

Village of Laurium Master Plan

Demographics

A thorough understanding of a community's demographic and socioeconomic trends is imperative to identify growth and development challenges and the changing needs and preferences of the citizenry, which in turns aids decision-makers in an equitable planning process. By analyzing population trends, this plan hopes to understand how the demographics of the Village of Laurium have both shaped the area and will impact the needs of future residents. Important background information includes but is not limited to the economic characteristics of the population, age distribution, educational background, and employment characteristics of the region. This section compares the Village of Laurium to other municipalities in the region as well as to Houghton County and the State of Michigan to provide context for where the community stands in relation to other geographic units.

DATA SOURCES

Demographic information referenced in this chapter came from the following locations, in this preferred order:

- **2020, 2015, 2010, 2000, and 1990 US Census.** The decennial censuses are the most accurate source of demographic information in the United States. Mandated by the United States Constitution the aim of the decennial census is to count 100% of the US Population. Since the decennial census has been operating since 1790 it offers a valuable reference point to illustrate how populations have changed over time. While the decennial census has been administered for over 200 years the questions have shifted to better reflect modern populations. For example, your history of rebellion against the United States is no longer a question on the form.¹ Information collected in the most recent counts includes information about age, sex, race, the relationship between household members, and household tenure.
- **American Community Survey.** The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the "long-form" Census questions beginning in 2000, but collects the same types of information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a continual basis. If the ACS questions were included in the decennial census, it would be more resource-intensive and could reduce the response rate and impact of the decennial census. The ACS is not a complete survey of the United States but a sample. A random selection of households is sent the ACS every year and the Census Bureau draws inferences to generate educated estimates for the rest of the population. Since the ACS is a sample smaller of communities, to establish an accurate assessment, multiple years of sampling are required. Communities with less than 20,000 people must be sampled over 60-months to establish reliable data and are referred to as 5-year estimates. The Village of Laurium does not have a population over 20,000 therefore this plan will use ACS 5-year estimates.

¹ 1870 Census: Index of Questions, United States Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1870_1.html

POPULATION

Table XX: Population 1960 – 2020

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Village of Laurium	3,058	2,868 (-6.2)	2,678 (-6.6%)	2,126 (-20.6%)	2,135 (0.04%)	2,151 (-7.0%)	1,922 (-10.7%)
Village of Calumet	1,139	1,007 (-11.6%)	1,013 (0.6%)	818 (-19.3%)	850 (3.9%)	726 (-14.6%)	621 (-14.5%)
Calumet Township	9,192	8,271 (-10.0%)	7,965 (-3.7%)	7,015 (-11.9%)	6,968 (-0.1%)	6,489 (-6.9%)	6,263 (-3.5%)
Houghton County	35,654	34,652 (-2.8%)	37,872 (9.3%)	35,446 (-6.4%)	36,016 (1.6%)	36,192 (0.5%)	35,890 (-0.1%)

Source: 1960 – 2020 Decennial Census

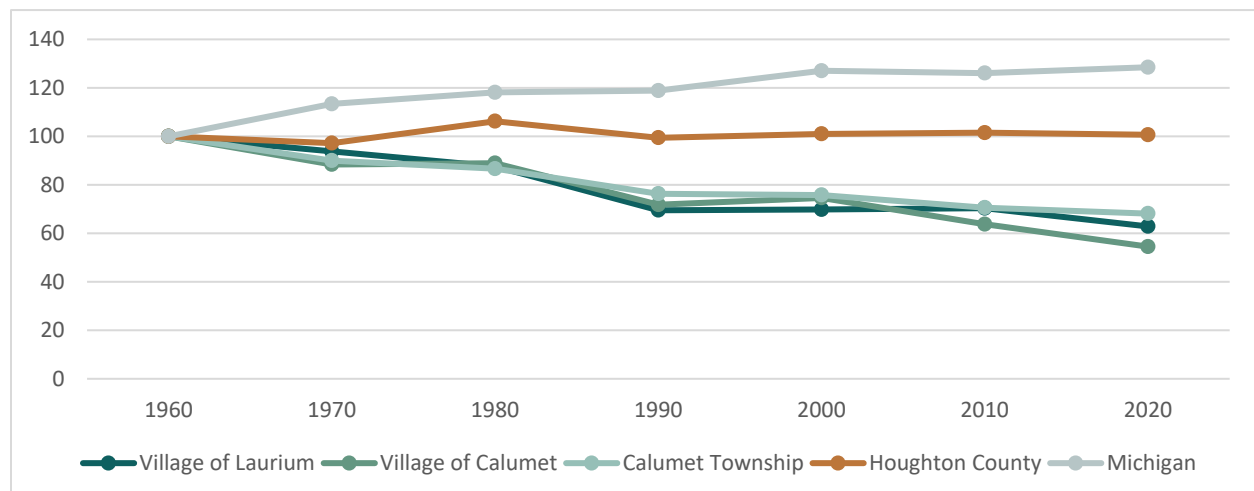
Over the past 20 years, the Village of Laurium has experienced an 18% overall decline in population. Population decline has a profound impact on a community, typically resulting in disinvestment, increased vacancies, and decreased funding to provide necessary village services.

