Twin Goals

How Duplexes Can Build Family Wealth & Return Affordability to Central Ohio

AHA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLIANCE CENTRAL OHIO

Transforming Community Through Housing

Twin Goals: How Duplexes Can Build Family Wealth & Return Affordability to Central Ohio
An economic benefits study of duplex owner-occupancy in Central Ohio

by the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio

in partnership with Scioto Analysis

2026

Using local and national datasets, we estimate a duplex owner could accrue the following benefits compared to an owner of a similar single-family home.

$1,293,416

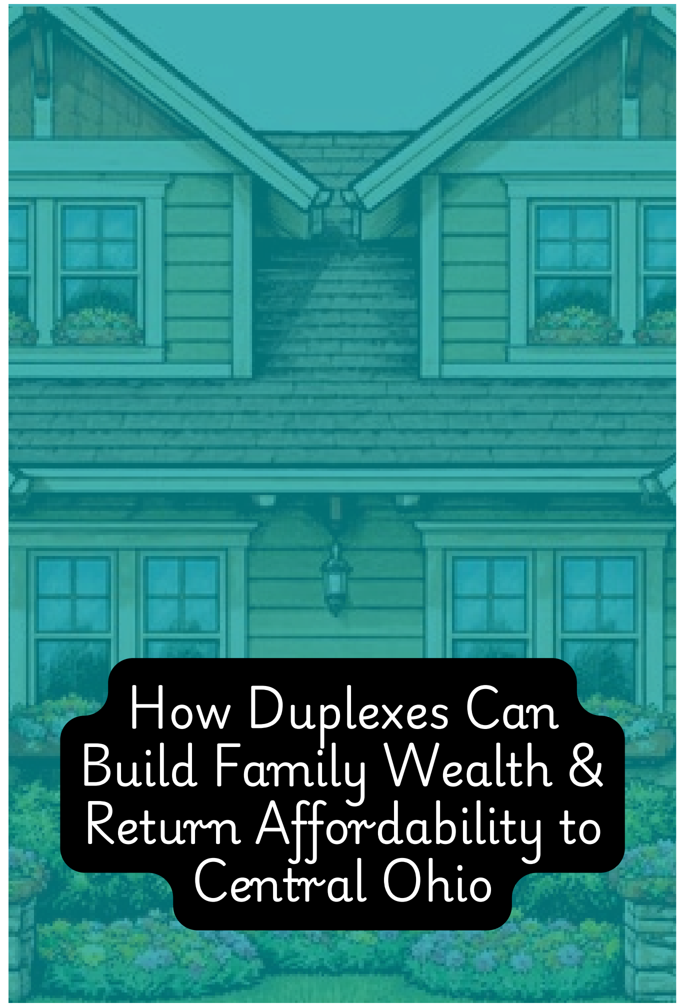
Lifetime earnings & savings from duplex ownership

$11,654

Net Annual Rental Income

$10,755

Annual Room & Board Savings



How Duplexes Can Build Family Wealth & Return Affordability to Central Ohio

$56,134

Avoided Assisted Living Costs in Retirement

$14,629

Annual Mid-Term Rental Income

Introduction to Twin Goals

Central Ohio's economic growth continues to be the envy of the Midwest. Our carefully curated balance of job gains, wage growth, technological innovation, and small business opportunity offers the promise of a fulfilling and prosperous life for generations to come. There's now a very real possibility that our kids will be able to get any education, land any job, and start any business they want, right here in Ohio. That's the so-called heart of it all.

But, even as Central Ohioans celebrate a new level of influence and relevancy, they rightly worry that workforce gains are not balanced with sufficient urgency to keep housing prices low. As the Wall Street Journal observed, "[b]ecause companies can create jobs much faster than home builders and developers can create more homes, Columbus's longtime Goldilocks status as a successful city with still-affordable housing is now on shaky ground."

The thankful reality is that Central Ohio is - *for now* - affordable for many of us. That's a truth that must be protected, and it's an advantage that must be expanded to all of our families.

Regional housing sufficiency and attainability is the goal.

Or, rather, *one* of the goals.

The other vital objective is to create a housing ecosystem that is diverse, organic, and free.

Today, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to create a system where families have an authentic choice in the kind of home they live in. One that meets their financial needs, as well as their personal style. One that is as physically accessible as it is spiritually. A home that can grow with them or, equally as powerful, a home they are excited to outgrow because their next home is waiting.

It is this intersection between affordability and independence that this report shines a remarkable light. It explores how the "humble" duplex - once an unstoppable cornerstone of the American workforce - can bring families both financial and personal freedom.

We share it with you in the hopes that it can inform our future, contribute to a robust and factual housing debate, and inspire families across our great region.

With Faith,

Bob Bitzenhofer, Board Chair
Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio

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Assessing the Benefits of Duplex Ownership

With housing prices rising precipitously in the Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area ("MSA" or "Central Ohio") and beyond, local leaders and residents are increasingly looking to the past for guidance on the future.

Among the most pronounced trends in development today is a revival of the American duplex. Sought after for its unique ability to expand both community-level housing supply and individual-level economic mobility, this architectural icon is rapidly emerging as one effective solution to this complex housing challenge.

