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# Lake Almanor Basin Housing Assessment Draft Report

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March 2023

Prepared for: LMNOP Design

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# Acknowledgements

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ECONorthwest prepared this report as a subcontractor for LMNOP Design.

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# 1. Housing Profile of Lake Almanor Basin

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## 1.1 Overview

In 2021 the Dixie Fire devastated large areas of Northern California, becoming the largest single wildfire in the state's history. Greenville, a town in Plumas County near Lake Almanor, saw 75 percent of its structures destroyed as a result,<sup>1</sup> creating a number of challenges for housing in this rural area of the state.

ECONorthwest is supporting LMNOP Design on a systems-based approach for developing a strategic plan to address affordable housing need in the Lake Almanor region of Plumas County. This report includes a housing profile of the area, an analysis of the impact of second homes and vacation rentals, and an assessment of the implications for workforce housing. Chapter 1 presents data and analysis on:

- **Housing Stock**, including details on housing stock in Greenville and Plumas County, including homeownership, vacancy rates, types of available housing, and regulated affordable units.
- **Socioeconomic Factors**, which may impact housing needs and dynamics, including income, race, ethnicity, age, and household type.
- **Market Factors** showing local market conditions, including median housing costs, home sale prices, and rental data.

The primary objective of this section is to provide a baseline context of where we were before the fire, in addition to providing insights into the direction of market activity since.

### 1.1.1 Key Findings

- **The majority of residents in Plumas County are homeowners and live in single-family detached homes.** In 2017-2021, 72 percent of households owned their homes and the majority of units were single-family detached houses. About 13 percent of units were mobile homes, and a very small share of units were in multifamily buildings. Homes sold in Greenville and Plumas County since the 2021 Dixie Fire were also predominately single family, reflecting the general character of housing stock in the area.
- **Before the Dixie Fire, Greenville had a low vacancy rate, lower median rents, and older building stock.** Buildings in the town tended to be older than those in the County by over two decades on average. Average housing costs in Greenville were less than half of average rent across California and lower than Plumas County overall. In 2017-2021, median rent in Greenville was \$700 per month.

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<sup>1</sup> Sophie Kasakove, Annie Correal, and Derrick Bryson Taylor, "We Lost Greenville': A California Town Is Overrun by the Dixie Fire," The New York Times, August 5, 2021, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/05/us/dixie-fire-greenville-california.html#:~:text=Fire%20officials%20estimated%20that%2075.>

- **There is a lack of regulated affordable housing units in the market.** There are few regulated affordable units across Plumas County and none in Greenville, with less than 1 percent of all units receiving a subsidy from LIHTC, HUD, or USDA.
- **Average housing costs in Greenville were less than half of average costs across California and lower than Plumas County overall.** In 2017-2021 over a quarter of Greenville residents paid between \$300 and \$500 per month. In the thirteen months following the Dixie Fire, the median home sale price for Plumas County was 30% higher than Greenville at \$353,000 compared to \$271,000 in the city.
- **Despite lower housing costs, incomes are low. Both Plumas County and Greenville have lower median incomes than California overall.** However, residents in the study area were also far less cost burdened than the state as a whole, with nearly half of Plumas County residents spending less than 20 percent of monthly earnings toward housing costs.
- **In Greenville, cost burdening affected lower-income households much more than higher-income households.** Although housing costs and incomes are roughly proportionate in Plumas County, in 2017-2021 the ACS estimates that virtually all households with an annual income under \$20,000 in Greenville were cost burdened.
- **Greenville and Plumas County have an aging population that is less diverse than California as a whole.** Over a third of Greenville residents were over the age of 65 in 2017-2021. About 80 percent of residents in both areas were White alone, with far less racial and ethnic diversity than California overall. Greenville also had a lower share of family households compared with Plumas County and slightly smaller household sizes on average in 2017-2021.

### 1.1.2 Data Considerations and Sources

#### American Community Survey (ACS)

This analysis uses the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates. Due to the small population in the Greenville Census Designated Place (CDP) and Plumas County, the ACS only provides data in 5-year aggregate in the study area geographies rather than the more recent 1-year estimates available in more populous areas. Although there are some known collection issues with the 2020 Decennial Census,<sup>2</sup> the ACS provides a profile of Greenville and Plumas County up to the 2021 wildfires using multiple years of data collection to inform its estimates.

#### Property Radar

To understand the current housing market after the Dixie Fire, this analysis also covers data from October 2021 through December 2022 in Plumas County and Greenville pulled from the third-party real estate data provider Property Radar. Trends in the housing market after the

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<sup>2</sup> D’Vera Cohn and Jeffrey S. Passel, “Key Facts about the Quality of the 2020 Census,” Pew Research Center, June 8, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/06/08/key-facts-about-the-quality-of-the-2020-census/#:~:text=Some%20researchers%20also%20have%20included.>

Dixie Fire are difficult to definitively track because of incomplete data. Publicly available information about home sales and rental prices is limited, given the low population and transaction velocity in the area.

## 1.2 Housing Stock

Encouraging a range of housing types to meet the diverse needs of the population is important in developing sustainable and resilient communities. This section provides a detailed profile of the local housing stock that characterizes the range and condition of housing types in Plumas County and the town of Greenville, California, with some comparison to state trends, including:

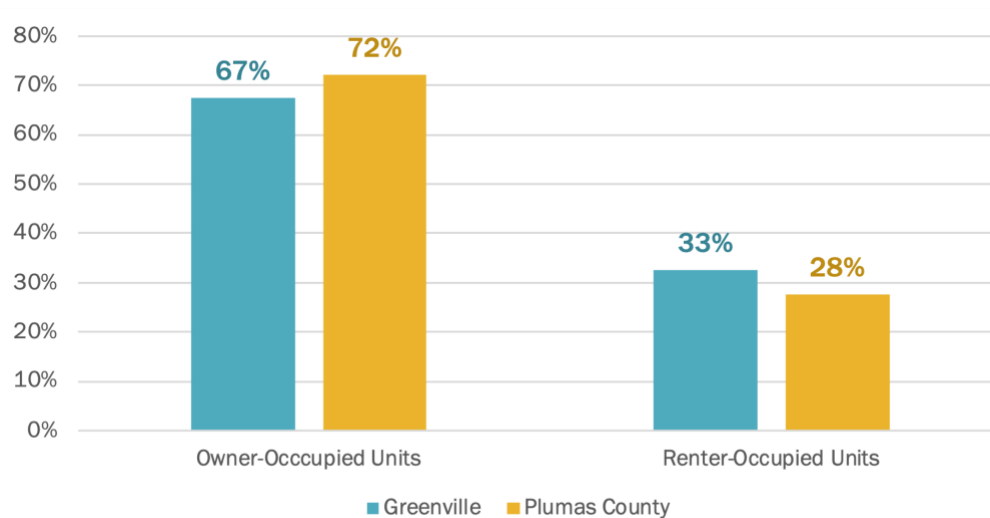
- Renter-occupied and owner-occupied housing units
- Housing stock by age
- Distribution of housing stock by type
- Estimated share of units that are used as secondary homes or vacation rentals
- Number of deed-restricted affordable housing units

### 1.2.1 Homeownership

In 2017-2021, Plumas County had about 15,422 total housing units, with 426 of those units (2.8 percent) located in Greenville. The majority of Greenville and Plumas County residents owned their homes with about a third of units in Greenville occupied by renters.

#### Exhibit 1. Housing Tenure, Greenville CDP and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04



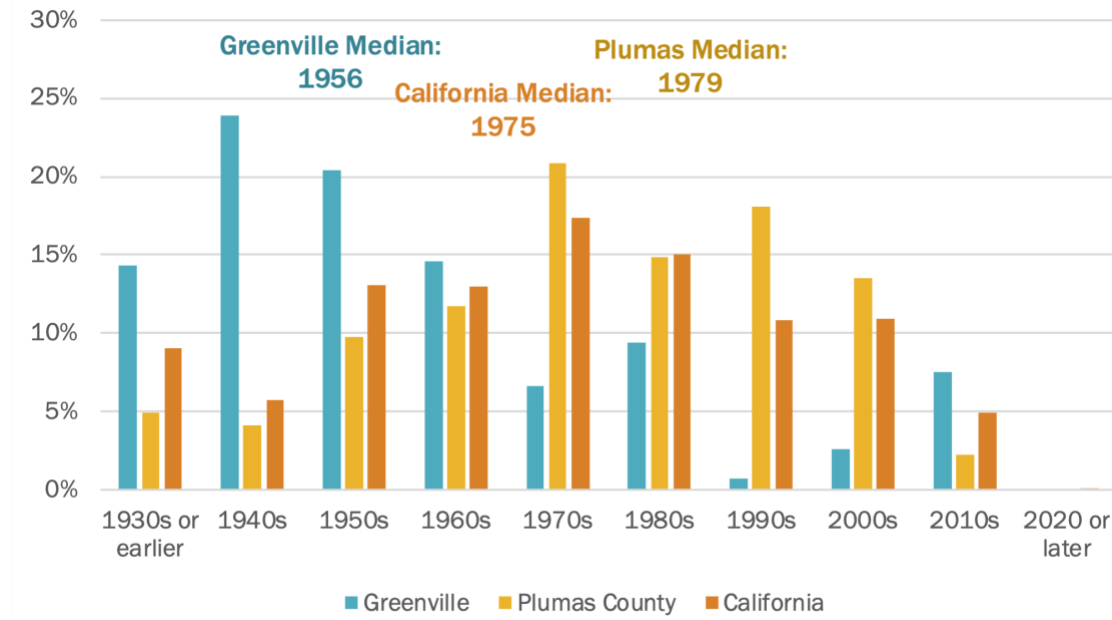


### 1.2.2 Age of Housing

The housing stock in Greenville was older in comparison with Plumas County and the state by about twenty years, with a large share of its units built in the 1940s to 1960s. The County in general is comprised of somewhat newer homes compared to California’s average overall, with a greater share built in the 1970s to 1990s. Both Greenville and Plumas County had no homes built since 2020.

**Exhibit 2. Age of Housing Stock, Greenville CDP, Plumas County, and California, 2017-2021**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

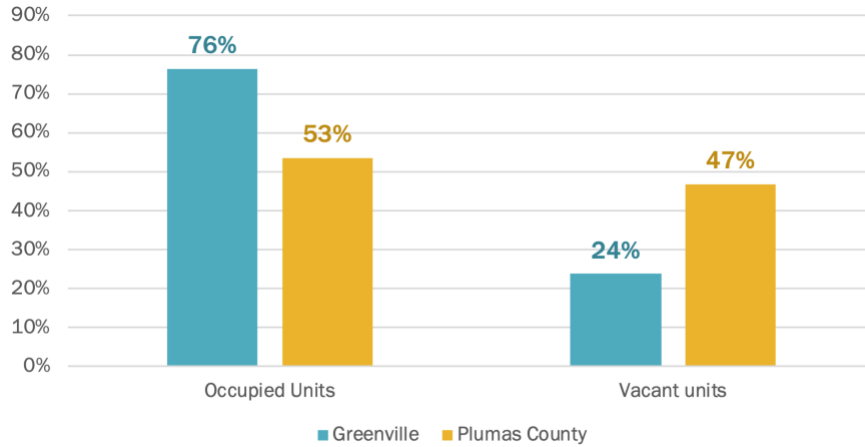


### 1.2.3 Vacancy

Nearly half of the 15,422 units across Plumas County were vacant in 2017-2021, but the vacancy rate for Greenville’s 426 units was considerably lower. The city had a far higher share of occupied units compared to the county, with less than a quarter vacant. High vacancy rates are indicative of the potential impacts of the second-home market in the region.

