

# Central Region

The Central region is home to 282,160 households, 78 percent of which are homeowners and 22 percent renters. This region has the largest percentage of homeowners in the state, as well as the highest rate of owner cost burden in the state. The Central region has also seen some of the sharpest declines in median owner income, and significant increases in housing costs in recent years. At \$57,700, the East Central portion of the region has the second highest cost of living in the state, just behind the Twin Cities, with housing accounting for approximately 20 percent of a household's budget. By 2035, the region is expected to gain an additional 41,715 individuals, making Central the second fastest growing region in the state after the Twin Cities. As the Central region grows, it will be critical to expand affordable housing opportunities for renters, homeowners, and seniors to reduce housing cost burden and support a strong economy.

## Top 5 Facts



At 78 percent, the region contains the highest percentage of homeowners. However, while 79 percent of white households are homeowners, only 46 percent of people of color and Indigenous households own their home.



The region contains six of the 10 counties with the highest rates of owner cost burden; Pine County ranks as the worst in the state, with 28 percent of all homeowners experiencing cost burden.



In 2017, seniors accounted for nearly a quarter of all households in the region. By 2035, the number of residents aged 65 and older is expected to increase by 77 percent, the highest rate of growth of any region in the state.



In 2017, the region added an additional 399 multifamily units and 3,125 single family units, constituting the second highest amount of single family units after the Twin Cities region.



The region has the highest rate of severe owner housing cost burden; In eight of the 14 counties in the region, 9 percent of homeowners are paying more than half of their total household income on housing.

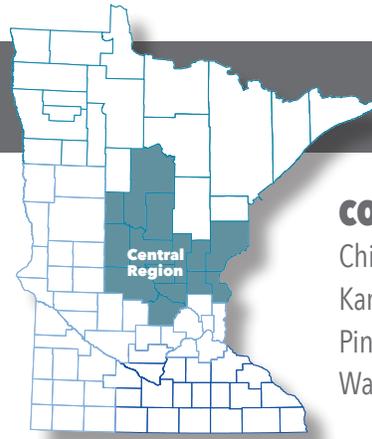
# CENTRAL REGION

## Rental Housing

There are more than 63,230 renter households in the Central region, accounting for 22 percent of total households. Although the region is made up of 14 counties, 30 percent of all renter households live in Stearns. Stearns County, home to the major population hub of St. Cloud, has the largest renter population (18,360 households) and the highest percentage of renter households (31 percent) in the region.

The Central region contains approximately 17,725 renter households that earn less than 30 percent of area median income. However, the region contains just 13,947 units that are affordable to households at that income and just 7,057 units that are affordable and available. In total, 42 percent of renter households in the Central region pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, with cost burden affecting from 28 percent of renter households in Todd County to 51 percent in Benton County.

From 2000 to 2017, five Central counties (Benton, Chisago, Kanabec, Morrison and Pine) saw declines in renter median income, while other counties saw very modest increases — with the exceptions of Todd and Wadena counties, which saw 23 percent and 24 percent growth, respectively. Meanwhile,



**COUNTIES:** Benton, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, Wright

from 2000 to 2017 median gross rent rose from 1 percent (Benton County) to 33 percent (Wadena County).

## Owner-Occupied Homes

The Central region is home to more than 218,925 homeowner households, accounting for 78 percent of the region's population. Compared to all other regions in the state, the Central region has the highest rate of owner cost burden with 21 percent of all owner households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. The region contains six of the 10 counties with the highest percentages of owner cost burden; Pine County ranks as the worst in the state, with 28 percent of all homeowners experiencing cost burden. Other counties with high rates include Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Isanti, Benton, and Todd Counties, where 23 to 26 percent of homeowners are cost-burdened.

### Gap in affordable rental units for ELI households



**21%** of owner households in the Central region are cost burdened, the highest rate of any region in the state.

## CITY SPOTLIGHT: St. Cloud

The Central region contains the St. Cloud MSA, which spans Benton and Stearns counties. The city itself contains 25,847 households, with renter households accounting for nearly half of all households. Renter households have grown by 27 percent since 2000 in St. Cloud, and currently 45 percent experience cost burden, paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent. The median gross rent in the city was \$731 in 2017, rising by 10 percent since 2000. Between 2000 and 2017, renter income dropped by 6 percent and homeowner income dropped by 9 percent in the city.