The Village of Laurium has experienced less population decline compared to the neighboring Village of Calumet (-25%); however, compared to Calumet Township (-16%) and Houghton County (1%) the Village of Laurium has lost population at a greater pace. The decade with the largest drop in population was between the years 1980 and 1990, which could be attributed to the rapid decline in copper extraction in the region during that period.

Another way to look at population growth (decline) trends is to index a given year and then compared decennial population estimates to that base year; in this instance 1960. For example, in 1960 the index for the various municipalities was indexed at 100. The state of Michigan over the 60-year timeframe rose from 100 to 129. Similarly, the Village of Calumet started at 100 and ended up at 55 over the same period. Similar index declines were experienced for Calumet Township and the Village of Laurium. Houghton County remained relatively stable over the 60-year period starting at 100 in 1960 and ending at 101 in 2020.

Population Growth Index

Figure XX: Growth Index, 1960 and 2020

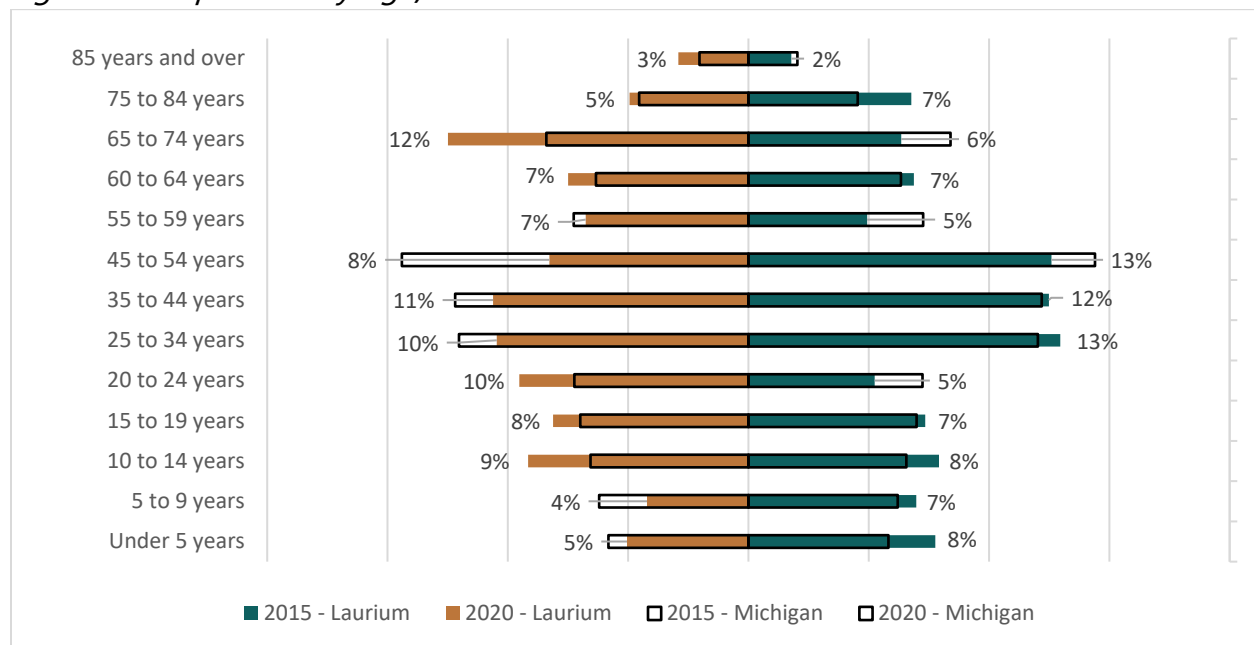


Age

Age is a critical indicator during the process of community planning since different age cohorts require different needs from their community. For example, if a community has a high number of elderly and no facilities or healthcare workers to support them, the elderly residents will be forced to leave, and the ones able to remain will be forced to pay a premium price for necessary services. Alternately, if a community has a ballooning cohort under 14 years old and lacks the education infrastructure, the community is likely to see low school ratings, not due to the fault of the children but rather proper planning by officials for that age group.

