

Housing, Population, and Socioeconomic Trends in McLean County

October 2025

Introduction

In June 2025, the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the Project for Middle Class Renewal published a report titled “You Can’t Buy What You Can’t Afford: Illinois’ Housing Shortage and Ways to Fix It.”¹ The report cites population and employment growth as factors that drive the housing shortage that the state is experiencing. While Illinois remains more affordable compared to other states, access to affordable housing continues to be a pressing concern.

According to the report, as of July 2024, the average home value in Illinois was \$264,000, a 37% increase over five years. The report also notes that Illinois experienced a 9% growth in terms of employment since 2010 and a 4% growth in households from 2019 to 2023. A key finding of the report says that Illinois has a shortage of 142,000 homes and that the state needs to build 227,000 units over the next five years, which translates to 45,000 homes per year, to keep up with the demand.

The goal of this white paper is not to estimate the shortage of housing units in the county. Rather, it aims to look into the factors contributing to the housing shortage – population, housing inventory, and income & employment, and how these factors have changed from 2019 to 2023. Under “Population”, this paper explores the change in total population, number of households, and immigration in McLean County. The “Housing” section explores median home values, housing units, permits issued, and median rent. The paper also explores the trends in income and employment in the county.

Population

Total Population

Throughout this paper, both the numerical difference and percentage change will be presented. It is important to note that the percentage change may appear disproportionately high due to the smaller population base of the municipalities, which magnifies small changes in terms of population, income, etc.

Table 1 shows that McLean County experienced a decline of 1,696 in total population, or a 1.0% decline from 2019 to 2023. The total population of the City of Bloomington increased by 688, a 0.9% increase. On the other hand, the Town of Normal saw a decrease of 1,983 in its total population, a 3.6% decrease over five years. Across the county, Bloomington experienced the highest increase in total population while Normal experienced biggest loss in population during this time frame.

Figure 1 shows that from 2019 to 2023, Downs experienced the largest population growth, from 1,010 in 2019 to 1,451 in 2023, a 43.7% increase. Anchor experienced the second-largest population growth with a population of 184 in 2019 to 243 in 2023, a 32.1% increase. On the other hand, Stanford experienced a 29.9% decline in its total population, from 669 in 2019 to 469 in 2023.

Figure 2 shows the trend in population change for the County, Bloomington, Normal, Downs, and Stanford. As seen in the figure above, the City, the Town, and the County did not experience fluctuations in their respective populations. Meanwhile, both Downs and Stanford saw spikes in their population growth from 2019 to 2020 and a decline from 2020 to 2021. Downs saw a 40.3% increase in its population from 2019 to 2020. Stanford’s population has maintained roughly a 12% decline in its total population year-over-year since 2021.

Table 1. Total Population in McLean County (2019 - 2023)

| Geography | 2019 | 2023 | Difference | Change |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bloomington | 78,015 | 78,703 | 688 | 0.9% |
| Downs | 1,010 | 1,451 | 441 | 43.7% |
| Lexington | 1,894 | 2,074 | 180 | 9.5% |
| Anchor | 184 | 243 | 59 | 32.1% |
| Saybrook | 660 | 714 | 54 | 8.2% |
| Arrowsmith | 332 | 381 | 49 | 14.8% |
| Cooksville | 164 | 191 | 27 | 16.5% |
| Carlock | 579 | 560 | -19 | -3.3% |
| Bellflower | 431 | 410 | -21 | -4.9% |
| McLean | 771 | 730 | -41 | -5.3% |
| Ellsworth | 270 | 229 | -41 | -15.2% |
| Towanda | 436 | 356 | -80 | -18.3% |
| Hudson | 2,136 | 2,048 | -88 | -4.1% |
| Danvers | 1,044 | 951 | -93 | -8.9% |
| Colfax | 1,143 | 955 | -188 | -16.4% |
| Stanford | 669 | 469 | -200 | -29.9% |
| Gridley | 1,590 | 1,339 | -251 | -15.8% |
| Heyworth | 3,124 | 2,818 | -306 | -9.8% |
| Chenoa | 1,997 | 1,559 | -438 | -21.9% |
| Le Roy | 3,702 | 3,177 | -525 | -14.2% |
| <i>McLean County</i> | <i>172,578</i> | <i>170,882</i> | <i>-1,696</i> | <i>-1.0%</i> |
| Normal | 54,891 | 52,908 | -1,983 | -3.6% |

Figure 1. Change in Population in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

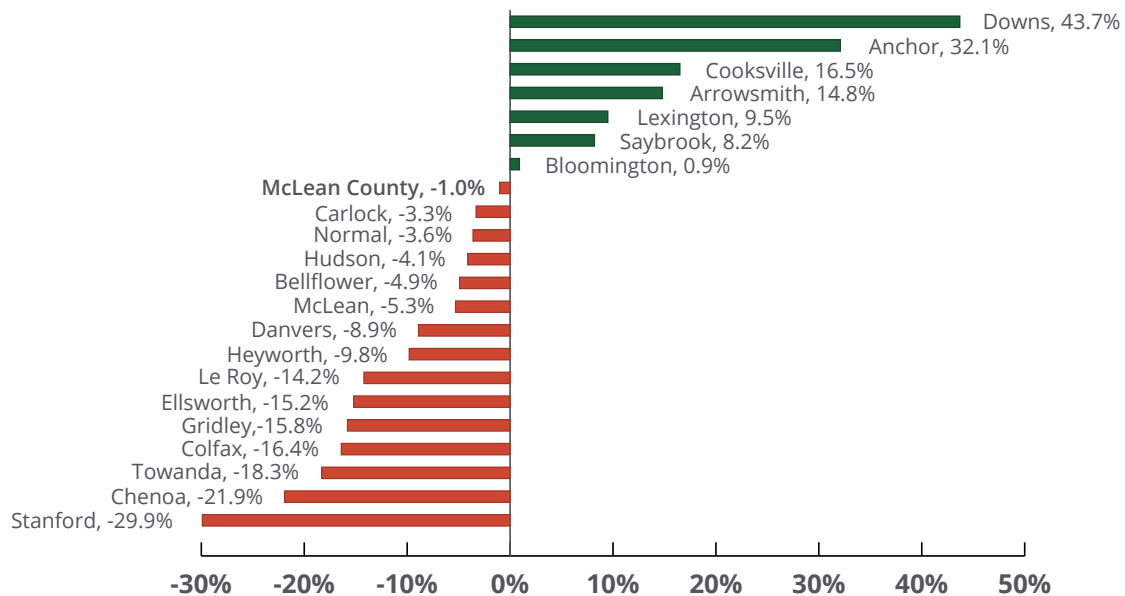
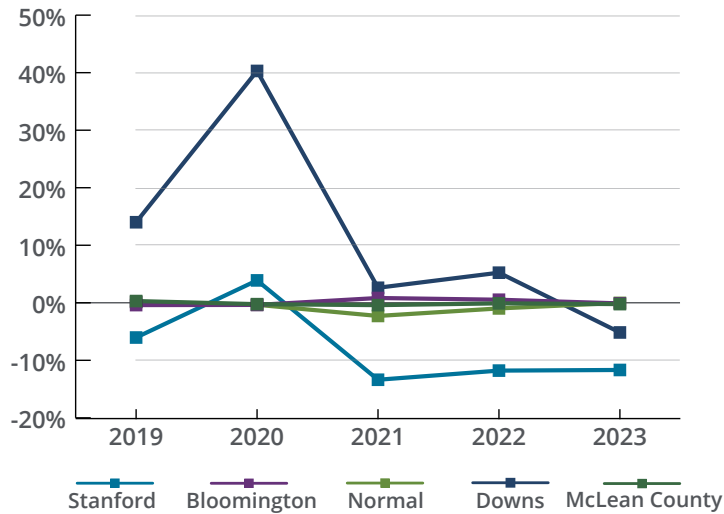
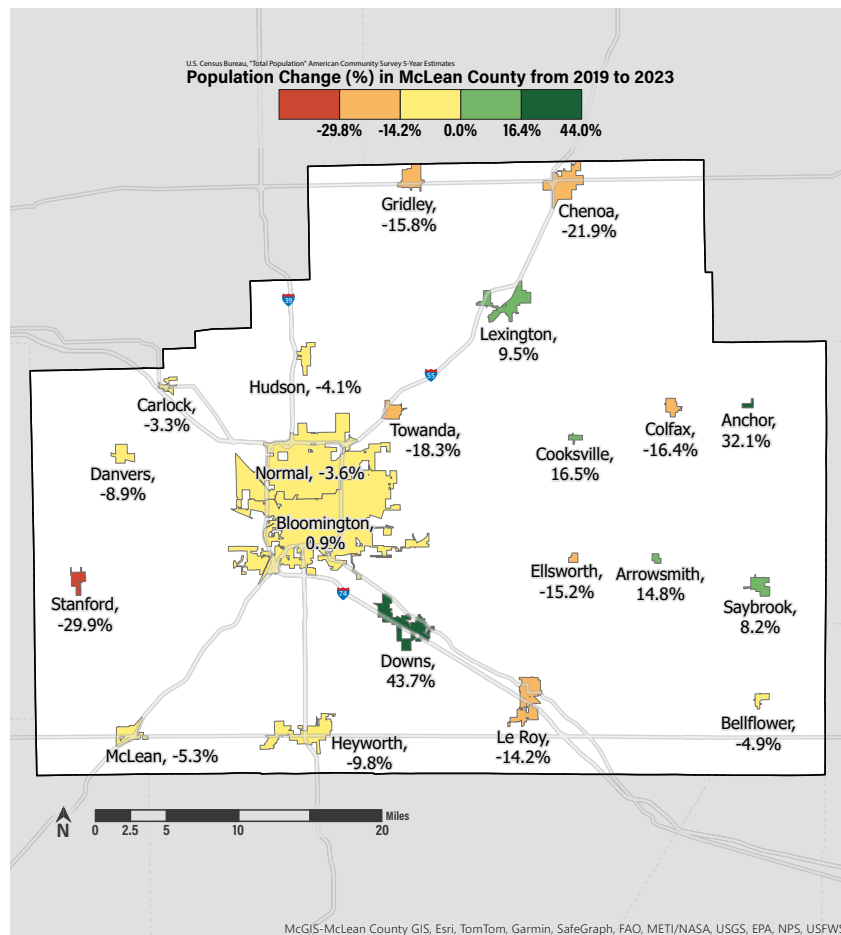


Figure 2. Population Change of Select Municipalities in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



Map 1. Population Change in McLean County (2019 to 2023)



Map 1 shows that most of the municipalities that experienced population growth were east of Bloomington-Normal. On the other hand, municipalities surrounding the Bloomington-Normal area, as well as Gridley and Chenoa up north, lost population.