The region also has the highest rate of severe owner housing cost burden; In eight of the 14 counties in the region, 9 percent of homeowners are paying more than half of their total household income on housing. In total, there are 16,920 owner households paying more than half of their income on housing.

In part, owner housing cost burden is high due to stagnant or declining owner income. Since 2000, median home values have seen the highest gains in Todd County (rising 41 percent) and the lowest in Sherburne County (rising by 3 percent). In contrast, median owner income fell as much as 10 percent in Pine County, and only rose as much as 8 percent in Cass County. In total,

median owner income fell in 36 percent of counties in the region. In Pine and Kanabec counties, where rates of owner cost burden are highest, the median owner income has dropped 8 and 9 percent, while home values have increased 22 and 15 percent, respectively.

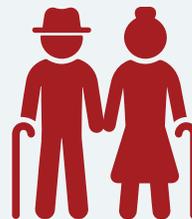
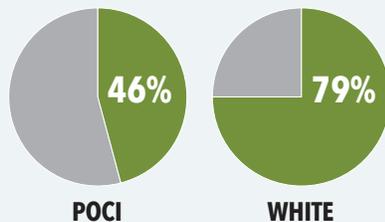
The growing gap between owner median income and median home value is particularly problematic for households of color. In 2017, only 46 percent of people of color and Indigenous (POCI) households owned their home compared to 79 percent of white households in the region.

## Senior Housing

There are 67,750 senior households in the region, accounting for nearly one-quarter of the total household population. In 2017, more than half of all senior renter households and a quarter of all senior owner households experienced housing cost burden. At these levels, the Central region is tied with the Twin Cities for the highest rate of senior owner cost burden in the state.

Over the next 20 years, the number of residents aged 65 and older is expected to increase by 77 percent, the highest rate of growth in the state. The region is expected to increase by 88,060 seniors, growing to a total of 202,435 individuals over the age of 65. With the senior population rapidly expanding, it will be critical that the region address extremely high rates of housing cost burden among senior households.

Less than half of POCI<sup>2</sup> households own their homes compared to 79% of white households.



By 2035, the number of seniors will **increase 77 percent in the region**, the highest rate of growth in the state.

<sup>2</sup> People of color and Indigenous

## Central Spotlight: A place to age — and stay independent

When Shirley owned a home in Baxter with Harlen, her husband of 61 years, it was more than a place for the couple to share a life together. To most of the neighborhood, it was Gramma’s Daycare.

“Women used to plan their pregnancies around my openings so they could bring their children there,” she said. Shirley provided daycare out of her home for 17 years. When Harlen — known as ‘Grandpa’ to the daycare kids — got sick, maintaining a home became too difficult. It was time to downsize.

“But it’s hard to find places for people who are handicapped,” Shirley said. “We had to give up a beautiful apartment across from Central Lakes college because Harlen couldn’t get up the stairs.”

Like Shirley and Harlen, many older Minnesotans are struggling to find a home that meets their needs. In the Central Region, where Baxter is located, the number of residents aged 65 or over is expected to increase by 77 percent over the next 20 years — the highest growth rate in the state.

Affordability is a major issue for seniors in the Central Region. Half of all senior rental households and a quarter of all senior owner households paid more than 30 percent of their income for housing in 2017. The region is tied with the Twin Cities for the highest rate of senior owner cost burden in the state.

Seniors who pay too much for housing often must sacrifice essentials like medications or transportation. And a 2015 Wilder report indicated that seniors are one of the fastest growing segments of people experiencing homelessness.



Home modifications and repairs, in-home care, and development of accessible and affordable townhomes and apartments are important strategies to ensure older residents stay healthy and stably housed.

Shirley found an affordable, accessible home at the Grand Oaks Court Townhomes in Baxter. Managed by Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, two-bedrooms rent at \$680 per month and three-bedrooms at \$775. The property accepts Section 8 vouchers and provides four units designated for people experiencing long-term homelessness.