The median age in the Village of Laurium in 2020 was 39.4 years old while the State median (39.9) Laurium.²

Figure XX: Population by Age, 2015 and 2020



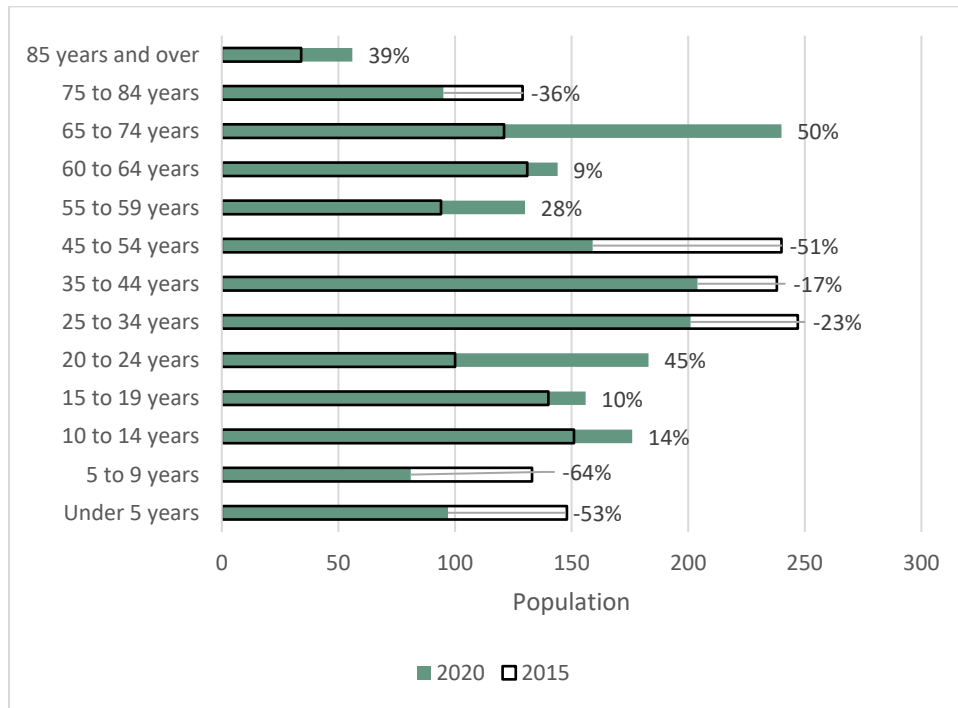
Source: 2015 & 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP05

The Village of Laurium’s population displays a stable distribution. The figure titled “Population by Age, 2015 and 2020” shows a population pyramid that has a strong base of young persons under 19 years of age and a relatively small percentage of individuals needing elderly care based solely on age. The age group of 45–54-year-old individuals saw a 5% decline from 2015 to 2020.³ The decline in this segment of the working-age citizen shows potential lack of employment opportunities, which could lead to further population decline

² American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2020 5 Year Estimates DP05.

³ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2015 & 2020 5 Year Estimates DP05.

Figure XX: Village of Laurium Population Change, 2015 to 2020



Source: 2015 & 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP05

The cohort change that carries the most immediate significance is the reduction of working age citizen, 45–54-year-old (-51%).⁴ This is an indication that there is a lack of employment opportunity in Laurium. Also, the 65–74-year-old cohort grew by 50%, an age group with will need medical facilities and appropriate staff. There are small signs of vitality for the Village since the 20- to 24-year-old cohort grew by 45%. If a location is hoping to reinvent itself, a young and enthusiastic population can instigate change quickly.

Disability

In the Village of Laurium, 12% of the population is living with a reported disability, many of which may have multiple types of disabilities.⁵ To accommodate the disabled population in a community, local officials should determine what type of modifications are required to both the built environment, such as auditory and physical cues at crosswalks, and land use patterns. In Laurium, for example, with a high percentage of individuals reporting ambulatory difficulty, buildings could be fitted with handrails while also reducing the prevalence of stairs when possible. Furthermore, land use requirements in a community committed to serving the disabled population require consideration, especially pertaining to housing. It is important for the Village to accommodate a range of housing formats to meet the needs of different age groups and abilities in the community, especially when a significant portion of the community is living with a disability.

Table XX: Population Reporting a Disability, 2020

⁴ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau 2020 5 Year Estimates, DP05.

⁵ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2020 5 Year Estimates S1810.

Disability Type	Citizens in Laurium
Cognitive Difficulty	7%
Ambulatory Difficulty	7%
Independent Living Difficulty	5%
Hearing Difficulty	4%
Vision Deficiency	2%
Self-Care Difficulty	2%
Total Population Reporting a Disability	12%