### Exhibit 3. Vacancy Rate, Greenville CDP and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04

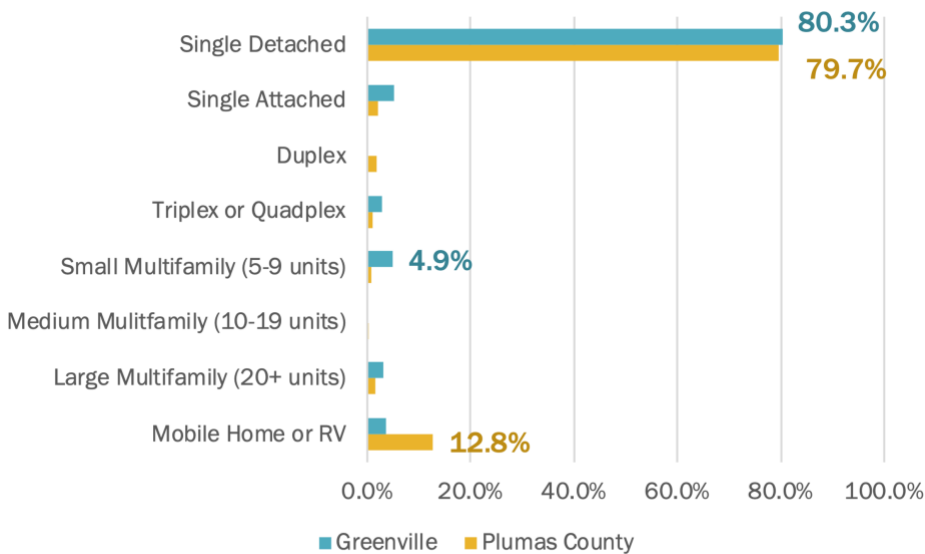


### 1.2.4 Housing Types

Both Greenville and Plumas County have a large share of single-family detached homes, comprising about 80 percent of each area, respectively. Greenville had virtually no other housing types except for a small share of small multifamily buildings with 5 to 9 units. Plumas County also had a significant share of mobile homes and RVs that accounted for about 12 percent of all units. A lack of diversity in housing types contributes to affordability challenges.

### Exhibit 4. Housing Units by Type, Greenville CDP and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04



### 1.2.5 Deed-Restricted Units

Plumas County has 8 regulated affordable housing developments, with 311 units in all, using a combination of LIHTC, HUD, and USDA funding. Three are in Chester, three are in Quincy, and three are in Portola.

#### **Exhibit 5. Affordable Homes and Developments by Funding Source**

Source: California Housing Partnership, Plumas County: Benefits of Affordable Rental Housing

Funding Source	Affordable Homes	Developments
LIHTC	94	2
HUD	47	1
USDA	264	7
HCD	0	0
CalHFA	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>8</b>

# 1.3 Socioeconomic Factors

An evaluation of baseline socioeconomic factors underscores the challenges that residents are facing in their housing choice. This section documents trends and conditions of socioeconomic factors in Plumas County and the town of Greenville, California, including:

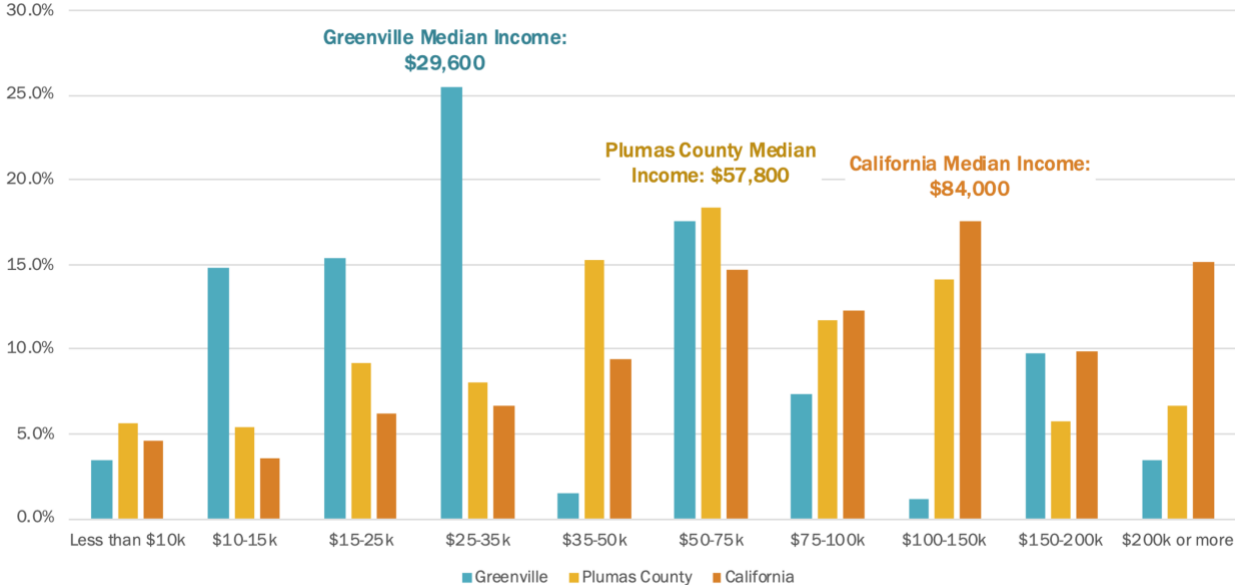
- Median income
- Baseline demographics for race, ethnicity, and age
- Family status, household size, and overcrowding
- Homeownership rates
- Workforce and commuting trends

## 1.3.1 Income

Median income in Greenville was lower than Plumas County overall in 2017-2021, with the majority of residents making under \$35,000 annually. While the annual median income for the County was approximately \$57,000, very few households in Greenville had an income between \$35,000 and 50,000. Both Greenville and Plumas County had a much lower median income than California, which was \$84,000 in the same time period.

**Exhibit 6. Median Income, Greenville, Plumas County, and California 2017-2021**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates, Table S1901

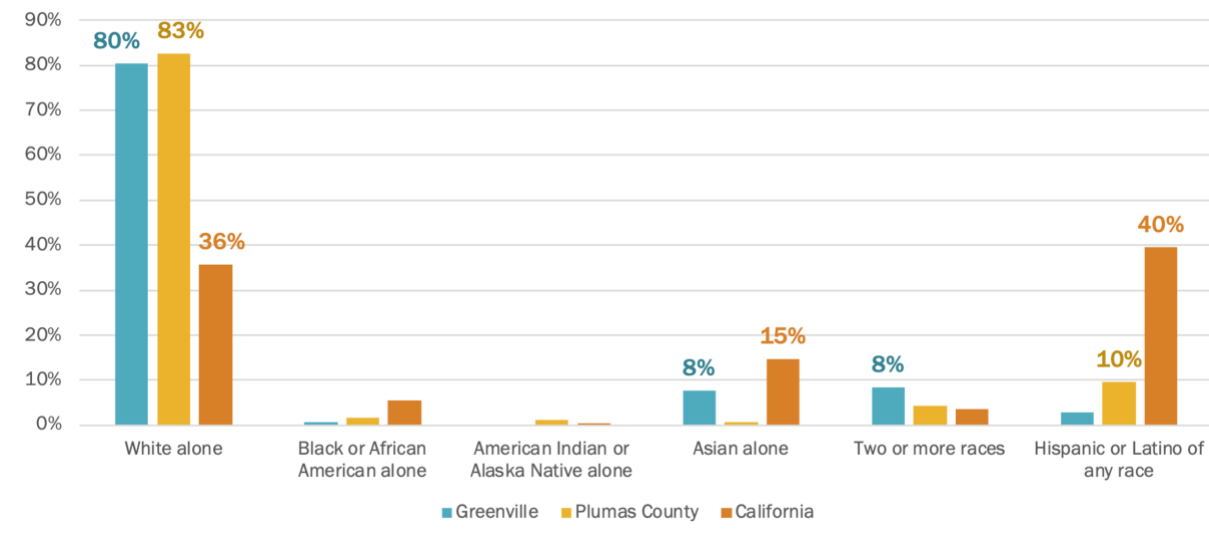


### 1.3.2 Race and Ethnicity

Greenville was more diverse than Plumas County in 2017-2021 overall, although both geographies were over 80 percent White alone. The margins of error for less populous race and ethnicity categories make it difficult to state an exact share for these groups. Greenville had a higher share of Asian residents and people of two or more races than the County, at about 8 percent of the population each. Greenville had a comparatively lower share of Hispanic or Latino residents of any race than the County. Both Greenville and Plumas County had over double the share of White alone residents compared with California overall.

#### Exhibit 7. Race and Ethnicity, Greenville and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table B03002

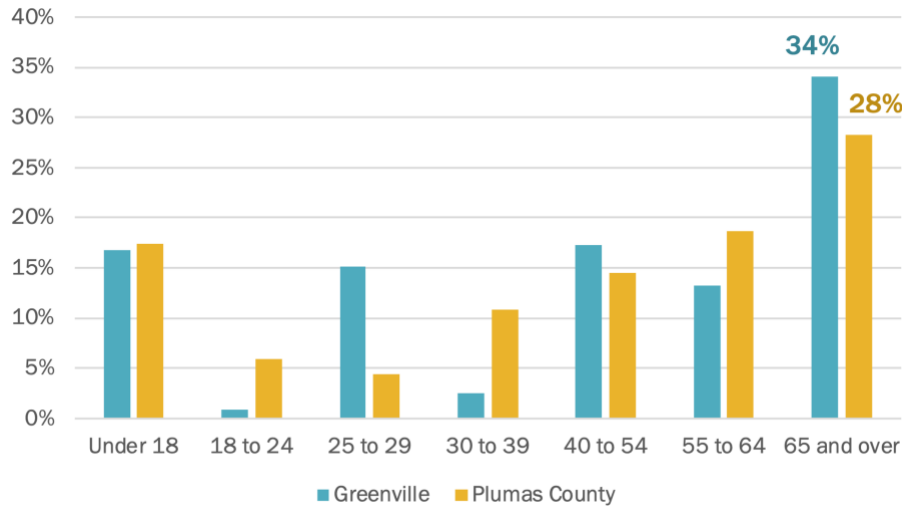


### 1.3.3 Age

In 2017-2021 the median age for Greenville was 51 and the median age for Plumas County was 52. Residents aged 18 to 24 and 30 to 39 comprised only 1 percent of the population in Greenville, respectively. Over a quarter of both Greenville and Plumas County were over the age of 65. An aging population base will translate into shifting housing needs as a share of seniors seek to transition into smaller housing types or continuing care.