Household

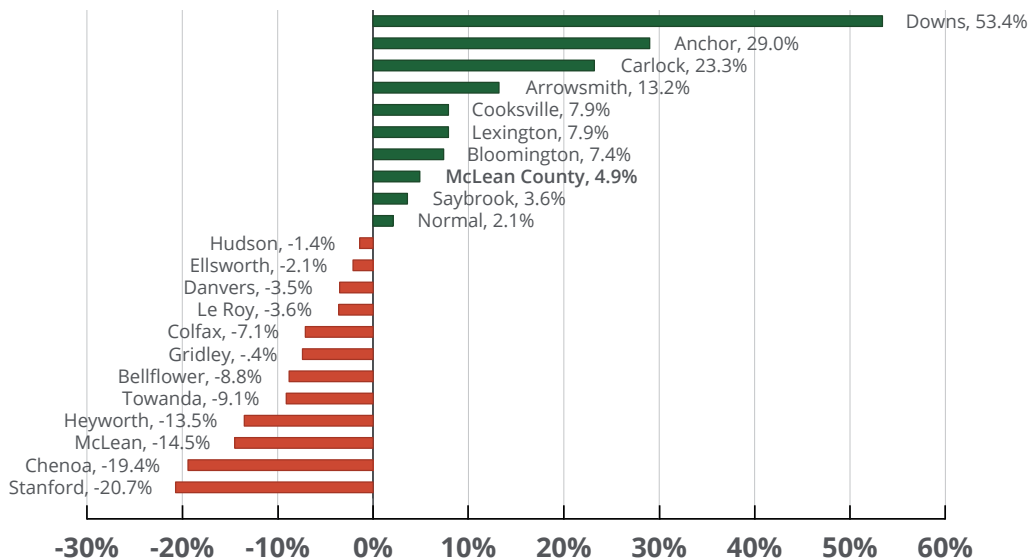
Table 2 shows that McLean County had a 3,227 increase in its total number of households, from 65,845 to 69,072 – a 4.9% increase from 2019 to 2023. The City of Bloomington also saw a 2,364 increase in its total number of households, a 7.4% increase from 2019 to 2023. The Town of Normal also saw a slight increase in its households, from 19,368 to 19,775, a 407 increase or a 2.1% change. Bloomington had the highest increase in total households while Chenoa had the highest decrease, losing 153 households from 2019 to 2023.

Table 2. Total Households in McLean County (2019 - 2023)

| Geography | 2019 | 2023 | Difference | Change |
|---------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|
| McLean County | 65,845 | 69,072 | 3,227 | 4.9% |
| Bloomington | 31,853 | 34,217 | 2,364 | 7.4% |
| Normal | 19,368 | 19,775 | 407 | 2.1% |
| Downs | 356 | 546 | 190 | 53.4% |
| Lexington | 775 | 836 | 61 | 7.9% |
| Carlock | 198 | 244 | 46 | 23.2% |
| Anchor | 62 | 80 | 18 | 29.0% |
| Arrowsmith | 114 | 129 | 15 | 13.2% |
| Saybrook | 277 | 287 | 10 | 3.6% |
| Cooksville | 76 | 82 | 6 | 7.9% |
| Ellsworth | 95 | 93 | -2 | -2.1% |
| Hudson | 695 | 685 | -10 | -1.4% |
| Danvers | 401 | 387 | -14 | -3.5% |
| Bellflower | 159 | 145 | -14 | -8.8% |
| Towanda | 187 | 170 | -17 | -9.1% |
| Colfax | 393 | 365 | -28 | -7.1% |
| Gridley | 582 | 539 | -43 | -7.4% |
| McLean | 324 | 277 | -47 | -14.5% |
| Stanford | 241 | 191 | -50 | -20.7% |
| Le Roy | 1,457 | 1,404 | -53 | -3.6% |
| Heyworth | 1,100 | 952 | -148 | -13.5% |
| Chenoa | 790 | 637 | -153 | -19.4% |

Figure 3. Change in Total Households in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

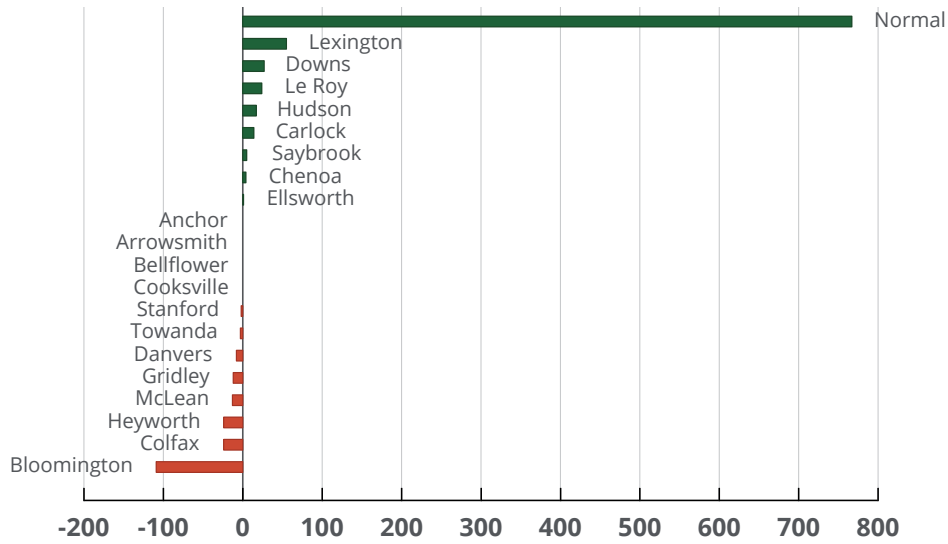


Similar to the total population, Downs experienced the largest percent increase in total households, seeing a 53.4% growth, from 356 households in 2019 to 546 in 2023. On the other hand, Stanford saw the largest percent decrease, seeing a 20.7% decline in its total households, from 2019 to 2023.

Immigration

Figure 4. Difference in Foreign-Born Population in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



One of the factors that the ILEPI & PMCR report cites as a factor influencing housing demand is immigration. Figure 4 shows that the Town of Normal gained 767 foreign-born residents from 2019 to 2023, the largest increase in McLean County by a wide margin. In contrast, the City of Bloomington saw a decline of 109 foreign-born residents over the same period. Three municipalities – Anchor, Arrowsmith, and Cooksville, reported zero foreign-born residents through those five years. Bellflower maintained a count of 2 foreign-born residents in 2019 and 2023, reflecting no change.

Housing

Median Home Value

**Table 3. Median Home Value in McLean County (in US Dollars)
(2019 - 2023)**

| | 2019 | 2023 | Difference | % Change |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Downs | 178,400 | 237,700 | 59,300 | 33.2% |
| Hudson | 176,300 | 221,100 | 44,800 | 25.4% |
| Heyworth | 158,600 | 196,200 | 37,600 | 23.7% |
| <i>McLean County</i> | <i>167,000</i> | <i>198,300</i> | <i>31,300</i> | <i>18.7%</i> |
| Bellflower | 86,500 | 117,600 | 31,100 | 36.0% |
| Bloomington | 168,300 | 198,800 | 30,500 | 18.1% |
| Normal | 170,200 | 199,900 | 29,700 | 17.5% |
| Le Roy | 137,800 | 165,600 | 27,800 | 20.2% |
| Lexington | 146,500 | 171,600 | 25,100 | 17.1% |
| Colfax | 99,000 | 123,000 | 24,000 | 24.2% |
| Danvers | 134,500 | 156,500 | 22,000 | 16.4% |
| Towanda | 137,200 | 158,200 | 21,000 | 15.3% |
| McLean | 106,000 | 124,700 | 18,700 | 17.6% |
| Gridley | 117,100 | 134,600 | 17,500 | 14.9% |
| Ellsworth | 106,300 | 123,500 | 17,200 | 16.2% |
| Chenoa | 104,100 | 120,700 | 16,600 | 15.9% |
| Cooksville | 93,500 | 107,800 | 14,300 | 15.3% |
| Stanford | 87,800 | 101,800 | 14,000 | 15.9% |
| Carlock | 121,300 | 132,500 | 11,200 | 9.2% |
| Arrowsmith | 90,500 | 101,200 | 10,700 | 11.8% |
| Anchor | 85,000 | 93,700 | 8,700 | 10.2% |
| Saybrook | 91,100 | 92,900 | 1,800 | 2.0% |

Table 3 shows that McLean County experienced an 18.7% increase in median home value from 2019 to 2023. In 2019, the median home value in McLean County² was \$167,000. In 2023, it increased to \$198,300. The City of Bloomington also saw an increase in median home value, from \$168,300 in 2019 to \$198,800 in 2023 – an 18.1% increase. Similarly, the Town of Normal saw a 17.5% increase, from \$170,200 in 2019 to \$199,900 in 2023. Downs experienced the highest total increase in median home value, with an increase of \$59,300 within the span of five years.