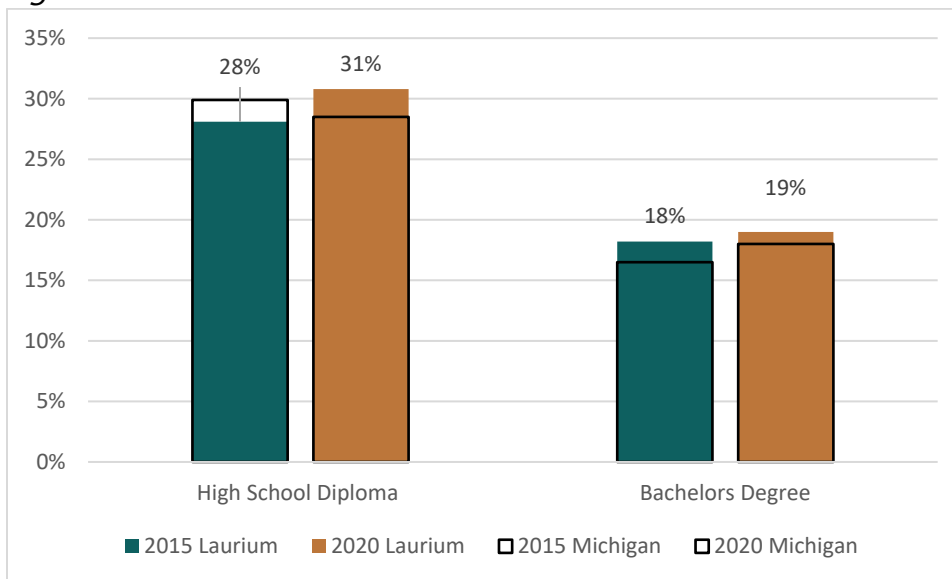
Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates S1810

SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

Education

Educational achievement in a community often has a direct correlation with available employment opportunities and the economic stability of a region as higher education levels typically correlate with higher incomes. Education levels in the Village of Laurium are in line with the State of Michigan for the percentage of the population that has a high school diploma and a bachelor's degree. Per 2020 ACS estimates, 73% of the Village has a high school degree or higher: 31% of the Village residents had earned a high school diploma (or equivalent), 14% had a two-year degree, 19% had obtained a four-year degree, and 9% a graduate degree.⁶

Figure XX: Educational Achievement

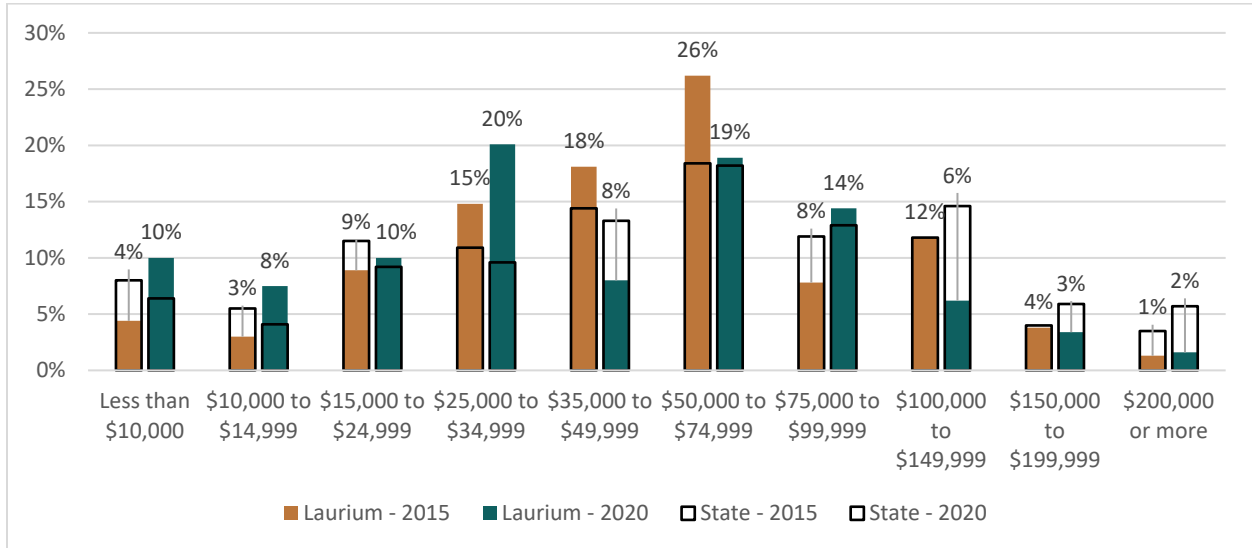


⁶ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2015 & 2020 5 Year Estimates DP02.