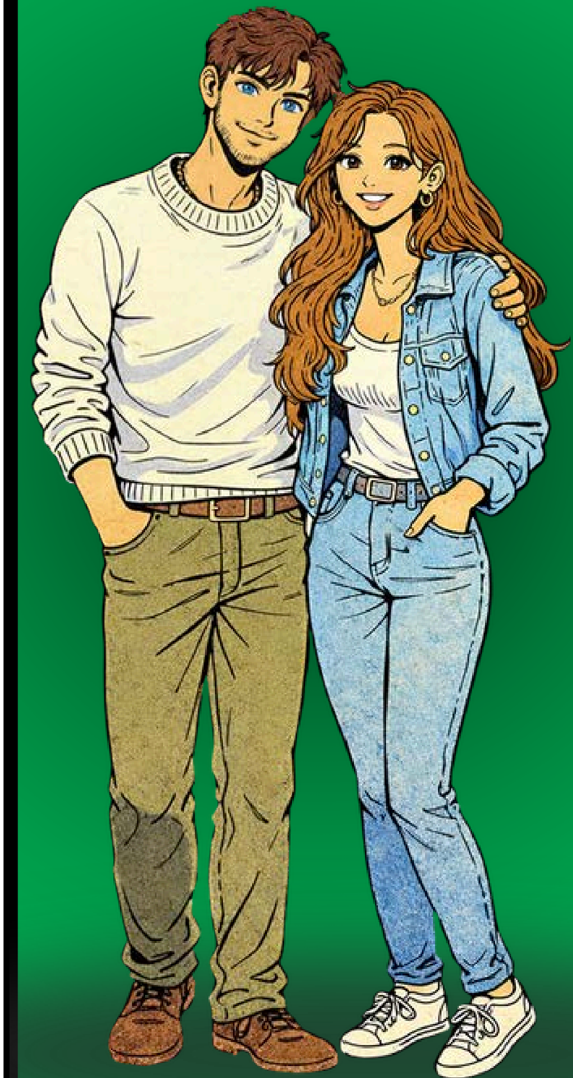
This report is the first economic benefits study that quantifies the financial impacts individual homeowners gain through duplex ownership. It finds that **a typical Central Ohio family can reasonably earn or save nearly $1.3 million over their lifetime as a result of duplex owner-occupancy**.

This benefit comes from using the duplex in a variety of ways that shift to adjust the owner's lifestyle and needs, including traditional rental income, mid-term rental income (renting to traveling nurses), avoided higher education expenses, and avoided assisted living expenses.

While not factored into this analysis, it is also documented that voluntary resource sharing, which can be enabled by the proximity duplexes offer, creates additional cost savings through an "economies of scale" advantage. For instance, neighbors who share a backyard may choose to split outdoor furnishing costs instead of duplicating the patio furniture. This is called a "non-rivalrous" use. Another unstudied example of cost savings arises when related duplex neighbors choose to share family meals, savings on food and preparation costs.

Meet James & Delaney

This report follows a young hypothetical couple as they purchase their first home in Central Ohio. It explores how their choice to buy a duplex creates financial opportunities and personal independence as they progress through life and build a family in our community.



James and Delaney purchase a classic "side-by-side" duplex in a middle-class Central Ohio suburb. Each unit has two bedrooms, a kitchen, and 1.5 bathrooms.

The purchase price is slightly higher than a similar single-family home with four bedrooms. However, because they are owner-occupants, they receive the same mortgage offers and down payment assistance as traditional first-time buyers. Their annual mortgage payments are $3,866 higher than if they purchased a single-family home; throughout this report, that amount is deducted from any earnings or savings they accrue.

In this report, James and Delaney use the duplex to meet different family needs. For all of these scenarios, the analysis assumes that having a separate, independent household is an absolute priority for all parties. This may stem from a financial motive (to protect a tax classification or benefit eligibility) or a personal motive (avoiding feelings of dependence or need for privacy). As such, "doubling up" or taking on roommates is not a viable alternate.

This report does not assess the tax implications of duplex ownership. It can be reasonably assumed that a duplex owner would (1) incur some tax liability for rental income received and (2) will incur some tax advantages that a typical homeowner cannot, like deducting repair expenses, property insurance premiums, and depreciation. The report does not determine if these are fully offsetting.

What's a Duplex?

A duplex is simply a home with two independent dwelling units inside one structure.

Duplexes can be arranged in a variety of styles, each with their own nicknames. Side-by-side duplexes, also called mirrored homes or twins, were common in colonial communities and saw a resurgence in the 1960s and 70s. The over/under style, also called the Cleveland Double, was a housing staple around the turn of the century, especially in streetcar suburbs and in the South where it was a common variant of the Charleston Single. Architectural Historian Thomas Hubka argues that this up-and-down style remains the most common. Today, back-to-back and corner lot duplexes are increasingly common for their ability to blend into single-detached neighborhoods.

They are one of the housing styles that urban designer Daniel Parolek calls "missing middle." They are in the architectural *middle* between singles and high-rises. And they are *missing* "because they have typically been illegal to build since the mid-1940s."

Duplexes are sometimes confused with Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), which the American Planning Association defines as small, independent residential dwellings located on the same lot as a stand-alone home. ADUs can be either attached to the primary structure or detached from it (like over a garage). The key difference is that an ADU must be subordinate to (smaller than) the primary home, whereas the two parts of a duplex are often mirror images of each other.

Twin Goals

Part 1: The Newlyweds Buy Their First Home

James and Delaney are newlyweds who both graduated from the Ohio State University last year. James is an outside sales representative and Delaney is a first-grade teacher and they have a combined income of $62,000. For their first home, they bought a duplex, living in one side and renting the other to their college friend for $1,400 per month. This arrangement lasts for ten years, helping them repay student loans faster.

Over ten years, James and Delaney can earn over $116,000 in rental income. This represents a 14-19% increase to the annual income earned at their jobs.

The rent that the couple can reasonably charge varies significantly across the region based on the location and quality of the home. In Central Ohio, the Fair Market Rent ("FMR") for a two-bedroom ranges from a high of $2,150 to a low of $1,070. This is calculated by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development ("HUD") for each zip code using 40th percentile gross rent for a standard-quality unit; in other words, the FMR is a lower or "safe" rent estimate because 60% of landlords get a higher price.