Figure 5 shows the change in median home value in McLean County from 2019 to 2023. Bellflower saw the highest percent increase in median home value, with a median home value of \$86,500 in 2019 and \$117,600 in 2023 – a 36.0% increase within 5 years. On the other hand, Saybrook saw the least amount of change in median home value, both in terms of difference and percent change, with only a \$1,800 or 2% increase within the same time frame. All municipalities experienced an increase in median home value.

Figure 5. Change in Median Home Value in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

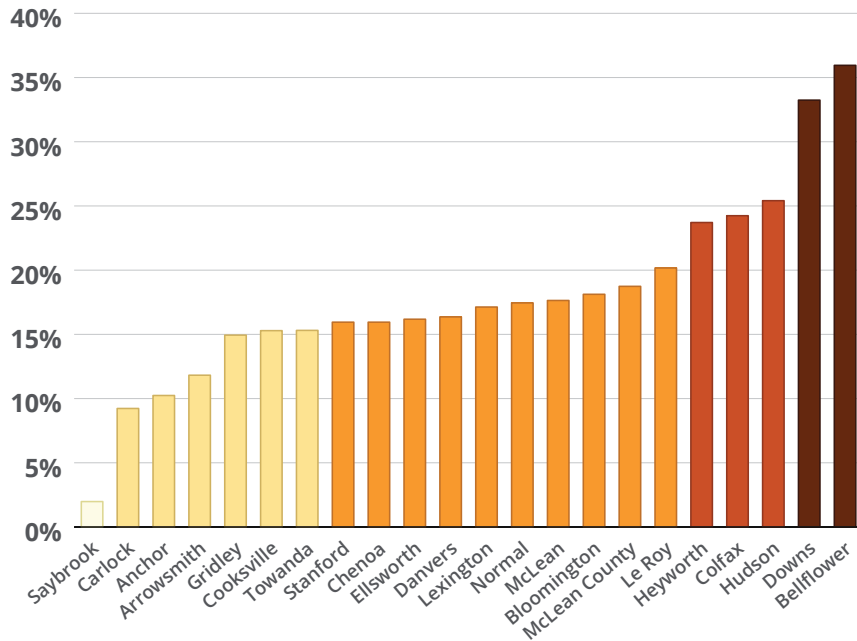


Figure 6. Median Home Value Trend of Select Municipalities in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

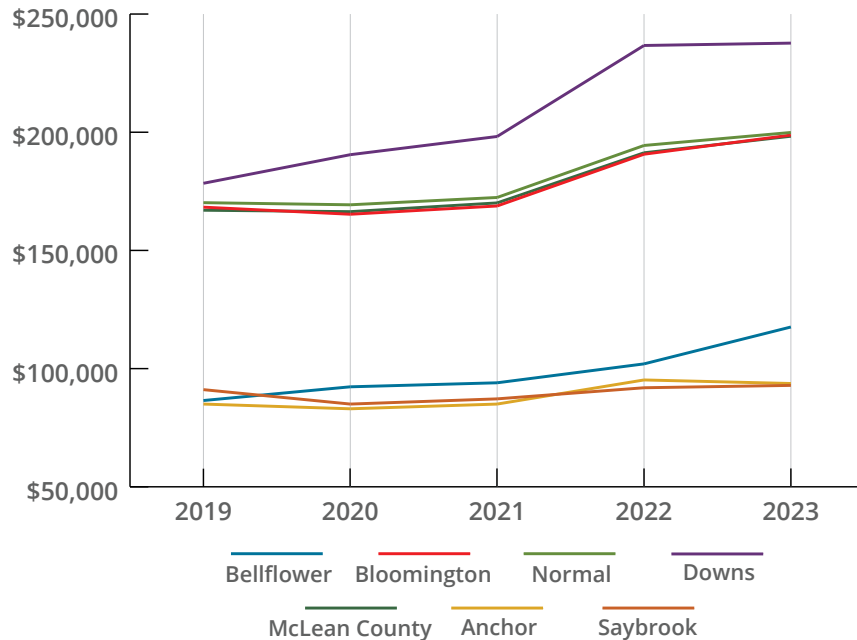
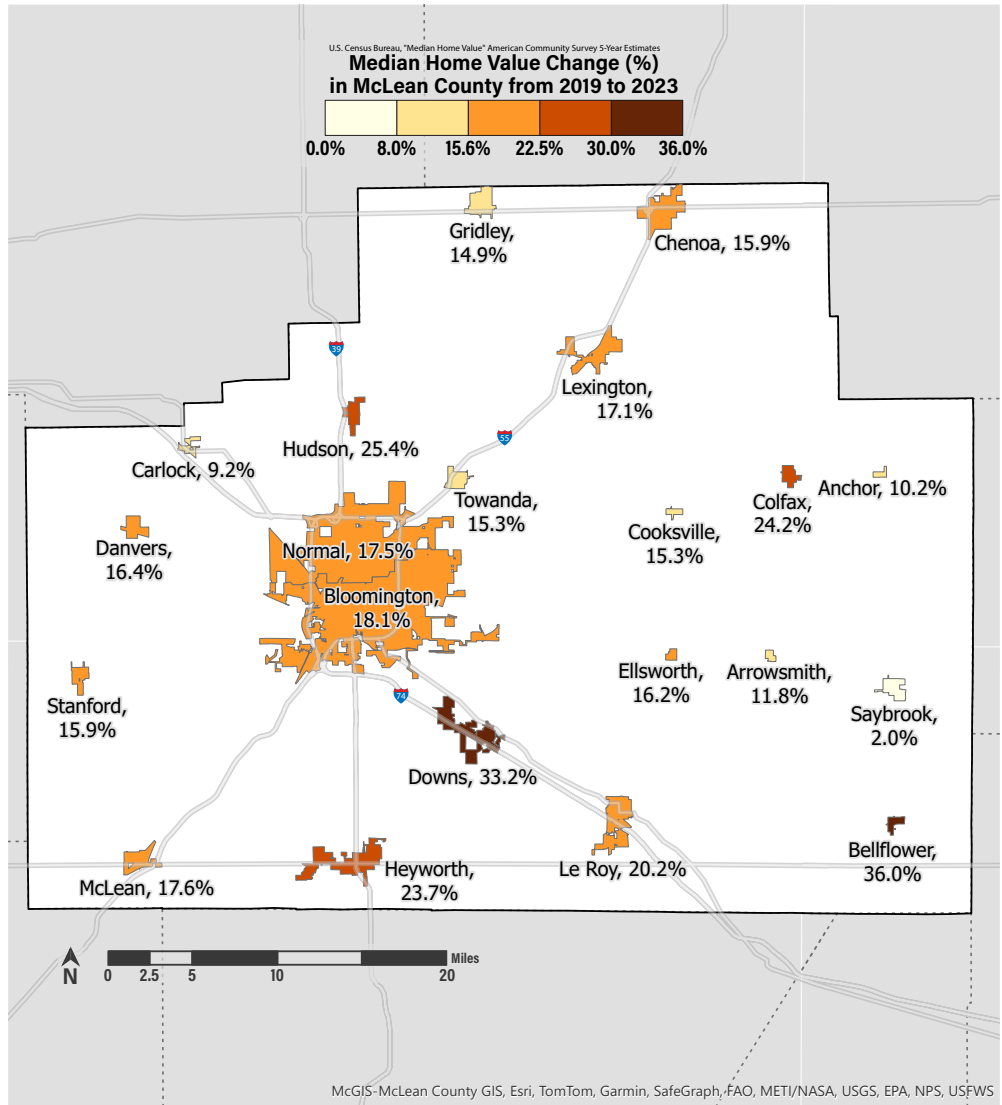


Figure 6 shows select municipalities and how their median home values changed from 2019 to 2023. Bloomington and Normal were chosen given that they are the core areas of the county. Saybrook and Bellflower were chosen because they saw the lowest and highest percent change in median home value. Anchor was chosen because it had the lowest median home value in the county in 2019. Downs was chosen because it had the highest median home value in 2023. McLean County is also included in this graph as a point of comparison.

As seen in figure 6, the home values of Bloomington, Normal, and the County are similar to each other through the years. Downs has a notably higher median home value throughout the five-year period compared to the rest of the municipalities, with a spike from 2021 to 2022. The rest of the select municipalities had similar trends, except for Bellflower seeing an increase in median home value from 2022 to 2023.

