



# Oregon's Kitchen Table – Gilliam County Housing Opportunities

## Background

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In spring 2017, a group of community members from Arlington and Condon in Gilliam County created a collaborative workgroup to help create strategies to improve housing options in Gilliam. The group, in partnership with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT), conducted an online consultation mid-June to mid-July 2017 to engage residents, property owners, businesses, employees and visitors to Gilliam County to weigh in on challenges and opportunities to creating housing in the county.

The OKT online consultation provided some background on what the workgroup had learned about housing in the county in the county and asked a series of questions about current living situations to get a sense of demand for housing followed by a series of questions about the future of Gilliam County and why people might want to live there. A series of demographic questions also informed the Gilliam County team of who responded to the survey.

The survey consisted of 201 participants with 111 taking the survey online and 90 on paper. Survey invitations were sent through Oregon's Kitchen Table, the different members of the Gilliam County Attainable Housing team, and a number of partners. In addition, several local businesses and community groups circulated the survey. About 34% of all participants identified Arlington as their primary community and 40% Condon. 3% came from elsewhere in Gilliam County and 22% said their primary community was outside the county. The majority from those who were outside the county came from zip codes adjacent to or close to the county. The majority of participants own their current home and have 2 adults with no children living in the home.

The raw data was processed and analyzed by OKT. The following analysis includes a summary of results as well as an annotated survey attached as an appendix. Results in the annotated questionnaire (Appendix A) may add up to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

**Oregon's Kitchen Table:** Oregon's Kitchen Table is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center in the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University, and was created by a group of non-partisan, non-profit community organizations dedicated to helping Oregonians have a voice. Oregon's Kitchen Table is a



place for Oregonians to share their ideas, opinions, beliefs, and resources to improve Oregon and our communities. [www.oregonskitchentable.org](http://www.oregonskitchentable.org)

## Overview of Results

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Overwhelmingly, participants believe that housing is a serious problem in the county, with over 87% of respondents selecting either “Very Serious” or “Somewhat Serious.” Nearly half, 49%, selected “Very Serious.” At the same time, just over half (51%) of all respondents were “very satisfied” with their living situation and nearly half were “Very Unlikely” to move to a different situation if other housing were available in Gilliam County. One commenter among others noted that “We are 20+ year residents and, though we love our home, are well aware that there are few affordable options to rent or buy here.”

### Factors and Criteria for Those Seeking New Housing

Of those that said that they would like to move, when asked what kind of housing they would be looking for, nearly 65% selected “Single Family Home.” More space, affordability, and a house in better condition were the top three criteria for those who might be considering moving when looking for a new home or apartment. Together, they made up nearly 60% of responses. In addition to the options listed, participants added additional responses, which included: more acreage, smaller house / less space, location, and different layout.

Lack of available homes, cost to purchase and condition of available homes made up the top three reasons for what was preventing people from moving. Participants also added additional reasons, including: desires of other family members such as a parent or spouse, ownership of home, and the amount of land / acreage associated with the house.

For those who identified themselves as living outside Gilliam County in question 10, 70% said they either would move or might move to Gilliam County if there was better housing available. It is worth noting that some of those who responded to this question already do live in Gilliam.

Participants were fairly evenly divided in terms of how much they would be willing to spend to purchase a home; however, nearly all (99%) of respondents who answered this question said they would not be willing to pay over \$900 in rent, with most (69%) saying they would be willing to pay between \$501-700.



Participants were given the opportunity to leave additional comments that they thought it was important for the workgroup to know about their housing situation. Common responses centered around the need for more rental units and apartments and the need for improved infrastructure and conditions of housing.

**EXCERPTED COMMENTS**

*“We will retire to Condon within 3 years. Our home there had been reasonably maintained and used by family. However, as we get older it will be crucial to our staying there to be able to find nearby skilled building and maintenance technicians or laborers to hire as needed.”*

*“The infrastructure is poor here. We do a good job at what we have, but there is no pride in ownership. Roads are stricken with potholes, houses are in shambles.”*

*“Rentals in Arlington are very scarce and most are small mobile homes or substandard duplex.”*

\*All responses to this question were provided to the Gilliam County workgroup and are available upon request from OKT.