### Exhibit 8. Age, Greenville and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101

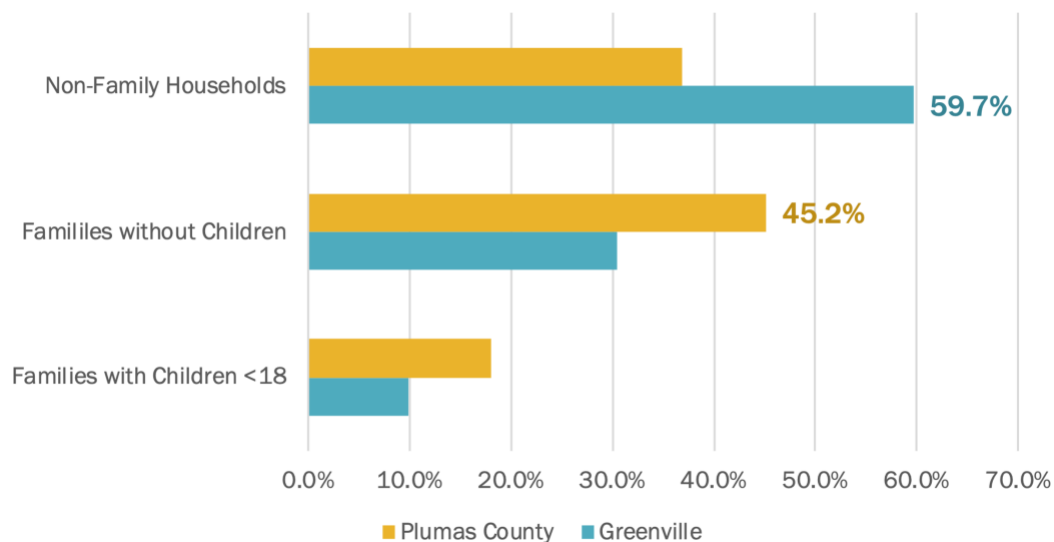


### 1.3.4 Household Type and Size

In Greenville over half of households were nonfamily households in 2017-2021, comparatively higher than Plumas County. The city also has about half the number of families with children under 18 compared with the county. This could be indicative of the presence of a specific workforce segment. The average household size was slightly smaller in Greenville.

### Exhibit 9. Household Type, Greenville and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101



### Exhibit 10. Household Size, Greenville and Plumas County, 2017-2021

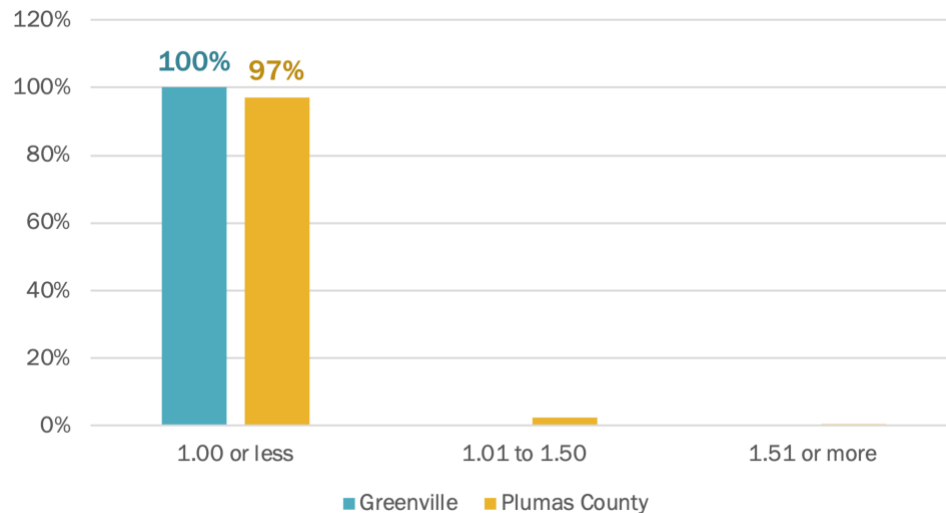
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101

<b>1.98</b>	<b>2.35</b>
Greenville CDP	Plumas County

Typically, a ratio of persons per room above 1.0 is the threshold for overcrowding and above 1.5 is the threshold for severe overcrowding. Neither Greenville nor Plumas County had overcrowding issues in 2017-2021, with only a small portion of households in the county reaching above 1.0.

### Exhibit 11. Persons Per Bedroom, Greenville CDP and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04



## 1.4 Market Factors

An understanding of local market conditions informs how market forces are impacting affordability and real estate investment patterns. This section documents observations in the local real estate market since the Dixie Fire using data from the 2017-2021 ACS and a survey of recent for-sale transactions obtained from the third-party data source Property Radar. Additionally, this analysis explores rent levels for varying property types to provide a sense of the price points where housing is achievable for local residents, including metrics for:

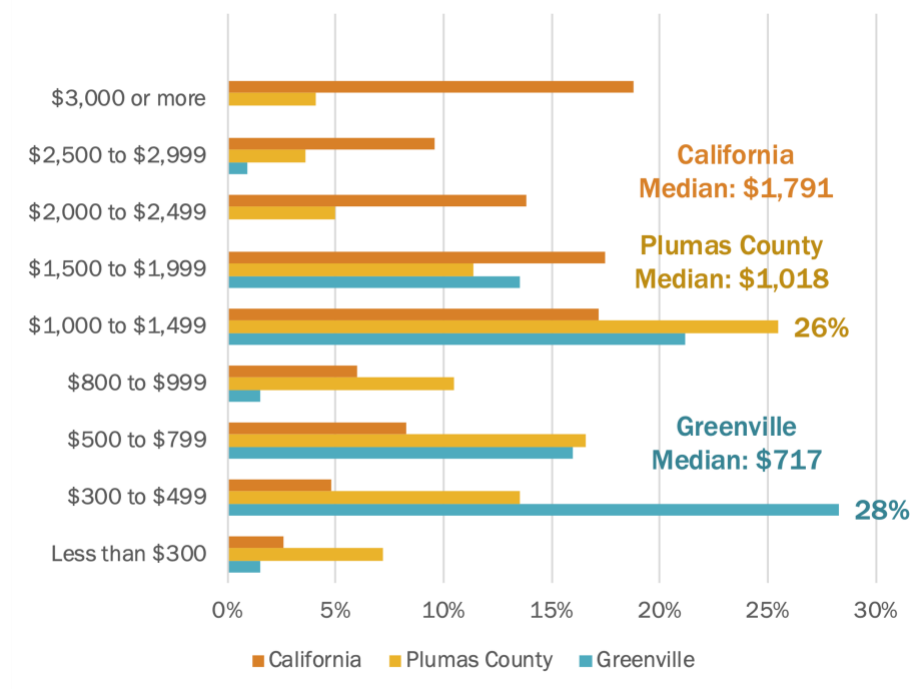
- Median rents
- Median prices of recent home sales
- Affordability levels
- Rate of cost burden and severe cost burden by demographic cohort

### 1.4.1 Monthly Housing Costs

Between 2017 and 2021, monthly housing costs in Greenville were typically lower than Plumas County overall. The median monthly cost for households in Greenville was only \$717, about \$300 lower than the median cost for Plumas County residents and over \$1,000 lower than California overall. This average includes both renter and owner-occupied homes.

#### Exhibit 12. Monthly Housing Costs, Greenville, Plumas County, and California 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table 2503



### 1.4.2 Affordability

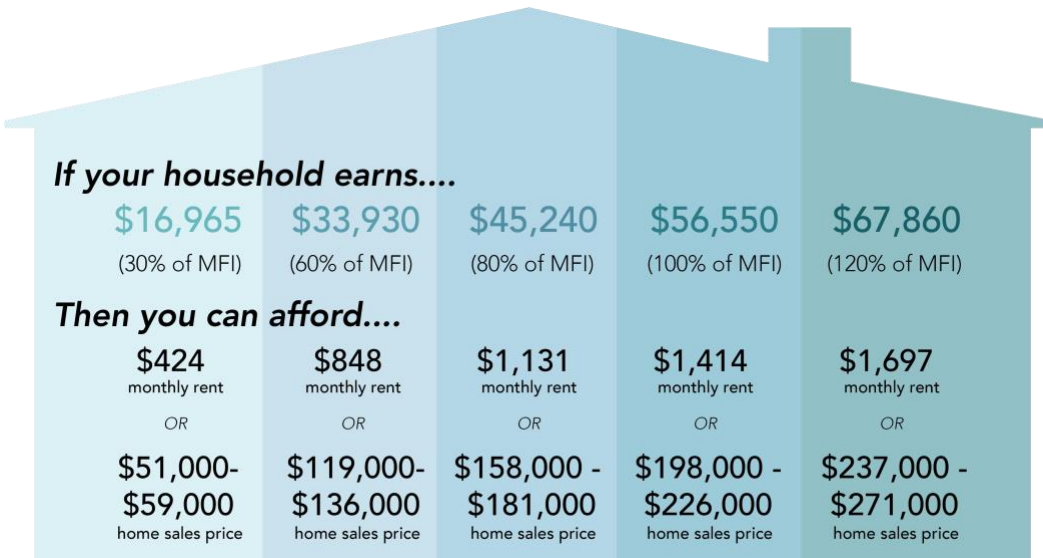
Although monthly housing costs tend to be lower in Greenville and Plumas County compared with the state, median incomes in both geographies are also lower than California as a whole (Exhibit 6). Exhibit 13 below compares area median income (AMI) determined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Plumas County, affordable monthly housing costs for a 2- or 4-person household in 2022. To determine what rent or home sales price would be affordable, this calculation assumes that a household would spend 30 percent of their monthly income towards housing costs.



