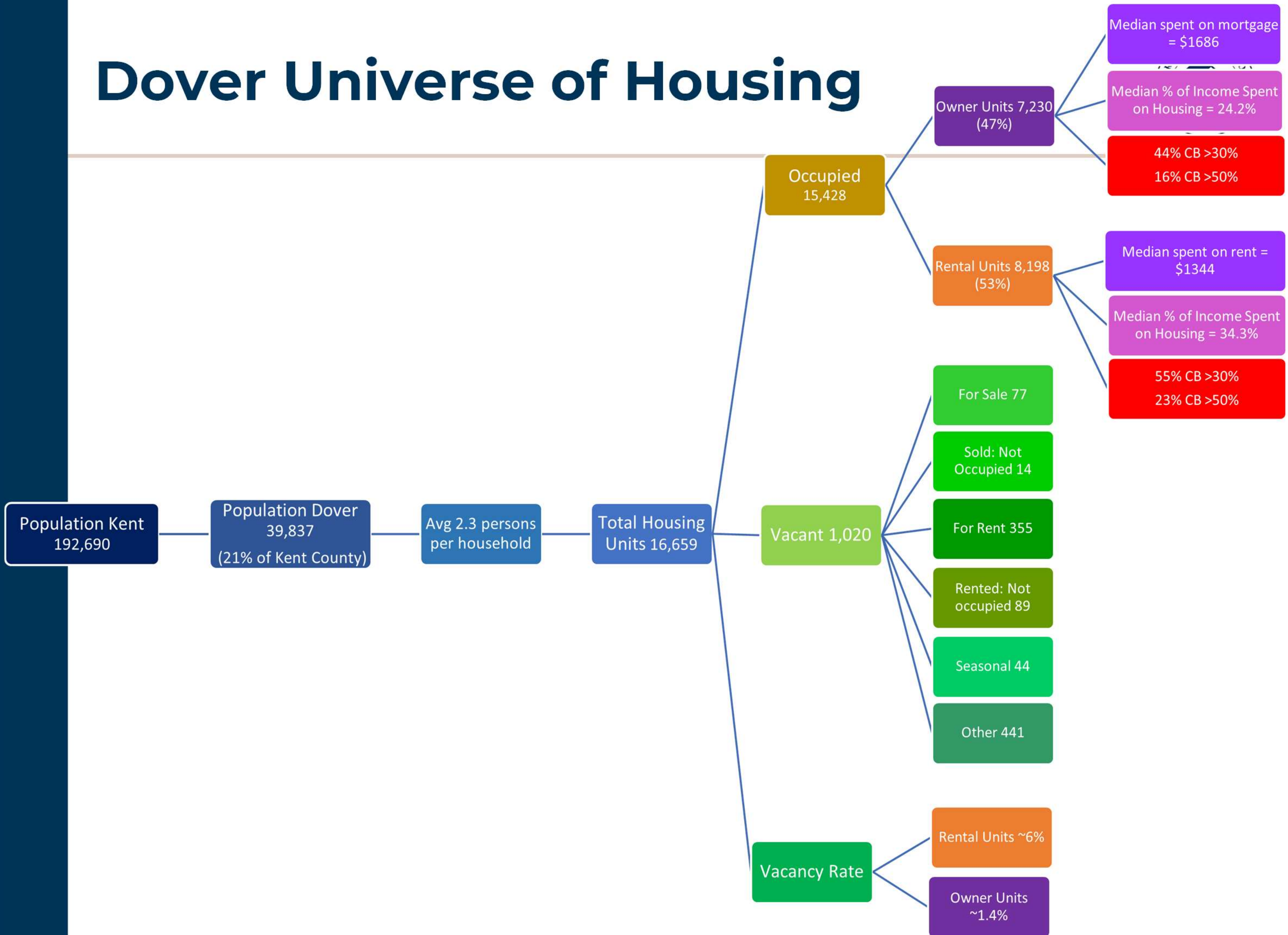
Agenda: Why is Affordability So Difficult? But Why it Needs to be Addressed

- **What Dover's Housing Looks Like**
  Housing inventory and tenure
- **Where the Pressure Shows Up**
  Cost burden and rent trends
- **Who Is Affected**
  Working households and ALICE
- **What Housing Is Missing**
  The affordability gap
- **What Is Within Local Control**



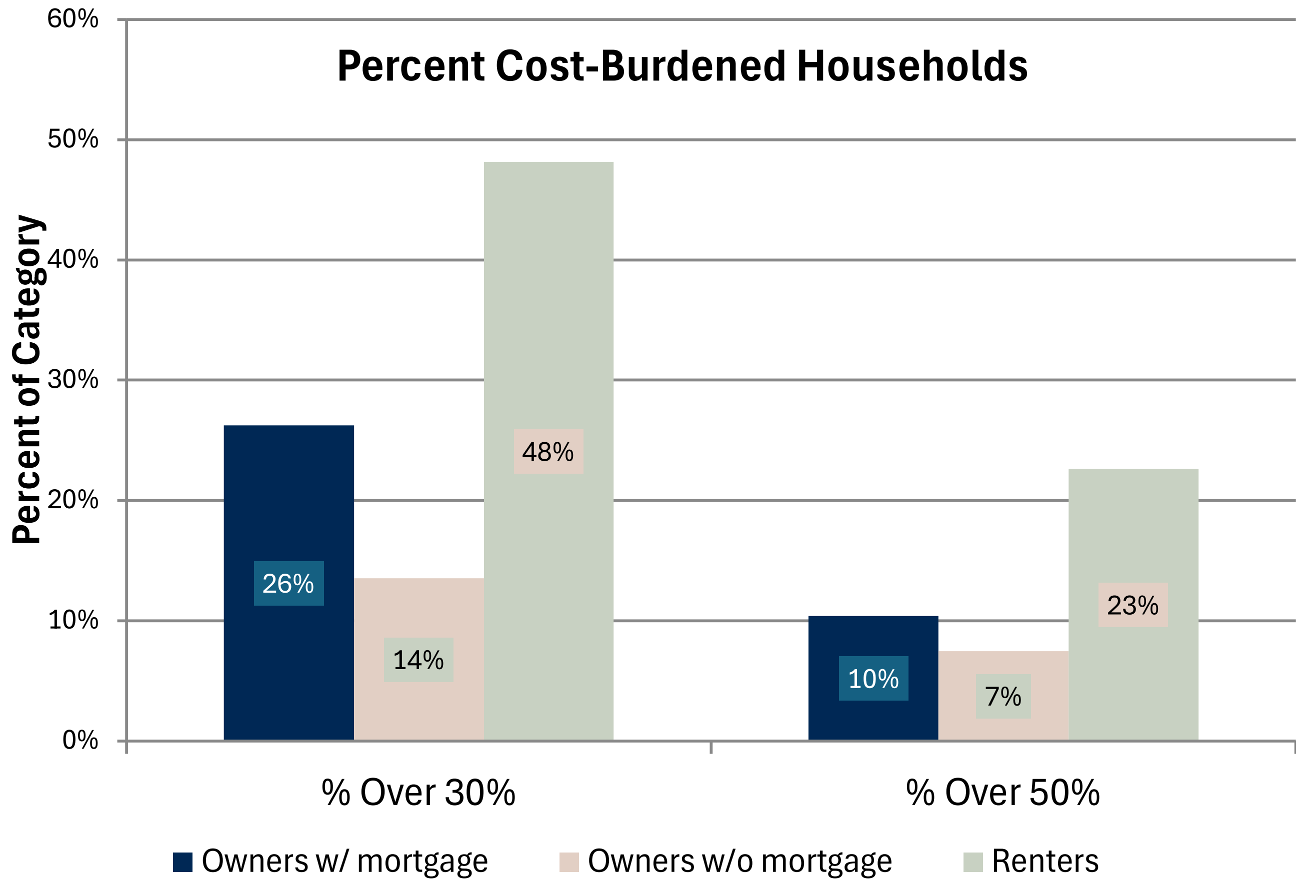
Sources:
- *ACS 2020–2024 (5-year)*
- *HUD CHAS 2018–2022*
- *ALICE United Way 2023*
- *HUD Fair Market Rent 2026*

