



LACKAWANNA COUNTY RENT STUDY 2020

Scranton/Lackawanna County Continuum of Care



Prepared By:

The Institute

Turning Information into Insight

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Introduction

This report was prepared by The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development as a study of rent reasonableness in Lackawanna County. The data contained herein is primarily sourced from a market scan conducted between October 6th and October 29th 2020. Units were added to a list with data on address, property type, characteristics, rental price, and other miscellaneous notes from public listings.

One limitation is that only data was included on rental units found on online listings. Thus, it is possible that some segments of the market are less represented in the dataset, particularly where informal channels or word of mouth drive the rental market. However, every effort was made to gather a diverse dataset in order to analyze the overall rental market and provide at the largest possible number of comparable units to use when establishing rent reasonableness in housing and community development activities.

The full dataset, in tabular form suitable for searching and sorting, is accompanying this report. The appendix contains technical notes on the dataset. The dataset can be used to identify the most appropriate comparison properties for any given proposed housing development.

Summary Market Findings

There were a total of 85 rental units included in the dataset. Of these, two were studio apartments, 22 were 1 bedroom units, 41 were 2 bedroom units, 17 were 3 bedroom units, and 3 were 4 or more bedroom units. Complete counts by bedroom and bathroom count can be found in the accompanying table.

The average rent ranged from \$828 per month for a 1 bedroom unit to \$2,083 per month for a 4+ bedroom unit. Studio apartments, of which only two were included in the dataset, actually had an average rent higher than one bedroom apartments.

Units were also categorized by the following types: apartment in complex, apartment in house, duplex, entire row house, and entire detached house. In general, entire detached houses and row houses had higher rents, while the lowest average rents were found in apartments within houses among all units with 1, 2, and 3 bedrooms.

Summary by Bedrooms/Bathrooms		
	Count	Average Rent
Studio	2	\$863
1 Bathroom	2	\$863
1 Bedroom	22	\$828
1 Bathroom	21	\$779
1.5 Bathroom	1	\$1,850
2 Bedroom	41	\$954
1 Bathroom	29	\$856
1.5 Bathroom	4	\$884
2 Bathroom	8	\$1,344
3 Bedroom	17	\$1,423
1 Bathroom	10	\$1,080
1.5 Bathroom	1	\$1,200
2 Bathroom	3	\$1,233
2.5 Bathroom	2	\$3,000
3 Bathroom	1	\$2,500
4+ Bedroom	3	\$2,083
1 Bathroom	2	\$1,925
1.5 Bathroom	1	\$2,400
Grand Total	85	\$1,053

Mean Rent by Bedroom Count and Unit Type						
	All Unit Types	Apartment in complex	Apartment in house	Duplex	Entire detached house	Entire rowhouse
Studio	\$863	\$863	-	-	-	-
1 Bedroom	\$828	\$1,075	\$723	\$830	-	\$895
2 Bedroom	\$954	\$998	\$868	\$930	\$1,020	\$1,206
3 Bedroom	\$1,423	\$925	\$907	\$2,025	\$1,363	\$2,233
4+ Bedroom	\$2,083	\$1,600	-	-	\$2,325	-
All Bedroom Counts	\$1,053	\$1,027	\$819	\$1,029	\$1,377	\$1,373

The square foot size of units in the dataset correlated with both type of unit and number of bedrooms. Entire houses and row houses tended to be larger than apartments, and units with more bedrooms had increasing average size.

On average, the rent for units in the dataset was \$0.93 per square foot per month (regardless of utility costs). Apartments in complexes and row houses had higher costs per square foot than other unit types; apartments within houses had the lowest cost per square foot.

Interestingly, smaller and larger units in terms of bedroom count had higher costs per square foot: the two studio apartments analyzed averaged \$2.05 per square foot and 1 bedroom units averaged \$1.22 per square foot. The price per square foot dropped to \$0.83 and \$0.91 for 2 and 3 bedroom units, respectively, while the three largest (4+ bedroom) units averaged \$1.17 per square foot.

