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Manufactured Housing Communities in New Jersey: The Basics

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL OUTREACH



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Introduction

Land-lease manufactured housing communities (MHCs)¹ are a unique housing style that combines features of renting and homeownership, resulting in a mix of risks and advantages for residents. In this *split-tenure* arrangement, manufactured homes, which are usually owner-occupied,² are placed on lots that are leased from a separate landowner. In addition to the expenses associated with purchasing and maintaining their home, MHC homeowners typically pay a monthly lot rent to the landowner. With relatively low upfront home purchase costs, MHC homeownership is often more attainable for modest-income households than conventional, site-built homeownership (Durst and Sullivan, 2019; Kaul and Pang, 2022), but the lack of land ownership negatively impacts residents' wealth-building opportunities and increases the risks of financial exploitation and displacement (Sullivan, 2018; Genz, 2001; Boehm and Schlottmann, 2004).

There is relatively little research on MHCs, which are not well-captured in most commonly used, publicly available data sets (Sullivan, Makarewicz, and Rumbach, 2022; Lamb, Shi, and Spicer, 2023). To enhance policymakers' and community development practitioners' understanding of MHCs and the issues affecting MHC residents, this report leverages a new, custom data set of 268 MHCs in New Jersey, home to an estimated 20,100–24,600 households.³ Analysis of this data set reveals that the vast majority of New Jersey MHCs are located in census-defined urban areas, which range from small towns to midsize cities. These MHCs are often part of moderate-income neighborhoods with high rates of homeownership, contributing to the unsubsidized, low-cost supply in these housing markets. Supplementary data analysis indicates

that MHC homebuyers are disproportionately lower-income households and that the affordability of MHC homeownership is heavily contingent on lot rents.

Manufactured Housing Communities in New Jersey

The following sections present an analysis of the affordability, spatial distribution, and community contexts of MHCs in New Jersey. The data used in this analysis include public sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) and Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data, as well as a custom data set of MHC locations that I compiled for this research. This custom data set was drawn from a combination of tax assessment data assembled by CoreLogic Solutions (CoreLogic), Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data from the Department of Homeland Security, Facility Registry Services data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the membership directory of the New Jersey Manufactured Housing Association. These data sets are integrated to provide a comprehensive geocoded inventory of MHCs in the state. Using geographic information system (GIS) software, I spatially merged this geocoded inventory to census geographies, which enabled local demographic and socioeconomic characteristics to be merged with each MHC record.⁴

Definitions

Manufactured homes are factory-built housing units that are constructed to be transported to a site for installation. Technically, the term *manufactured home* refers to units that meet the requirements of the Manufactured Home

¹ This style of housing is referred to in policy documents, news media, and academic literature by a wide variety of names, including manufactured housing communities, mobile home parks, trailer parks, mobile home courts, and various permutations of those words. This report uses manufactured housing communities (MHCs) as a generic term for this type of land-lease community.

² Roughly 30 percent of units in MHCs are likely to be renter-occupied, according to the 2021 American Housing Survey (AHS). For the tenant, renting a home in an MHC is largely similar to renting a site-built unit, although renters in MHCs are thought to be particularly low-income and housing insecure (Genz, 2001).

³ This is part of a collection of reports examining MHCs in Third District states (Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). To see all the reports in this series, visit www.philadelphiafed.org/community-development/housing-and-neighborhoods/manufactured-housing-communities-in-pennsylvania-the-basics.

⁴ See Appendix A for details.

Construction and Safety Standards Act enacted in 1976,⁵ whereas the commonly used term *mobile home* refers to factory-built housing constructed before 1976. However, for brevity, this report uses *manufactured home* as an umbrella term for this style of housing. Efficiency gains from prefabrication as well as somewhat smaller unit sizes make manufactured housing a low-cost alternative to site-built units. Even after factoring in transportation, installation, and other related costs, a double-segment manufactured home costs 60 percent as much to build as a comparable site-built unit, excluding land costs (Herbert, Reed, and Shen, 2023). Contrary to common stereotypes, modern manufactured homes are similar in quality and resident satisfaction to site-built homes (Boehm and Schlottmann, 2004; Kaul and Pang, 2022), although many older or improperly installed units have severe repair and maintenance issues (Furman, 2015).

While most manufactured homes are placed on land that is also owned by the homeowner (Durst and Sullivan, 2019), many are placed on leased land, in both MHCs and individual leaseholds. Although there is no universal definition of what constitutes an MHC, in New Jersey, the Mobile Home Park Private Residential Leasehold Communities Act defines an MHC as one or more parcels of contiguous land under common ownership with at least 10 homesites leased or for lease for manufactured home placement (N.J.S.A. § 46:8C). This is a relatively high unit threshold for a property to be considered an MHC; in Pennsylvania, the minimum number of manufactured home placements is three, and in Delaware, at least two lots must be leased or for-lease for manufactured home placements. For consistency with other reports in this series, the MHC definition adopted for this analysis is three or more manufactured homesites on a single parcel or adjacent parcels under common ownership.