Dover Universe of Housing

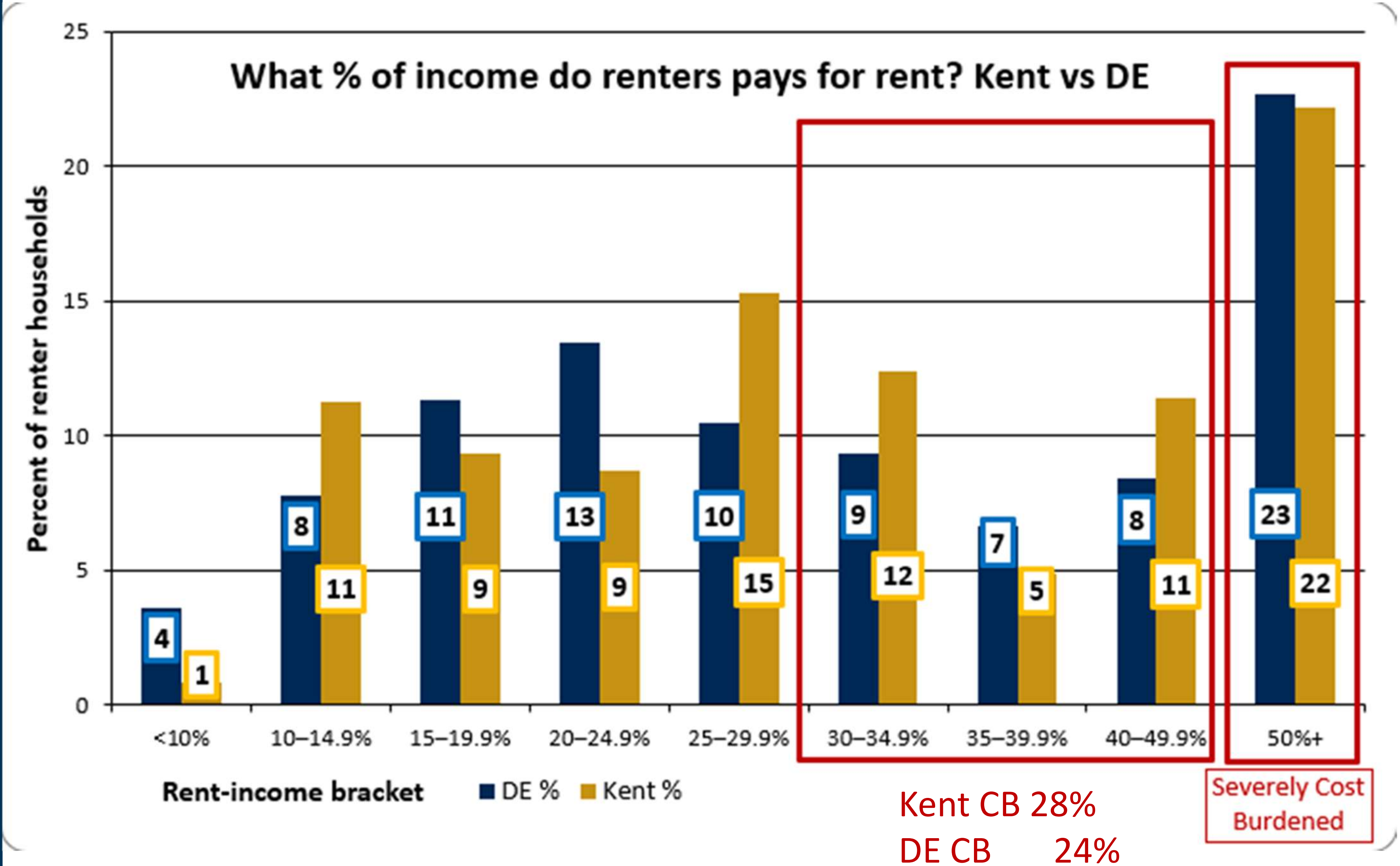


Cost Burden Signal — All Dover MSA = Metropolitan Statistical Area = Kent County

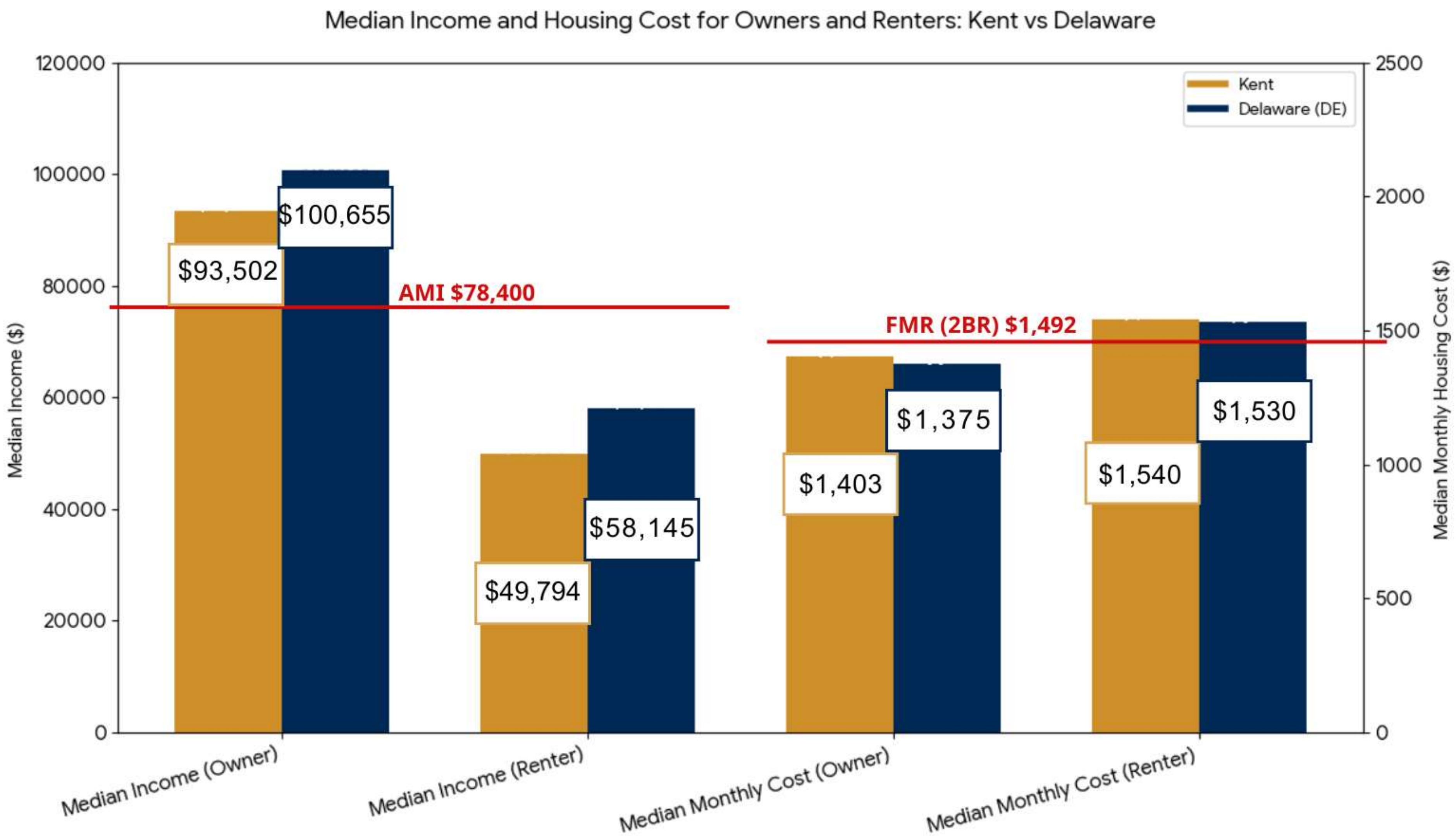
- **Cost-burdened** means a household spends 30%+ of its gross income on housing costs. **Severely cost-burdened** = 50%+ of gross income spent on housing.
  - For renters, housing costs usually include rent + utilities.
  - For owners, it typically includes mortgage (principal & interest) + property taxes + insurance + utilities (and sometimes HOA fees).