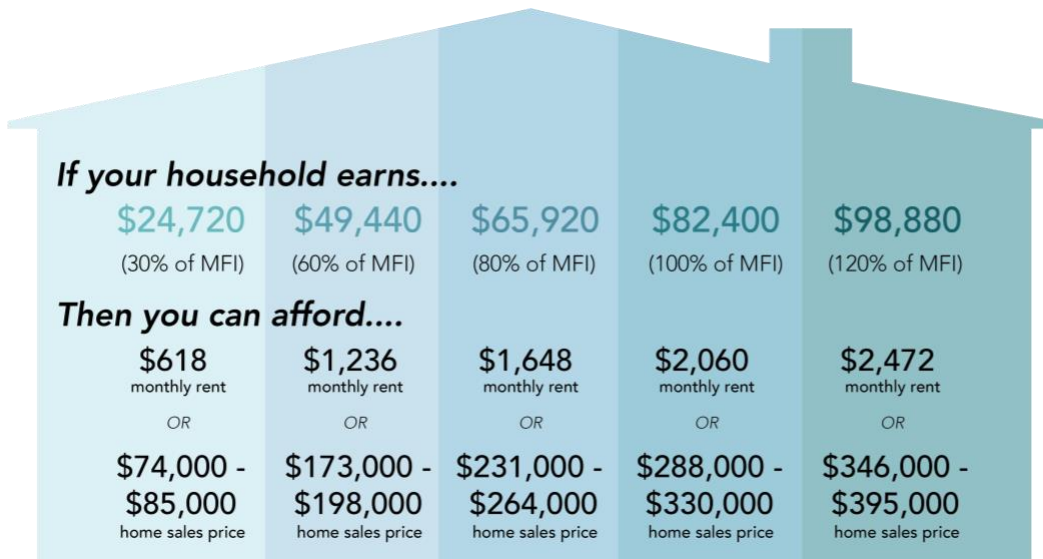
### Exhibit 13. Affordable Housing Costs for Plumas County Residents, 2022

Source: HUD Income Levels

For a 2-Person Household:



For a 4-Person Household:

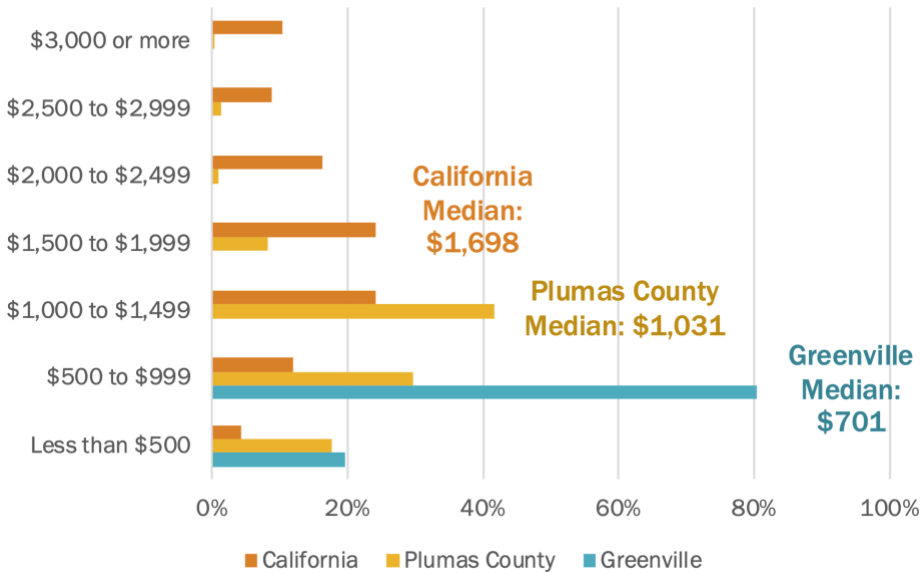


#### 1.4.3 Rental Costs

Rental costs in Greenville were much lower than both Plumas County and California overall in 2017-2021. Compared with the state, Greenville renters paid less than half in gross monthly rent. This median rate is affordable for a 2-person household making 60 percent of AMI, as well as a 4-person household making 30 percent of AMI. However, lower rents clearly reflect the difference in quality of housing stock observed in the analysis above.

**Exhibit 14. Median Gross Rent, Greenville, Plumas County, and California, 2017-2021**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table 2503

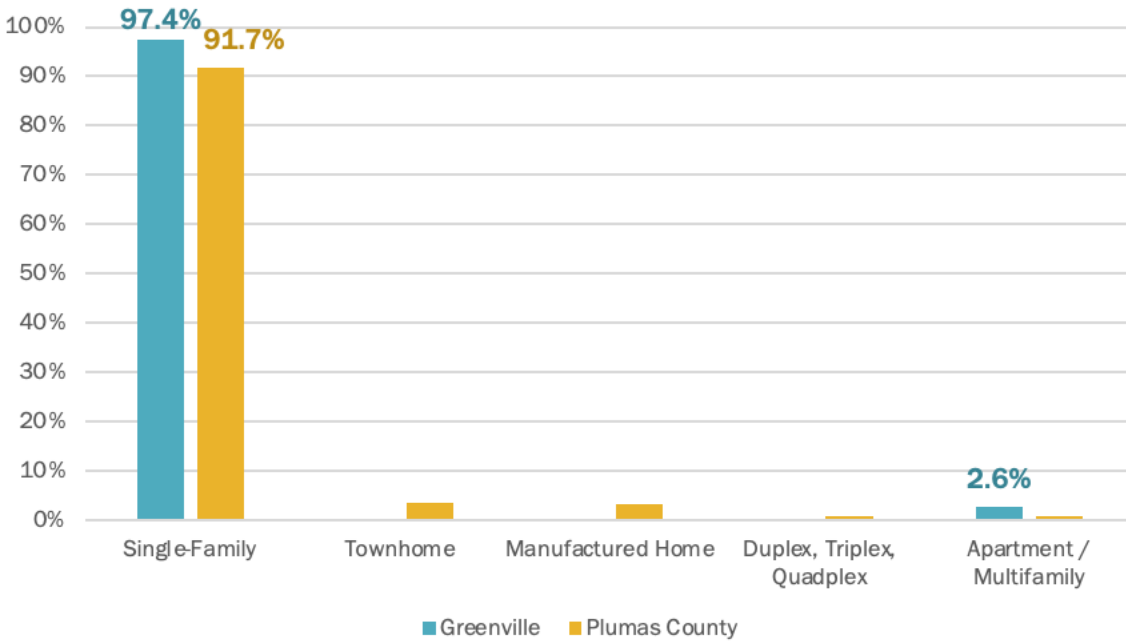


**1.4.4 Home Sale Prices**

Thirty-eight of Greenville’s home sales were registered on Property Radar during the postfire period, 97 percent of which were single-family detached homes. Plumas County’s sales were also predominately single-family homes, with a small share of townhomes, manufactured homes, and middle housing.

**Exhibit 15. Home Sales by Type, Greenville and Plumas County, October 2021 to December 2022**

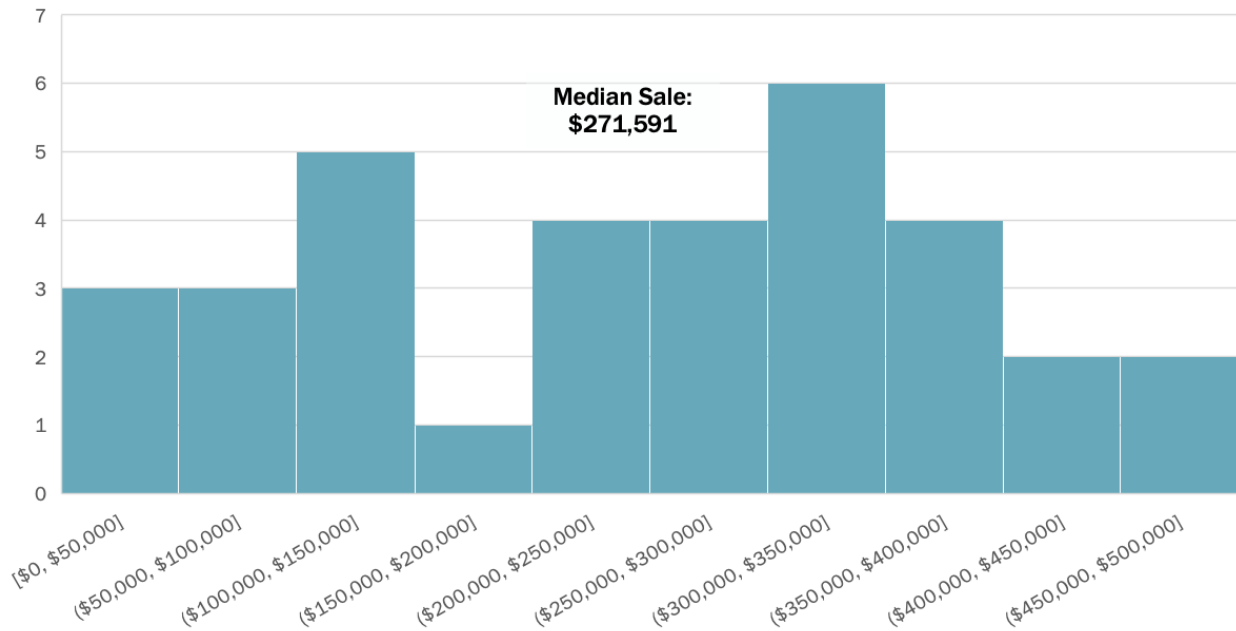
Source: Property Radar



The median home sale price in Greenville following the Dixie Fire was approximately \$271,000. Compared with area median income, this price point would likely be affordable to a 4-person household at 80 percent of AMI.

**Exhibit 16. Home Sales in Greenville, All Housing Types, October 2021 to December 2022**

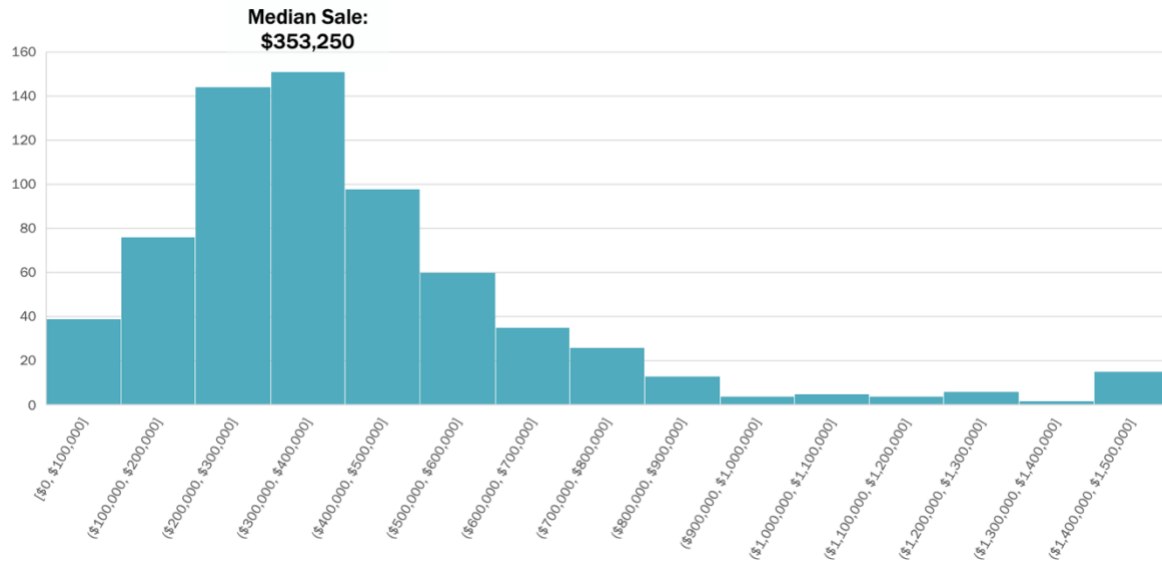
Source: Property Radar



In the thirteen months following the Dixie Fire, the median home sale price for Plumas County was 30% higher than Greenville at \$353,000 compared to \$271,000 in the city. This price is just out of the affordability range for a four-person household in Plumas County making the area median income. However, the distribution of sales prices shows some outliers upward of \$1 million, with a larger share of sales below the median.