**Future of and Hopes for Gilliam County**

When asked about the future of Gilliam, overwhelmingly participants chose “I would like to see Gilliam County grow by bringing new jobs and businesses into the area, increasing the number of workers and families” as their top hope with 76% of those who responded selecting this option. “I would like to see Gilliam County stay pretty much the same as it is now” landed in the fourth position.

**AS YOU CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF GILLIAM COUNTY, PLEASE RANK THESE STATEMENTS FROM 1-4, WITH 1 BEING MOST AGREE AND 4 BEING LEAST.**

■ Most Important ■ Second Most Important ■ Third Most Important ■ Fourth Most Important

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE GILLIAM COUNTY GROW BY BRINGING NEW JOBS AND BUSINESSES INTO THE...



I WOULD LIKE TO SEE GILLIAM COUNTY STAY PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS IT IS NOW.



I WOULD LIKE TO SEE GILLIAM COUNTY BECOME PRIMARILY A RECREATIONAL DESTINATION WITH...



I WOULD LIKE TO SEE GILLIAM COUNTY BECOME A RETIREMENT DESTINATION WITH THE AMENITIES...



For those participants who chose to provide additional thoughts on their hopes for Gilliam County, several comments on the need for educational and other opportunities for children as well as multi-generational activities. In addition, multiple commenters noted the poor condition of the trailers in the trailer park in Arlington; however, others noted a need for more housing options in many forms, whether for families, couples, or single people and that could include the trailer park.

### EXCERPTED COMMENTS

*"I hope that Gilliam County has employment, educational, and housing opportunities for those who want to live in the county. I didn't rank the questions above because I don't have a preference whether that opportunity is achieved by staying the same, or by growing in a particular way. I think rural communities are struggling in a global economy, and more people choosing to live in larger cities."*

*"I would like to see a community center for all ages. Right now it seems the churches are peoples communities and they are each separate. We need something that brings people together other than joining the Elks."*

*"I think keeping the medical clinics well-staffed and open is crucial to the growth and stability of the community. I am also happy to see Condon working to enhance the availability of high speed internet, which might encourage individuals who work remotely, as well as technology companies to move in."*

*"The trailer park in Arlington is a huge drain on Arlington resources. The trailers need to be purchased as they are sold and removed by the county, city, port, individuals. That is the only way this problem is ever going to change. It is a revolving door of people living in substandard housing."*

*"Think you are on the right track in getting an increase in available housing. Lots of people working in Gilliam County but living outside of Gilliam County. One other issue besides housing is availability of basic services for those who are used to grocery stores, theaters, bowling alley, 24 hour gas stations etc. Those that already live here are used to not having these conveniences and are good with it. Some workers choose to live outside the area because of convenience of other services not available in Gilliam County."*

\*All responses to this question were provided to the Gilliam County workgroup and are available upon request from OKT.

## Factors Influencing People to Live and Work in Gilliam County

When ranking what factors might influence people to live and work in Gilliam County, participants thought that availability of housing and the quality / offerings of school were the top two factors.

**WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT WHY PEOPLE WHO WANT TO LIVE AND WORK IN GILLIAM COUNTY MIGHT NOW MOVE HERE, PLEASE RANK THE FACTORS THAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE INFLUENCING THEIR DECISIONS (1-4, WITH 1 BEING MOST IMPORTANT AND 4 BEING LEAST IMPORTANT).**

■ Most Important   ■ Second Most Important   ■ Third Most Important   ■ Fourth Most Important



The majority of additional comments regarding why people might move here included references to the area's safety, quiet, and tight-knit communities. In addition, multiple participants noted the importance of jobs in drawing people to the area while also commenting that even with a job, the lack of available housing in good condition might deter them from moving to Gilliam.