Cost Burden Signal — Kent & DE Renters



Monthly Cost vs Income — Kent & DE



HUD FMR vs Realty

- **FMR (Fair Market Rent)** is **HUD's estimate of what a typical, modest rental home costs to rent in a specific area**, by bedroom size.
- It's usually set around the **40th percentile of market rents** (meaning about 40% of rentals cost less and 60% cost more), adjusted for recent rent changes.

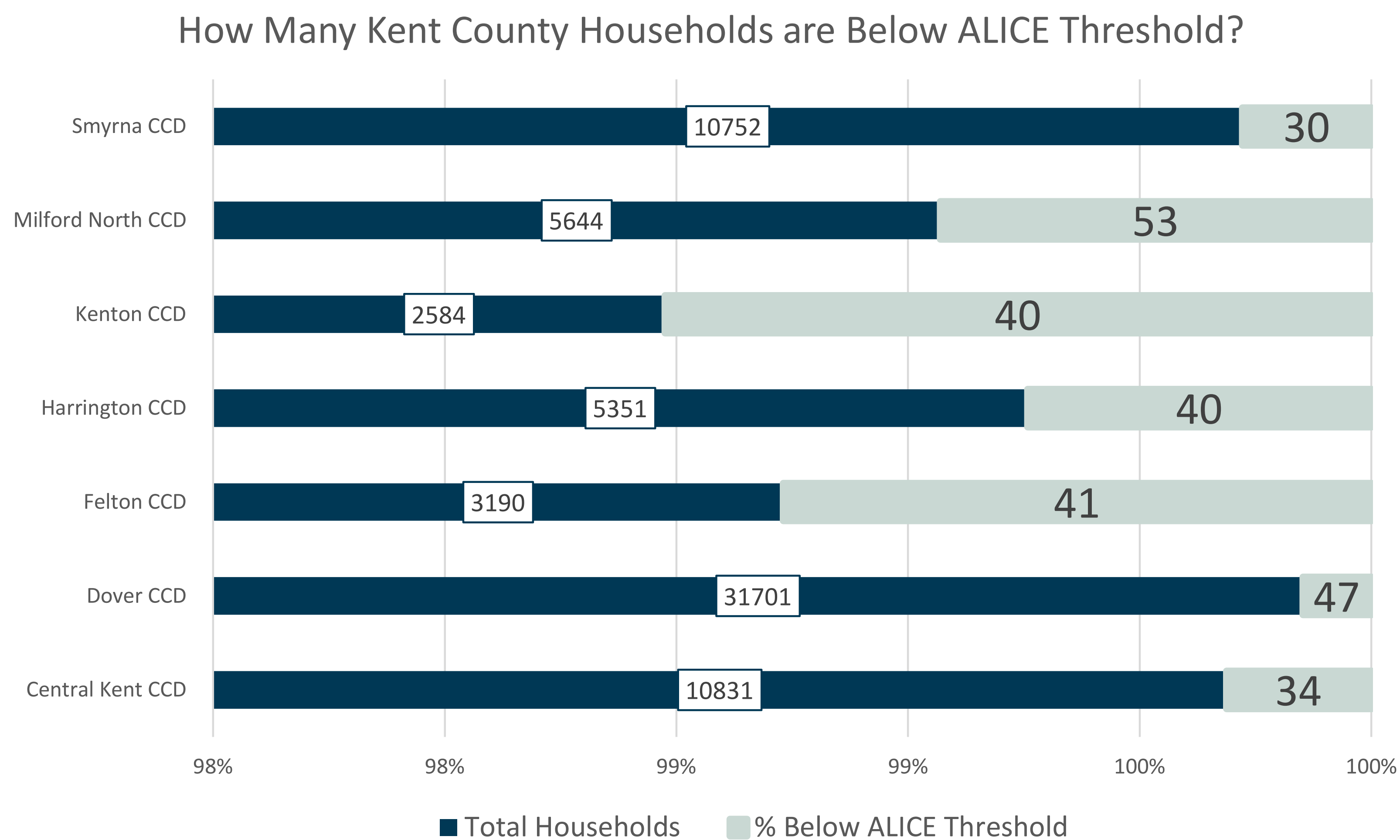
FY 2026 Fair Market Rent (effective 1 August 2025)					
FMR Area	**0 BR**	**1 BR**	**2 BR**	**3 BR**	**4 BR**
Kent County	$ 1,158	$ 1,165	$ 1,470	$ 2,044	$ 2,285
New Castle County	$ 1,397	$ 1,520	$ 1,810	$ 2,170	$ 2,423
Sussex County	$ 1,059	$ 1,066	$ 1,399	$ 1,757	$ 2,172