Price per Square Foot				
	Count	Average Rent	Average Sq. Ft.	Avg. Rent/Sq. Ft.
Apartment in complex	17	\$1,027	1,032	\$1.00
Apartment in house	33	\$819	934	\$0.88
Duplex	9	\$1,029	1,084	\$0.95
Entire detached house	15	\$1,377	1,445	\$0.95
Entire rowhouse	11	\$1,373	1,351	\$1.02
Studio	2	\$863	420	\$2.05
1 Bedroom	22	\$828	678	\$1.22
2 Bedroom	41	\$954	1,146	\$0.83
3 Bedroom	17	\$1,423	1,562	\$0.91
4+ Bedroom	3	\$2,083	1,780	\$1.17
Grand Total	85	\$1,053	1,129	\$0.93

Units in the dataset were also classified by which utilities were included in the advertised monthly rent. In a typical arrangement, water, sewer, and often garbage, are paid by the landlord, and other utilities, including electricity, internet, and cable or satellite TV are paid by the tenant. Twenty-nine units in the dataset fell into this category. In this arrangement, heat and natural gas (if applicable) may be paid by either the landlord or tenant. Another 28 units included fewer utilities, where tenants are required to pay for either water, sewer, or both. A smaller number fell into a category with more included, where landlords paid for electricity or another utility beyond water, sewer, garbage, heat, or natural gas. A number of units had incomplete information in the listing or did not specify, and are not reflected in this table.

Average Rent by Utilities Included						
	Typical W/S/G		More Included		Less Included	
	Count	Avg. Rent	Count	Avg. Rent	Count	Avg. Rent
Apartment in complex	6	\$921	3	\$1,091.67	4	\$1,034
Apartment in house	15	\$824	1	\$875.00	10	\$821
Duplex	2	\$758	1	\$1,075.00	4	\$975
Entire detached house	1	\$725	0	-	8	\$1,178
Entire rowhouse	5	\$1,054	0	-	2	\$2,750
Studio	1	\$675	1	\$1,050.00	0	-
1 Bedroom	9	\$711	2	\$950.00	3	\$783
2 Bedroom	15	\$930	2	\$1,137.50	18	\$959
3 Bedroom	3	\$925	0	-	7	\$1,649
4+ Bedroom	1	\$1,600	0	-	0	-
Grand Total	29	\$876	5	\$1,045.00	28	\$1,113

The average rents for units with water, sewer, and possible garbage paid by the landlord averaged \$876 per month, lower than units where fewer utilities are included. An apparent explanation for this is because entire detached homes, which tend to be larger and have higher monthly costs, were more likely to have fewer utilities included in the price. Apartments and units with fewer bedrooms generally had more utilities included in the monthly rent cost.

Analysis by Submarket

Several submarket areas were aggregated to analyze more localized market conditions. Submarkets were defined with consideration given to political boundaries (municipal and school district) and general community characteristics such as urban/rural character, distance from the urban core of the region, and population density. Many of these submarkets are still made of distinct local neighborhoods with different character – some differing communities were grouped together in order to ensure a reasonable sample of rental units was available for analysis in each submarket.

Scranton: Defined as the City of Scranton

The Abingtons: Defined as Clarks Summit, South Abington Township, Dalton, and surrounding areas

Lackawanna Valley: Defined as boroughs immediately north of Scranton, including Dickson City, Dunmore, Throop, Blakely, Olyphant, and Jessup.

Northern/Eastern Lackawanna County: Defined as areas north of and including Archbald borough, as well as the southern and eastern rural areas such as Moscow. Also includes Carbondale and surrounding areas.

Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic: The three municipalities southwest of Scranton within Lackawanna County.