**Exhibit 17. Home Sales in Plumas County, All Housing Types October 2021 to December 2022**

Source: Property Radar



**1.4.5 Cost Burdening**

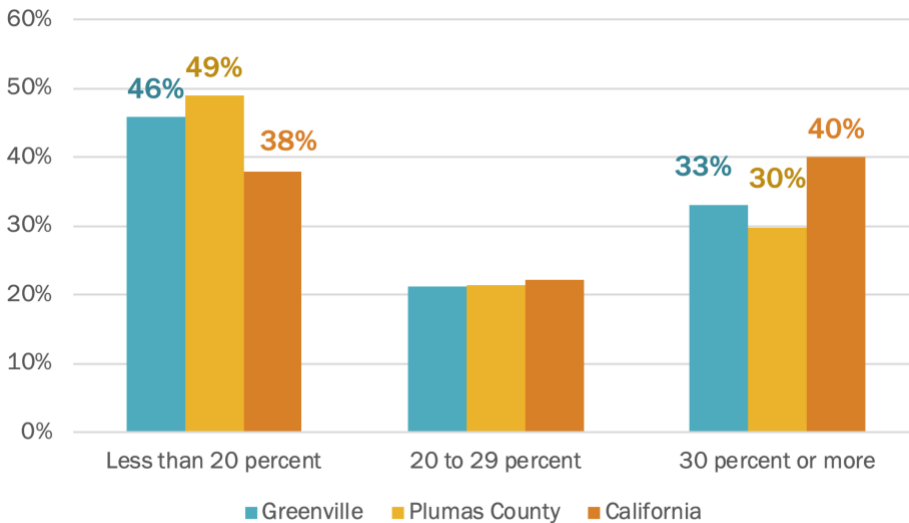
Cost burdening related to housing is generally characterized as households that pay 30 percent or more of their monthly income on housing costs (including rent, mortgage payments, utilities, and other fees).<sup>3</sup>

In 2017-2021, about a third of both residents in Greenville and Plumas County were cost burdened by this definition and about half of residents in each geography paid less than 20 percent of their income toward monthly housing costs. Compared with Plumas County and Greenville residents, a greater share (40 percent) of Californians across the state were cost burdened.

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau, “More than 19 Million Renters Burdened by Housing Costs,” Census.gov, December 8, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/renters-burdened-by-housing-costs.html#:~:text=Households%20spending%20more%20than%2030>.

**Exhibit 18. Monthly Housing Costs as % of Income, Greenville CDP, Plumas County, and California 2017-2021**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table S2503



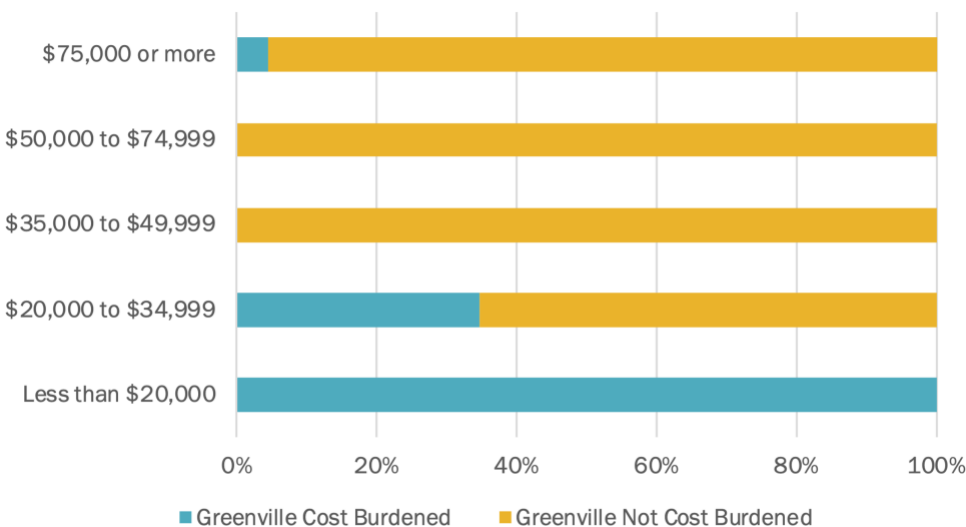
By income level, cost burdening most impacted those in Greenville making less than \$35,000 annually and had little impact on those above this threshold. Notably, 100 percent of households below \$20,000 in income were cost burdened in this time frame.

In Plumas County as a whole, lower income levels were also more likely to be cost burdened compared with higher-income households. However, cost burdening was more distributed throughout different income brackets and less concentrated on those making under \$20,000.

**Exhibit 19. Cost Burden by Income Group, Greenville CDP, 2017-2021**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table 2503

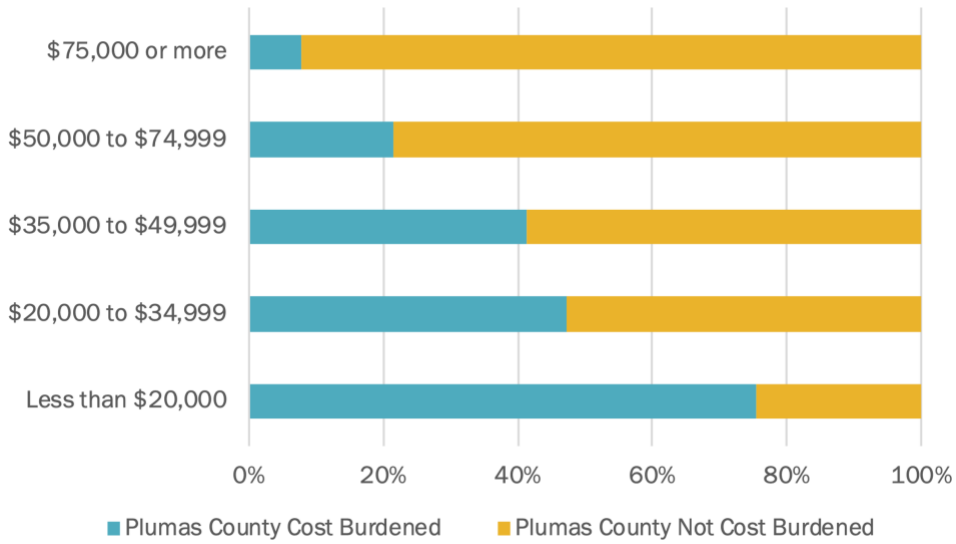
Note: The threshold level for cost-burdened households in this graphic is 30 percent of monthly income or higher.



### Exhibit 20. Cost Burden by Income Group, Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates, Table 2503

Note: The threshold level for cost-burdened households in this graphic is 30 percent of monthly income or higher.



## 2. Second Homes and Vacation Rentals

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### 2.1 Overview

The Plumas County Social Safety Net Needs Assessment conducted by the North Valley Community Foundation in 2021, in addition to other local planning documents, notes that there are a number of housing units within the County used as second homes or vacation rental properties. These properties may potentially be reducing the number of units available to permanent residents of the area and limiting options for those displaced by the Dixie Fire.

This section provides a profile of second-home sales and vacation rentals, concentrating on Greenville and the area around Lake Almanor. The analysis uses home sales data available from the third-party website Property Radar and the short-term rental platform Airbnb.

#### 2.1.1 Key Findings

- **Second homes are likely a significant share of units recently sold in the Lake Almanor area**, with the primary market for these homes being in-state residents in other areas of California. However, the town of Greenville likely has a lower share of rental homes sold compared to the County overall since October 2021, likely due to significant damage and higher demand from displaced residents wishing to stay in Greenville.
- **Short-term vacation rentals around Lake Almanor are primarily larger luxury units renting for \$300 per night or more.** These units would likely not be affordable for most residents, particularly as workforce rentals. Outside of the vacation rental market, very few units with four or more bedrooms are typically renter occupied in Plumas County.
- **Some smaller vacation rental units may be contributing to the area's shortage of available rental housing.** Studio or 1-bedroom units are more likely to be occupied by renters in Plumas County, and these units are available at lower monthly rates on average, making them more attainable for a range of households. However, smaller studio or 1-bedroom units do not account for a large portion of the second-home rental inventory, nor do they make up a large portion of units in the County overall.

### 2.2 Second-Home Sales

#### 2.2.1 Methodology

Property sales data tracked by the third-party website Property Radar show some general trends in the current second-home market in the area after the Dixie Fire. This analysis includes data from October 2021 through December 2022 in Plumas County and Greenville. Some data from Property Radar may be incomplete or missing, but it reflects general market trends.

Although there is no formal designation in these data indicating whether a sale is for a vacation home or permanent residence, some variables help indicate the share of units that might be purchased for this use by local and regional buyers.

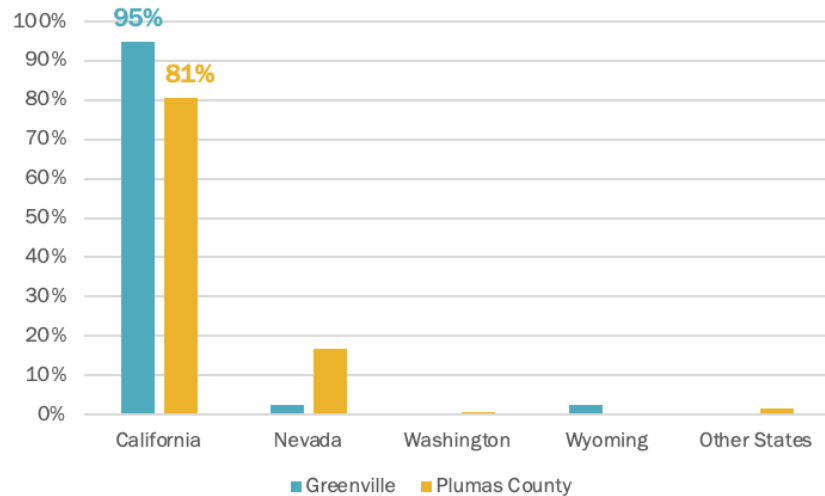
### 2.2.2 Local and Regional Market

**Property Radar data show that the majority of home sales in Greenville were made to buyers with a mailing address within the state.**

In Plumas County overall, only 81 percent of sales were to buyers within the state, with about 17 percent of buyers listing an address in Nevada. Although not all California buyers may use the homes as their primary residence, the strongest market for home sales is with in-state residents.