Source: 2015 & 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP02

Income and Earnings

Figure XX: Median Household Income 2015 & 2020

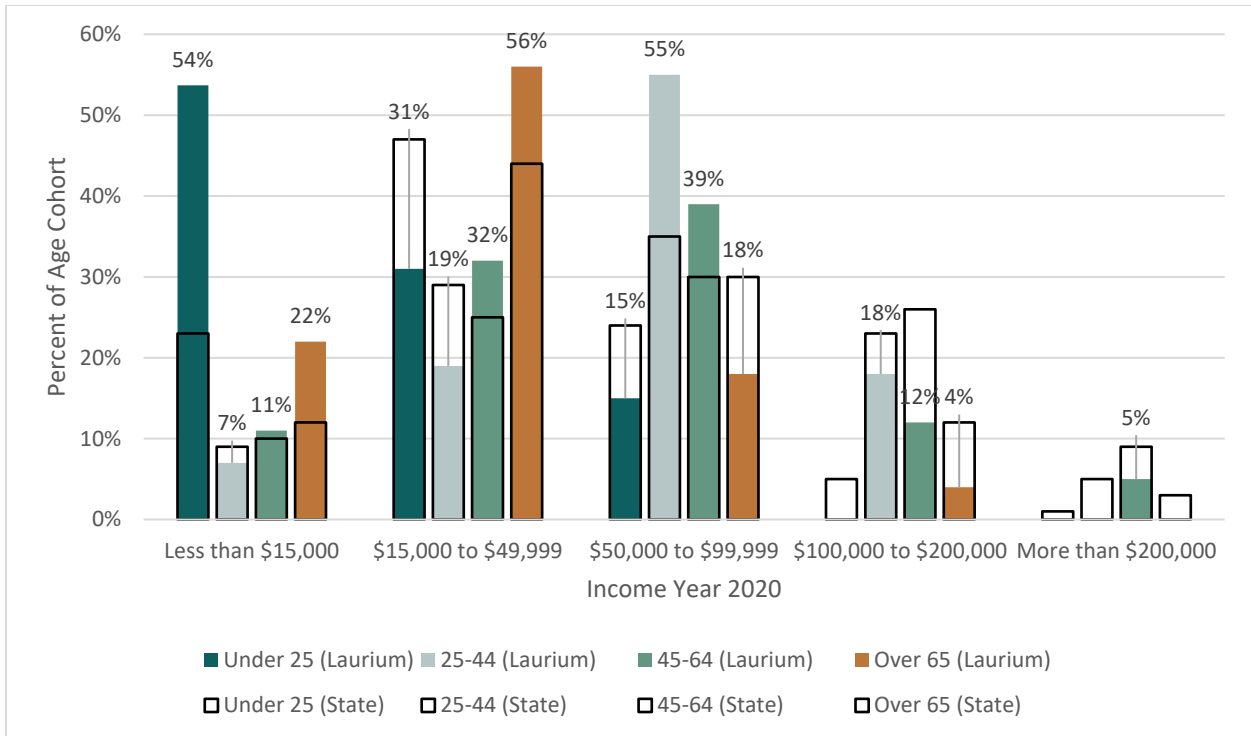


Source: 2015 & 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP03

Per 2020 ACS estimates, the median household income in the Village of Laurium was \$38,833, which is significantly lower than the State (\$59,234) and the County (\$44,839). The mean household income fares slightly better for Laurium, indicating \$53,407 per household compared to \$80,803 and \$62,815 for the State and County, respectively. ⁷

Figure XX: 2020 Median Household Incomes by Age

⁷ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2015 & 2020 5 Year Estimates DP03.



Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, B19037

The median household income when grouped by age cohort shows which age group has the most earning power within the Village. In general, the distribution of earned income appears to be reasonable for each income in comparison to the State average. However, when looking at the two high end income brackets, the Township is not meeting the median income when compared with the State. The four most significant outliers are those citizens in Laurium under 25 making less than \$15,000 (while an expected income level for that age bracket is significantly higher than the state average) which could be attributed to a small sample size in relation to the State sample. The 25-44 and 45-64, (\$50,000 to \$99,999) and 65 and over (\$15,000 to \$49,999) age groups in the Village are earning higher than the State average. A group of concern for Laurium leadership are the individuals over the age of 65 making less than \$15,000, which could indicate those households are living in poverty at an elderly age, stressing available healthcare services in the community.

Poverty

Table XX: Poverty Limits

Houghton County Income Limits*	
Extremely Low Income	\$17,500
Very Low Income	\$29,100
Low Income	\$46,550

*Family of 3

Source: US Department of HUD, Michigan, 2021

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines low-income status by comparing household income to a County’s median family income. ⁸ The median household income for Laurium in 2020 was \$38,833, indicating that most of the population is above the very-low-income designation but below the low-income threshold. ⁹ Overall, 6% of the total population was below the poverty line in 2020.

