Housing Affordability in Blue Earth County

Housing is considered affordable if it consumes less than 30% of a household’s gross income. At higher levels, families must choose between housing and other basic needs and will struggle to weather financial setbacks. In Minnesota, housing costs continue to consume a large portion of families’ income. For many, extended economic hardship is taking a toll.

### Renters vs. Home Owners

| Household Income | Renters | | | Home Owners | | |
|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|
|                   | Number of Households Paying 30% or More in Rent | Percent of Households Paying 30% or More in Rent | Number of Households Paying 30% or More in Ownership Costs | Percent of Households Paying 30% or More in Ownership Costs |
| Less than $20,000 | 2,633 | 83.1% | 994 | 70.0% |
| $20,000 – $34,999 | 820 | 51.9% | 689 | 33.8% |
| $35,000 – $49,999 | 68 | 8.4% | 998 | 37.9% |
| $50,000 and over | 117 | 8.2% | 1,186 | 11.9% |
| All Income Levels | 3,638 | 50.2% | 3,867 | 24.1% |

The table above shows the number and percent of households at different income levels that pay 30% or more of household income for rental or ownership costs. It illustrates that the burden of housing costs weighs more heavily on lower-income families.\(^1\)

Even before the current economic downturn, housing needs were severe. In 2008, 1 in 8 Minnesotans spent at least half of their income on housing, up from 1 in 15 in 2000. Minnesota experienced the fastest increase of extremely cost burdened households of any state in the nation during this time period.\(^2\)

In 2006-2008, about 69% of Blue Earth County residents owned their home and 31% were renters. Of these, approximately 24.1% of homeowners and 50.2% of renters in Blue Earth County spent 30% or more of their household income on housing.\(^3\)
Lower-income households face extreme affordability challenges.

The chart below compares median earnings across different occupations to the income required to afford housing.4

Foreclosures in Minnesota
- From 2005-2009 in Blue Earth County, there were 598 foreclosures. Of these, 144 occurred in 2009.10
- Almost 8% of primary mortgages in Minnesota were delinquent by 60 days or more by early 2010.11
- The most common reason people sought foreclosure counseling in 2009 was loss or reduction of income.12

Homelessness in Minnesota
- On a single day in 2009, 483 people were known to be homeless in the Southeast Region, including 278 children and youth through age 21.13
- An estimated 13,100 Minnesotans are homeless on any given night. The number of homeless people identified increased by 25% from 2006 to 2009.14
- The largest increase in homelessness from 2006 to 2009 was among young adults (18-21). Youth aged 12-21 saw the largest increase in likelihood of being turned away from a shelter.15

Extreme Cost Burden
- Approximately 26% of renter households pay at least half of their income on housing in Blue Earth County.16
- For homeowner households in Blue Earth County, 7% pay at least half of their income on housing.17

HOUSING COSTS. In Blue Earth County, a median-priced home cost $148,950 in 2009, excluding foreclosures. The fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment was $682 per month in 2010. Since 2001, home prices have increased by 8%, and the fair market rent has increased by 0.4%, after adjusting for inflation.5

INCOME. In Blue Earth County, a family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of $52,227 to afford the basic cost of living.6 The median household income for Blue Earth County was $49,098 in 2008.7

JOBS. 43% of jobs in Blue Earth County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.8 In April 2010, the unemployment rate in Blue Earth County was 5.8%, compared to 6.5% in 2009 and 3.2% in 2005.9