FMR Area / County	Bedroom	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	% Change 24→25	% Change 25→26	% Change 24→26
Dover, DE MSA	0 BR	$ 1,110	$ 1,173	$ 1,158	5.7%	-1.3%	4.3%
Dover, DE MSA	1 BR	$ 1,117	$ 1,181	$ 1,165	5.7%	-1.4%	4.3%
Dover, DE MSA	2 BR	$ 1,368	$ 1,492	$ 1,470	9.1%	-1.5%	7.5%
Dover, DE MSA	3 BR	$ 1,928	$ 2,080	$ 2,044	7.9%	-1.7%	6.0%
Dover, DE MSA	4 BR	$ 2,152	$ 2,278	$ 2,285	5.9%	0.3%	6.2%
Phila-Camden-Wilm, PA-NJ-DE-MD MSA	0 BR	$ 1,303	$ 1,372	$ 1,397	5.3%	1.8%	7.2%
Phila-Camden-Wilm, PA-NJ-DE-MD MSA	1 BR	$ 1,451	$ 1,512	$ 1,520	4.2%	0.5%	4.8%
Phila-Camden-Wilm, PA-NJ-DE-MD MSA	2 BR	$ 1,737	$ 1,802	$ 1,810	3.7%	0.4%	4.2%
Phila-Camden-Wilm, PA-NJ-DE-MD MSA	3 BR	$ 2,100	$ 2,171	$ 2,170	3.4%	0.0%	3.3%
Phila-Camden-Wilm, PA-NJ-DE-MD MSA	4 BR	$ 2,422	$ 2,468	$ 2,423	1.9%	-1.8%	0.0%
Sussex County, DE	0 BR	$ 909	$ 1,031	$ 1,059	13.4%	2.7%	16.5%
Sussex County, DE	1 BR	$ 988	$ 1,066	$ 1,066	7.9%	0.0%	7.9%
Sussex County, DE	2 BR	$ 1,298	$ 1,398	$ 1,399	7.7%	0.1%	7.8%
Sussex County, DE	3 BR	$ 1,656	$ 1,763	$ 1,757	6.5%	-0.3%	6.1%
Sussex County, DE	4 BR	$ 2,037	$ 2,197	$ 2,172	7.9%	-1.1%	6.6%

What is ALICE?

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

In 2023, FPL for DE households was 11%. This does not measure the additional 30% of the DE's households were also experiencing financial hardship. ALICE: earning above the FPL, but not enough to afford basic expenses in the county where they live.



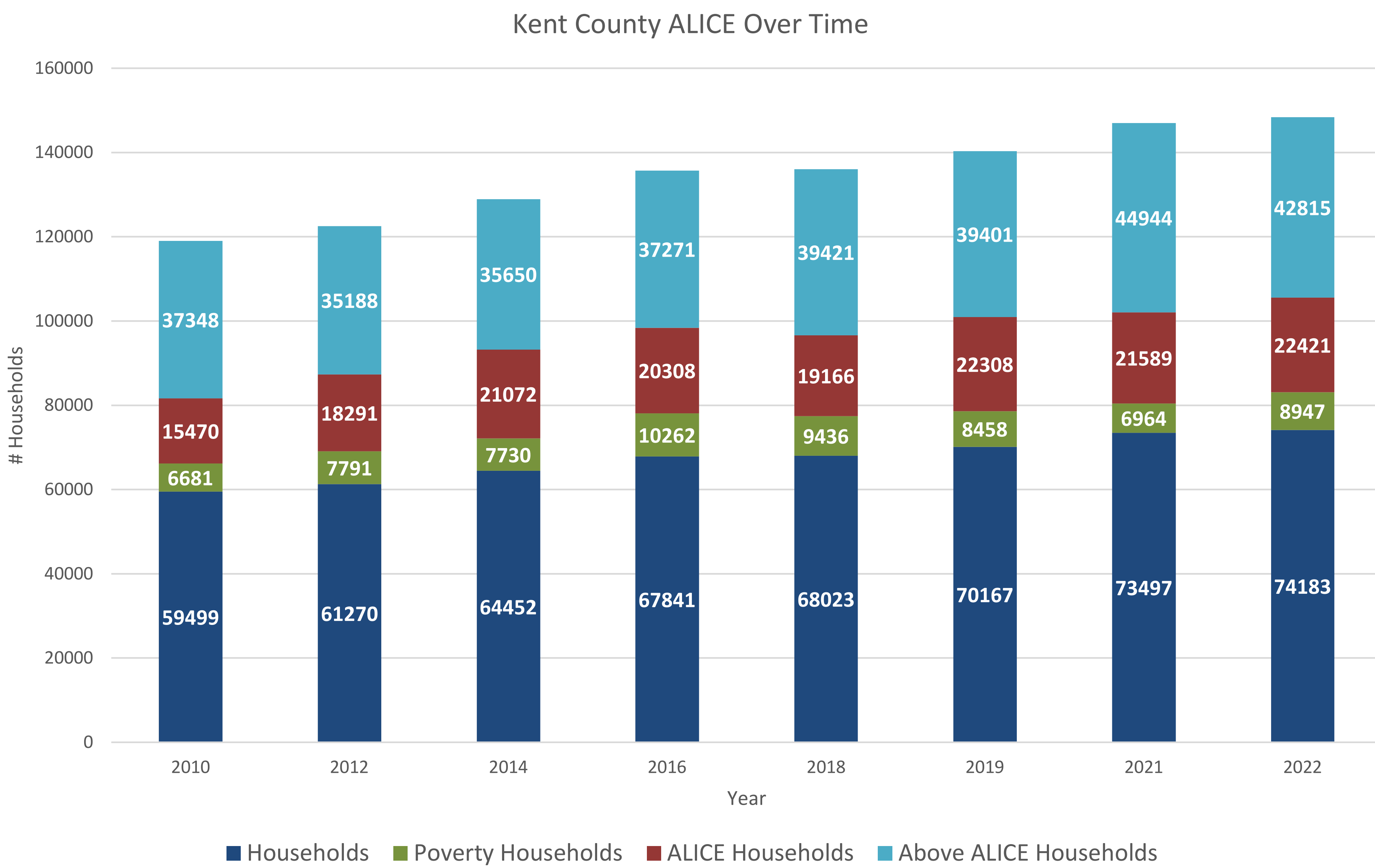
ALICE Household Survival Budget

Household Survival Budget reflects the minimum cost to live and work in today's economy and includes **housing**, **child care**, **food**, **transportation**, **health care**, and **technology**, **plus taxes** and a 10% **miscellaneous** category.