Weighted for population size, the average FMR for a two-bedroom home across all of Central Ohio is $1,436. This analysis further rounds down to assume $1,400 gross rent per month, reflecting that James and Delaney are renting to a friend and not seeking to maximize their income. With this, they earn $16,800 per year in gross rents.

Like other rentals, duplex owners cannot expect to receive uninterrupted income. Losses can come from tenants moving (physical vacancies), tenants unable to pay rent (economic vacancies), and time offline for repairs. According to a 2023 HUD analysis, vacancy rates in the greater Columbus area are about 6.9%. This figure is higher in the City of Columbus and lower in outer areas. For James and Delaney, we assume a high 7.62% vacancy, the average in Ohio in 2024 according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. This lowers their net rental income to $15,520 per year.

Finally, we deduct an additional $3,866 per year from this income to account for the higher purchase price they paid. This brings their annual rental income to $11,654.

Importantly, this assumes that James and Delaney do not raise the rent over time. From 2016-2023, the average rent increase for a two-bedroom apartment in Central Ohio was 5%. If James and Delaney routinely raised their rents to match the overall market, they would have earned an additional $37,151 in net income over the ten year period.

Twin Goals: Wealth Building & Unit Creation
James and Delaney's rental arrangement reveals the powerful dual benefits that duplexes offer: creating new income opportunities for working families while also lowering overall housing costs for the community by expanding the supply of housing.

At the individual level, the couple earned over $116,000 in income that would otherwise be unavailable to them. This increased their earnings by 14-19% each year beyond their salaries.

This is just the beginning of their earning journey. The $116,000 gain represents just 9% of the earnings or savings this analysis estimates James and Delaney will ultimately accrue over their lifetime in the home. Future sections will assess additional benefits.

How the couple chooses to use this income can greatly influence their ability to gain economic power. For example, U.S. News & World Report estimates that the average student loan debt for a class of 2024 graduate was $25,549 for public college students. Assuming they have a moderate 7% interest rate on their loans, if James and Delaney put all their rental income towards paying down their student loans, they would eliminate their debt in approximately 5 years. Compared to a ten-year repayment schedule, they would **save $9,995 in interest** through this accelerated repayment strategy.

In addition to helping James and Delaney build wealth and economic stability, the scenario also highlights the societal benefit of having a new rental unit in the market. Their college friend was able to access a safe, reliable home in a good neighborhood for less than the market rate. One study estimates that for every 10% increase in the housing stock, nearby rents decline by 1%.

The Math

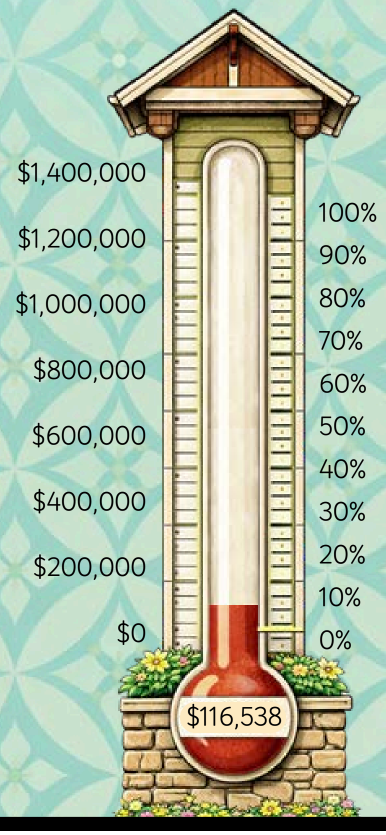
Average Fair Market Value for a two-bedroom apartment minus friends & family discount: $16,800/yr

After deducting vacancy allowance: $15,520/yr

After deducting higher home price costs: $11,654

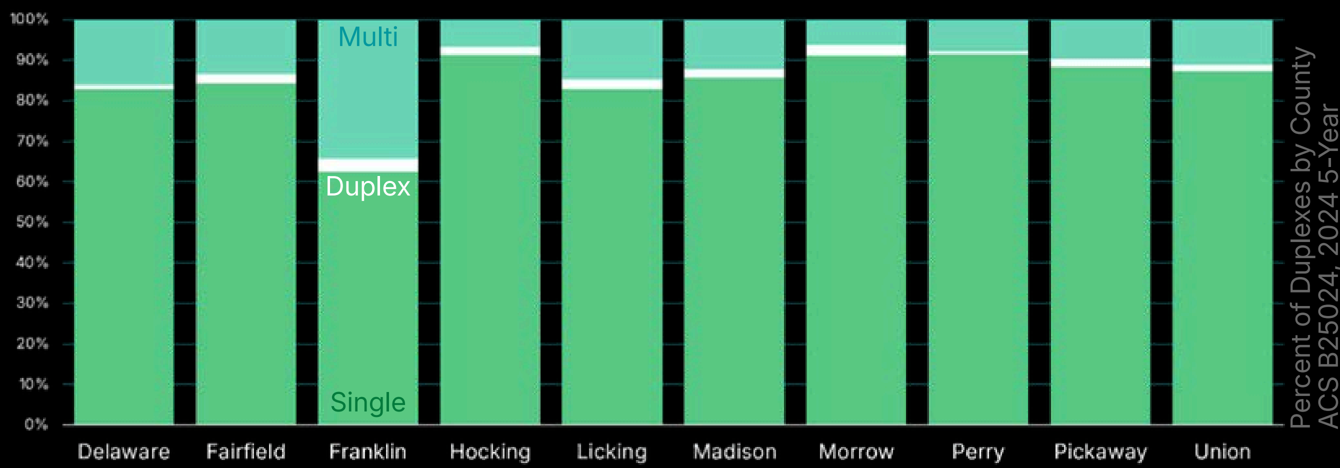
Multiplied by ten years: $116,538

James & Delaney's work income started at a combined $62,000 per year. We assume it increases 3% per year until retirement. As such, this rental boosted their income from 14-19% per year.