Size and Characteristics of the Manufactured Housing Stock

According to the 2017–2021 ACS, there are nearly 33,600 manufactured homes on both owned and leased land in New Jersey, representing slightly less than 1 percent of the state’s housing stock. From 2018 to 2022, an annual average of 535 new manufactured homes were shipped to the state, down from a peak of 724 from 2000 to 2004. Although data are not available at the state level, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the new manufactured homes in the Northeast census region (which includes New Jersey) were placed in land-lease communities from 2018 to 2022 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Despite these new shipments, the total number of manufactured homes in the state has been essentially unchanged since the 2000 decennial census.⁶

Nationally, approximately two in five manufactured homes are placed inside MHCs (Durst and Sullivan, 2019). However, this share is likely significantly higher in New Jersey. While it is difficult to directly estimate the number of homes in New Jersey MHCs, the American Housing Survey (AHS) provides some benchmarks that can inform a likely range. Although full-state estimates are not available for New Jersey, the 2013 AHS suggests that 73 percent of manufactured homes in the northern New Jersey region⁷ were in MHCs.⁸ The equivalent 2013 estimate for the Philadelphia MSA, which includes several counties in southern New Jersey, was 60 percent. Treating these figures as upper and lower bounds for the share of present-day New Jersey manufactured homes in land lease communities suggests a total number of MHC units in the range of 20,100 to 24,600.

⁵ This is often referred to as the HUD Code.

⁶ This suggests that new shipments were offset by losses of manufactured units, either through demolition or relocation to another state.

⁷ The northern New Jersey region includes Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, and Union Counties.

⁸ Author’s calculations using the AHS Table Creator, available at www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/data/interactive/ahstablecreator.html. This corresponds to the share of manufactured homes in groups of seven or more, which may include some homes in subdivision-style communities where land and unit ownership are combined but may exclude MHCs with three to seven homes.

Challenges Affecting Manufactured Housing Community Residents

Although many modest-income households find MHCs to be a financially attainable housing option, the separation of home and land ownership has significant drawbacks for the financial and residential security of MHC households. Homeowners in MHCs are exposed to market pressures through lot rents, which can increase substantially between lease terms and erode the savings associated with lower upfront purchase prices.⁹ Additionally, residents are at risk of displacement if a property owner decides to close the community — regardless of whether the closure is for redevelopment, from an inability to finance needed infrastructure improvements, or in response to exclusionary local regulations (Sullivan, 2018; Abu-Khalaf, Arabo, and Swann, 2021). Moving a manufactured home is prohibitively expensive for many MHC homeowners, and despite being commonly referred to as *mobile homes*, many older units cannot be moved without compromising the structure. Even homeowners who are able to move their units may have difficulty finding an alternative homesite nearby because of exclusionary zoning practices and MHC-specific restrictions on the age and condition of incoming homes (Sullivan, Makarewicz, and Rumbach, 2022; Dawkins et al., 2011; Ehrenfeucht, 2016).

The lack of underlying land ownership also hinders the wealth-building potential of MHC homeowners. Even properly installed, well-maintained manufactured homes are subject to wear and tear. Without stable or increasing land values to offset unit depreciation, it is less likely that homeowners will be able to sell their unit at or above its original purchase price. Additionally, like most states, New Jersey requires manufactured homes to be titled as personal property rather than real property.¹⁰ As a result, MHC residents are generally unable to obtain a standard mortgage to purchase their home or borrow against their home equity. Instead, homebuyers often finance their

purchases using chattel loans, which carry significantly higher interest rates and have fewer consumer protections than traditional mortgages (CFPB, 2021).

The split-tenure nature of MHC homeownership can also complicate residents' ability to access aid intended for distressed homeowners. For example, in response to the economic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 enacted a national foreclosure moratorium and established mortgage forbearance options for borrowers with federally backed loans. However, chattel loan borrowers were generally not included in these forbearance opportunities and are subject to repossession, rather than foreclosure, if they fall behind on payments. As a result, despite being disproportionately lower-income, MHC homeowners were largely unable to benefit from these protections (CFPB, 2021).¹¹ These challenges are not limited to federal legislation. Following Hurricane Sandy in 2012, MHC homeowners in New Jersey reported significant difficulty accessing state-administered disaster relief programs, which was attributed in part to confusion over eligibility due to their land-lease status (O'Neil, 2014; Boburg, 2013).

Policy Context in New Jersey

At the state level, New Jersey has relatively few laws and regulations specific to MHC residents, although landlord-tenant and consumer finance laws are applicable in many situations (MHOA-NJ, 2012b). Some municipalities have local regulations that pertain to MHCs, resulting in a patchwork of protections across the state. For example, unlike Pennsylvania and Delaware, New Jersey does not have statewide legislation mandating the payment of relocation assistance for residents of MHCs displaced by community closure or redevelopment, although some municipalities have enacted this requirement.¹² Additionally, local rent stabilization laws, which were once common in

⁹ This, along with many of the challenges outlined in this section, is also applicable to manufactured homeowners with homes on leased land outside of MHC contexts.