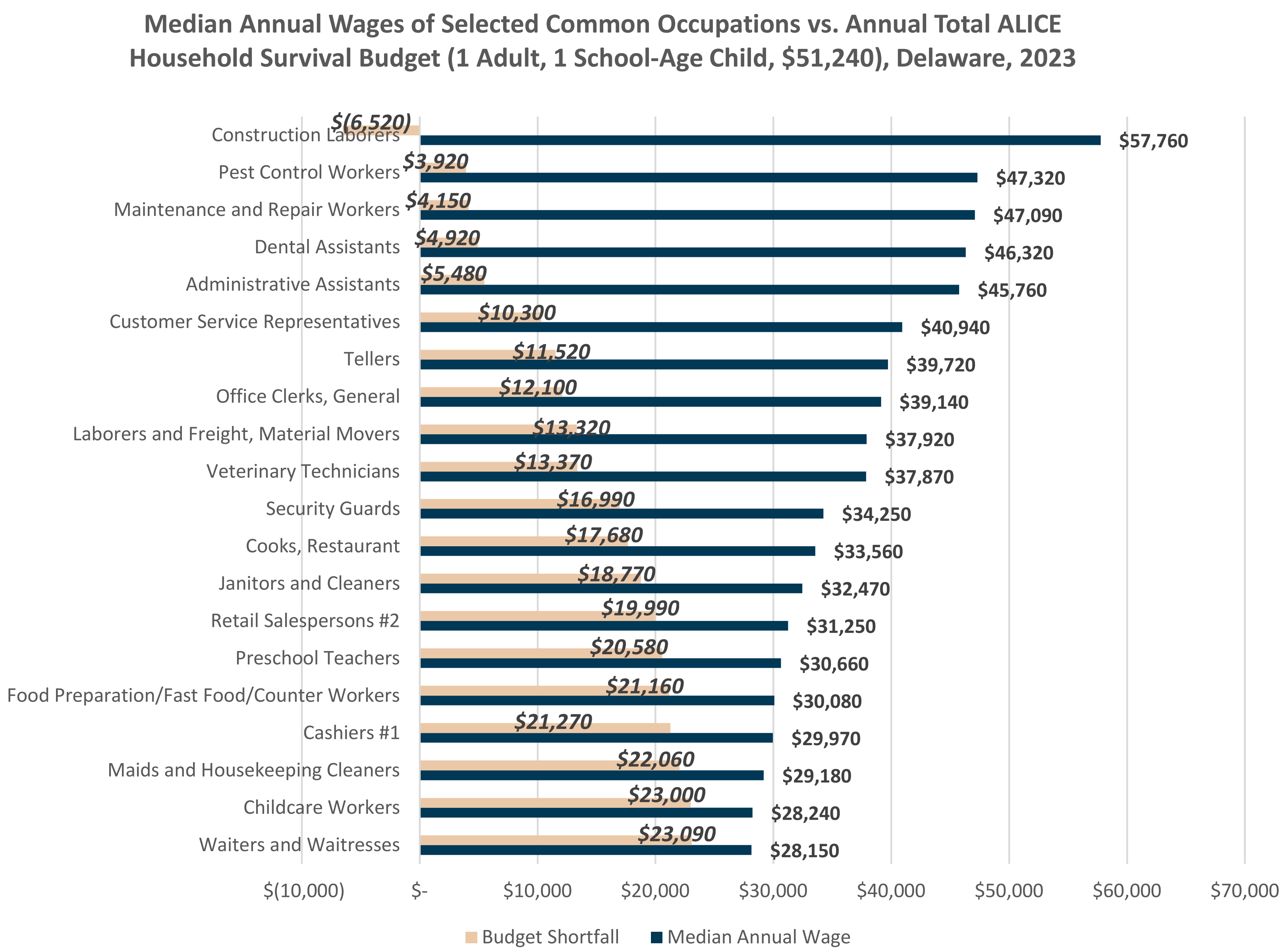
ALICE Household Survival Budget, Kent County, Delaware, 2023

Monthly Costs	Single Adult	1 Adult, 1 Child	1 Adult, 1 Child (Child Care)	2 Adults	2 Adults, 2 Children	2 Adults, 2 in Child Care	Single Adult 65+	2 Adults 65+
Housing	$1,078	$1,082	$1,082	$1,082	$1,300	$1,300	$1,078	$1,082
Child Care	$0	$312	$833	$0	$625	$1,875	$0	$0
Food	$456	$771	$692	$836	$1,402	$1,237	$419	$769
Transportation	$446	$580	$580	$685	$973	$973	$375	$545
Health Care	$184	$516	$516	$516	$756	$756	$547	$1,094
Technology	$86	$86	$86	$116	$116	$116	$86	$116
Miscellaneous	$225	$335	$379	$324	$517	$626	$251	$361
Taxes	$410	$386	$509	$514	$539	$853	$481	$786
Monthly Total	$2,885	$4,068	$4,677	$4,073	$6,228	$7,736	$3,237	$4,753
Annual Total	$34,620	$48,816	$56,124	$48,876	$74,736	$92,832	$38,844	$57,036
Hourly Wage	$17.31	$24.41	$28.06	$24.44	$37.37	$46.42	$19.42	$28.52

Kent County ALICE Over Time



Median Wage vs ALICE Households



Kent County Median Sale Price $365,000 (as of Feb 2026)

Kent County 2-BR Fair Market Rate $1,492

If your household earns this:

You can afford this:

	2 person	4 person	Rent	Home Price
100%AMI	$78,430	$98,000	$2,450	$294,000
			$1,961	$235,290
Moderate — 80% AMI	$62,750	$78,400	$1,960	$235,200
			$1,569	$188,250
Low — 50% AMI	$39,200	$49,000	$1,225	$147,000
			$980	$117,600
Extremely Low — 30% AMI	$23,550	$29,400	$735	$88,200
			$588	$70,650

Occ Therapist $90,300 · Civil Engrs $93,940

Police, Sheriff $80,920 · Investigators $83,980 · Nurse BSN $86,280 (#5)

Computer Admin $75,870 · Guidance Counsel $76,640 · Architect $77,860 · Aircraft Mech $78,770

HR $61,310 · Dietician $62,620 · Librarian $63,320 · PT Assts $63,720 · Business Ops $69,820 · Teacher $73,940

Truck Drivers $52,460 · Paralegals $52,770 · Social Worker $56,220 · Postal Svs $57,470 · Electrician $58,420

EMTs $44,420 · Bookkeeper $44,710 · Construction $44,630 · Mechanics $47,400 · Real Estate $49,700

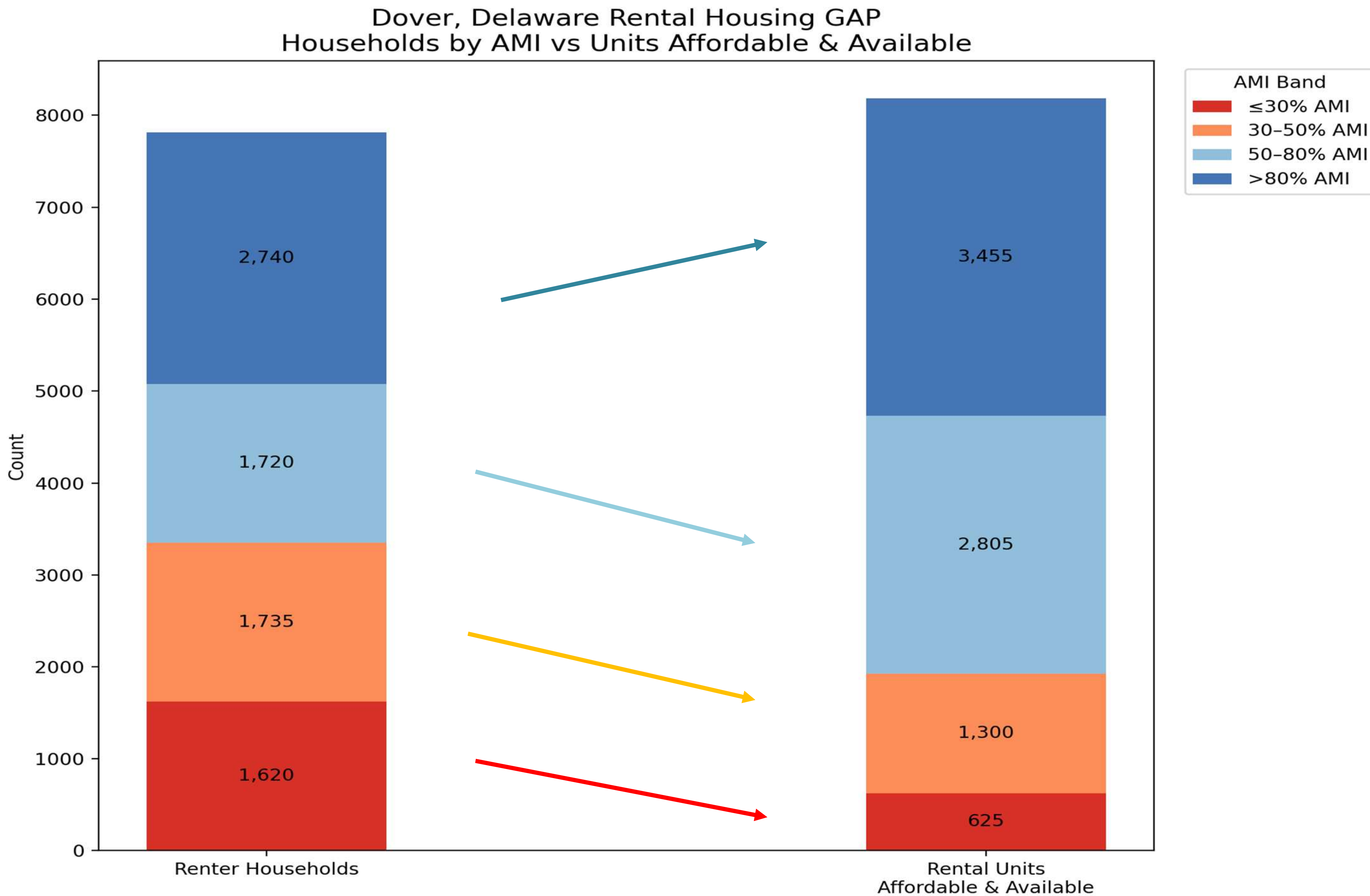
Retail Sales $32,120 (#3) · Medical Assts $38,750 · Customer Svs $38,070 (#10) · Secretary $44,020 (#6)