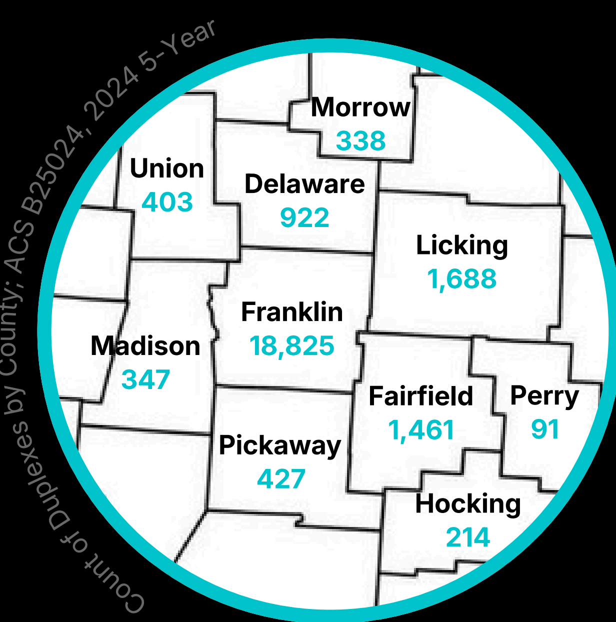
Where are our Duplexes?

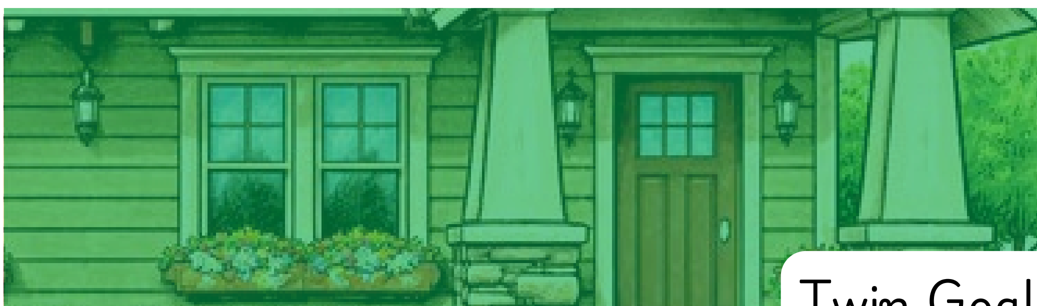
According to American Community Survey, there are 12,500 duplexes in Central Ohio, totaling 25,047 units. Nearly 77% of these are in Franklin County even though less than 60% of the metropolitan area lives within those borders. The share of duplexes in each county is small; it is highest in Franklin County, where they compose 3.3% of all homes. Duplexes exceed 2% of homes in Fairfield, Licking, Morrow, and Madison.



Some of these existing homes are now considered “nonconforming uses”, because they were built in areas that no longer allow duplexes. This would make them difficult or impossible to rebuild in the event they are destroyed by a flood or fire.

Before cities sprawled outwards towards farmland, duplexes were dispersed throughout the community, often nestled among single homes and small businesses. This helped create desirable, amenitized neighborhoods with spaces for upward mobility. As laws and policies pushed housing further away from jobs, duplexes largely disappeared, with newer ones most likely in large, master-planned housing developments.





For the first time ever, in partnership with Scioto Analysis, this report provides a public, interactive map of where duplexes are legal throughout the Central Ohio region. Click here to open a link and explore where duplexes are allowed to be built in your town.

Westerville, Ohio

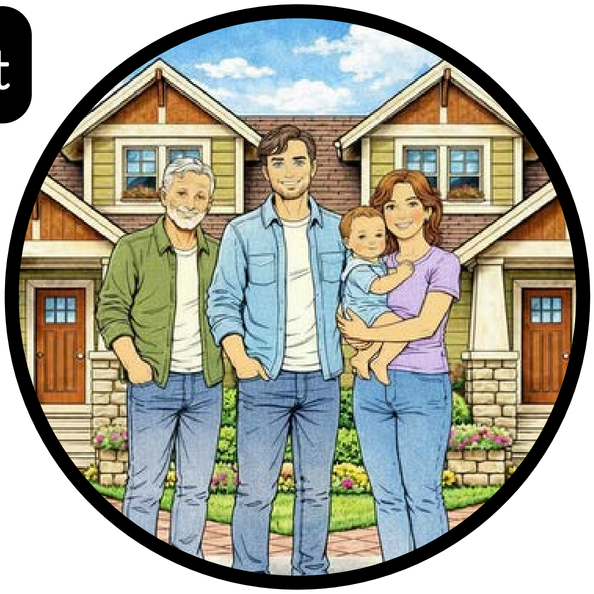
Mount Vernon, Ohio

Newark, Ohio

According to Scioto Analysis' map, today's zoning laws only allow duplexes on 17% of all Central Ohio parcels. They are illegal in nearly 79% of the region, and data is unavailable for the remaining 4%.

There is significant variation within the full 11-county Central Ohio region. For example, they are allowable "by right" (without seeking a discretionary or conditional approval) in 4% of Newark, 2% of Marysville, 12% of Columbus, 17% of Circleville, 32% of Delaware, 51% of Lancaster, 58% of London, and 91% of Powell.

Part 2: a Safe & Independent Space for Aging Parents



Over the years, James and Delaney's life together has grown. They welcomed a baby and continue to advance in their careers. However, James' dad suffered a fall in his home last month and he no longer feels safe there, but he doesn't feel ready to move into an assisted living facility either. James invited him to move into the other side of their duplex so he can feel supported and be closer to his grandson.