¹⁰ Homes that are permanently affixed to land owned by the homeowner may be converted to real property (Fannie Mae, 2023).

¹¹ As land tenants, some MHC residents were covered by the CARES Act eviction moratorium for nonpayment of lot rent, and virtually all MHC residents were covered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) eviction moratorium as well as various state and local moratoria.

¹² Joseph Sullivan (executive director, Manufactured Home Owners Association of New Jersey), personal communication, August 23, 2023.

the state and are still in place in many areas (Ambrosius et al., 2015), often apply to lot rents, reducing MHC homeowners' exposure to unaffordable increases.

New Jersey is one of 20 states that provide MHC residents with a right of first refusal to cooperatively purchase their community in certain circumstances (NCLC, 2021).¹³ Resident ownership of MHCs has the potential to mitigate many of the challenges associated with the split-tenure arrangement and enhance wealth-building opportunities for MHC homeowners (Ward, French, and Giraud, 2006; Lamb, Shi, Silva, and Spicer, 2023). However, New Jersey's resident purchase law only pertains to sales made in contemplation of a change in land use. While this is protective of MHCs at risk of redevelopment, in recent years, a growing number of MHCs have been acquired by real estate investors who plan to continue to operate the land-lease communities (Casey and Thompson, 2022;

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Additionally, local rent stabilization laws, which were once common in the state and are still in place in many areas, often apply to lot rents, reducing MHC homeowners' exposure to unaffordable increases.

Sullivan, 2018). In these transactions, MHC owners are not legally obligated to notify residents and provide them with an opportunity to match a third-party offer.

A distinctive feature of the New Jersey housing policy landscape is the statewide constitutional mandate for every municipality to provide a “fair share” of its respective region's affordable housing (Fair Share Housing Center, 2023).¹⁴ Manufactured housing, both inside and outside of MHCs, is recognized as a contributor to the affordable housing stock,¹⁵ and some communities have proactively sought to preserve MHCs as a strategy for meeting their fair share requirements.¹⁶ However, there is little indication to date that this has led to support for expanding MHCs as an affordable housing strategy.

Affordability

Table 1 compares the characteristics of home purchase loans in New Jersey for three types of borrowers: those using chattel loans to purchase a manufactured home for placement on leased land (likely MHC homebuyers),¹⁷ those using a mortgage to purchase both a manufactured home and land, and those using a mortgage to purchase a site-built home. A caveat to this comparison is that MHC homebuyers, particularly those who are older or lower-income, are less likely to use chattel loans to finance a home purchase,¹⁸ in part because chattel loans have exceptionally high denial rates (Riley, Freeman, and Dorrance, 2021; CFPB, 2021; Liang, Siegel, and Staveski, 2022). As a result, the borrowers reflected in these statistics represent the subset of MHC homebuyers who are able to access financing.

¹³ The right of first refusal provides MHC residents with the right to make the first offer to purchase a community when the property is listed for sale under certain circumstances. This enables residents to organize support and line up financing to cooperatively purchase the community before other offers are considered.

¹⁴ The formulas for allocating a “fair share” of a region's affordable housing needs to a given municipality are complex and include separately estimated components reflecting both present-day and forecast needs. For details, see Kinsey (2015).

¹⁵ From the Affordable Housing Act of 1983 (N.J.S.A. § 40:55D-105): “When reviewing and approving development regulations pertaining to residential development, a municipal agency is to be encouraged to review those regulations to determine whether or not mobile home parks are a practicable means of providing affordable housing in the municipality.”

¹⁶ For more information, see www.robbinsville-twp.org/news_detail_T2_R324.php.

¹⁷ This may include loans to homebuyers who lease land outside of MHC contexts (for example, land owned by a relative).

¹⁸ These borrowers may instead rely on the proceeds from a previous home sale or alternative financing, such as rent-to-own agreements (Riley, Freeman, and Dorrance, 2021; Pew, 2022).

TABLE 1

Comparison of Originated Loan Characteristics by Land Ownership and Build Type, New Jersey, 2019–2022

	Manufactured: Chattel Loan, Leased Land	Manufactured: Mortgage Loan, Direct Land Ownership	Site-Built: Mortgage Loan
Number	562	130	396,320
Median Applicant Income	\$58,000	\$62,000	\$109,000
Median Interest Rate	6.25%	4.43%	3.38%
Median Loan Amount	\$65,000	\$165,000	\$335,000
Median Loan Term (Months)	240	360	360
Median Loan-to-Value Ratio	80.0%	96.5%	89.3%
Est. Monthly Loan Payment	\$475	\$829	\$1,482

Sources

Author's calculations using 2019–2022 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data.