Fast Food $21,160 (#1) · Cashiers $29,160 (#2) · Waiters $33,050 (#9) · Personal Care $33,310 (#4)

Seasonal Parks: $15/hour

Top 4 jobs make a median of < $35k/avg $15.30/hr.

Dover: *Min wage need to work per week:* 60hrs/0BR, 61hrs/1BR, 77hrs/2BR, 107hrs/3BR, 122hrs/4BR

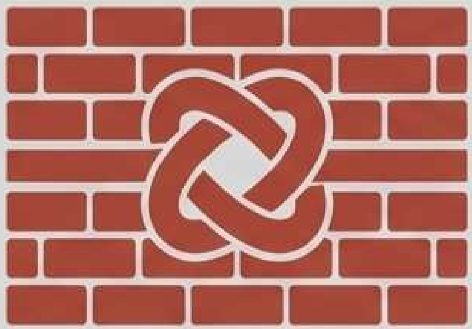


Threshold	#Renters	#Units	Gap
≤30% AMI	1,620	625	-995
30-50% AMI	1,735	1300	-435
50-80% AMI	1,720	2,805	1,085
80-100% AMI	2,740	3,455	715
Total	7,815	8,185	370

Note: “Affordable and available” units include vacant units and units occupied by households at or below the applicable income threshold. Data are rounded per HUD disclosure rules.

Chart replicates the **National Low Income Housing Coalition GAP methodology** at a local (city) scale.

The Paradigm: Local Barriers vs. Local Levers



Local Barriers (The Friction We Create):

- Zoning and land-use constraints limiting small-scale housing
- Permitting timelines and development friction increasing project costs
- Infrastructure and site readiness issues
- Financing gaps for small developers and rehabilitation projects
- Market pressures such as rising construction costs, taxes, and insurance

Local Levers (The Tools We Possess):

- Enable gentle density (ADUs, duplexes, triplexes)
- Streamline approvals for smaller housing projects
- Launch programs to bring vacant units back online
- Support small-scale developers and rehabilitation projects
- Expand attainable homeownership pathways

Housing Policy Actions & Outcomes (2013-2026)

Foundational planning adoptions represent local effort, but site-specific friction has stalled critical density—paving the way for new State-level interventions.

Key Takeaways

The Structural Mismatch

- Building housing can help, but the real question is whether the housing being built **matches the incomes** of the people who live and work here.
- There are fewer affordable units than households who need them; this structural mismatch drives rising rents, overcrowding, and displacement.

The Squeeze on Dover's Workforce

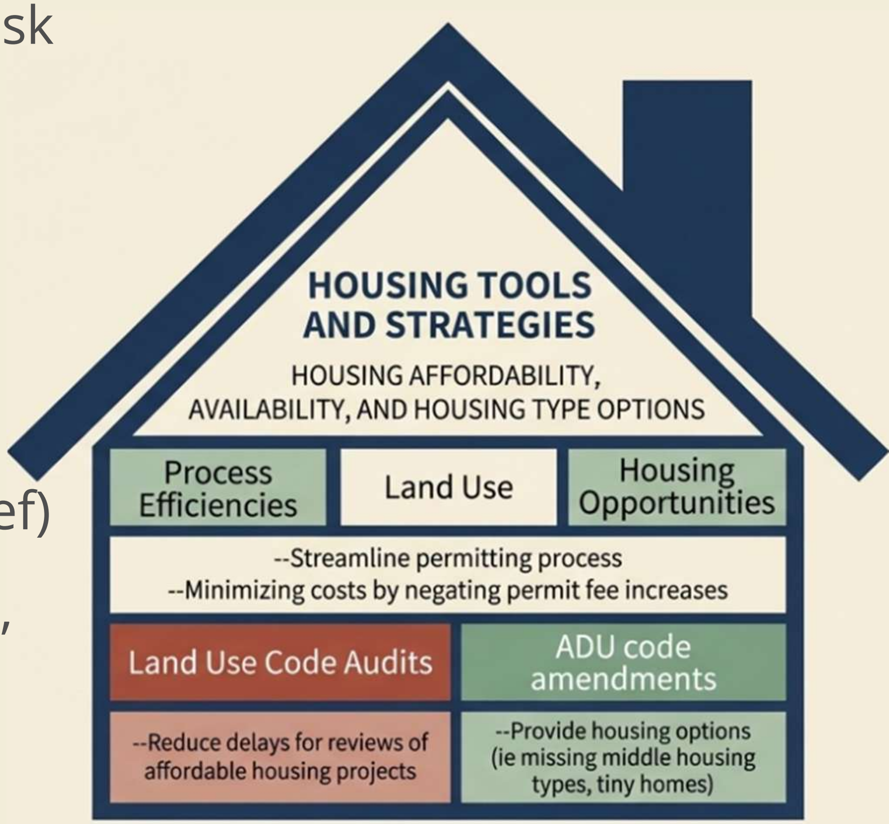
- When vacancy is limited and renter share is high, even small cost increases create outsized pressure.
- Cost burden is a **leading indicator of instability** — long before homelessness or displacement appears.
- Employment alone no longer guarantees housing stability in Dover.
- HUD's Fair Market Rent benchmarks confirm sustained upward pressure, not a short-term fluctuation.
- ALICE households earn above poverty levels but below what it costs to live locally.
- The gap between ALICE Budget and wages affects workforce stability, commuting patterns, and local employers.

The Mandate for Local Action

- Local barriers create local opportunities opportunities for action...These are local decisions within municipal control.