Submarket Areas by Bedroom Count		
	Count	Average Rent
Studio	2	\$863
Scranton	2	\$863
1 Bedroom	22	\$828
Abingtons	5	\$753
Dunmore	2	\$775
Northern/Eastern	3	\$692
Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic	3	\$858
Scranton	9	\$917
2 Bedroom	41	\$954
Abingtons	2	\$1,725
Dunmore	5	\$1,005
Lackawanna Valley	6	\$928
Northern/Eastern	9	\$846
Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic	6	\$948
Scranton	13	\$905
3 Bedroom	17	\$1,423
Dunmore	1	\$1,000
Lackawanna Valley	2	\$1,100
Northern/Eastern	1	\$725
Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic	8	\$1,768
Scranton	5	\$1,225
4+ Bedroom	3	\$2,083
Abingtons	1	\$2,400
Dunmore	1	\$1,600
Scranton	1	\$2,250
Grand Total	85	\$1,053

Significant variation was observed between submarkets. The average rent ranged from \$801 per month in the Northern/Eastern submarket to \$1,318 in the Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic submarket. The largest submarket by number of units in the dataset, Scranton City, had an average rent of \$1,004, just below the average across the entire dataset.

The average rent per square foot was highest in The Abingtons, followed by Scranton. The lowest costs per square foot were observed in the Lackawanna Valley and Northern/Eastern submarkets.

Price per Square Foot for Submarket Areas				
	Count	Average Rent	Average Sq. Ft.	Avg. Rent/Sq. Ft.
Abingtons	8	\$1,202	1,102	\$1.09
Dunmore	9	\$1,019	1,063	\$0.96
Lackawanna Valley	8	\$971	1,250	\$0.78
Northern/Eastern	13	\$801	1,234	\$0.65
Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic	17	\$1,318	1,318	\$1.00
Scranton	30	\$1,004	950	\$1.06
Grand Total	85	\$1,053	1,129	\$0.93

Within the City of Scranton, ZIP codes, which approximately align with commonly understood neighborhoods, show significant variation in the market as well, and help to explain some unexpected statistics: the two units in the city center, a local market defined by upmarket listings, averaged only 500 square feet, but are high priced, with an average price per square foot of \$2.68, the highest cost per square foot of any subset of units analyzed in this report. Other parts of the city have much lower costs per square foot and unit sizes closer to average for the submarket.

Price per Square Foot for Scranton ZIP Codes				
	Count	Average Rent	Average Sq. Ft.	Avg. Rent/Sq. Ft.
18503: City Center	2	\$1,338	500	\$2.68
18504: West Scranton	10	\$747	837	\$0.89
18505: South Side	5	\$900	1,071	\$0.84
18508: North Scranton	5	\$1,045	1,088	\$0.96
18509: Green Ridge	2	\$860	1,000	\$0.86
18510: Hill Section	6	\$1,421	975	\$1.46
City Total	30	\$1,004	950	\$1.06

Market Housing Affordability

Rental price data collected as part of this dataset was compared to median household incomes for several household and family types in order to show affordability of unsubsidized market-rate housing. The median household income estimates were compared against average monthly rents for units suitable for each family type. Monthly housing costs in excess of 30 percent of gross income are generally considered to be unaffordable and are highlighted in the table below.

Studio or 1 bedroom apartments with an apartment complexes averaged \$1,004 per month, 42 percent of the monthly median income for single-person households in Lackawanna County. One bedroom apartments within houses, averaging \$723 per month, were at the cusp of affordability, at 30 percent of median income for these households on average.

Married couple households with one or more children had much higher incomes on average, with a median of over \$90,000. This made most rental property types affordable for those households. For single parent households with one or more children, two bedroom rental units, both in complexes and

within houses, were outside of the 30 percent affordability threshold without subsidy. Three bedroom units of all types, which average \$1,423 per month, were even further out of reach.

In general, apartments within houses are much more affordable for families of all types in the region compared with apartments in complexes, or partially or fully detached homes.