Notes

Calculations include only originated, first-lien purchase loans for owner occupancy. Chattel loans to manufactured homebuyers with direct land ownership, indirect land ownership, and unpaid leaseholds are excluded to focus on loan outcomes for likely MHC homebuyers. Estimated monthly loan payments are based on the median loan amounts, median terms, and median interest rates reported in table.

As shown in Table 1, likely MHC homebuyers in New Jersey have much lower incomes than those obtaining mortgages for site-built homes and slightly lower incomes than manufactured homebuyers purchasing both a home and land. The interest rate for likely MHC homebuyers was significantly higher than that of borrowers with manufactured home mortgages, despite lower-risk features such as smaller loan amounts, shorter loan terms, and higher loan-to-value ratios. However, this interest rate disparity is relatively small compared with those observed in both national data and the neighboring states of Delaware and Pennsylvania.¹⁹ Although higher risks of default and lower credit scores among MHC homebuyers likely contribute to higher interest rates relative to manufactured home buyers using mortgages (Park, 2022; CFPB, 2021), the chattel loan market also lacks many of the

institutional and policy supports that facilitate access and affordability in the traditional mortgage market.²⁰

In addition to loan payments, lot rents are a significant portion of MHC homeowners' monthly expenditures. For the substantial segment of MHC homebuyers who purchase their units with cash, lot rents may be the primary monthly housing cost. Unfortunately, there are no publicly available, state-level survey estimates for typical lot rents in New Jersey. According to the 2021 AHS, the median lot rent in the Middle Atlantic Census Division — which includes New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania — was \$425.²¹ This suggests that the typical MHC homeowner's monthly loan and lot rent payments would total roughly \$900. Although the comparison does not account for differences in property taxes,²² this back-of-the-envelope

¹⁹ Nationally, chattel loans for manufactured homes carried a median interest rate of 8.6 percent, which is higher than the 4.9 percent median for manufactured home mortgages (CFPB, 2021). In Delaware, the median interest rate for likely MHC homebuyers was 8.55 percent, while the median for manufactured home mortgages was 4.25 percent; the corresponding rates in Pennsylvania were 7.99 percent and 3.88 percent, respectively (Divringi, 2023; Divringi, 2024).

²⁰ For example, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac do not purchase chattel loans, resulting in a weak secondary market. Additionally, the federal insurance program for chattel loans, Title V, is considered outdated and is not widely used by lenders (Park, 2022; CFPB, 2021; Kaul, Goodman, and Tozer, 2022).

²¹ This is likely to be a low estimate for lot rents in New Jersey. In September 2023, I reviewed for-sale listings posted to Zillow and Craigslist for homes in New Jersey MHCs. At total of 45 listings reported lot rents, with a median of \$742 overall and a median of \$687 among the 23 properties with asking prices of \$100,000 or less. However, since this is a small, and likely nonrepresentative, sample, these estimates should be interpreted with caution.

²² New Jersey MHC homeowners are not assessed property taxes on their dwelling unit, although they may be assessed fees by the surrounding municipality to defray the costs of public services (N.J.S.A § 54:4). Taxes applied to the underlying land are likely passed through in lot rents.

calculation illustrates how the relative affordability of MHC homeownership is heavily influenced by lot rents, which can erode or eliminate the initial savings associated with purchasing only the home. This may be one reason why previous research finds that the most affordable manufactured housing tenure entails owning both a home and land (Durst and Sullivan, 2019).

Geographic Distribution

Figure 1 displays the locations of MHCs in New Jersey, depicted by size and overlaid with census-designated urban areas. As the map illustrates, MHCs are distributed throughout the state, present in all but one county (Essex). The largest number of MHCs are in coastal counties, specifically Atlantic (38), Ocean (38), Monmouth (31), and Cape May (28) — but even in these areas, many MHCs are located further inland.²³

Table 2 breaks out the state’s MHCs by size category and urban/rural status. Although the majority (62.3 percent) of MHCs in New Jersey are medium-sized (11 to 99 homesites), over one-third are categorized as large (100 or more homesites). This group includes many communities with several hundred homes, such as Pine Ridge at Crestwood, an age-restricted community in Ocean County with over 1,000 units. Large communities make up a greater portion of MHCs in New Jersey compared to Pennsylvania (11.3

TABLE 2 MHCs by Urban/Rural Location and Size

	Count	Row % in Size Category		
		Small (3-10 homesites)	Medium (11-99 homesites)	Large (≥100 homesites)
Rural	54	5.6	68.5	25.9
Urban	214	2.3	60.7	36.9
Total	268	3.0	62.3	34.7