Map 2. Median Home Value Change in McLean County (2019 to 2023)



Map 2 shows that south of Bloomington-Normal, specifically Downs, Heyworth, and Le Roy, is where the highest increase in median home value occurred within the county. The west side of the county (Danvers, Stanford, McLean) also experienced an increase in median home values. The smaller municipalities east of the Bloomington-Normal area experienced lower increases in median home value, with the exception of Bellflower and Colfax.

Housing Units

Table 4. Total Housing Units in McLean County (2019 to 2023)

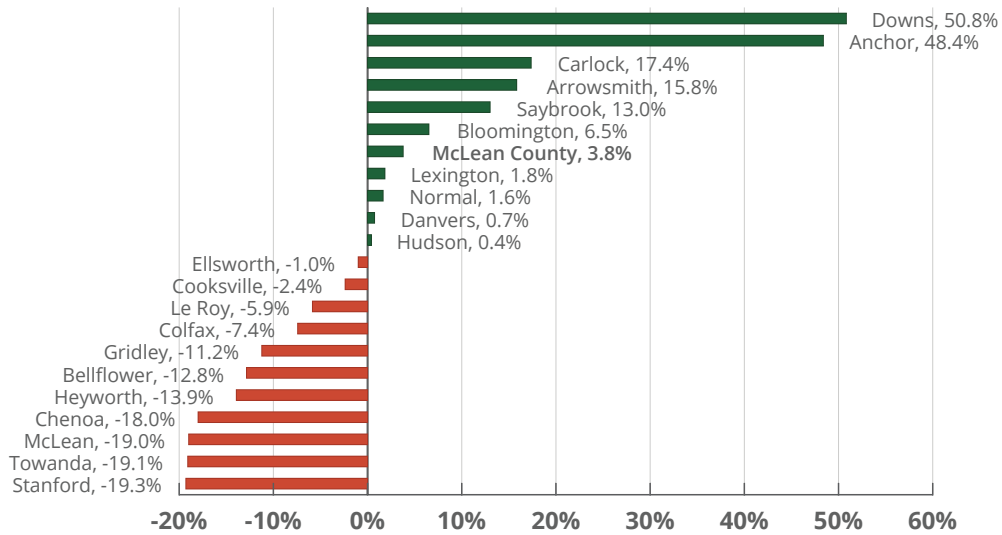
| | 2019 | 2023 | Difference | % Change |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <i>McLean County</i> | 72,384 | 75,120 | 2,736 | 3.8% |
| Bloomington | 34,750 | 37,013 | 2,263 | 6.5% |
| Normal | 21,524 | 21,879 | 355 | 1.6% |
| Downs | 362 | 546 | 184 | 50.8% |
| Saybrook | 292 | 330 | 38 | 13.0% |
| Carlock | 213 | 250 | 37 | 17.4% |
| Anchor | 62 | 92 | 30 | 48.4% |
| Arrowsmith | 120 | 139 | 19 | 15.8% |
| Lexington | 871 | 887 | 16 | 1.8% |
| Hudson | 725 | 728 | 3 | 0.4% |
| Danvers | 404 | 407 | 3 | 0.7% |
| Ellsworth | 101 | 100 | -1 | -1.0% |
| Cooksville | 84 | 82 | -2 | -2.4% |
| Bellflower | 179 | 156 | -23 | -12.8% |
| Colfax | 418 | 387 | -31 | -7.4% |
| Towanda | 220 | 178 | -42 | -19.1% |
| Stanford | 311 | 251 | -60 | -19.3% |
| McLean | 358 | 290 | -68 | -19.0% |
| Gridley | 641 | 569 | -72 | -11.2% |
| Le Roy | 1,589 | 1,496 | -93 | -5.9% |
| Chenoa | 895 | 734 | -161 | -18.0% |
| Heyworth | 1,177 | 1,013 | -164 | -13.9% |

Table 4 shows the total housing units in McLean County³. The county in general saw a 3.8% increase in total housing units, from 72,384 in 2019 to 75,120 units in 2023. The City of Bloomington saw a 6.5% increase in total housing units, from 34,750 in 2019 to 37,013 in 2023. Meanwhile, the Town of Normal saw a 1.6% increase within the same time frame, from 21,524 units in 2019 to 21,879 in 2023. Bloomington saw the highest increase in total housing units, with an increase of 2,263 units from 2019 to 2023. The Town of Normal follows with 355 additional units from 2019 to 2023. On the other hand, Heyworth and Chenoa experienced the largest decrease in total housing units within the same time frame, losing 164 and 161 housing units respectively.

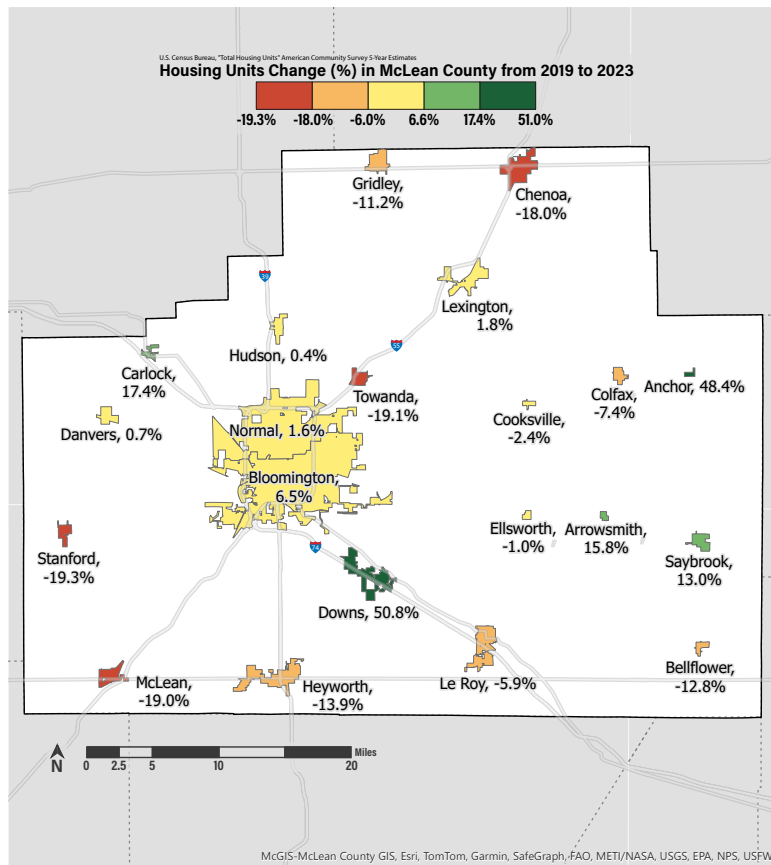
Figure 7 shows that Downs experienced the highest rate of increase in total housing units, from 362 units in 2019 to 546 in 2023 – a 50.8% increase. On the other hand, Stanford saw a 19.3% decline in its total housing units, from 311 in 2019 to 251 units in 2023.

Figure 7. Change in Total Housing Units in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



Map 3. Change in Housing Units in McLean County (2019 to 2023)



Map 3 shows that the highest and third-highest growth in terms of housing units occurred around the Bloomington-Normal area, with Downs and Carlock recording increases of 50.8% and 17.4% respectively. The rest of the municipalities around the B-N area, as well as those southwest and northeast of the urban area all experienced either stagnant growth or a decline in housing units. This suggests that people may have a preference of moving closer to urban amenities while retaining the small-town atmosphere and affordability.

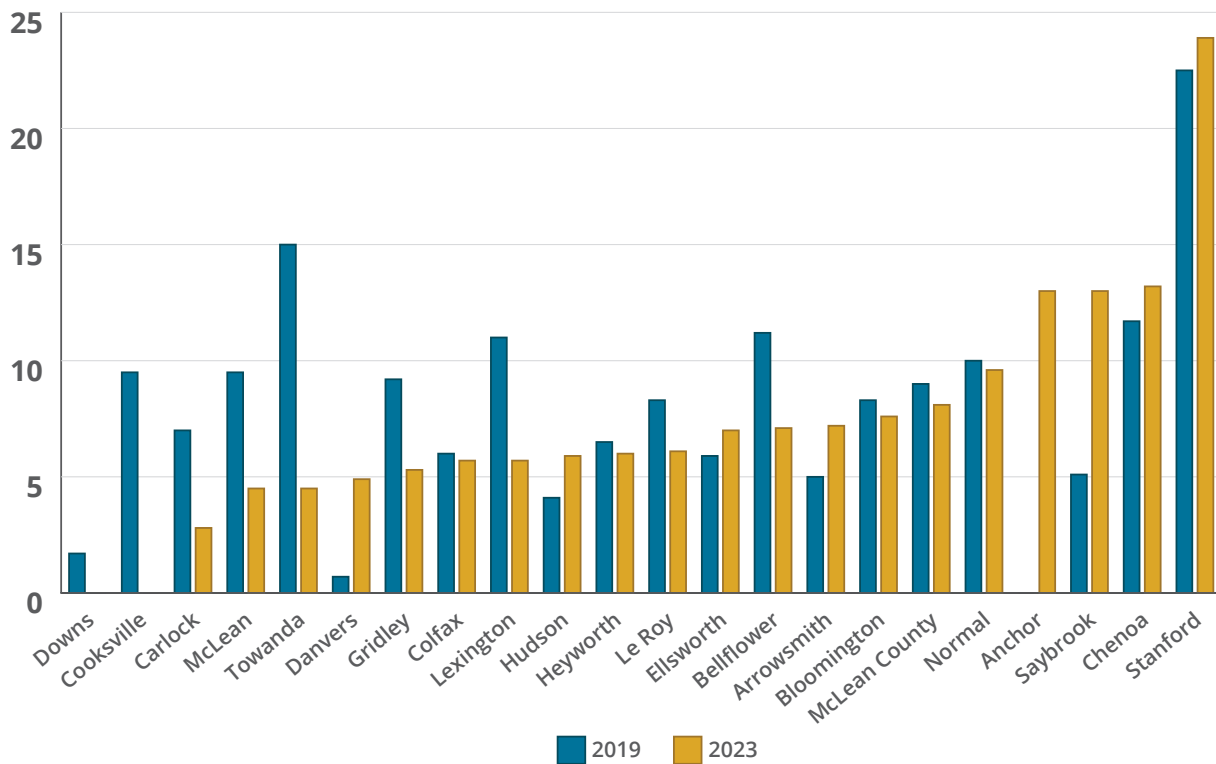
Vacancy Rates

According to both the ILEPI & PMCR report and the McLean County Regional Housing Recovery Plan⁴, healthy housing markets require a certain level of housing vacancies. Lower vacancy rates indicate a tighter market and higher demand for additional housing. According to the Regional Housing Recovery Plan, healthy vacancy rates are typically between 8 to 10%.