Over ten years, James and Delaney can save $561,340 in foregone assisted living expenses. This represents a 52-67% annual increase in spending power.

James' dad, Mathias, is an active and independent older man. As a lifelong renter, he is also among the 20% of adults over the age of 65 who does not own their own home. Accordingly, his net wealth is only $10,100, the median for older renters in America.

Not only does Mathias not feel emotionally ready to enter into assisted living, James and Delaney know that his limited savings will only cover about two months at an assisted living facility, the average cost of which is approximately $5,000 per month in Columbus. Because he does not yet qualify for full-scale nursing care, after Mathias' savings are exhausted, James and Delaney must cover those steep costs out of their own pockets.

By allowing Mathias to live in the duplex, they avoid $60,000 in annual assisted living expenses. After removing $3,866 per year to account for the higher purchase price they paid, James and Delaney record an **annual savings of $56,134**. This assumes Mathias does not pay any rent, which would further benefit the couple.

During this time, James and Delaney are able to provide "activities of daily living" to Mathias that would otherwise be third-party expenses, like help cooking, cleaning his home, shopping for groceries, managing medicine, and caring for pets. Without their help, the average Ohio cost for these part-time, in-home services is $35,360 per year.

Unlike a traditional renter, having a retirement-age family member occupy the second unit of a duplex does not come with vacancy costs. Instead, the risk is that a retirement-age family member might one day require more assistance than a duplex owner can provide by themselves. For this scenario, we assume that Mathias is able to remain in independent housing for an additional ten years, after which he will require full-scale nursing care, which is fully covered by his Medicare insurance.

Twin Goals: Individual & Societal
The duplex's ability to serve both family and community needs continues to be evident in James and Delaney's hypothetical. In ten years, they will have saved over half a million dollars.

The couple is also part of a growing "sandwich generation" who are caring for both young children and aging parents. According to AARP's Caregiving in the US report, 24% of Americans are caregivers. Of caregivers under the age of 50, nearly half are part of this sandwich generation. Not only does the duplex allow families to forego assisted living costs as James and Delaney's example shows, it also makes this caregiving function more efficient. For example, it eliminates commuting times between the caregiver and their aging relative and it makes meal sharing logistically simpler.

As young parents, James and Delaney may also be among the 47% of parents of children under the age of five who receive childcare support from a grandparent. For every year that Mathias provides childcare to their toddler, the couple would save an additional $11,125 in foregone childcare center expenses that are not factored into this savings analysis.

How James and Delaney choose to use their assisted living savings can dramatically reshape their own golden years. For instance, if they redirected half ($280,670) into a retirement account with a modest 5% rate of return, over the next 30 years that seed would grow to over $1.2 million, enough to fund 17.5 years of retirement.

Mathias may also experience non-financial benefits by staying in the community instead of commitment to an institutional. Research suggests that older adults who "age in place" maintain greater autonomy, stronger social connections, and reduce loneliness. And living in a larger home, with four household members, is predictive of higher happiness levels.

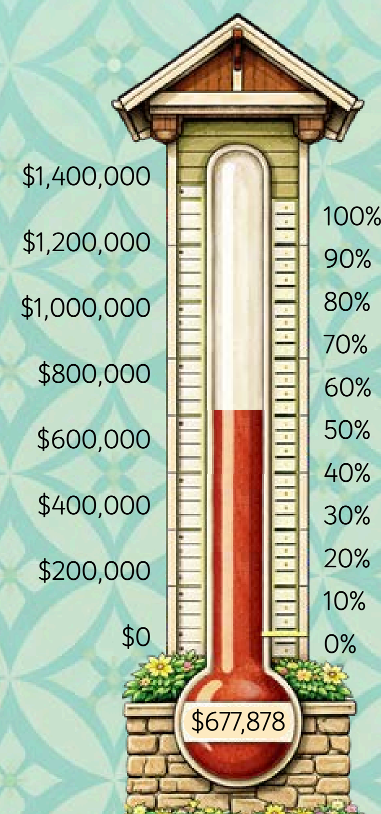
The Math

Savings from foregoing average cost of assisted living: $60,000/yr

Savings after deducting higher home price costs: $56,134/yr

Multiplied by ten years: $561,340

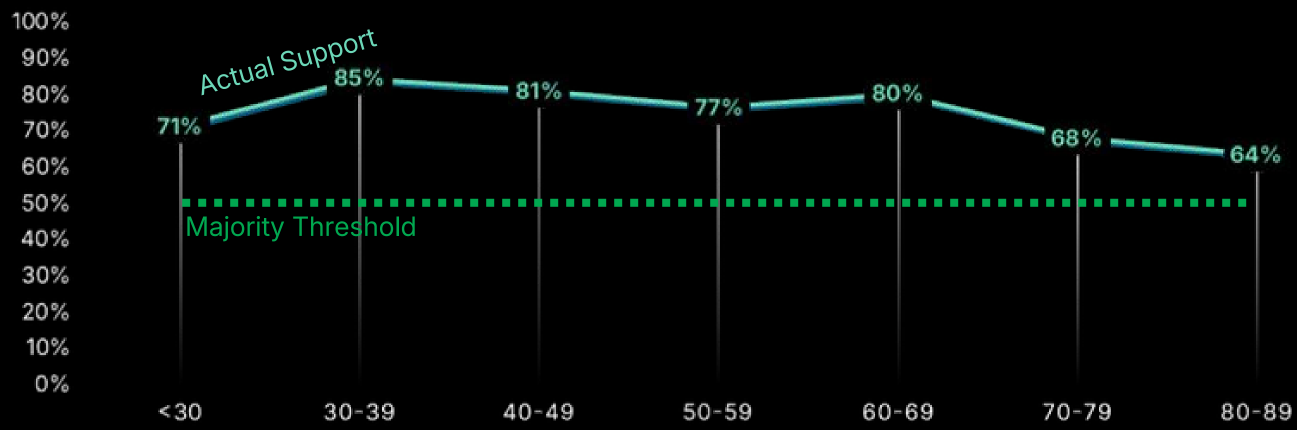
James & Delaney's combined work income has increased to $108,000 per year. By foregoing $53,034 in assisted living expenses, they have increased their purchasing power by 49-64% during this ten-year period.