Interventions

- Governor’s Affordable Housing Stock Task Force
- Increase gentle density (ADUs, duplex–fourplex)
- Attainable ownership (Down Payment Assistance (DPA), shared equity, CLTs).
- Preserve rentals (rehab, energy, tax relief)
- Unlock new supply (pre-approved plans, streamlining)
- Target vacancy (rehab incentives, conversions)
- Small Scale and Incremental Development



Questions

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ATTACHMENT #2
Council Committee of the Whole Meeting of 03/10/2026

TO: Dover Town Council **DATE:** March 10, 2026

FROM: Michele A Williams PhD (AKA Dr. Tiny), Fuller Center for Housing of Delaware

SUBJECT: Dover and Kent County's Housing Snapshot

Part I: The Problem – Dover's Universe of Housing & the Structural Mismatch

The current housing landscape in Dover is defined by a significant misalignment between the cost of available units and the actual incomes of residents.

16,659	92%	53%	~6%
Total Housing Units in Dover	Occupancy Rate (1,020 vacant)	Renter-Occupied (8,198 units)	Rental Vacancy Rate (Owners: 1.4%)

WHY THIS MATTERS

Dover is a renter-majority city — more than half of all occupied units are rentals. In markets like this, renters absorb price pressure first and fastest. Even a modest rent increase can push hundreds of working families into financial crisis.

FY 2026 Fair Market Rent (effective 1 August 2025)

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Kent	$ 1,158	$ 1,165	$ 1,470	$ 2,044	$ 2,285
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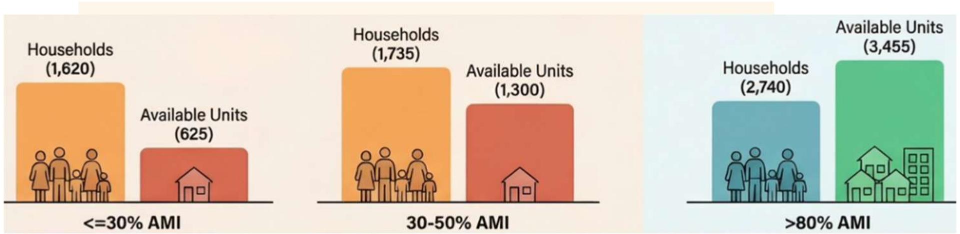


The Rental Market & Vacancy Signals

Because over half of Dover's population are renters, limited vacancy in specific price bands creates outsized market pressure. This pressure is sustained rather than seasonal; notably, the **FY 2026 FMR** for a 2-BR unit in Dover saw a **7.5% increase** over the previous year, signaling that costs are continuing to outpace local economic growth.

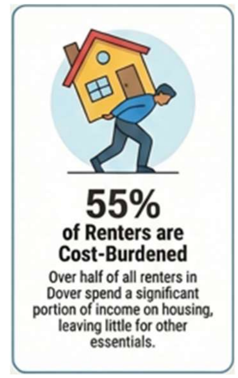
The Structural Mismatch (The Gap)

The fundamental issue is a lack of homes at price points local households can afford. The surplus of units in higher income brackets suggests that higher-income units are being occupied by lower-income households who are forced to overspend, or they are held by those with greater financial mobility, leaving the lowest earners with no options.

The Critical Deficit

Dover **faces** a staggering **995-unit gap** for households at or below **30% AMI** and a **435-unit gap** for those in the **30-50% AMI** range. While there is a combined surplus of **1,800 units** for those earning above **50% AMI**, these homes do not "trickle down" effectively. Instead, the lack of units at the bottom creates a vacuum that drives cost burden across the entire city.

Part II: The Impact – Local Workforce Stability and Cost Burden



Renter Cost-Burden Analysis

Dover’s renters are under extreme financial duress, which serves as a leading indicator of community-wide instability:

- **55% of renters are cost-burdened** (spending >30% of income on housing).
- **23% of renters are severely cost-burdened** (spending >50% of income on housing).

TRANSLATING PERCENTAGES TO PEOPLE

Dover has approximately 8,198 renter households. At 28% cost-burdened, that is roughly 2,295 Dover families spending an unsustainable share on rent. At 22% severely burdened, roughly 1,804 households spend more than half their income on housing — leaving under $2,000/month for food, healthcare, transportation, and childcare combined. These are not distant statistics. These are Dover's teachers' aides, home health workers, food service staff, and retail associates.

The ALICE Threshold in Kent County

The crisis affects the "working middle" as much as those in poverty. **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households earn above the Federal Poverty Level but cannot afford a basic survival budget. In Delaware, **11%** of households live in poverty, but an additional **30%** are ALICE. Collectively, **41% of households** are one emergency—a medical bill or car repair—away from total housing instability.

Workforce Impact: The Survival Budget vs. Wages

The **ALICE Household Survival Budget** for a single adult in Kent County is **$34,620. For a household with one adult and one school-age child, that requirement jumps to $51,240**. Currently, a minimum wage worker in Dover must work **60 hours per week** just to afford a **0-BR unit** and an untenable **77 hours per week** to afford a **2-BR unit**.

THE AFFORDABILITY RULE

Housing is affordable when it consumes 30% or less of gross household income. A Dover renter earning the median of $49,794/year who pays the median rent of $1,344/month is already at 32.4% of income — above the threshold. Half of all Dover renters pay more than the median.

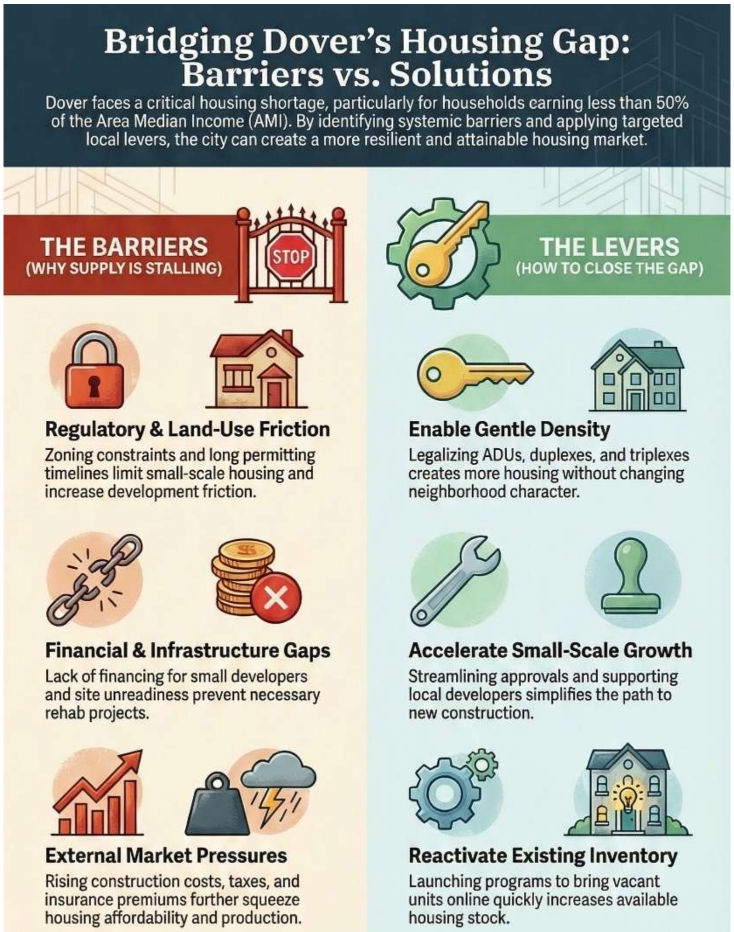
Occupational Shortfall List

Despite being **Employed**, workers in Dover’s most common occupations cannot meet the **$51,240** survival budget for a single-parent household:

- **Waiters and Waitresses:** Median wage $28,150 ($23,090 shortfall)
- **Childcare Workers:** Median wage $28,240 ($23,000 shortfall)
- **Cashiers:** Median wage $29,970 ($21,270 shortfall)
- **Preschool Teachers:** Median wage $30,660 ($20,580 shortfall)

Part III: The Solution – Local Levers and Interventions

Addressing this mismatch does not require massive new spending; rather, it requires the removal of regulatory friction and the activation of existing assets.