Figure 8 shows that the county in general saw a slight decline in vacancy rates⁵, from 9.0% in 2019 to 8.1% in 2023. This is within the 8-10% range suggested by the RHRP. The Town of Normal also saw a slight decline in its vacancy rates, from 10% in 2019 to 9.6% in 2023 – a 0.4% decrease. Despite this, it is still within the recommended range. On the other hand, the City of Bloomington saw a 0.7% decline in vacancy rates, from 8.3% in 2019 to 7.6% in 2023, below the suggested threshold. Stanford has the highest vacancy rates, both in 2019 and 2023, with 22.5% in 2019 and 23.9% in 2023. Two municipalities reported 0 vacancies in 2023 – Downs and Cooksville. Among the listed municipalities, 16 have vacancy rates below the recommended threshold, showing a tight housing market across the county.

Figure 8. Vacancy Rates in McLean County in 2019 and 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

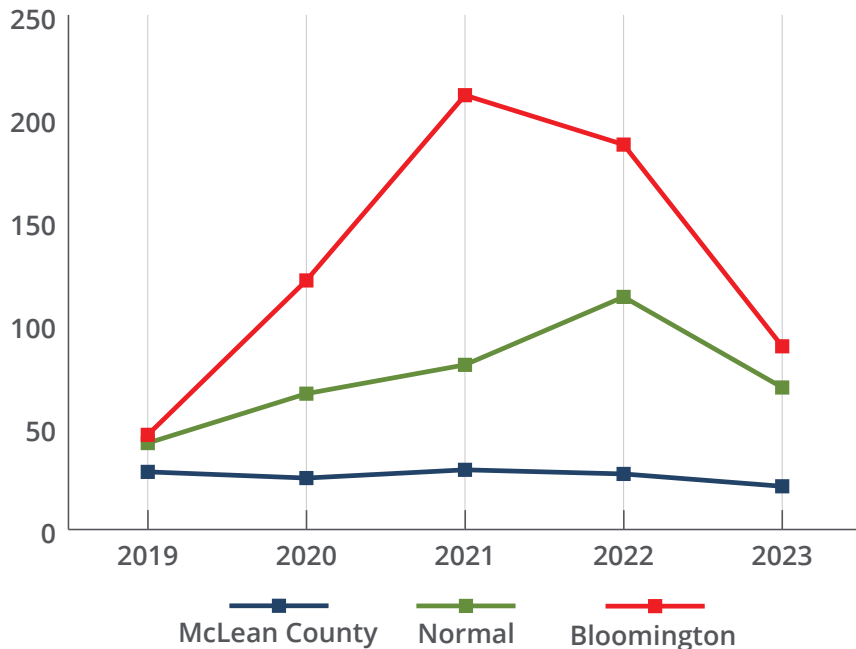


Permits

Another factor that the ILEPI & PMCR report looked at were building permits⁶. Figure 9 shows the number of new residential permits issued by the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal, and McLean County (unincorporated areas) from 2019 to 2024. In 2019, the City and the Town issued similar amounts of new residential permits, with 46 for the City and 42 for the Town. The county issued 28 new residential permits during the same year. The City issued 121 new residential permits in 2020 and 211 new residential permits in 2021, resulting in a spike as seen in Figure 9. In 2022, the Town issued a five-year high of 113 new residential permits. Since then, both the City and the Town have seen a decline in permits issued. Meanwhile, the county has maintained about 25-30 new residential permits per year since 2019.

Figure 9. Number of New Residential Permits Issued in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: McLean County Housing Dashboard



Median Rent

Table 5 and Figure 10 both show the change in median rent in McLean County⁷ from 2019 to 2023. The county experienced a 17.4% increase in median rent, from \$845 in 2019 to \$992 in 2023. Bloomington saw a 20.1% increase, from \$836 in 2019 to \$1,004 in 2023. Normal saw an 11.3% increase in median rent, from \$875 in 2019 to \$974 in 2023. Stanford experienced the highest total increase in median rent, with a \$562 increase within the five-year period. Arrowsmith saw a \$41 decrease in median rent – the only municipality in the county to experience a decline in median rent.

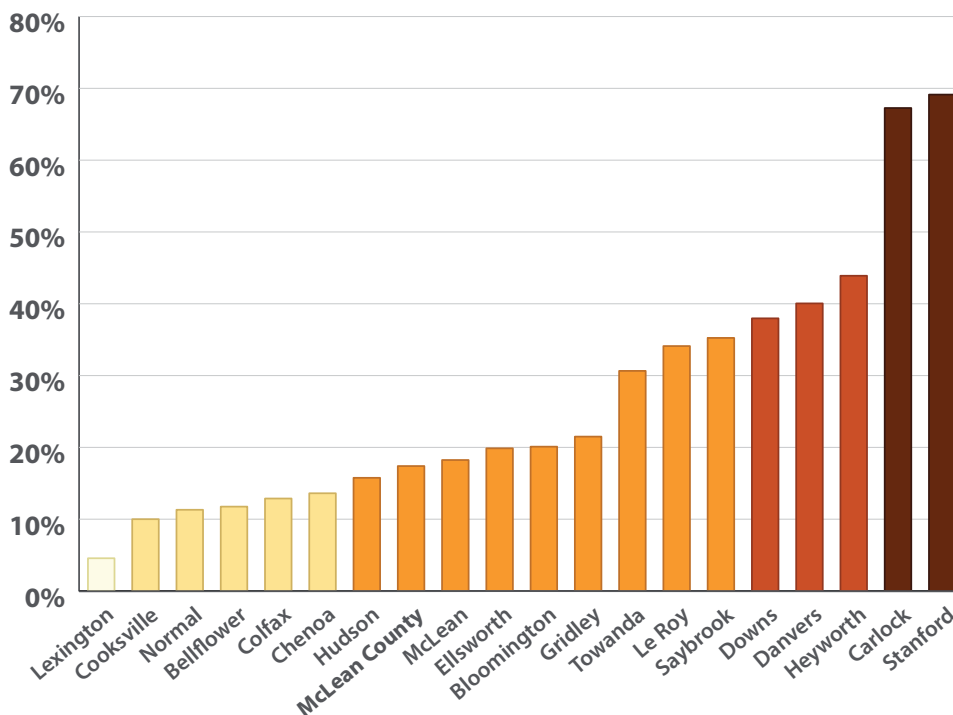
Figure 10 shows that Stanford saw the highest percent increase in median rent, from \$813 to \$1,375 – a 69.1% increase in five years. Lexington saw the least amount of percent increase in median rent, a 4.6% increase within the same time frame.

Table 5. Median Rent in McLean County (in US Dollars) (2019 to 2023)

| Geography | 2019 | 2023 | Difference | % Change |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Stanford | 813 | 1,375 | 562 | 69.1% |
| Carlock | 788 | 1,318 | 530 | 67.3% |
| Downs | 906 | 1,250 | 344 | 38.0% |
| Danvers | 819 | 1,147 | 328 | 40.0% |
| Heyworth | 713 | 1,026 | 313 | 43.9% |
| Towanda | 721 | 942 | 221 | 30.7% |
| Saybrook | 613 | 829 | 216 | 35.2% |
| Le Roy | 601 | 806 | 205 | 34.1% |
| McLean | 1,036 | 1,225 | 189 | 18.2% |
| Bloomington | 836 | 1,004 | 168 | 20.1% |
| Hudson | 990 | 1,146 | 156 | 15.8% |
| Ellsworth | 765 | 917 | 152 | 19.9% |
| <i>McLean County</i> | <i>845</i> | <i>992</i> | <i>147</i> | <i>17.4%</i> |
| Gridley | 628 | 763 | 135 | 21.5% |
| Chenoa | 735 | 835 | 100 | 13.6% |
| Normal | 875 | 974 | 99 | 11.3% |
| Colfax | 753 | 850 | 97 | 12.9% |
| Bellflower | 783 | 875 | 92 | 11.7% |
| Cooksville | 750 | 825 | 75 | 10.0% |
| Lexington | 702 | 734 | 32 | 4.6% |
| Arrowsmith | 1,083 | 1,042 | -41 | -3.8% |