Why Duplexes?

Duplexes make up a significant portion of what urban planners sometimes call the “missing middle”. These are two-, three-, and four-home structures that are stylistically compatible with the neighborhoods around them. Missing middle housing has been termed the “original workforce housing” option because it is naturally less expensive than other housing styles. Missing middle also serves as a transitional housing style for young people who are not yet ready for homeownership and empty nesters looking for affordable downsizing options within their residential communities.

Expanding where duplexes can be built by-right is overwhelmingly popular with Central Ohio residents. A supermajority (78%) support them on “any residential lot,” and even higher support is documented among those in peak homebuying age ranges.



Percent of Central Ohioans that support Missing Middle housing on “any residential lot”
Overwhelming: Central Ohio’s Housing Survey

Cities are looking to missing middle housing to ease prices and expand choices. For instance, Portland’s “Residential Infill Project” reduced red tape so people could more easily build affordable cottages, duplexes, triplexes, and small townhomes for homeownership. An evaluation found that homes built under the program sold for $250,000 - $300,000 less than comparable single-detached homes.

Portland joined a range of communities that are re-legalizing duplexes, including cities like Minneapolis, Charlotte, Raleigh, Boise, and Alexandria, and states like New Hampshire, Maine, and Montana. In addition to lowering costs, policymakers also seek broader benefits, like lowering energy burdens, preserving farmland and greenspace, creating more efficient public service models, and supporting age-in-place needs.

Part 3: Empty Nesters Helping with College

As time passed and their son grew older, James and Delaney's housing needs continued to evolve. Now their teenage son, Archie, is graduating and preparing to begin college at Otterbein. His parents agreed to pay for his school as long as he lives in the other side of the duplex so they don't have to pay for room and board costs. He felt this was a fair compromise that lets him have independence while still graduating debt-free.

Over four years, James and Delaney can save $43,019 in foregone dormitory expenses. This represents a 9-10% annual increase in their annual spending power.

The average cost for room and board at Central Ohio's colleges and universities is $13,871 for the nine-month school year, nearly identical to Otterbein's rate. While James and Delaney save the housing portion by letting Archie stay in the duplex, they are still paying for food by sharing family meals at home. As such, $284 in average monthly food expenses ($2,556 over nine months) is removed from the savings calculation.

But because the dorms only provide housing for nine months each year, students like Archie must find short-term accommodations during summer break. At an estimated $1,100 per month, the one-bedroom FMR for Central Ohio, this represents an additional $3,300 annual savings added back into the calculation for James and Delaney.

Accordingly, the annual savings for each year of room and board per student is estimated to be $14,621. After removing $3,866 per year to account for the higher purchase price they paid, James and Delaney record an **annual savings of $10,755**. Over four years, James and Delaney's total savings on Archie's college costs are $43,019.

Because dormitory costs vary across local colleges, if Archie were to switch schools, their savings could be as high as $12,100 per year at Ohio State or Ohio Wesleyan which have relatively higher room and board costs. Or it could be slightly lower, around $8,900 annual savings, at a lower-cost institution like Ohio Dominican.

This assumes that Archie lives in the duplex alone. However, if he took a roommate, that would generate additional income. For example, if a roommate paid half of the FMR for an average two-bedroom unit ($718 per month), it would generate $7,959 in income per year after factoring in a 7% vacancy allowance. Over four years, this roommate's contributions would total $31,837 in additional income, equivalent to nearly a year of tuition costs at Otterbein or three years of tuition at Ohio State's regional campus.

Twin Goals: Economic Mobility & Social Services
Once again, the economic return of the duplex shows exceptional savings for the family. As with earlier analysis, however, this purely financial perspective fails to incorporate other societal and family goods that the duplex produces.

For example, the duplex allows Archie to graduate from college without student loans. This is a benefit that will support him in a variety of ways throughout his life. For instance, graduating debt-free may accelerate his path to homeownership. The Education Data Initiative found that homeownership declines by 1.8% for every $1,000 of student loan debt owed. And a survey from the National Association of REALTORS concluded that 61% of non-homeowning millennials report student loan debt as impeding their ability to purchase.

Overall, 20% of recent homebuyers with student loans reported that their educational debt delayed homeownership by five years or longer. A 2024 study from the National Association of REALTORS found that over the five-year period of 2019-2023, the average homeowner gained $29,400 per year in equity. That means a five year delay in homeownership could "cost" $147,000 in foregone wealth building.

Beyond the impact on homeownership, research also suggests that student loan debt is associated with a variety of other life barriers including delays in marriage; reductions in net worth; greater financial hardships; modest but persistent mental health challenges; and long-term "physiological weathering."

While this report's analysis focused on how the duplex supports college studies, beneficial effects are not likely limited to those in degree-granting programs. With 48% of young adults aged 15-24 experiencing housing cost burdens, access to affordable and safe housing helps them prioritize career education and workforce readiness.