Sources

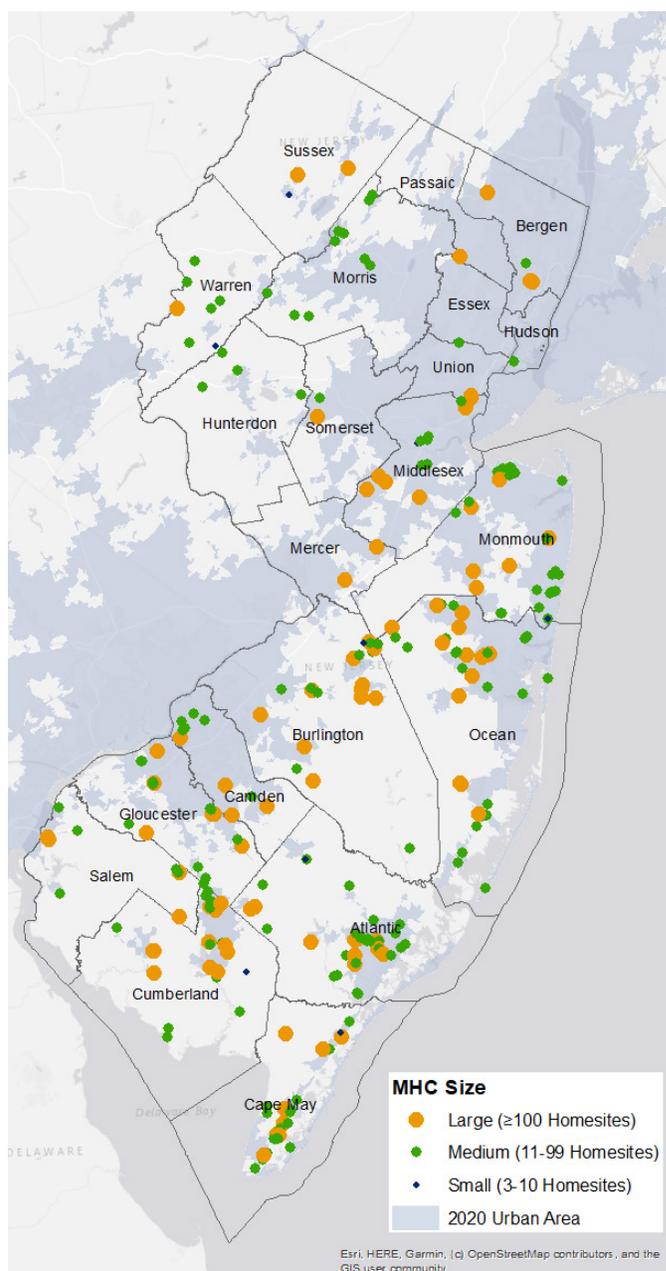
Author’s calculation using the Philadelphia FRB Manufactured Housing Community data set and Census TIGER/Line Shapefiles.

Notes

Urban/Rural classifications are based on the 2020 census. Figures are tabulated at the MHC level and are not unit-weighted.

²³ See Appendix B for counts of MHCs by size in all New Jersey counties.

FIGURE 1 Locations of MHCs in New Jersey



Sources

Philadelphia FRB Manufactured Housing Community Data set and Census TIGER/Line Shapefiles.

Notes

Urban/Rural classifications are based on the 2020 census.

percent)²⁴ and Delaware (26.3 percent). Relatively few New Jersey MHCs (eight total) are categorized as small (three to 10 homesites); these are below the size threshold for the legal definition of an MHC in the state.

Nearly four in five (79.9 percent) New Jersey MHCs are in census-designated urban areas, which is unsurprising, given that New Jersey is the third-most urban state.²⁵ The Census Bureau defines urban areas based on a combination of residential or population densities and land use criteria, which may not necessarily correspond to municipal boundaries. Some MHCs are located in midsize cities/townships, such as Edison, Camden, and Vineland, but many are in built-out suburbs and smaller towns. Along the central and southern coastline, many communities serve both year-round and seasonal vacation users,²⁶ sometimes including dedicated areas for recreational vehicle (RV) camping. Rural MHCs are found across the state, with the largest numbers found in Warren, Ocean, Burlington, and Cumberland counties.

Lot Vacancy

To shed light on the demand for this style of housing in New Jersey, MHCs in which 30 percent or more of homesites did not have a manufactured home placement were flagged as having high lot vacancy. Lot vacancy determinations were made based on the most recent aerial imagery available.²⁷ While this represents a snapshot of lot utilization, MHCs with high rates of lot vacancy may be at elevated risk for disinvestment and closure, since each unfilled homesite represents lost revenue for the community owner.