### EXCERPTED COMMENTS

*"Low crime rate, good sense of community (knowing neighbors), less commute time"*

*"I appreciate the safety and the peace and quiet. If I were raising children I would like the closeness of the community and the lack of crime."*

*"Job opportunities - we need more business."*

*"I moved here because of my job and fortunately I was able to buy a house. I don't know I could do that today. I see a current lack of decent housing, for rent or purchase, as being an obstacle. There is very limited selection."*

*"Having 24 hour healthcare I think is one of the top three most important amenities for both families with young children, retention of our senior population and seniors looking to locate here."*

\*All responses to this question were provided to the Gilliam County workgroup and are available upon request from OKT.

## **Priorities for and Barriers to Improving Housing in Gilliam County**

Finally, participants were asked to rank their top priorities for what might help improve housing options in Gilliam and what the barriers to doing so might be. Each question contained 7 or 8 options. In terms of priorities for improving housing priorities, participants overwhelmingly ranked "Build more homes to serve as vacation rentals" as their 7<sup>th</sup> out of 7 priorities. A top priority was not as clear, with "Rehabilitate and upgrade existing homes and rentals", "Fill in vacant lots with new homes of various sizes," and "Tear down dilapidated housing and build single family homes from the ground hope" falling close together as top priorities.

Similarly, participants consistently ranked "Building and zoning codes that are too restrictive" as the lowest priority out of 8 options for barriers to improving housing availability. "Cost of new construction" was slightly preferred as the highest priority with the other six options ranking very closely with each other.



For both questions, participants were also given an opportunity to provide any additional priorities not included in the options. Regarding improvements priorities, several commenters noted a need to better inform people about incentive programs that already exist, model incentive programs in other communities, and the need to improve conditions at trailer parks. Additional barriers identified in responses include a lack of contractors, lack of access to lending programs, and the need to review existing land use policies.

### **EXCERPTED COMMENTS - Improvement Priorities**

*"I think having a housing option that doesn't require the tenant to have to maintain a yard, weeds, landscaping is attractive. Especially to young, single people and the elderly."*

*"The CDC offers incentives to property owners already, the program is already in place, perhaps more advertising of the program or less stringent income guidelines to make it more accessible to the middle income. Then folks could afford to purchase a dilapidated home and fix it up to sell or rent."*

*"Morrow County has offered a \$5000 incentive to homeowners who purchase or build a house there: Gilliam County should do this!"*

*The only affordable housing continues to be at our trailer courts, one of which is poorly maintained and in deplorable condition."*

### **EXCERPTED COMMENTS - Barriers to Improvement**

*If it hadn't been for Farm Home Administration, we would not have been able to afford our first home in Gilliam County. The availability of safe, affordable housing and supportive lenders with low down payment financing and accessible home improvement loans seems critical."*

*"Lack of contractors."*

*"I believe a review and assessment of current land use, rules, related ordinances for county and city application should be conducted with a view of promoting this community is due."*

\*All responses to this question were provided to the Gilliam County workgroup and are available upon request from OKT.

## Appendix A. Gilliam County Housing Opportunities – Annotated Survey

### INTRODUCTION

Like many communities in Oregon and around the country, Gilliam County is suffering from a lack of housing for people already living here as well as people who want to move into the community to work and raise their family. Recently, a group of community members from Arlington and Condon created a collaborative workgroup to help create strategies to improve housing options in Gilliam County. That workgroup wants to hear from you about your values and priorities regarding housing in the county. We want to hear from current Gilliam County residents as well as others who own property in Gilliam County, who work in Gilliam County, and those who would consider moving to Gilliam County if they could make it work for themselves and their family.