**Exhibit 21. Mailing Addresses of Homebuyers by State, Greenville and Plumas County Sales, October 2021 to December 2022**

Source: Property Radar

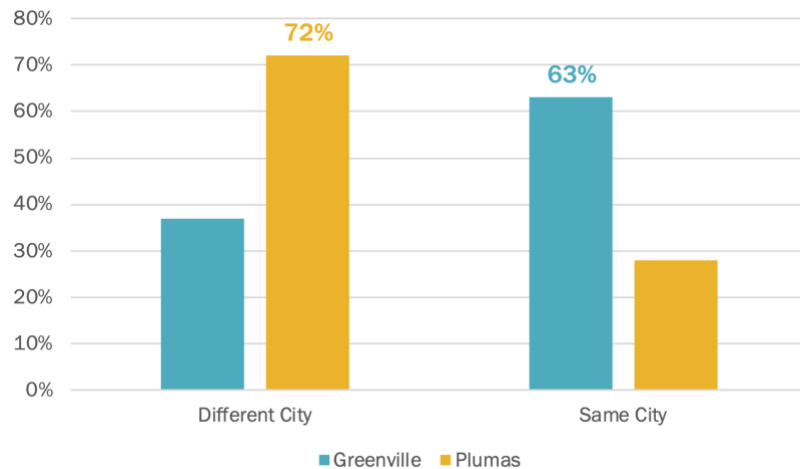


**Some mailing addresses for buyers are in California, but not within the same city as the home purchased.**

Greenville tended to have more buyers who listed a local home address, while 72 percent of buyers across Plumas County listed an address outside of the area where they were purchasing a home. Although this may not correlate directly with second-home sales, it indicates that Greenville likely has a lower share of second homes than the County overall.

**Exhibit 22. Mailing Addresses of Homebuyers by City, Greenville and Plumas County Sales, October 2021 to December 2022**

Source: Property Radar





## 2.3 Vacation Rental Market

### 2.3.1 Methodology

To understand the vacation rental market, our team surveyed data from the rental platform Airbnb. Our parameters for a qualitative search were available stays for a weekend visit from May through September 2023, assumed to be the tourist season for Lake Almanor. We concentrated on rentals within a three-mile radius of the lake, finding six subareas for short-term rentals: Chester, Lake Almanor Peninsula, Lake Almanor Country Club, Hamilton Branch, East Shore, and Lake Almanor West. Although other areas

around the lake also draw in visitors, Prattville, Almanor, and Canyondam primarily serve campers seeking RV, tent, and cabin stays. It is likely that there is some variation in pricing and availability of short-term rental units not captured in this qualitative survey. Given our search parameters of weekend stays between May and September, off-season or midweek pricing may be lower, given fluctuations in demand. Property owners may choose to increase/decrease prices or open/pause bookings at any time in response to these trends.

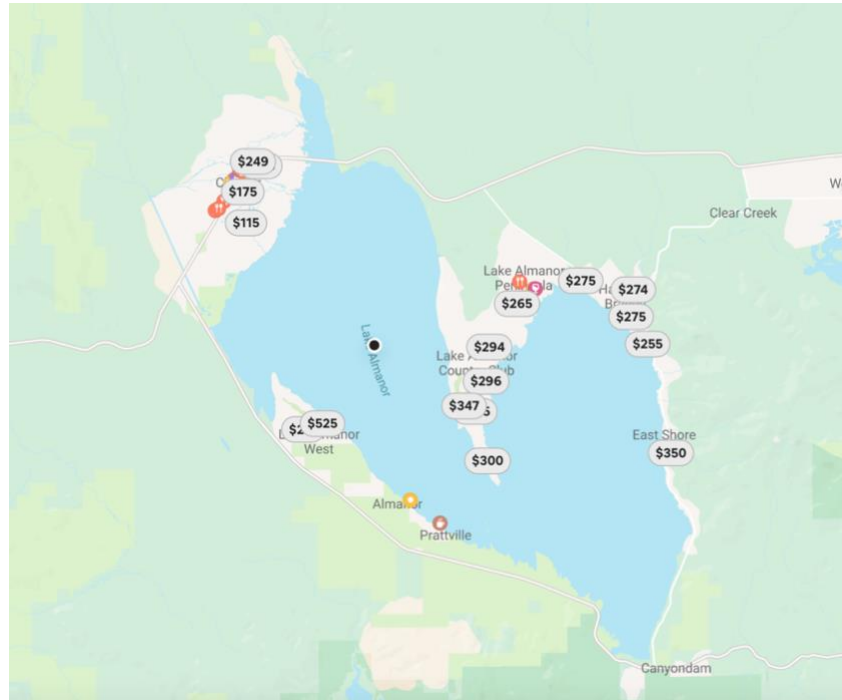
### 2.3.2 Pricing

Typically, the most expensive rentals per night were in the Lake Almanor West and Country Club areas, near the golf course and lakefront. The least expensive were in Chester and East Shore, though Chester in particular had a very limited number of available rentals. Rentals were primarily concentrated in Lake Almanor Country Club and Peninsula, as well as Chester.

#### Exhibit 23. Airbnb Clusters at Lake Almanor

Source: Airbnb

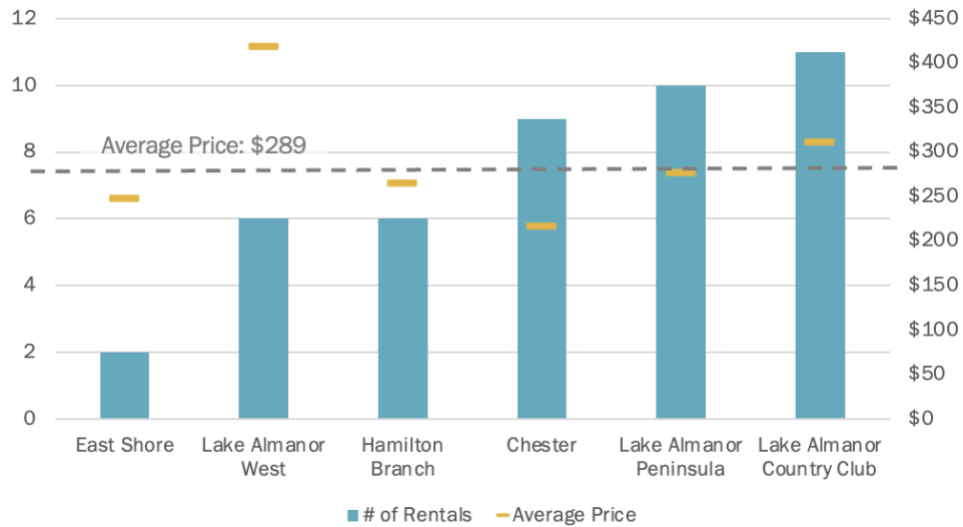
Note: This is intended as an overview of subareas, not as a full representation of available Airbnb rentals.



## Exhibit 24. Average Price per Night and Available Rentals by Subarea

Source: Airbnb, ECONorthwest analysis

Note: This is a Point-in-Time survey; it does not control for dynamic pricing or other demand factors.



### 2.3.3 Unit Types

The low end of unit prices tended to be for single-bedroom, studio-style cottage or cabin rentals located in Chester, Lake Almanor Peninsula, and East Shore. However, the total inventory of units was relatively low. Only a quarter of all Airbnb units found within the area cost less than \$200 per night.

#### Rental Type: Studio-Style Cottage

The lowest cost unit found in our survey and the only one below \$150 per night was a small studio unit in the East Shore area, with a living-sleeping area, one bathroom, and a large outdoor space on the lake.

**Comparison:** Although they accounted for only 12 percent of all units in Plumas County, studio and 1-bedroom units were more likely to be renter occupied than those with more bedrooms in 2017-2021 (56 percent of studios and 70 percent of 1-bedroom units).

#### Exhibit 25. Short-Term Rental Unit in East Shore

Source: [Airbnb](#)



Luxury cabins and homes with three bedrooms or more that can accommodate larger groups of guests were the most common type of Airbnb rental found around the lake, with listings allowing between six and twelve guests in a party. These units typically started at prices of \$275

per night, with several costing upward of \$400 in locations with lake views or access to activities.

**Rental Type: Large Luxury Cabin**

One of the highest cost units found in our survey was one of the only stays near \$500 per night. This luxury cabin in the Lake Almanor Country Club area is a 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom rental with premium features like a game room and updated appliances.

**Comparison:** Homes with four or more bedrooms accounted for only 11 percent of all units in Plumas County in 2017-2021. These were almost entirely owner occupied, accounting for 94 percent of 4-bedroom units and 97 percent of those with five or more bedrooms.

**Exhibit 26. Short-Term Rental Unit**

Source: [Airbnb](#)



Few rentals were advertised for units in multifamily buildings or moderate-sized single-family homes. Only a handful of these units were listed in population centers like Chester and Hamilton Branch, with rates that fell between \$175 and \$200 per night.

**Rental Type: Apartment**

The only multifamily unit listed as such in our survey of Airbnb listings was an apartment for \$200 per night that had 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, modern renovations, and proximity to the Lake Almanor Boat Ramp, as well as a dedicated workspace and Wi-Fi access.

**Comparison:** Approximately 30 percent of units in Plumas County had two bedrooms in 2017-2021, but very few in this category were listed as short-term rentals through Airbnb. The platform did include more 3-bedroom units, though these are much more likely to be owner occupied in Plumas County (at a rate of about 80 percent in 2017-2021).

**Exhibit 27. Short-Term Rental Unit in Hamilton Branch**

Source: [Airbnb](#)



### 2.3.4 Comparison with Housing Market

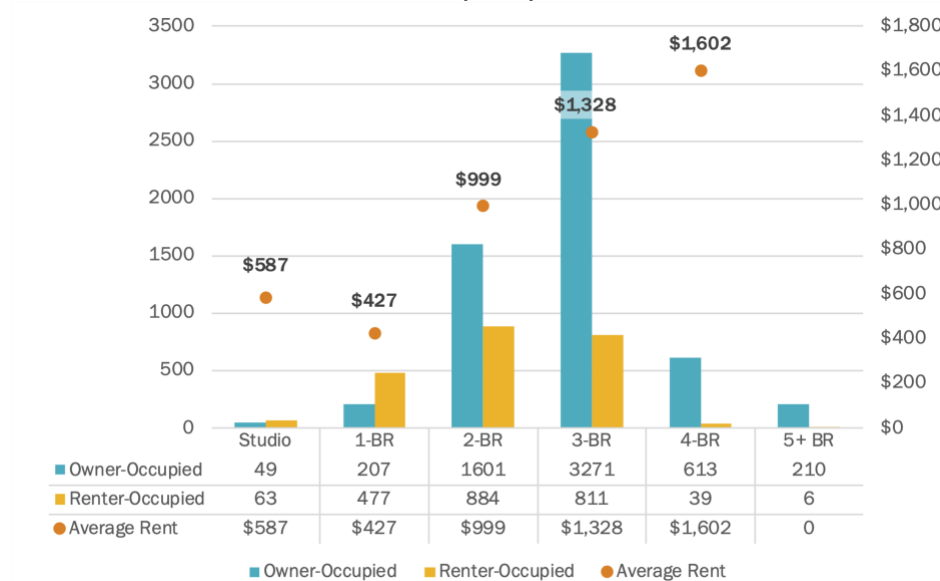
It is possible that some units around Lake Almanor available for short-term rent on Airbnb are removing a small amount of housing stock that could otherwise be used as rental housing for workers and permanent residents in the area. However, most of these units are relatively large and/or include premium features and amenities that indicate higher price (although other characteristics such as building age and parcel size are not observable through Airbnb listings).