Of the 268 MHCs in New Jersey, only eight (3 percent) met the threshold for high lot vacancy. Nearly all of these were

medium-sized MHCs, and they were split almost evenly between rural and urban areas. The share of communities with high lot vacancy in New Jersey was notably lower than that of neighboring states (7.8 percent in Delaware and 11.5 percent in Pennsylvania²⁸), suggesting a significantly tighter MHC market. The high share of New Jersey MHCs located in urban areas may be a contributing factor; in both Delaware and Pennsylvania, a greater share of rural MHCs had high lot vacancy. Although communities can have a substantial number of vacant homesites without meeting the threshold for this indicator, this does suggest that very few MHCs in New Jersey experience severely depressed demand.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Context

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the block groups²⁹ in which MHCs are located, broken out by urban/rural status. While these figures do not necessarily represent the characteristics of MHC residents (although some large MHCs may comprise entire block groups), they are illustrative of the community contexts in which MHCs are located.

As presented in Table 3, block groups containing MHCs are, on average, less diverse than New Jersey overall, particularly MHCs in rural areas. Relative to statewide demographics, non-Hispanic White residents are overrepresented in MHC block groups, while Hispanic/Latino and, to an even greater extent, Black residents are underrepresented. A disproportionate share of residents in MHC block groups are 65 years or older. This comports with a 2012 survey that found that more than two in five residents in manufactured homes in New Jersey were over

²⁴ This reflects updates to the Pennsylvania data set since the June 2023 report.

²⁵ As measured by the share of its population in urban areas, according to the 2020 census. Source: State-Level Urban and Rural Information for the 2020 Census and 2010 Census [table], available at www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html.

²⁶ According to the 2017–2021 ACS, 9.8 percent of manufactured homes in New Jersey were vacant for seasonal/recreational use.

²⁷ Unoccupied (abandoned, for sale/for rent, or seasonally vacant) manufactured homes would not count toward this vacancy measure. Additionally, a homesite was considered vacant only if there was evidence of a prior manufactured home placement (i.e., an earlier aerial image showing a home in that location or the visible remnants of foundation piers). See Appendix A for details.

²⁸ This reflects updates to the Pennsylvania data set since the June 2023 report.

²⁹ Block groups are geographic units that are nested within census tracts. Although block groups vary in size, they typically encompass populations of 600 to 3,000 residents. See www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html.

65, driven by the large segment of the state’s MHCs that are age-restricted communities (MHOA-NJ, 2012a).

Compared with statewide figures, the areas surrounding MHCs tend to have lower rates of postsecondary education and lower incomes. However, rates of unemployment are only slightly higher, and family poverty rates are comparable with, if not slightly lower than, the state overall, particularly in the areas surrounding rural MHCs. Although rates of labor force participation are lower in MHC block groups, this is expected given the disproportionate share of retirement-age adults in these areas. Block groups containing MHCs, in both urban and rural areas, have notably high homeownership rates, to which the presence of MHCs likely contributes. Overall, this socioeconomic profile suggests that MHCs provide residents with access to neighborhoods that are modest-income but financially stable — a segment increasingly described as *middle neighborhoods* in the community development sector.

TABLE 3 Demographic Characteristics of Census Block Groups Containing MHCs Relative to New Jersey

	NJ	NJ Block Groups Containing MHCs		
		All MHCs	Urban	Rural
RACE/ETHNICITY				
Share Black	12.5%	7.3%	8.3%	3.2%
Share Hispanic/Latino	20.8%	14.3%	15.8%	8.6%
Share White	53.8%	70.6%	67.8%	81.0%
Share Other/Multiracial	12.8%	7.9%	8.1%	7.2%
AGE				
Share 65 Years or Older	16.2%	20.9%	20.8%	21.1%

Sources

Author’s calculations using the Philadelphia FRB Manufactured Housing Community Dataset and U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017–2021 Estimates.

Notes

Estimates for block groups containing MHCs are weighted by the number of MHCs present in a block group. Race/ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive. The Black, White, and other/multiracial categories are non-Hispanic; Hispanic/Latino can be of any race.

TABLE 4 Socioeconomic Characteristics of Census Block Groups Containing MHCs Relative to New Jersey

	NJ	NJ Block Groups Containing MHCs		
		All MHCs	Urban	Rural
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT				
High School or Lower	35.9%	43.5%	42.6%	46.9%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	41.5%	29.7%	30.7%	26.1%
EMPLOYMENT				
Labor Force Participation Rate	65.8%	62.8%	62.7%	63.1%
Unemployment Rate	6.2%	7.2%	7.2%	7.0%
INCOME				
Family Poverty Rate	7.0%	6.6%	6.9%	5.5%
Median Household Income	\$102,368	\$78,284	\$77,324	\$81,690
HOUSING				
Homeownership Rate	63.8%	79.1%	78.3%	82.1%
Median Home Value	\$401,274	\$270,310	\$272,688	\$262,018
Share Housing Cost Burdened	36.3%	36.4%	36.8%	34.8%

Sources

Author’s calculations using the Philadelphia FRB Manufactured Housing Community data set and U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017–2021 estimates.