The method for determining poverty per household used by the U.S. Census Bureau is to account for the number of individuals per household in relation to the reported annual income. When comparing Laurium to Houghton County, the Village has fewer individuals living in poverty (17%) than Houghton County (19%) but more than the State (14%).¹⁰

Table XX: Regional Poverty Year 2020

Percentage of Residents Below Poverty Level			
	Michigan	Houghton County	Village of Laurium
All families	9%	8%	6%
Families with female householder, no spouse present	27%	28%	23%
With related children of the householder under 18 years	37%	35%	30%
With related children of the householder under 5 years only	45%	72%	46%
All people	14%	19%	17%

Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP03

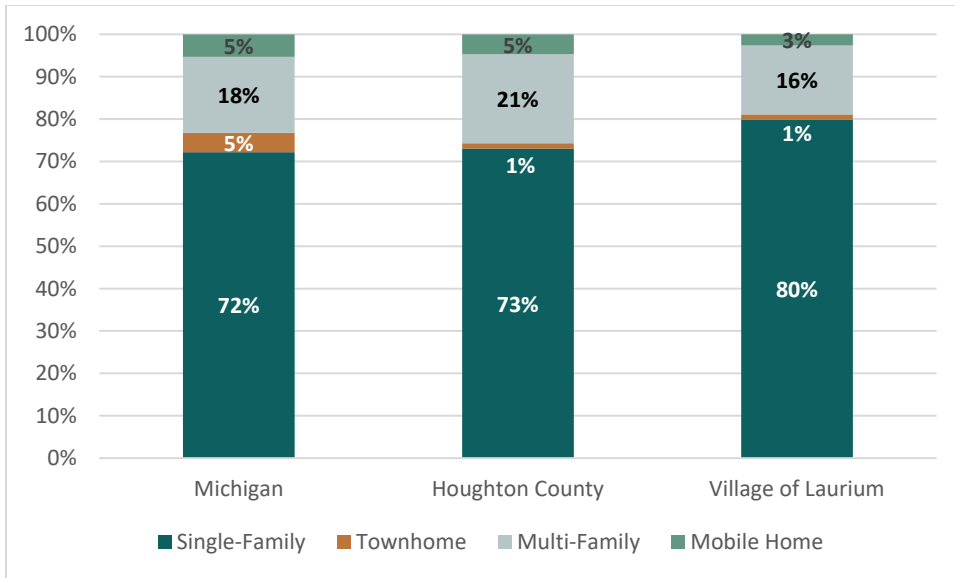
Housing

When considering land use implications for a community with a lower-than-average household income, dwelling type and availability are directly impacted. For example, in the Village of Laurium, the mobile home occupancy is 100% despite having permanent housing stock available. This points to possible barriers to entry in the local housing market, likely a combination of housing costs, housing conditions, and lower-than-average household incomes.

Figure XX: Housing by Type, 2020

⁸ “Houghton County Income Limits,” United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#2021>

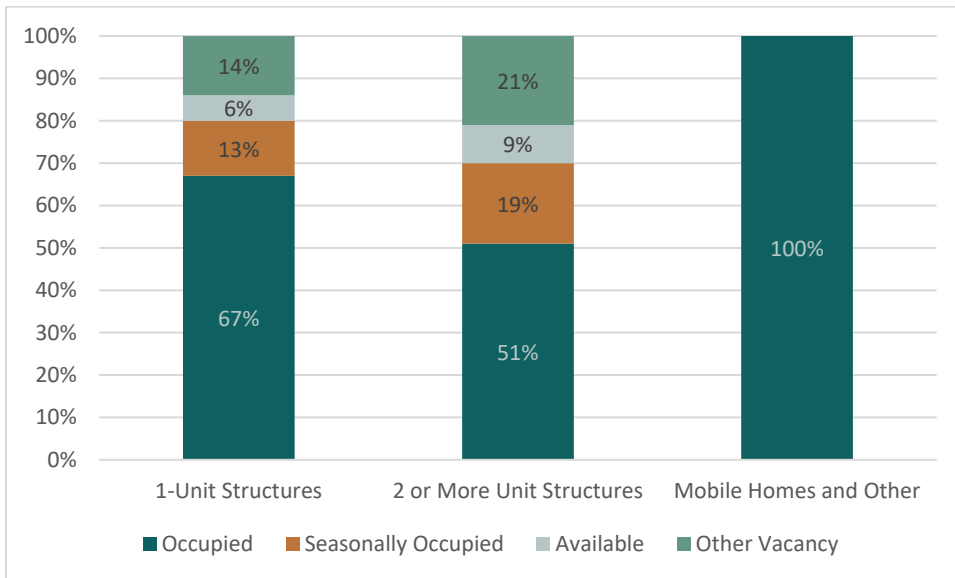
^{9,8} American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2015 & 2020 5 Year Estimates DP03.



Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP04

As depicted in the figure titled “Housing by Type, the residents of Laurium primarily reside in single family homes and multi-family dwellings (apartments). However, when the figure titled “Housing Vacancy by Type” is also considered, it shows during off seasons, 49% of multi-family dwellings are vacant indicating an overabundance of apartment style housing in relation to available single family dwellings.