**Please take a few minutes to provide your input. This survey should take you less than 10 minutes to complete.**

### BACKGROUND

Gilliam County has just under 2,000 residents, with the majority of people living in either Arlington or Condon. While there are current job opportunities and the potential for future jobs in both Arlington and Condon, it has become very difficult for new residents to find appropriate housing, and it has become difficult for current residents to upgrade their living situation. The workgroup has heard from a variety of employers who offered jobs to people who have accepted but then had to turn down the job because they could not find a place they want to live in. There have also been numerous experiences where people have an existing job that can be done anywhere. They want to move to Gilliam County and “bring” the job to the community. But after a fruitless search for suitable housing they do not move to the community. There are not enough total homes to support an increase in the working population, and many of the existing homes are older and are in need of upgrades. In addition, the financing for new construction is difficult because often the cost exceeds the ultimate value of the home. The workgroup is considering a number of options to help increase both the number of homes available and to help improve the homes that are available (remodel, improve insulation, etc.). This work will take the whole community though. So, we need to hear from you. Please weigh in! Please encourage your friends and neighbors to participate as well by giving them the following link to our survey at <https://consultations.oregonskitchentable.org/survey/gilliam-county-housing-opportunities>. For paper survey pick up and drop off: Condon Chamber of Commerce (307 S Main St, Condon, OR 97823) or Arlington Hardware (200 on the Mall, Arlington, OR 97812).

A report summarizing your input will be provided to this workgroup and others working on economic development and housing in the county, and will be available to the public on Oregon’s Kitchen Table’s website. All answers will be confidential and will not be associated with your name or contact information, per OKT’s privacy policy.

### QUESTIONS

First we are going to ask you a few questions about your own living situation to help give us a sense of the demand for new housing. We realize that some of you may have answered similar questions in earlier surveys, but we are looking for the most current answers from a broad range of people living both inside and outside the County.



### 1. What do you consider to be your primary community in Gilliam County?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=201
Arlington	34%
Condon	40%
I live elsewhere in Gilliam County	3%
My primary community is outside Gilliam County	22%

### 2. What is your living situation?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=200
Rent	26%
Own	69%
Other	6%

### 3. How many adults live in your household?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=197
0	1%
1	22%
2	65%
3	10%
4 or more	2%

### 4. How many children live in your household?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=200
0	61%
1	15%
2	15%
3	6%
4 or more	4%



**5. How satisfied are you with your living situation?**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=197
Very Satisfied	51%
Somewhat Satisfied	31%
Somewhat Unsatisfied	8%
Very Unsatisfied	8%
Don't Know / No Opinion	2%

**6. If other housing were available in Gilliam County, how likely are to you move to a different living situation?**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=201
Very Likely	10%
Somewhat Likely	17%
Somewhat Unlikely	10%
Very Unlikely	46%
Don't Know / No Opinion	16%

**If you are satisfied with your housing situation, please skip or mark n/a (not applicable) for the next set of questions.**

**7. If you would like to move, what kind of housing would you be looking for? Please select your top choice.**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=186
Apartment	3%
Duplex or Quad-plex	4%
Single Family Home	41%
Ranchette	12%
N/A	37%
Other	3%

**8. If you are considering moving, what would you be looking for in a new home or apartment? Please check all that apply.**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=261
More Space	20%



Home in Better Condition	16%
Home Closer to Work	9%
Home Closer to School, Medical Care, Or Other Amenities	5%
Affordability	17%
N/A	25%
Other	7%

**9. If you would like to move, what is preventing you? Please check all that apply.**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=292
Cost to Purchase	13%
Cost to Move	5%
Lack of Available Homes	25%
Size of Available Homes	9%
Condition of Available Homes	14%
N/A	26%
Other	8%

**10. If you live outside of Gilliam County, would you consider moving into the county if there were better housing available?**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=181
Yes	15%
No	10%
Maybe	8%
N/A	67%

**11. If you are looking to purchase a home, what would be the maximum purchase price for a home?**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=188
Less than \$75,000	6%
\$75,001 - \$100,000	11%
\$100,001 - \$125,000	12%
\$125,001 - \$150,000	10%



\$150,001 - \$175,000	9%
\$175,001 - \$200,000	11%
More than \$200,000	6%
N/A	34%