Notes

Estimates for block groups containing MHCs are weighted by the number of MHCs present in a block group. Educational attainment measures are calculated for the population 25 years old and over; those who have completed some college but less than a bachelor’s degree are not included in either category. Employment measures are calculated for the population 16 years old and over. Median household income is calculated as a household-weighted averages of block group medians and median home value is calculated as an owner-occupied unit-weighted average of block group median, excluding block groups for which estimates were unavailable. A household is housing cost–burdened if total housing costs equal or exceed 30 percent of household income.

Takeaways for Policy and Practice

Overall, New Jersey MHCs appear to offer a financially attainable homeownership option in stable neighborhoods with few signs of economic distress. Accordingly, this housing style merits attention from policymakers and community development practitioners concerned with preserving the unsubsidized, low-cost housing stock. While escalating lot rents remain a pressing affordability challenge for this segment of the housing market (Casey and Thompson, 2022), there are a variety of opportunities to improve the financial and residential security of MHC residents. For example, community development financial institutions can facilitate access to more consumer-friendly home purchase loans or provide capital for cooperative or nonprofit acquisitions of MHCs (Thomas, 2019; Stoker, 2022). Future federal housing market stabilization efforts can proactively include homeowners with chattel loans to prevent these disproportionately vulnerable households from slipping through the cracks. At the state level,

improved awareness of MHCs could facilitate residents' access to repair and weatherization programs, disaster relief, and relocation aid.

As municipalities across New Jersey look to meet their fair share affordable housing requirements, preserving, or even responsibly expanding, MHCs could be a viable model to explore. Similarly, incentives and resources that support the ability of residents to purchase their communities, which unlocks new opportunities for asset building as well as mitigating market pressures on lot rents, are another potential tool in the preservation toolkit (NCLC, 2021). For situations in which resident ownership of an MHC is not feasible, ownership by mission-driven or public entities can help ensure that rents are manageable and proportional to operating costs, although significant initial investments in infrastructure repair and improvements may be required in some cases (Abu-Khalaf, Arabo, and Swann, 2021). Still, industry reporting indicates that MHC maintenance and operation costs are low relative to revenue from rents (Guichardo and Sullivan, 2021), suggesting that many communities can be operated and maintained at affordable rent levels.



“Accordingly, this housing style merits attention from policymakers and community development practitioners concerned with preserving the unsubsidized, low-cost housing stock.”

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Appendix A. Data and Methods

Philadelphia FRB Manufactured Housing Community (MHC) Data Set

The Philadelphia FRB MHC data set is intended to provide a comprehensive inventory of land-lease MHCs in the three states of the Third Federal Reserve District: Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.³⁰ This data set provides the latitude and longitude for all identified MHCs and categorizes entries as small (three to 10 homesites), medium (11 to 99 homesites), or large (100 or more homesites). MHCs in which 30 percent or more of the homesites are not in use are categorized as having high lot vacancy.

I used aerial imagery to visually assign MHCs into size and lot vacancy categories. I determined these categories during the initial phase of the construction of the Pennsylvania data set and decided to hold them consistent across all three states. An individual lot was considered vacant if it appeared to previously be the site of a manufactured home that had since been moved or demolished based on the most recent available aerial image.³¹ Existing units that may have been unoccupied did not count toward this vacancy measure. Vacant lots were included in size category determinations.

Communities with manufactured homes in which residents individually own their underlying parcel are not included in this data set, as they are not subject to the split-tenure arrangement that characterizes land-lease MHCs. Campsites that cater primarily to nightly or seasonal RV campers are also excluded, since these are not intended for long-term residential use. In the construction of this data set, I made inclusion determinations based on available information from public records, community/campsite websites, and other online sources. I take responsibility for any errors or omissions.

The contributing data sources vary somewhat for each state in the Philadelphia FRB MHC Data Set. I used the following sources to construct the data set for New Jersey:

- **CoreLogic Solutions Property Records Data:**³² This data set consists of public property assessment records, including information on land use, address, and geographic coordinates. A custom query designed to capture keywords associated with MHCs was used to generate a list of potential locations. Records were queried from the 2021 tax year.
- **Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Homeland Infrastructure Foundation Level Data (HIFLD):**³³ The Mobile Home Parks feature class/shapefile contains mobile home, residential trailer, and recreational vehicle (RV) parks in the continental United States and Alaska. The final data set includes the relevant features from the New Jersey subset of this file.
- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Facility Registry System (FRS) State Single File:**³⁴ The EPA FRS database contains the locations of facilities and sites that are subject to environmental monitoring. Many manufactured housing communities have onsite water systems, which are often included in the FRS file. Records were drawn from the state file for New Jersey and filtered based on a keyword search of the facility name. The data set includes geographic coordinates associated with sites.
- **New Jersey Manufactured Housing Association (NJMHA) Communities Map:**³⁵ NJMHA provides a directory of member communities by county. Listings include addresses that correspond to community locations.