Figure 10. Change in Median Rent in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



Median Household Income

Table 6. Median Household Income (in US Dollars) in McLean County (2019 to 2023)

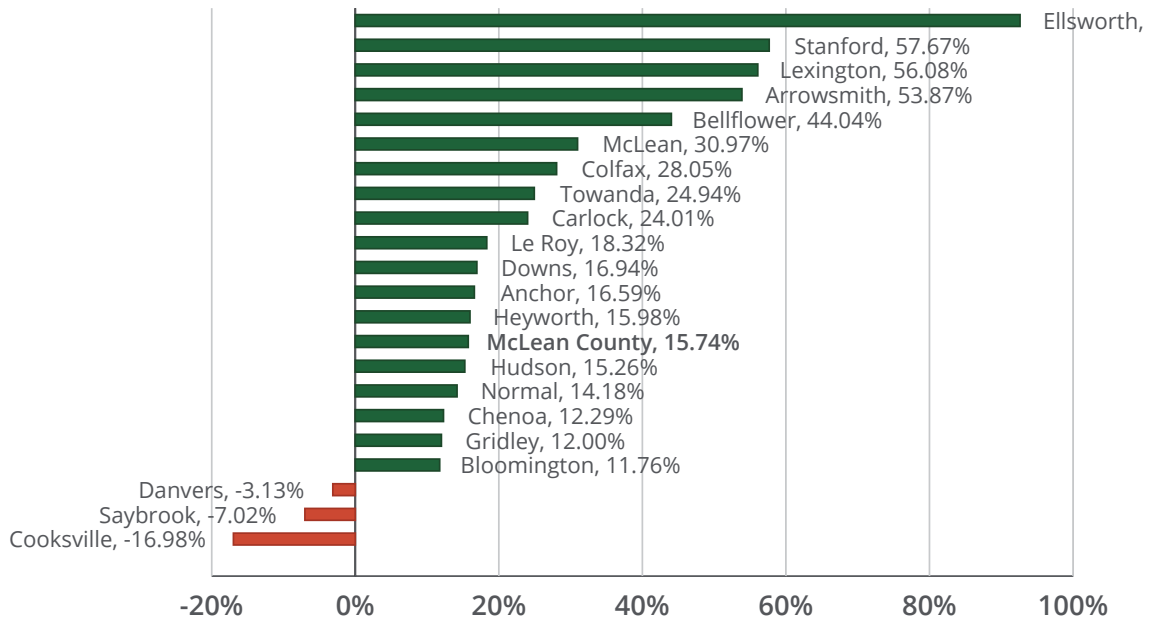
| Geography | 2019 | 2023 | Difference | Change |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Lexington | 63,221 | 98,676 | 35,455 | 56.1% |
| Ellsworth | 38,125 | 73,438 | 35,313 | 92.6% |
| Stanford | 52,750 | 83,173 | 30,423 | 57.7% |
| Arrowsmith | 55,625 | 85,592 | 29,967 | 53.9% |
| Bellflower | 55,250 | 79,583 | 24,333 | 44.0% |
| McLean | 64,722 | 84,766 | 20,044 | 31.0% |
| Towanda | 62,917 | 78,611 | 15,694 | 24.9% |
| Colfax | 55,859 | 71,528 | 15,669 | 28.1% |
| Downs | 91,333 | 106,809 | 15,476 | 16.9% |
| Carlock | 63,000 | 78,125 | 15,125 | 24.0% |
| Hudson | 99,013 | 114,125 | 15,112 | 15.3% |
| Le Roy | 73,950 | 87,500 | 13,550 | 18.3% |
| Heyworth | 78,077 | 90,556 | 12,479 | 16.0% |
| <i>McLean County</i> | <i>67,675</i> | <i>78,329</i> | <i>10,654</i> | <i>15.7%</i> |
| Anchor | 60,500 | 70,536 | 10,036 | 16.6% |
| Normal | 58,111 | 66,350 | 8,239 | 14.2% |
| Bloomington | 67,507 | 75,449 | 7,942 | 11.8% |
| Gridley | 62,222 | 69,688 | 7,466 | 12.0% |
| Chenoa | 59,333 | 66,625 | 7,292 | 12.3% |
| Danvers | 69,125 | 66,964 | -2,161 | -3.1% |
| Saybrook | 58,594 | 54,479 | -4,115 | -7.0% |
| Cooksville | 66,250 | 55,000 | -11,250 | -17.0% |

McLean County⁸ recorded a \$10,654 or a 15.7% increase in median household income from 2019 to 2023. Bloomington recorded an \$7,942 or a 11.8% increase within the same time frame. Normal experienced an \$8,239 or a 14.2% increase in median household income, from 2019 to 2023. Table 6 shows that Hudson has the highest median household income within McLean County in 2023, while Saybrook has the lowest. In terms of raw difference of median household income, Lexington experienced a \$35,455 increase during the five-year period, while Cooksville had the largest decline, with a decrease of \$11,250.

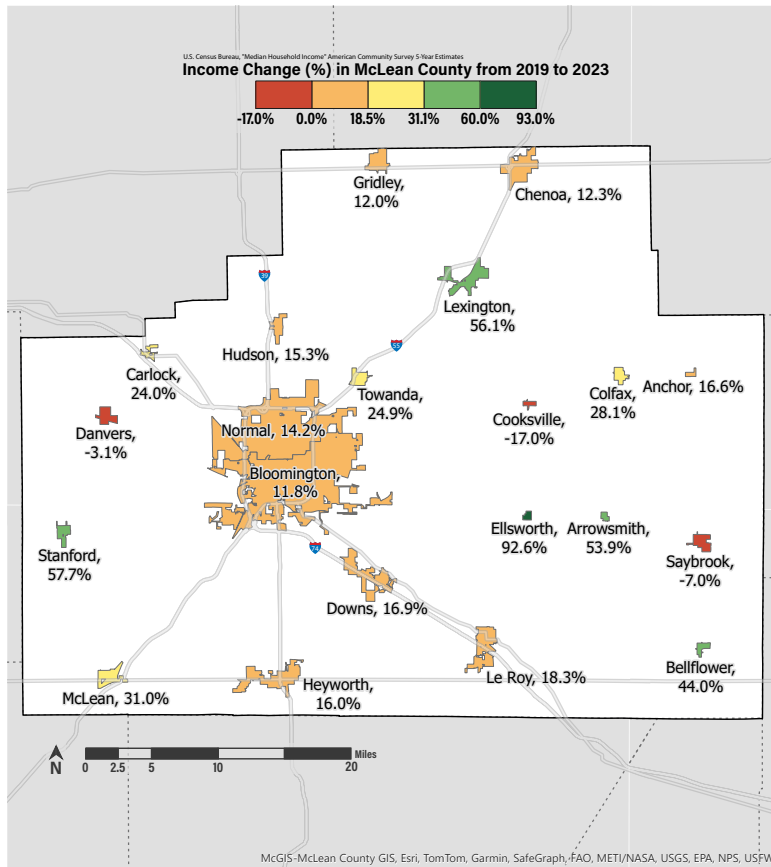
Figure 11 shows that three municipalities recorded a decrease in median household income within the five-year period – Cooksville, Saybrook, and Danvers, with Cooksville experiencing a 17.0% decrease, the most within the county. On the other end, Ellsworth saw a \$35,313 increase in median household income, translating into a 92.6% increase in median household income – the highest in the county by a wide margin.

Figure 11. Change in Median Income in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



Map 4. Change in Median Household Income in McLean County (2019 to 2023)



Map 4 shows that the highest increase in median household income occurred east and northeast of the Bloomington-Normal area, with the exception of Stanford. Municipalities near the B-N area, specifically Hudson and Downs, as well as southern municipalities such as Heyworth and Le Roy demonstrated income growth comparable to Bloomington-Normal.