Figure XX: Housing Vacancy by Type in Laurium, 2020



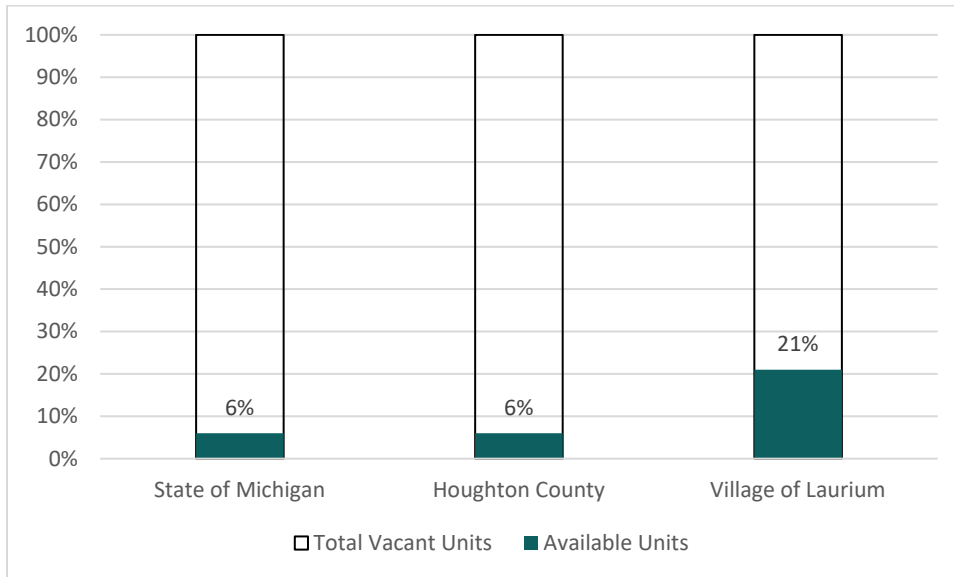
Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimate, B11011 and B25024

The Village of Laurium has a high percentage of available housing units. The ACS 5 year estimate indicates that 21%¹¹, or one-fifth of the multi-family housing stock is vacant. The rise in vacant

¹¹ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2020 5 Year Estimates B25004

housing is likely in concert with the trend of population decline experienced by the entire region and property owner disinvestment. Land use planning during and after prolonged population contraction often requires reducing the physical footprint of the built environment. This is done by reorganizing substandard structures through demolition and consolidation to establish pockets of vibrant residential properties.

Figure XX: Available Units, 2020



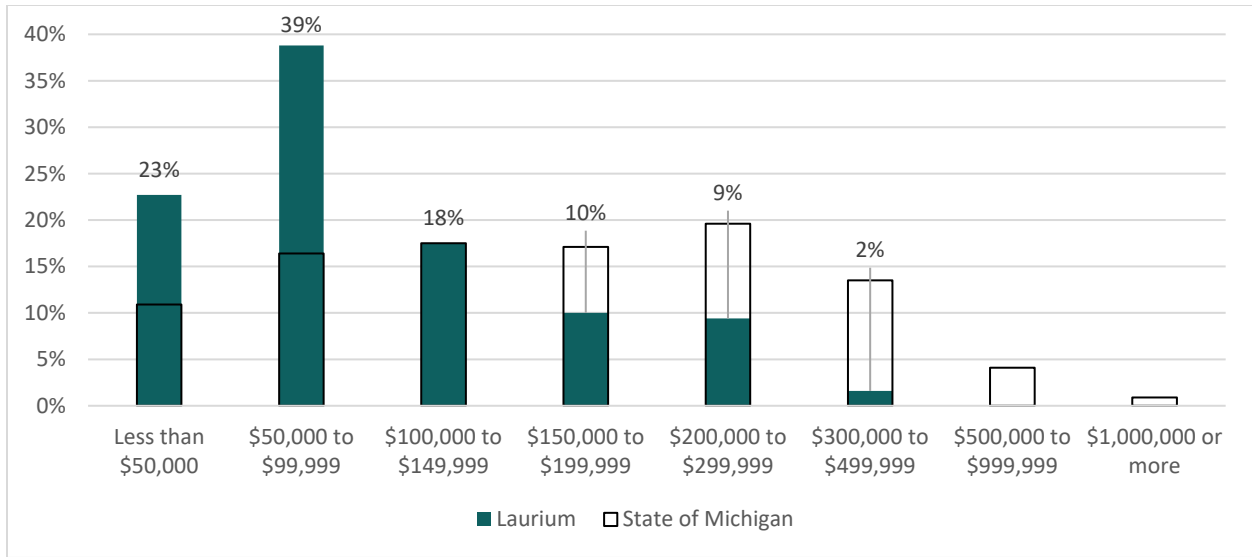
Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimate, B25004

Housing Value and Rental Cost

The Village of Laurium’s housing stock value skews to the moderate to low end of the spectrum, having 52% of homes valued under \$100,000.¹² The median household price in the Village in 2020 was \$82,400, significantly lower than both Houghton County (\$113,700), and the State of Michigan (\$162,600). Having a significant amount of moderate to low priced housing is beneficial if the dwellings are occupied and maintained. However if homes are vacant there is significant risk of vacancies leading to blighted sections within residential neighborhoods.