On average, only 28 percent of all Plumas County units were renter occupied in 2017-2021 (Exhibit 1). Units with fewer bedrooms were more likely to be renter occupied, while those with two bedrooms or more were almost entirely owner occupied.

**Studio or 1-bedroom units** are more likely to be occupied by renters in the County, and these units are available at lower monthly rates on average, making them more attainable for residents with lower incomes. However, studio and 1-bedroom units do not make up a large portion of the Airbnb inventory, nor do they make up a large portion of units in the County.

**Exhibit 28. Number of Bedrooms by Tenure and Average Monthly Rent, Plumas County**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates, Table B25042

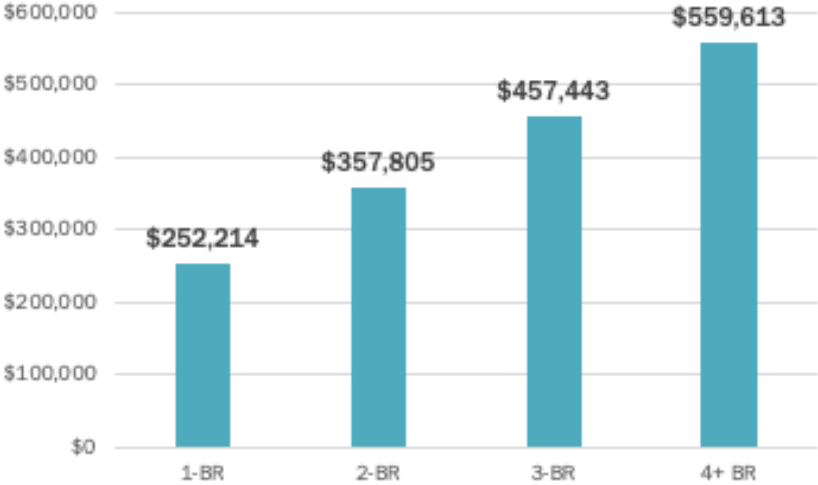


Very few units with four or more bedrooms are typically renter occupied in Plumas County, but these make up an outsized share of short-term rentals. Those homes with more bedrooms that are not owner occupied typically rent for far above the Plumas County median rent of \$1,031 per month (Exhibit 14). Given that the average household size is only 2.3 persons in Plumas County, these would also not likely be right-sized units for most households.

For recent home sale prices in Plumas County, the average cost also typically scales up relative to the number of bedrooms. While 1-bedroom units are typically affordable to households at or below median income (Exhibit 13), units with more bedrooms would be far out of reach.

**Exhibit 29. Average Home Sale Price by Number of Bedrooms, Plumas County, October 2021 to December 2022**

Source: Property Radar



## 3. Workforce Housing

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### 3.1 Overview

The 2021 Dixie Fire has also had an impact on economic activities in the Almanor Basin region, including the availability of housing for workers at local businesses. Several previous efforts such as the Plumas County Social Safety Net Needs Assessment have noted how the reduction in housing inventory has strained an already tight housing market with the loss of at least 600 units for Plumas County residents. This section of the report provides an analysis of continuing gaps for housing affordable to local workers and what scale is needed from recovery efforts to address these challenges. This section covers:

- A profile of workforce characteristics in Plumas County
- A summary of workforce housing needs described during engagement with employers and workers
- An assessment of current and continuing workforce housing needs

### 3.2 Workforce Characteristics

Within the Lake Almanor Basin, many local businesses are reliant on natural resources, including the lakes and nearby national forests. As of 2021, industries with the highest employment included retail, accommodation and food services, health care, manufacturing, and construction.<sup>4</sup> Of these industries, accommodation and food services, health care, and retail also offered the lowest annual wages of any industry in the county, while construction and manufacturing were among the highest. In 2017-2021, Plumas County had nearly 8,500 workers and an unemployment rate of 8.2 percent (slightly higher than estimates for the state of California at 6.5 percent statewide).

#### 3.2.1 Age of Workforce

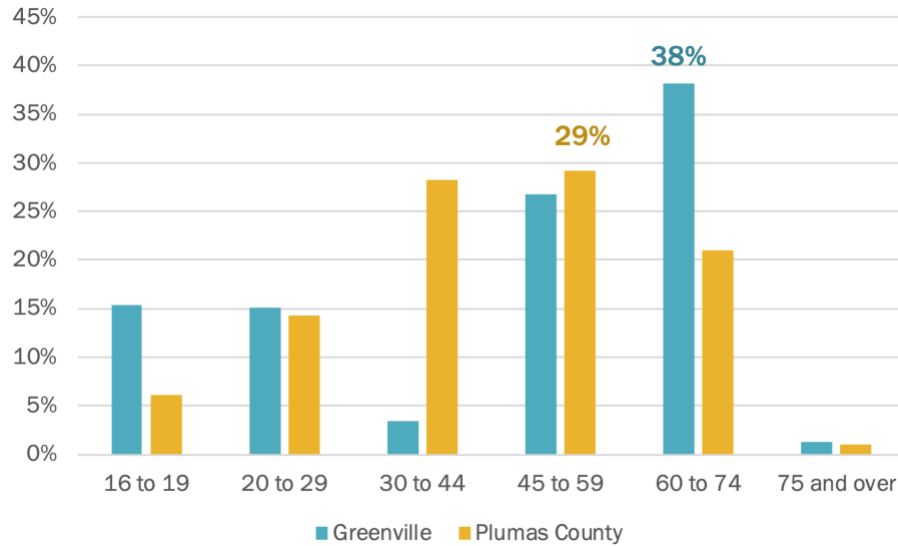
Greenville's workforce was older overall than Plumas County, with 38 percent of workers between the ages of 60 and 74. Comparatively, Plumas County had a much larger share of midcareer workers between the ages of 30 and 59, accounting for about a quarter of the county's workforce. The high share of workers aged 60 to 74 highlights the need to support in-migration to backfill workforce growth as older workers move into retirement.

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<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Plumas County California," United States Census Bureau, 2022, [https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table\\_maker/v4/table\\_maker.htm#type=6&year=2021&qtr=A&own=5&area=06063&supp=0](https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/table_maker/v4/table_maker.htm#type=6&year=2021&qtr=A&own=5&area=06063&supp=0).

### Exhibit 30. Age of Workforce, Greenville CDP and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table B23001

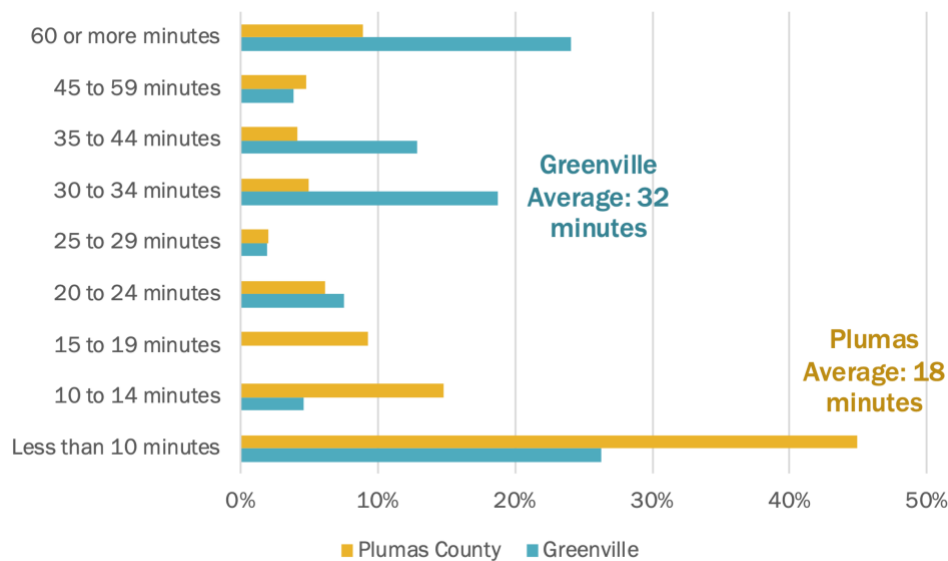


### 3.2.2 Commuting Trends

Workers in Greenville typically commuted for longer periods of time than Plumas County workers overall before the 2021 wildfires. Greenville residents spent nearly twice the amount of time commuting than the county average, with roughly a quarter traveling for an hour or more. Long commute times are not commonly factored into the equation of housing costs, but they create a legitimate burden on households in both direct costs and the opportunity cost of time.

### Exhibit 31. Commute Time, Greenville CDP and Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801



### 3.2.3 Current Housing Prices Relative to Income

According to the American Community Survey, the median income across Plumas County was approximately \$57,000 in 2017-2021 (Exhibit 6). For a household at this level of annual income, an attainable price for purchasing a home using standard affordability metrics would likely be between \$198,000 and \$226,000 (Exhibit 13).

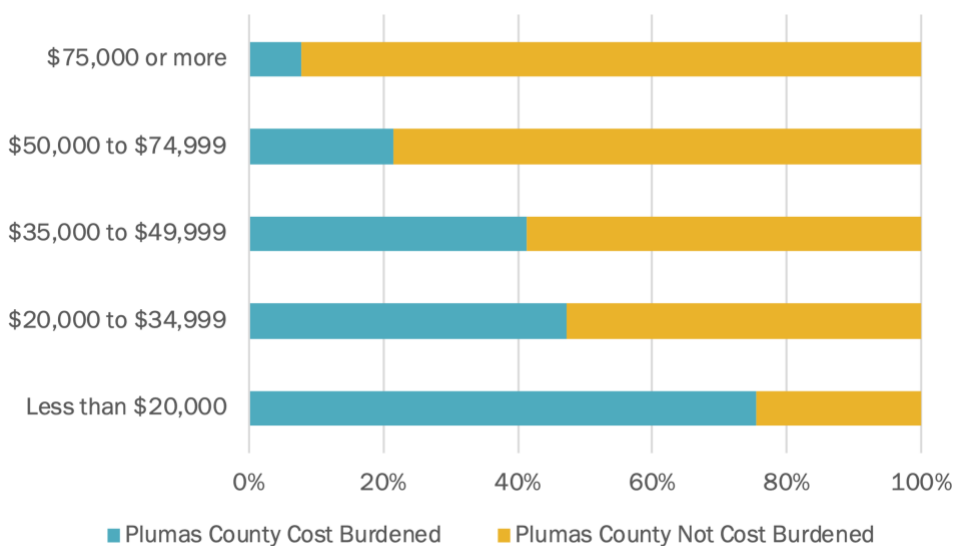
As of January 2023, the median listing price for homes in Plumas County on Realtor.com was \$380,000 (or \$231 per square foot). This is in line with findings from Property Radar that show an average sale price of \$353,000 between October 2021 and December 2022 (Exhibit 17). Only about a quarter of residents in Plumas County had an annual income that could support this median home sale price. Additionally, Property Radar data showed that 22 percent of homes sold during this study period within Plumas County sold for \$226,000 or below. **These two metrics indicate that there is a gap in affordable homes available for purchase by workers in Plumas County.**

Trends in cost burdening also indicate a similar gap for current renters and existing homeowners, as nearly a third of households pay over 30 percent of their income toward housing costs in Plumas County (Exhibit 18). This is particularly true for low-income households in the county: over three quarters of those earning less than \$20,000 were considered cost burdened and roughly half of households earning between \$20,000 and \$35,000 were cost burdened. Higher-income groups had much lower rates of cost burdening, with less than ten percent of households affected.