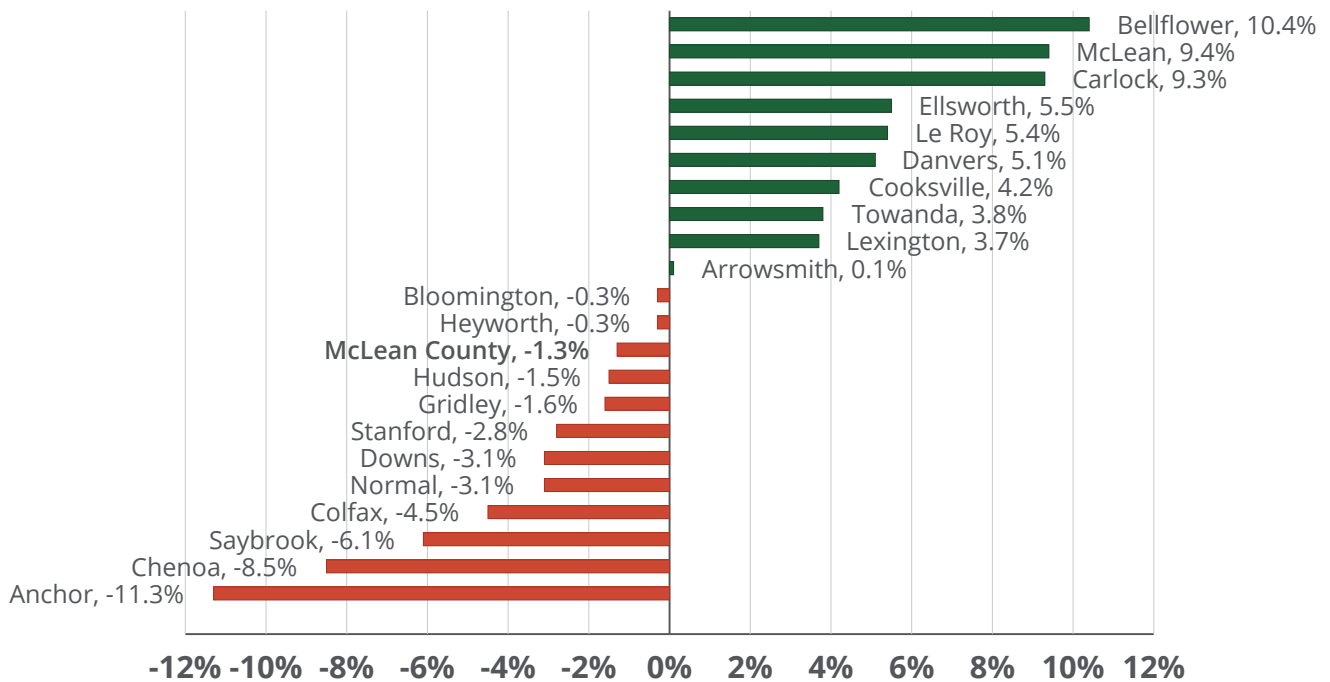
Employment

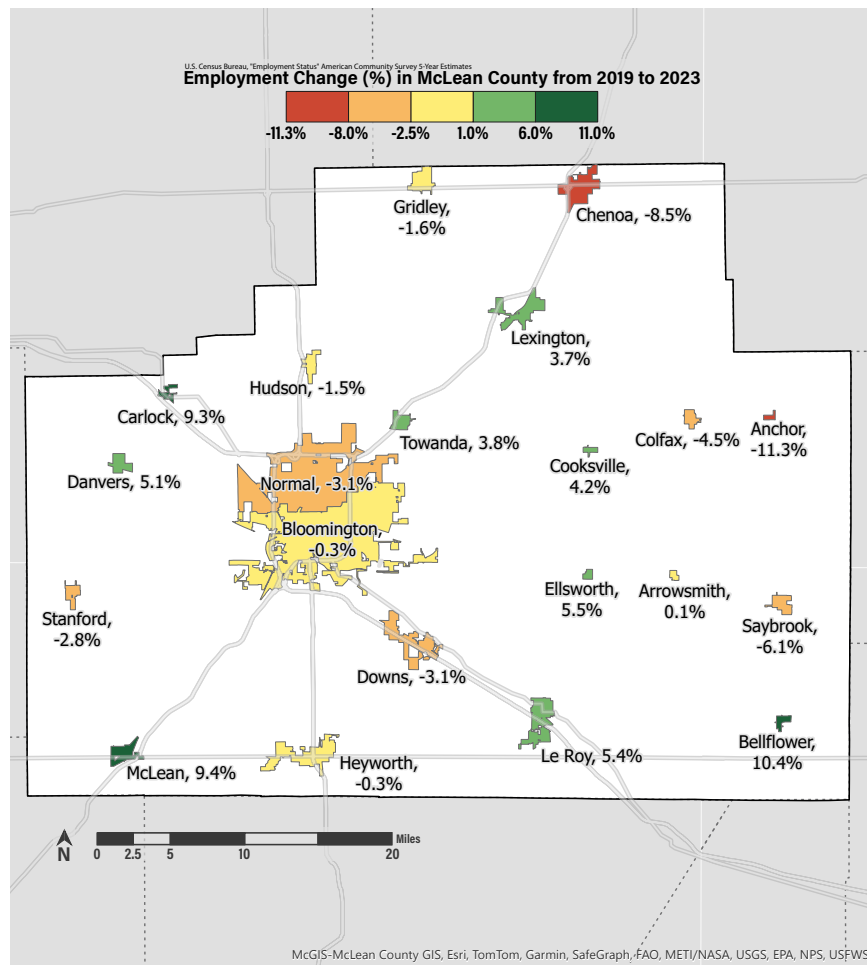
In this white paper, employment is quantified using the Employment/Population Ratio. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics⁹, employment/population ratio is the number of employed people as a percentage of the civilian non-institutional population, or simply the percentage of the population that is currently working. Figure 12 shows that the county experienced a 1.3% decline in the percentage of its population that is working. The City of Bloomington also experienced a slight decrease of 0.3% in its employment/population ratio from 2019 to 2023. The Town saw a 3.1% decrease in its employment/population ratio as well.

Bellflower saw the highest increase in the percentage of its population that is working, from 53.4% in 2019 to 63.8% in 2023, a 10.4% increase. Within the same time frame, Anchor recorded an 11.3% decline in its employment/population ratio, from 73.0% in 2019 to 61.7% in 2023.

Figure 12. Change Employment/Population Ratio in McLean County from 2019 to 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates





Map 5. Employment/Population Ratio Change in McLean County (2019 to 2023)

Map 5 highlights where within the county the highest increase in employment occurred. Bloomington and Normal, as well as neighboring municipalities such as Hudson, Downs, and Heyworth all experienced slight declines in employment from 2019-2023. In contrast, smaller municipalities across the county such as Le Roy, Danvers, Carlock, Bellflower, etc. recorded increases in their employment/population ratios.

Analysis

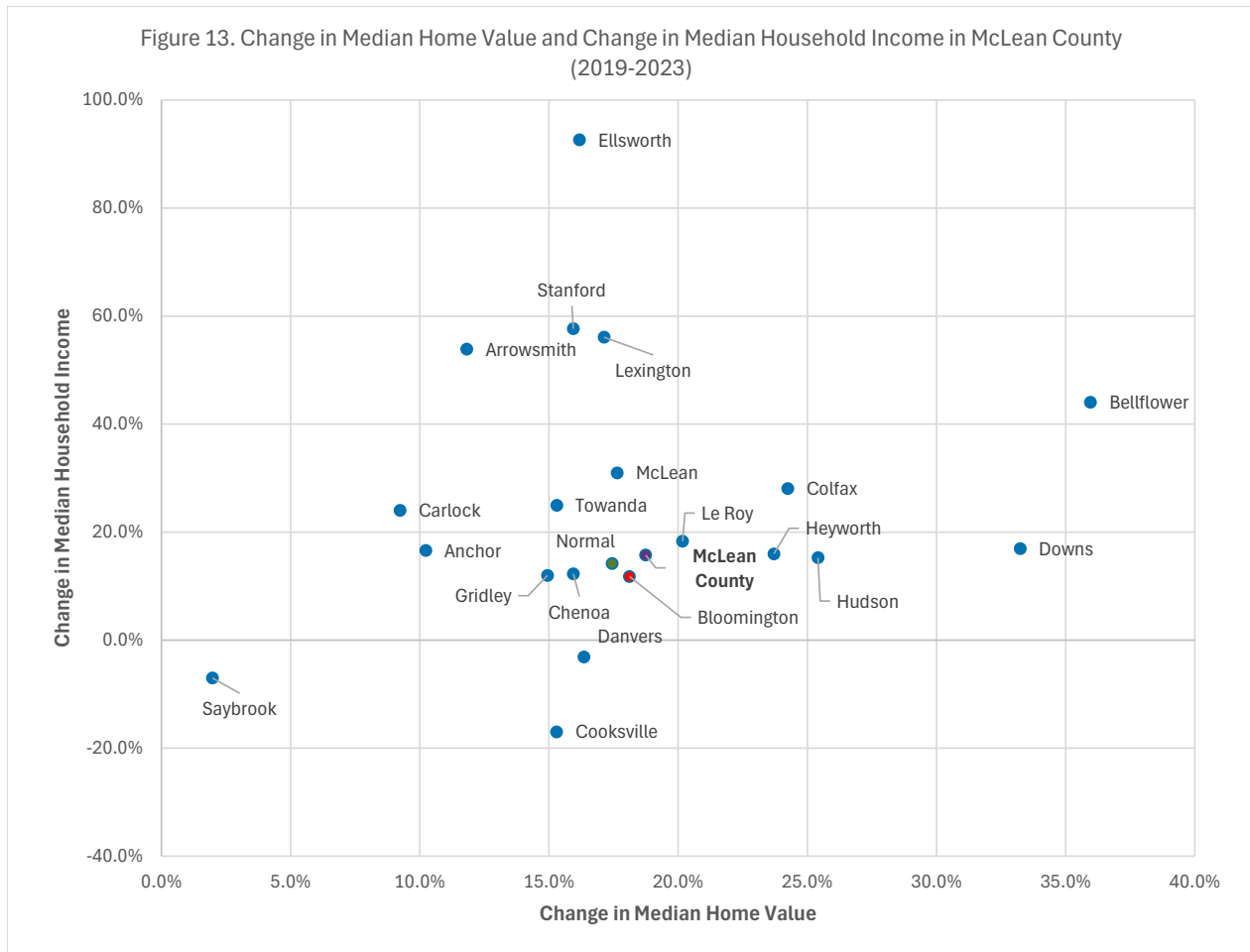


Figure 13 shows a scatterplot comparing the change in median home value and the change in median household income in McLean County from 2019 to 2023.

