



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Making the Case for Affordable Housing: Using BLS Statistics to ask Hard Questions About Salaries vs. Local Housing Costs

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Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/making-the-case-for-affordable-housing-using-bls-statistics-to-ask-hard-questions-about-salaries-vs-local-housing-costs/>

This entry was posted on April 18, 2017 and is filed under Built Assets & Housing, Community Development, Financial Assets, Human & Cultural Assets, Social & Civic Assets

Last year, nursing assistants in Goldsboro earned \$11.83 an hour (median wage) for a mean annual salary of \$24,610. Is this a sufficient wage to sustain a person who wants to live and work there?



Affordable housing for different demographic groups in North Carolina communities

has been discussed in several prior blogs, including ones about affordable housing for teachers, seniors and those living in rural areas. A different perspective is available with the use of easily-accessible, wonderfully-detailed data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) website on Occupational Employment Statistics.

A question recently came to the CED faculty at the School of Government. Could someone who was a nursing assistant earn enough to afford housing in their town? The answer lay with data gathered by the BLS across a wide variety of occupational classifications for larger metropolitan areas in each state. With these data, rather than focus on the longer-term goal of building lower cost housing for different groups, CED officials can also think shorter-term, asking about the salary levels needed to afford what is currently available.



For example, in Fayetteville last year, on average, police officers made just over \$22 an hour. In comparison, in the Hickory-Lenior-Morganton area, they made \$18.43. While traditional considerations of affordable housing may focus on the cost of rentals or first homes, the wage-earning potential of jobs in the surrounding area is less likely to be a direct part of the conversation. Affordability can be targeted from both the supply and demand side.



Areas outside of the larger metro areas are included in regional estimates. For North Carolina, data from 17 metropolitan areas are available, as well as for the Southeast and Northeast Coastal regions, and Piedmont and Mountain regions. The listing of occupations is extensive, from butchers and bakers to loan officers to bus drivers, covering a wide variety of jobs common to any community. The median, mean and average annual salary for each occupation for the chosen metro area or region is presented for the prior year. The most current data available are from May 2016.