Figure XX: Housing Value, 2020

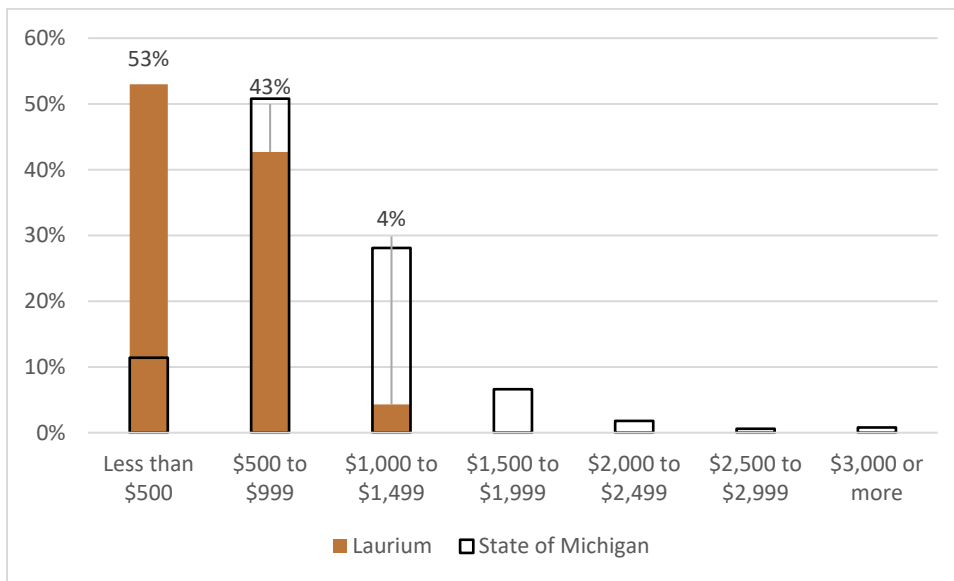
¹² American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2015 & 2020 5 Year Estimates DP05



Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimate, DP04

Much like home value in the Village of Laurium, the cost of rent is on the low end of the spectrum. 96% of all rentals in the Village are under \$999, and of that 53% below \$500.¹³ Compared to the moderate rental cost of \$500 to \$999 the Village (43%) is just below the State of Michigan (51%).

Figure XX: Monthly Cost of Rent, 2020



Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimate, DP04

¹³ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau 2020 5 Year Estimates DP04

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

2020 ACS estimates show that the sector that employed the most people in the Village of Laurium was “educational services, health care, and social services.” Despite being the most robust sector(s), the category experienced a 5% decrease from 2015 to 2020. The category that experienced the largest drop in employees was the “arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services” sector(s) which lost 55% of the workforce, and “manufacturing” saw a 31% decline.¹⁴ The table titled “Employment Industries in the Village of Laurium” displays the breakdown by category and year regardless of where a citizen resides, meaning that non-Laurium residents are included in the data table. A more detailed synopsis of the workforce in the Village is detailed in the economic development chapter.

Table XX: Employment Industries in the Village of Laurium

Industry	Residents Employed in 2015	Residents Employed in 2020	Change
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	6 (1%)	4 (1%)	-2
Construction	43 (5%)	45 (5%)	2
Manufacturing	149 (17%)	103 (12%)	-46
Wholesale trade	26 (3%)	23 (3%)	-3
Retail trade	30 (4%)	121 (14%)	91
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	0 (0%)	10 (1%)	10
Information	9 (1%)	20 (2%)	11
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	58 (6.8%)	25 (3%)	-33
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	27 (3%)	46 (5%)	19
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	299 (38%)	283 (33%)	-16
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	154 (18%)	69 (8%)	-85
Other services, except public administration	42 (5%)	45 (5%)	3
Public administration	13 (2%)	57 (6%)	44
Total	856	851	-5

Source: 2015 & 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates, DP03

¹⁴ American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2015 & 2020 5 Year Estimates DP03.

CONCLUSION

The demographic composition of the Village of Laurium, like many small, mining communities in the Upper Peninsula, has been experiencing population loss for several decades. This is a direct result of the reduction of the copper extraction which historically was a mainstay for the region. Although the population has comparable educational level to the State and when grouped by age, has reasonable earning power, the community's median household income is still lower than the County and State median levels. A significant portion of the community (17%) is living in poverty, and the number of seniors above the age of 65 that are living on less than \$15,000 per year is a topic of concern, especially when the number of healthcare jobs in the community have been declining. Recent housing vacancy and availability data suggests possible barriers to entry in the local housing market, likely a combination of housing costs, poor housing conditions and standards, and lower-than-average household incomes. Allowing for housing formats that are both affordable and meet the needs of all age groups and abilities should be a priority for the Village going forward.