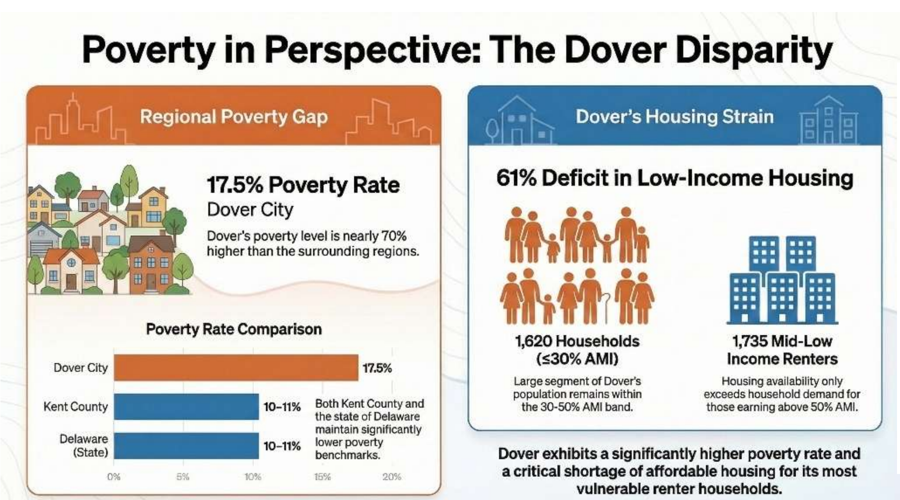


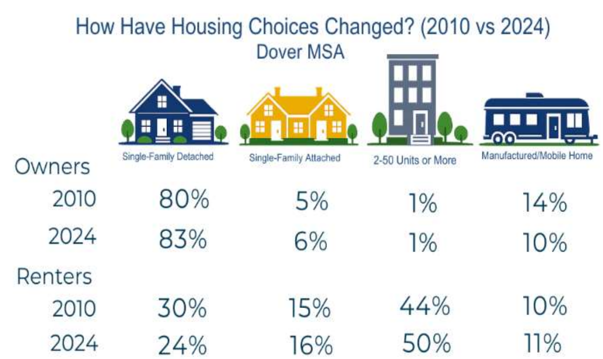
Governor's Affordable Housing Stock Task Force:

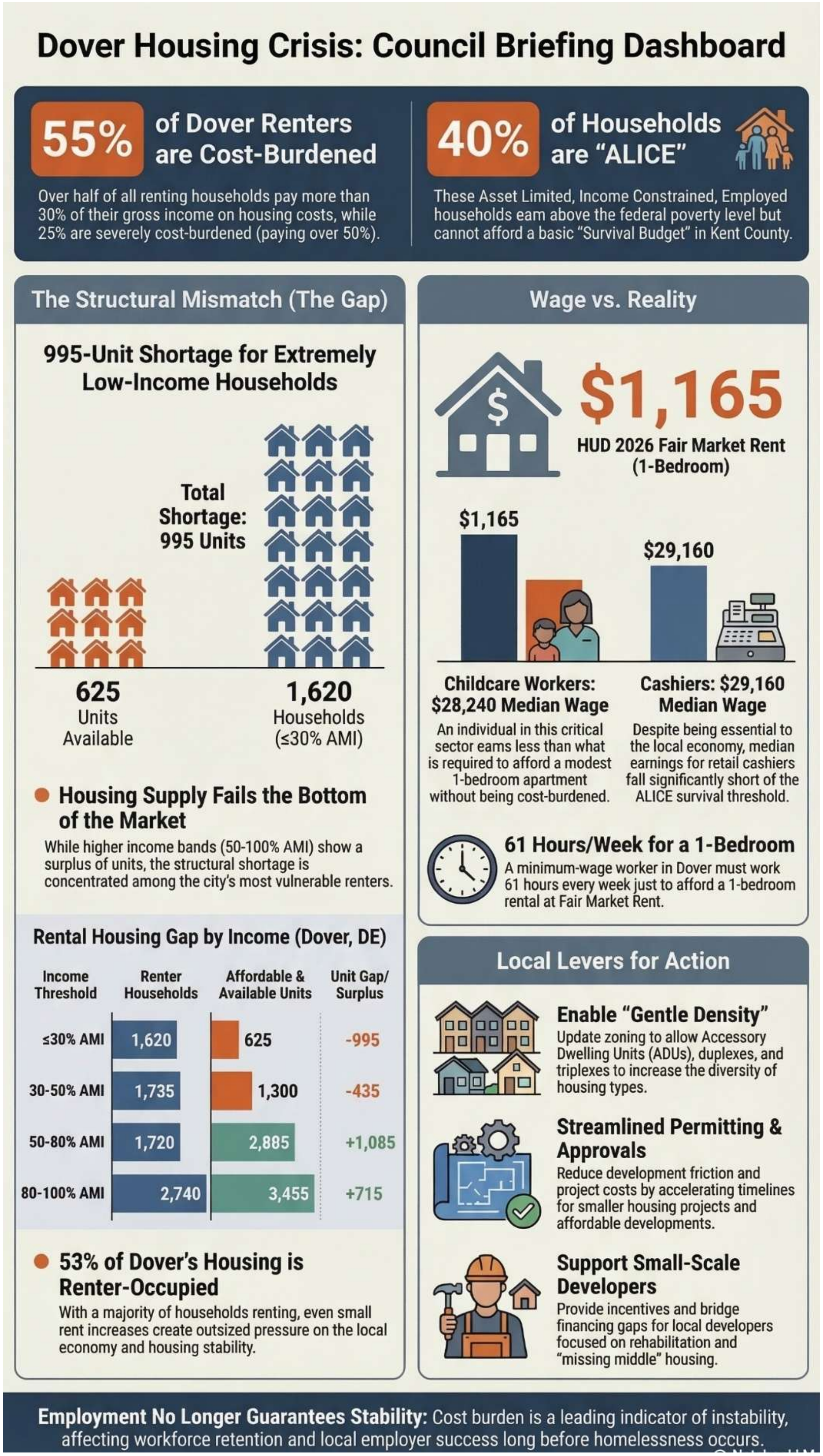
https://www.destatehousing.com/about/housing-production-task-force/

Homelessness Data Table (2007–2025)

Year	DE (State)	Kent Co (Local)	Notes
2007	1,089	218*	Initial HUD PIT Count
2017	1,015	223	Pre-pandemic baseline
2019	921	168	Historic low point
2020	1,165	267	Start of upward trend
2021	1,579	183	*Sheltered individuals only*
2022	2,369	223	Pandemic peak (motel vouchers)
2023	1,245	176	Post-pandemic stabilization
2024	1,358	246	Resumed upward growth
2025	1,585	266	Current record high







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