Market Housing Affordability				
Family Type	Median Household Income	Bedrooms & Property Type	Average Monthly Rent	Rent as % of Monthly Income
Householder living alone	\$28,622	Studio or 1 Bedroom in Apt. Complex	\$1,004	42%
Householder living alone	\$28,622	1 Bedroom Apartment within House	\$723	30%
Married couple with children	\$90,704	3 Bedroom Detached House	\$1,363	18%
Married couple with children	\$90,704	4 Bedroom, Any Property Type	\$2,083	28%
Single mother w/children	\$33,811	2 Bedroom Apartment in Complex	\$998	35%
Single mother w/children	\$33,811	2 Bedroom Apartment in House	\$868	31%
Single mother w/children	\$33,811	3 Bedroom, Any Property Type	\$1,423	51%
Single father w/children	\$27,403	2 Bedroom Apartment in Complex	\$998	44%
Single father w/children	\$27,403	2 Bedroom Apartment in House	\$868	38%
Single father w/children	\$27,403	3 Bedroom, Any Property Type	\$1,423	62%

Income data source: 2018 U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates.

Percent values greater than 30% highlighted in red to show unaffordable average rents at median household income for family type

Appendix: Rental Unit Dataset Technical Notes

The full rental dataset is found in the Excel workbook delivered with this report. Going forward, comparable rental units can be identified easily for any given proposed or existing rental unit using this dataset. Columns can be filtered to show only units that share key characteristics such as bedroom count, property type, and submarket. If a large number of entries match those criteria, further filters can be applied based on other characteristics such as bathroom count or ZIP code, or the most relevant comparisons can be manually selected based on qualitative factors such as condition, neighborhood amenities, utility inclusion in the rent price, or accessibility features.

The primary worksheet within the workbook contains full listings with no photos. Separate worksheets broken down by community include photographs for as many listings as possible.

List of Fields in Dataset

Street Address: Listed address of unit

Town: City or town of unit, as provided in original listing

ZIP: ZIP Code

Submarket Area: Recoded submarkets based on Town and ZIP Code. Scranton: Defined as the City of Scranton. The Abingtons: Defined as Clarks Summit, South Abington Township, Dalton, and surrounding areas. Lackawanna Valley: Defined as boroughs immediately north of Scranton, including Dickson City, Dunmore, Throop, Blakely, Olyphant, and Jessup. Northern/Eastern Lackawanna County: Defined as areas north of an including Archbald borough, as well as the southern and eastern rural areas such as Moscow. Also includes Carbondale and surrounding areas. Old Forge/Taylor/Moosic: The three municipalities southwest of Scranton within Lackawanna County.

Property Type: Apparent nature of property based on original listing or photos. Apartment in complex, Apartment in house, Duplex, Entire row house, Entire detached house.

Square Footage: Square feet as provided in original listing. Some listings did not include this information.

Number of Bedrooms/Bathrooms: As provided in original listing. Zero in bedroom field indicates a studio/efficiency apartment.

Monthly Rate: Monthly rent as provided in original listing

Deposit: Information provided on deposit required. N/A indicates information not provided.

Lease Type: As provided in original listing, including availability and/or length of lease term.

Inclusion of Utilities: Notes on utilities provided based on original listing

Utility Code: Qualitative categories based on which utilities are included. Typical indicates that landlord pays water, and sewer if applicable. Landlord or tenant may pay garbage, heat, and natural gas, if applicable. "Less included" indicates that tenant pays water, sewer, or both, or listing indicated that tenant pays all utilities. "More included" indicates that listing indicated "all utilities" included or specified that landlord paid electric, internet, or cable/satellite TV. Some uncertainty may come from

property owners' differing understanding of what services fall under utilities or lack of specificity in listings. Some listings provided no information and were coded as Unknown.

Pet Policy: Policy as provided in original listing. N/A indicates information not provided.

Parking Options: Parking information as provided in original listing. N/A indicates information not provided.

Accessibility Features: As provided in original listing. N/A indicates information not provided.

Condition Notes: qualitative notes on unit condition, including information from listing on recent construction, renovations, or building history, and information gleaned from photographs.

Neighborhood Amenities: notes on transit routes, nearby shopping or facilities, schools, parks, or community amenities such as pools. Some notes are directly from original listing.

Source/Link: original listing source website. Links may be expired or listings may have been removed since access.

Date Accessed: date original listing was accessed

Other Notes: Other notes based on original listing