The Math

Savings from foregoing room and board: $13,817/yr

Savings after adding back in food expenses: $11,319/yr

Savings after subtracting summer housing: $14,621/yr

Savings after deducting higher home price costs: $10,755/yr

Multiplied by four years: $43,019

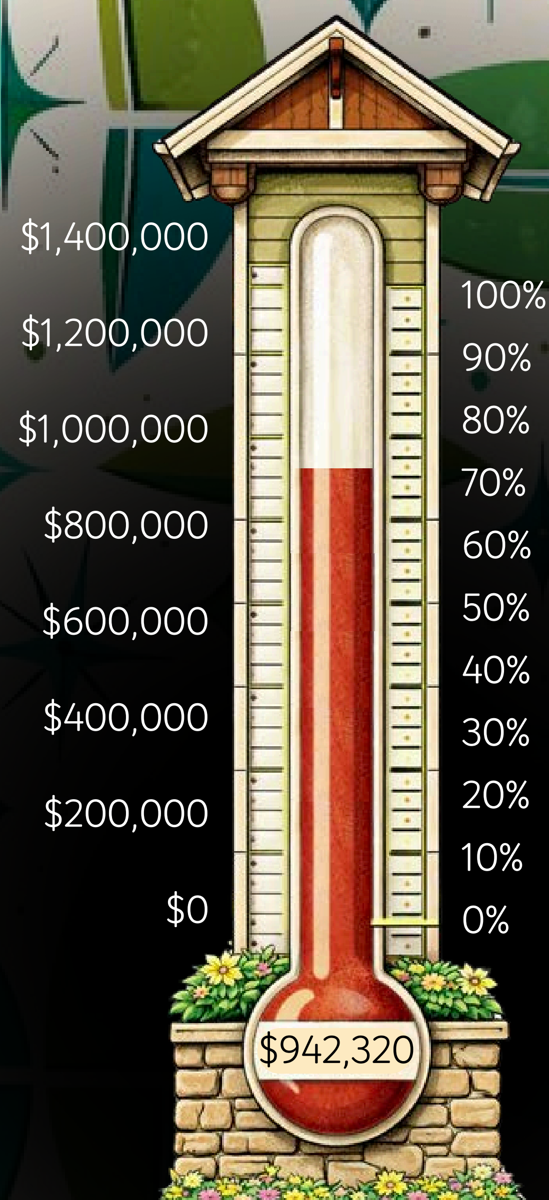
James & Delaney's combined work income has increased to $122,000 per year. By foregoing $43,019 in dorm costs, they increased their purchasing power by 9-10% during this period.

The Middle Years

After Archie graduates, James and Delaney return the duplex to its original function, as a rental unit. They continue to value having long-term, friendly tenants as neighbors and choose not to maximize the amount of rent they can charge. They continue collecting $1,400 per month for the next nineteen years. This generates $11,654 in net income each year, totaling $221,423 during this period.

Over the years, the extra income lets them pay off their mortgage a bit early, buy a new car, make some home upgrades, and take more vacations. Generally, they don't stress about money the way some of their friends do.

As they approach retirement, their professional income continues to grow at a modest 3% per year. Although they are healthy earners now, this extra revenue still expands their income between 5-9% each year during this period.



Part 4: Retirement With Comfort & Without Worry

After years of responsible savings and rewarding careers, James and Delaney are ready to retire in the community they love. With hopes of traveling, they still want an income supplement, but they don't want to be tied down with a long-term renter. They decide to partner with a local hospital to offer the other half of the duplex as a "mid-term" rental for traveling nurses. They also like the flexibility and the security of knowing a healthcare professional is nearby.

For the next 25 years, James and Delaney can earn at least $351,000 in rental income from a furnished, mid-term housing arrangement.

According to FurnishFinder, the average monthly rent for a medium-term rental in Columbus, Ohio is $2,055. The average length of stay for a medium-term rental guest is three months, with 34% of tenants traveling to serve in the healthcare profession.

This analysis assumes a 25% vacancy rate, meaning the home will be unrented for three months a year. This higher vacancy rate factors in "turn time" between tenants, as well as vacation time for James and Delaney. That results in $18,495 annual gross rent.

After removing $3,866 per year to account for the higher purchase price they paid, James and Delaney record an **annual medium-term rental income of $14,629**. Over twenty-four years, James and Delaney's total earnings during this period reach $351,096.

Because of the financial security the duplex has offered over the years, James and Delaney retire at age 65. The analysis assumes that their non-rental income drops precipitously to $59,286, the median income for a Central Ohio householder of retirement age, over 65 years. Without full-time jobs, the mid-term rental income plays a larger role in their annual earnings, now composing up to 25% of their income.

The monthly rent for a medium-term rental unit is 55% higher than a traditional lease, reflecting more customer service and marketing obligations than a usual rental. With more time to dedicate to the home, this feels like a reasonable tradeoff for higher income.

However, this income is half of what James and Delaney could earn if they choose to rent their home as a *short-term* rental, which generates on average $158 per night with a 58% vacancy rate. After subtracting the $3,866 per year to account for the higher purchase price they paid, short-term rentals would likely generate $29,583 per year.

Twin Goals: Workers & Retirees
As in earlier phases of their lives, James and Delaney’s duplex continues to help meet both personal needs for the couple, and community needs for their town.

Their housing priorities match those of many aging adults. As they shift to a fixed income, they need affordable housing. Harvard’s “Housing America’s Older Adults” report found over 5 million senior households are severely cost burdened, paying more than half their income towards housing. This critical instability may be fueled by the fact that the median householder (between 65-74 years old) only has $200,000 saved for retirement, despite $1 million still considered a baseline for comfort.

The couple also wants to “age in place” among friends and neighbors. They join 93% of adults over the age of 65 who share this goal, according to a 2026 survey from the Pew Research Center. But only 37% of those same adults feel confident it is possible for them. A separate study from AARP suggests that more than half of those who leave their homes will do so over affordability concerns.