Harlen passed away several years ago. For almost five years now, Shirley has lived at Grand Oaks Court. She’s got good neighbors and a patio to show off her green thumb. Most importantly, the accessible layout and affordable rents help Shirley stay independent.

“It gives me money left over so I can go in my car and take care of myself,” Shirley explained. “I don’t have to have anybody driving me to the doctor or taking me to the library or the grocery store. It makes me very independent, which I like. I’ve always been that way.”

*Photo: Harlen and Shirley*

## Housing Development and Subsidized Housing

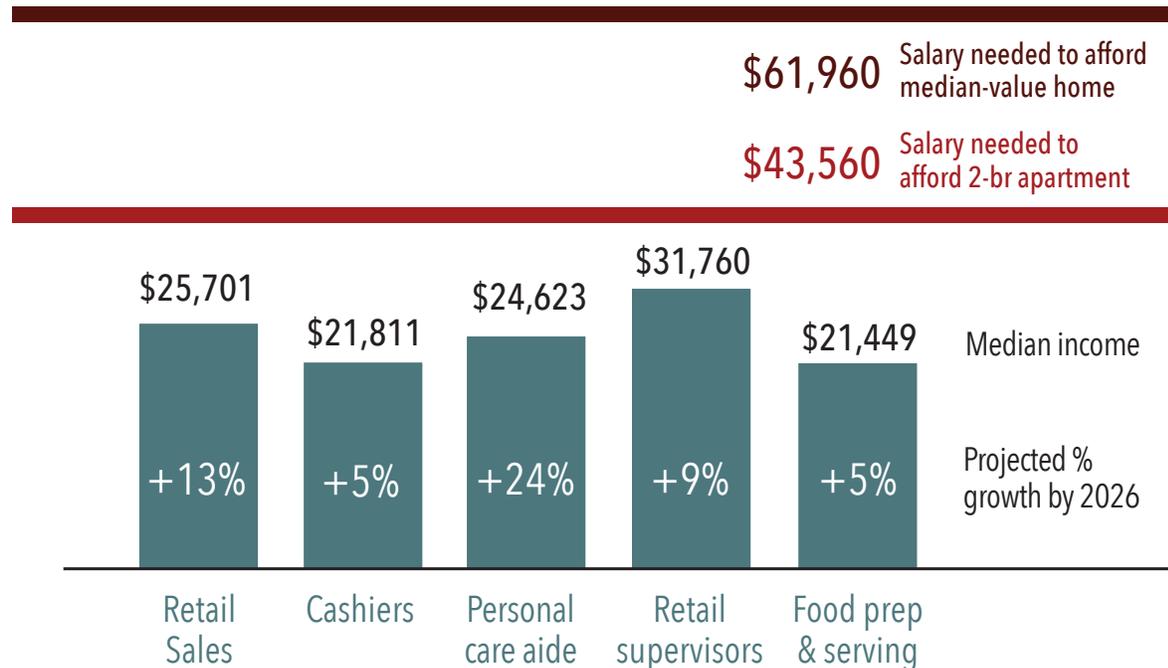
In 2017, the region added an additional 357 multifamily units and 3,125 single-family units, constituting the second highest amount of single family units after the Twin Cities region.

Also in 2017, there were approximately 7,200 subsidized units in the region, the third highest amount after the Twin Cities and Southern regions.

## Housing Affordability by Occupation

While median gross rent ranges from \$630 (Todd County) to \$963 (Sherburne County), the median renter income for the region ranges from \$24,363 (Pine County) to \$41,350 (Sherburne County). At these income levels, renter households can only afford to spend between \$609 and \$1,034 per month on housing. The top five in-demand jobs in the Central region currently include retail salespersons, personal care aides, first line supervisors of retail workers, cashiers, and food preparation and serving workers. These occupations contain salaries that range from \$20,595 (cashiers) to \$36,669 (first line supervisors of retail), meaning that these occupations can afford to spend from \$515 to \$917 monthly on rent.

## WAGES AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN CHISAGO COUNTY



### TOP IN-DEMAND JOBS, 2017