³⁰ Although the Federal Reserve's Third District includes only portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the full states are included in this data set.

³¹ I reviewed the aerial imagery that was available on Google Earth in May and June 2023.

³² For more information, see www.corelogic.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/downloadable-docs/capital-markets-data-sources.pdf.

³³ The full data set is available at hifld-geoplatform.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/geoplatform::mobile-home-parks/about.

³⁴ Available at www.epa.gov/frs/epa-frs-facilities-state-single-file-csv-download. Downloaded in May 2023.

³⁵ Available at njmha.org/communities/. Accessed in May of 2023.

- **Google Earth:** Google Earth is a desktop-based mapping application that combines recent and historical aerial imagery with GIS data, making it possible to search and review aerial imagery for both addresses and geographic coordinates. Each MHC record was verified and coded into size and vacancy categories using Google Earth aerial imagery. Depending on the location, the most recent available imagery ranged from less than one year old to more than five years old.
- **Regrid:**³⁶ Regrid is a property data company that maintains a nationwide parcel boundary mapping application with information from public records data. Cross-referencing the mapped parcel boundaries with satellite imagery helped identify and distinguish between multiparcel and adjacent MHCs and to differentiate MHCs from manufactured housing subdivisions where residents owned both the home and underlying land.

Data set construction was an iterative process. The preliminary data set was developed using the CoreLogic query output, which was initially deduplicated by removing records with identical geographic coordinates. I mapped the remaining records and used Google Earth and Regrid to determine if locations within overlapping 500-foot buffers were duplicates. Following this initial data cleaning, I examined aerial imagery of all retained records to confirm their use as MHCs. To integrate the geocoded DHS HIFLD data set, I mapped these records alongside the list of confirmed MHCs from CoreLogic, removed records within 500-foot buffers of CoreLogic MHCs, and again used aerial imagery to confirm the remaining records as MHCs. I repeated this process using the combined CoreLogic–DHS data set to add nonduplicate records from the EPA FRS data set.

To integrate records from the nonspatial NJMHA community directory, I geocoded the associated addresses using Regrid and mapped these records against the list of confirmed MHCs from the CoreLogic, DHS HIFLD, and EPA data sets. I then deduplicated and confirmed the records using the same method described above. For a final deduplication check, I truncated the geographic coordinates of every confirmed MHC to two decimal places and verified duplicate values using Google Earth and Regrid.

³⁶ Available at app.regrid.com.

Spatial Joins

To integrate data on the community contexts of MHCs, I used GIS software to spatially join the final MHC data set to two sets of geographies:

- To classify MHCs as urban or rural, I joined the MHC locations to the U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line Shapefile for Urban Areas based on the 2020 census. To account for situations in which an MHC parcel may be partially included in an urban area while its associated geographic coordinate falls outside that area, I added a 500-foot buffer around the urban area shapefile before conducting the join. MHC coordinates that fell within this buffer were classified as urban. All MHCs that were not spatially joined to an urban area were classified as rural.
- I joined the MHC data set to the TIGER/Line Shapefile for 2020 census block groups. I used the 12-digit Federal Information Processing System (FIPS) codes from this join to merge in block group–level estimates of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics from the 2017–2021 ACS. Each MHC was retained as a record for the analysis, even if multiple MHCs were located in the same census block group.

Owing to differences in the inputs used to construct the NJ MHC data set, there are some variations across records in the location of geographic coordinates relative to the MHC parcel. Many records were derived from the CoreLogic data set (123 of the total 268), which provided the coordinates of the parcel centroid. Nonduplicate records from the NJMHA (34) that were geocoded using Regrid also used centroid coordinates. However, records from the DHS HIFLD spatial layer (105) provided coordinates corresponding to street addresses, and the EPA FRS records (6) were a mix of centroid and street address points. Future enhancements to the data set will standardize these coordinate locations. Since the majority of MHCs were wholly contained within a single census block group, this variation in coordinate locations is expected to have minimal impact on the analyses presented in this report.

Appendix B. Manufactured Housing Communities by County and Size

County	MHCs	Size Category		
		Small	Medium	Large
Atlantic	38	1	27	10
Bergen	4	0	1	3
Burlington	21	1	9	11
Camden	10	0	6	4
Cape May	28	1	19	8
Cumberland	26	1	13	12
Essex	0	0	0	0
Gloucester	17	0	11	6
Hudson	1	0	1	0
Hunterdon	4	0	4	0
Mercer	2	0	0	2
Middlesex	15	1	7	7
Monmouth	31	1	24	6
Morris	9	0	9	0
Ocean	38	0	23	15
Passaic	1	0	0	1
Salem	9	0	5	4
Somerset	2	0	1	1
Sussex	3	1	0	2
Union	1	0	1	0
Warren	8	1	6	1

Sources

Author's calculation using the Philadelphia FRB MHC Data Set and Census TIGER/Line Shapefiles.



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