Finally, James and Delaney are conscious of their changing physical limitations and need a home that feels safe . U.S. News and World Report found the average cost of accessibility modifications for aging adults ranged from $3,000 - $15,000, but can exceed $50,000 for some individual needs.

For each of these needs, the income generated by the duplex helps the couple move closer to their goals. They are better able to increase their income, by resetting the rental rate, to meet rising utility and property tax expenses. They are able to make investments in accessibility upgrades, like walk-in showers or slip-resistant flooring. And they can do all that in a neighborhood that is familiar.

At the same time, they are helping respond to the growing nursing shortage, which was estimated to exceed 78,000 full-time registered nurses in 2025.

The Math

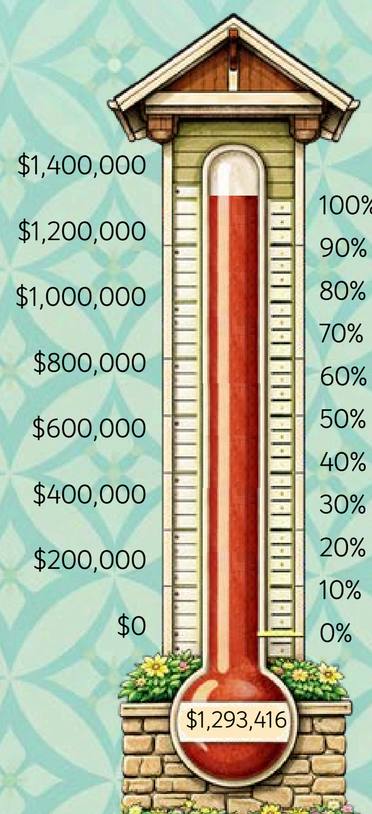
Average mid-term rental income: $24,660/yr

After deducting 25% vacancy allowance: $18,495/yr

After deducting higher home price costs: $14,629/yr

Multiplied by 24 years: $351,096

At retirement, James & Delaney’s non-duplex income dropped to $59,286, and continues to grow at 3% per year. As a result, mid-term rental income composes 13-25% of their total income.



The Hidden History

Duplex construction nearly rivaled single-structure home production in the early 1900s, coinciding with a major period of American population and demographic change. During this era of urbanization, industrialization, and economic growth, immigration from both rural areas and abroad fed a growing demand for workers.

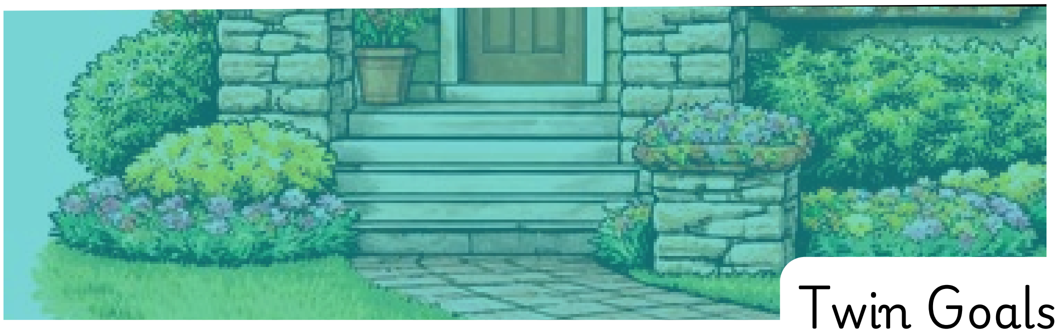
For these newcomers, the duplex served as a stepping stone to the American dream. It offered better conditions than a tenement and more space than a rooming house. And it allowed families to support each other as they progressed through the economic ladder, transitioning ownership from one generation to the next, lifting families from renters to owners, all under one roof. Even into the 1940s and 50s, classic duplexes were often larger and more ornate than the similarly affordable cape cod style of housing that grew in popularity.

However, New Deal policies advanced during the Great Depression caused duplexes to recede from the American landscape. These laws significantly disadvantaged middle housing styles in favor of suburbanization, sprawl, and detached housing. Over time, these kinds of "shared roof" housing styles also became associated with racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, miring their development or preservation in the traps of redlining, urban renewal, and other segregationist policies.

By mid-century, duplexes were cut off from the same federal financing tools used to build single-family housing and were increasingly outlawed under local zoning codes. Many of these laws continue to be in effect, skewing the region's housing market.

As a result of these policies - both historical and modern - today's homebuyers have fewer housing choices than their grandparents or great grandparents. Although half of Central Ohioans say they would personally like to live in a duplex or other middle style, the extreme scarcity of these homes means that few will ultimately get the chance.

Learn more about Central Ohio's unique history in "United: the Hidden Story of the Humble Duplex," by director Anita Kwan.



Conclusion

Over their lives together, James and Delaney gained nearly $1.3 million dollars by choosing to purchase a duplex.

This is a highly conservative estimate of their increased economic power. Over sixty-seven years together, it assumes they never raise their rent and always choose to lease to friends or family at a below-market rate, sometimes foregoing rent entirely.

It also ignores the many ways they can put this rental income to work that generates additional financial benefits, whether it is retiring high-interest student loans or mortgages earlier than otherwise possible or investing in other financial products to generate passive income for themselves.

Their choice is not for everyone. They made a purposeful decision to live comfortably but modestly, trading extra space for extra income. And used their time and talent to gain a level of financial independence that feels distant for many of us.

In many ways, they are an anachronism. They participated in a historic system of micro entrepreneurialism that is hard to find in today's severely constrained housing ecosystem. At the same time, they leveraged a flawed housing market to "hack" their own version of affordability, one that they generously shared with their kin. They are both a reflection of their ancestors and, with policy reforms, a vision for Central Ohio's future.

The Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio invites you to continue this learning journey by visiting our website at www.ahaco.org.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