#### Exhibit 32. Cost Burden by Income Group, Plumas County, 2017-2021

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017–2021 5-Year Estimates, Table 2503

Note: The threshold level for cost-burdened households in this graphic is 30 percent of monthly income or higher.





## 3.3 Workforce Housing Needs

As a part of the Housing Strategic Plan, LMNOP Design conducted a series of engagement activities with local workers and employers to understand the key housing needs for the Lake Almanor region's workforce. These activities included surveys, calls, and an in-person workshop with local employees and employers. This section provides a summary of qualitative and quantitative findings from this work and their implications for workforce housing.

### 3.3.1 Employee and Employer Survey Findings

Through a combination of surveys and calls, the project team received input from 31 employers and employees from businesses located in the Lake Almanor Basin. Key findings from these engagement activities include:

- **The Lake Almanor Basin has a combination of year-round and seasonal businesses that have different needs for workers, with a greater intensity of work in the summer focused on tourism.** A mix of respondents indicated a need for workers year-round and seasonally (typically between May to September or October). Those who did operate all year included employers in construction, health care, and lumber industries. Many of those who were open for four seasons noted that their operations scaled down during winter months, particularly those in the lodging, restaurant, and timber industries. Employers who participated in engagement activities reported a total number of workers between 826 to 893.
  - These year-round businesses typically offer higher wages but are seeking more reliable, long-term housing solutions to support their workforce. Retail and service businesses are often staffed by family members or part-time student workers to cover any year-round staffing needs.
  - Plumas County is the largest employer in the area and has an outstanding need for more experienced employees. However, wages are not competitive with other areas of Northern California.
  - The service and support staff for local businesses tend to have more of a nomadic lifestyle, with many living in Chico, Red Bluff, or other communities during the winter. Their housing needs are more aligned with seasonal, affordable short-term rentals or RV parks.
- **Most businesses are having difficulty finding employees, with the 2021 Dixie Fire having a negative impact on housing availability for workers in the Lake Almanor Basin.** While the total number of employees fluctuates for businesses in the Lake Almanor Basin depending on the season, employers who participated in engagement activities reported 142 current vacancies. Twelve employers who responded to the survey and phone calls indicated that previous employees had lived in Greenville. In total, these employers estimated that between 77 and 117 previous workers had been displaced by the 2021 Dixie Fire. Compared to the number of current vacancies, this

number equates with at least half of unfilled positions at businesses who participated in this engagement process.

- Workers who participated in engagement also noted impacts to their housing from the fire, including increased rent and higher cost of fire insurance.
- The town of Westwood has taken on an outsized role in providing the local housing stock after Greenville burned in 2021. Westwood has the lowest cost housing available in the area and is now home to much of the local workforce.
- **Current wages for lodging, restaurant, and other service industry jobs are not able to support growing housing prices and cost of living in the Lake Almanor Basin.** Almost every business which responded to questions about pay range reported that the available pay for positions was under \$20 per hour.
  - The majority of vacancies in Lake Almanor Basin are relatively low paying and inconsistent with rents and home prices in the area. Employers reported that rental rates were the largest issue in terms of finding housing reported by business owners.
  - Some businesses, like timber, had higher pay for salaried employees. Although some higher-paying jobs are available in industries like health care and timber, there are challenges for attraction and retention of the local workforce, including insurance availability/pricing, internet connectivity, mortgage rates, fuel costs, and commuting distances.
- **COVID has increased the amount of people who are able to relocate from other areas or spend more time in second homes or short-term vacation rentals.** In the past three years, home sales have reached record highs, which employers associated with an influx of white-collar remote workers and second-home buyers. They indicated that this is putting pressure on the housing market, which already has a low inventory and high construction costs.
  - Property owners are disincentivized from keeping properties as long-term rentals. More properties which may have been used for long-term rentals are being converted to short-term rentals or their rates are being increased.
  - Second-home purchases (particularly those for white-collar remote workers) are also perceived as lowering the inventory of available homes for purchase.
- **According to employers, most workers desired homeownership options, and only about half would choose to live in a multifamily complex.** Many workers desire affordable homeownership opportunities and housing types preferred for families, including single-family detached homes or cottages. Several employees indicated they were living at home with parents due to a lack of housing in the area or were sharing rental housing with coworkers but wanted other housing options.
  - Employers also expressed that California housing laws, policies, and ordinances designed for the state's heavily populated urban areas are restricting the local community from building new housing (such as permitting practices).

### 3.3.2 Workforce Housing Units

ECONorthwest used a scenario-based approach to estimate the housing units and housing types needed for workers in the Lake Almanor Basin based on the responses given from the employer calls and the survey conducted by LMNOP Design. This data provides a snapshot of housing needs for the 800+ employees working at these businesses. Most businesses indicated that rental rate, location, and housing type were the most important factors for employees choosing a housing option, with cost being by far the most important component of households' decisions. With some workers currently commuting up to an hour for work, this analysis shows what scale of different housing types would be needed to accommodate the local workforce within the Lake Almanor Basin, considering different needs for seasonal and year-round workers.

#### Worker Wages and Housing Costs

As part of engagement activities, some employers reported a range of average hourly rates for current positions that help to understand what is currently affordable to workers in the Lake Almanor Basin. On the low end, nearly half of employers reported offering the California minimum wage of \$15.50 per hour for both seasonal and year-round employees. Lodging, retail, food service, and health care and social service providers all reported starting rates at or near this level (below \$20 per hour).

On the high end, some employers reported estimates upward of \$30 per hour and as high as \$70 per hour for more highly skilled workers, including health-care employees. Others fell in the middle range, offering between \$20 and \$30 an hour for employees working in the lumber industry or experienced workers in some lodging establishments.

Using these hourly rates, we calculated what this would translate to as full-time or part-time annual income for low, medium, and high wages. Full time assumes that workers are employed for 40 hours per week year-round, while part time is assumed to cover either workers who are employed year-round with fewer hours per week (such as students) or seasonal workers who only work for approximately half of the year (May through October).

These wage scenarios allowed us to calculate the range of monthly housing costs that would be appropriate to these different groups either as rental or ownership products, summarized in Exhibit 33.

### Exhibit 33. Estimated Annual Wage Scenarios

Source: Employer engagement results, ECONorthwest analysis

Note: We used a combination of specific answers and assumptions based on industry type to project the approximate number of workers in each wage category. Entries where we were unable to determine an industry are not included.

Wages	Hourly Range	Number of Workers (Approx.)	Full-Time Annual Income	Part-Time Annual Income
Low	\$15-20	373	\$31,200 - \$41,600	\$15,600 - \$20,800
Medium	\$20-30	236	\$41,600 - \$62,400	\$20,800 - \$31,200
High	\$30-70 (highest reported)	51	\$62,400 - \$145,000	\$31,200 - \$72,800

We used these wage levels to calculate what affordable monthly housing costs would be for a worker making that hourly rate, either as monthly rental costs or a home sale price point. For calculating these affordable costs, we only used the full-time rate for each wage level, assuming that seasonal employees are likely to work a full-time schedule for the part of the year that they are employed at Lake Almanor Basin businesses and would seek short-term rental units rather than homeownership opportunities.

Given that the average home sale price in Plumas County was over \$350,000 in 2022 according to Property Radar, the results shown in Exhibit 34 indicate that few homes would currently be affordable for low and medium-wage workers. Some options for homeownership that are typically less expensive such as duplexes, condos, or older buildings in need of rehabilitation still may be accessible for medium-wage workers, but low-wage workers are likely to rent, given these conditions.

### Exhibit 34. Affordable Monthly Housing Costs by Wage Level

Source: Employer engagement results, ECONorthwest analysis

	Number of Workers (Approx.)	Monthly Rent	Home Sale Price
Low Wage	373	\$780 - \$1,040	\$109,200 - \$166,400
Medium Wage	236	\$1,040 - \$1,560	\$145,600 - \$249,000
High Wage	51	\$1,560 - \$3,625	\$218,400 - \$580,000

### Worker Categories and Housing Types

The type of housing that different workers need is likely to vary for seasonal or year-round employees. Employers noted that seasonal employees tended to live either in short-term rental units or recreational vehicles (RVs) while in the Lake Almanor Basin. Using the data collected

from employers, we estimated the breakdown of seasonal workers compared with year-round employees currently working for these businesses. Exhibit 35 shows that nearly a third of workers employed in the Lake Almanor Basin are seasonal workers rather than year-round employees.

**Exhibit 35. Estimated Count of Workers by Type**

Source: Employer engagement results, ECONorthwest analysis

Note: For employers that reported a mix of seasonal and year-round workers, we made an assumption of a 50/50 split between permanent and seasonal employees if it was not specified. Entries where we were unable to determine an industry are not included.

Category	Number of Workers (Approx.)
Seasonal	235
Year-Round	589

Using these affordable monthly housing costs and worker types, we estimated that the following housing units shown in Exhibit 36 are needed to accommodate the current workforce in the Lake Almanor Basin as described by engagement activities with local employers and trends observed from our analysis.

**Exhibit 36. Units Needed by Type**

Housing Type	Units Needed
Short-Term Rentals, Dormitory Housing, and RV Sites	235
Long-Term Rental Units	256
Affordable Homeownership Units (Duplexes, Rehab Opportunities, etc.)	282
Market-Rate Single-Family Units	51

We divided the units needed into categories to match groups of workers described by employers, including:

- **Short-Term Rentals, Dormitory Housing, and RV Sites.** These are likely to serve seasonal workers pursuing a ‘nomadic’ lifestyle, retirees, or students who require alternative housing options. We assumed that these workers would fall into the low and medium-wage categories, given responses by industry type.
- **Affordable Long-Term Rental Units.** These are likely to serve full-time, year-round workers who make a wage between \$15 and \$20 per hour. This category excludes those

described above who are more likely to require alternative housing types but who would not likely be able to afford purchasing a home given current market conditions.

- **Affordable Homeownership Units.** The results of engagement with employers and stakeholders indicate that homeownership is typically preferable for most year-round permanent workers. Although market trends show that homeownership is likely not feasible for low-wage workers, some options may be more affordable than typical homes sold in Plumas County, including duplexes, accessory dwelling units, condos, or older units which require some owner rehabilitation. These are likely to serve medium-wage workers who are employed year-round.
- **Market-Rate Single-Family Units.** Our analysis shows that most high-wage workers would be able to afford market-rate units in the area, and we have heard qualitatively that this is a default preference for most households. However, the inventory of single-family homes may still be limited due to fires and second-home purchases. These are likely to serve high-wage year-round workers.