Three municipalities – Saybrook, Cooksville, and Danvers are below the x-axis, showing a negative change in their median household income, as mentioned in the “Income” section. Figure 13 shows that while Saybrook experienced a decline in its median household income, its median home value has not changed a lot, suggesting housing there is relatively affordable compared to the rest of the county. On the other hand, Cooksville saw an almost 20% decline in its median household income while also seeing an almost 15% increase in its median home value, suggesting a tighter housing market and a potential need for affordable housing in the municipality.

Another notable municipality is Ellsworth. Ellsworth had the highest change in median household income while its median home value remained close to the county average. Bellflower is also notable given that it experienced the highest increase in median home value while experiencing a 40% increase in median household income. While the increase in median income is a positive change, residents of Bellflower might not feel that given the higher cost of homes in the municipality.

Throughout the figures above, two municipalities stood out – Downs and Stanford. Downs experienced the highest rate of increase in terms of population and housing units, showing growth and development. In contrast, Stanford saw the largest decline in terms of population and housing units, as well as the highest vacancy rates and highest median rent. This suggests that the municipality is shrinking and that the cost of living there has been increasing. It is important to note, however, that Stanford also saw the second-highest increase in median household income within the county. As seen in the scatterplot, while Downs may seem like an outlier, Stanford has a comparable home value-median income situation with Arrowsmith and Lexington.

Figure 14. Trends in McLean County (2019-2023)

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

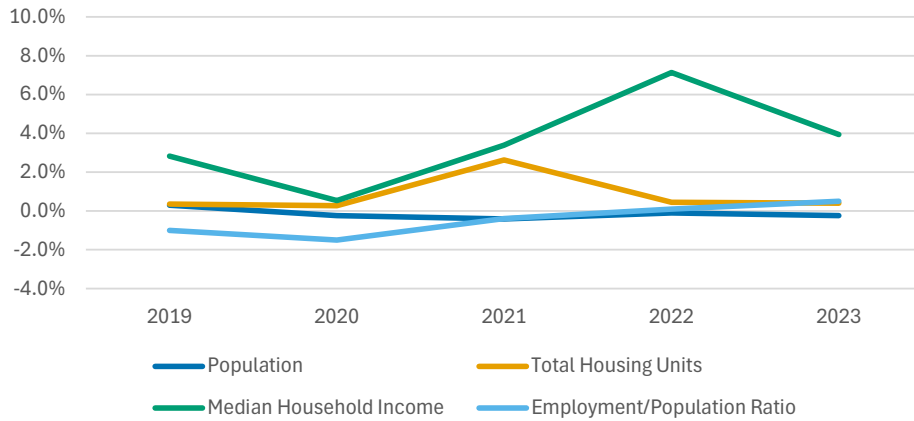


Figure 15. Trends in Bloomington, IL (2019-2023)

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

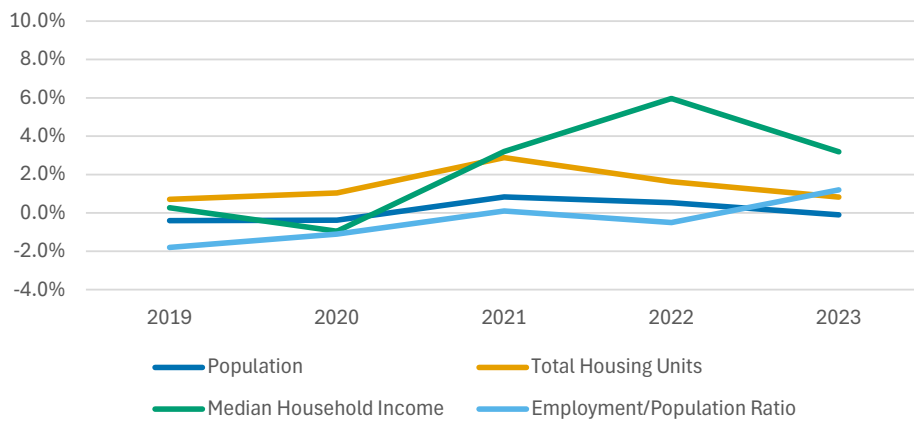
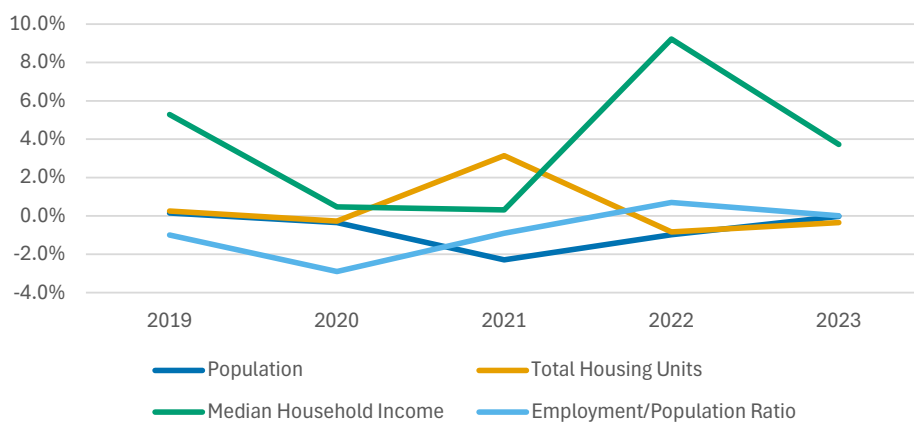


Figure 16. Trends in Normal, IL (2019-2023)

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



McLean County

Figures 14 through 16 show the percent change in population, total housing units, median household income, and employment across the County, City, and Town, respectively. From 2019 to 2020, the county experienced a dip in its median household income, potentially due to COVID-19. The population and total housing units both saw a slight decline during this year as well. From 2020 to 2021, the county recorded a spike in housing units and median household income, with the increase in median household income peaking in 2022. While the housing units and income increased, the population of the county still experienced a decline until 2021 and bounced back in 2022. In terms of median household income for the county has declined by 4% from 2022 to 2023. In terms of employment, the county saw a decline in employment and bounced back after 2020, growing at a higher pace than the total housing units and overall population.

City of Bloomington

Similar to the trends of the county, the City of Bloomington saw a decline in its median household income from 2019 to 2020 and had a surge from 2020 to 2022 and then declined by 2023. The city's population, total housing units, and employment all grew from 2019 to 2021 and slowed down by 2022. However, the employment ratio again had an increase from 2022 to 2023, outpacing the growth rate of the housing units and population.

Town of Normal

The Town of Normal also saw a decrease in its median household income from 2019 to 2020. However, unlike the County and the City, the Town's median household income stagnated from 2020 to 2021, with only a 0.3% increase year-over-year. It did, however, experience a 9.2% increase in median household income, from 2021 to 2022, far outpacing the other two, before slowing down in 2023. The total population and total housing units in the town barely changed from 2019 to 2020. In 2021, the Town's total housing units increased while its total population dipped. By 2023, the growth rates of these two variables were close to 0%. In 2020, the Town had the largest dip in employment relative to the other two. Within the next two years, the Town's employment ratio steadily increased before stagnating by 2023.

Across McLean County, the City of Bloomington, and the Town of Normal, the general trend is similar. All three experienced a dip in median household income in 2020 while their employment ratios either declined or stagnated. Their respective median household income bounced back post-COVID and peaked in 2022 before slowing down by 2023. While they have differences in terms of population, housing, and employment trends, they all slowed down by 2023 and have been hovering around 0% change since.

Figures 14 to 16 show that the median household income has outpaced the growth of the housing inventory in the City, Town, and County. While the population has slowed, an increase in purchasing power combined with limited inventory means that more households are competing for the same number of units, driving the prices and rent upward. Employment has also matched, if not outpaced, the increase in housing supply, adding further to the demand. As a result, households who are able to afford higher-valued homes are competing with a tight market, intensifying for everyone.

Summary

Despite the slow population growth of Bloomington, Normal, and McLean County, it is still experiencing a housing crisis. However, the changes are not just concentrated within the urban area. Municipalities such as Downs illustrate rapid growth and development, while Stanford shows signs of shrinking through population decline, high vacancy rates, and rising rents. Changes in the population, number of households, and number of available housing units, especially in the rural municipalities, all factor into the housing crunch that the county is experiencing.

Across McLean County, the City of Bloomington, and the Town of Normal, the post-pandemic recovery has played a role in the growth of income and employment, outpacing the growth of housing supply. While the median household incomes rebounded through 2022, they began to slow down by 2023 even though the population and housing inventory remained stagnant. The combination of rising purchasing power and limited housing supply intensified the competition for available units, pushing prices and rents higher and deepening the county's housing concerns.

1. Illinois Economic Policy Institute & Project for Middle Class Renewal. (2025). [You Can't Buy What You Can't Afford: Illinois' Housing Shortage and Ways to Fix It.](#)
2. US Census Bureau. [B25077](#): Median Value (Dollars).
3. US Census Bureau. [B25002](#). Occupancy Status
4. McLean County Regional Planning Commission. (2024). [Regional Housing Recovery Plan.](#)
5. US Census Bureau. [B25002](#). Occupancy Status
6. McLean County Regional Planning Commission. [McLean County Housing Dashboard](#)
7. US Census Bureau. [DP04](#). Selected Housing Characteristics
8. US Census Bureau. [B19013](#). Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months
9. US Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Concepts and Definitions \(CPS\).](#)