**12. If you are looking to rent a home or apartment in good condition, what would be the maximum rent you would be willing to pay per month?**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=170
\$501-\$700	33%
\$701 - \$900	15%
\$901-\$1100	4%
\$1101 - \$1300	3%
\$1301 - \$1500	1%
N/A	44%

**13. Is there anything else about your housing situation you would like us to know?** *Comments available in separate file.*

**14. As you consider the future of Gilliam County, please rank these statements from 1-4, with 1 being most agree and 4 being least.**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	#1	#2	#3	#4
I would like to see Gilliam County grow by bringing new jobs and businesses into the area, increasing the number of workers and families.	76%	11%	6%	7%
I would like to see Gilliam County become primarily a recreational destination with the year-round population growing little but with an increase in the number of visitors.	9%	46%	38%	10%
I would like to see Gilliam County become a retirement destination with the amenities necessary to support older adults.	4%	30%	42%	20%
I would like to see Gilliam County stay pretty much the same as it is now.	11%	13%	14%	63%

Do you have any other hopes for the community that you think are important for us to know? *Comments available in separate file.*



**15. When you think about why people who want to live and work in Gilliam County might now move here, please rank the factors that you think might be influencing their decisions (1-4, with 1 being most important and 4 being least important).**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	#1	#2	#3	#4
Availability of desirable housing	61%	17%	11%	10%
Quality or offerings of schools	25%	46%	16%	12%
Shopping or dining opportunities	5%	18%	32%	44%
Recreational or other amenities	9%	19%	41%	34%

Is there another factor for why people might move here that you think is very important? *Comments available in separate file.*

**16. As you think about the housing shortage in Gilliam, how serious a problem do you consider it to be?**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=188
Very Serious	49%
Somewhat Serious	38%
Not Too Serious	9%
Not At All Serious	<1%
Don't Know / No Opinion	3%

**17. As you think about improving the housing options in Gilliam County, please rank your priorities from 1 to 7 (with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least). You may only select each option once.**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Rehabilitate and upgrade existing homes and rentals.	28%	20%	16%	15%	14%	5%	3%
Fill in vacant lots with new homes of various sizes.	19%	19%	21%	17%	9%	7%	3%
Tear down dilapidated housing and build single family homes from the ground up.	19%	25%	22%	12%	9%	7%	3%
Build more multi-family options (duplexes, small apartment buildings, etc.).	12%	12%	16%	21%	18%	17%	4%
Build more new, larger single-family homes to accommodate working families.	10%	11%	9%	20%	27%	17%	4%
Build more homes to serve as vacation rentals.	2%	1%	1%	2%	7%	9%	70%
Offer incentives to owners to improve rental properties that they own.	9%	11%	13%	13%	16%	28%	12%



Is there another priority for improving housing options in Gilliam County that you think is very important?

*Comments available in separate file.*

**18. As you think about the barriers to improving housing options in Gilliam County, please rank them from 1 to 8 (with 1 being the most significant and 8 being the least). You may only select each option once.**

RESPONSE CATEGORY	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
Cost of new construction	28%	17%	11%	15%	13%	7%	7%	3%
Out of town landlords who are disconnected from the communities	14%	16%	13%	10%	11%	7%	13%	21%
Local property owners who won't or don't know how improve properties	8%	17%	14%	11%	10%	23%	13%	10%
Lack of developers willing to invest	9%	10%	14%	11%	10%	23%	13%	10%
Market that won't support higher rents	7%	9%	22%	19%	18%	10%	8%	7%
Market that won't support higher purchase prices	7%	17%	13%	15%	20%	15%	10%	6%
Lack of jobs to support adequate housing	22%	10%	8%	6%	13%	10%	18%	19%
Building and zoning codes that are too restrictive	5%	4%	5%	7%	3%	11%	16%	75%

Is there another barrier to improving housing options not listed above that you think is important?

*Comments available in separate file.*

