Housing Affordability in Meeker 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. For 2009, housing costs continue to consume a large portion of families’ income, with substantial unemployment threatening Minnesotans.

| 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 | 592     | 85.2%           | 551              | 71.4%           |
| $20,000 - $34,999| 132     | 42.3%           | 528              | 40.5%           |
| $35,000 - $49,999| 43      | 22.6%           | 379              | 31.6%           |
| $50,000 and over | 6       | 2.3%            | 617              | 14.5%           |
| All Income Levels| 773     | 45.9%           | 2,075            | 27.5%           |

The table above shows the number and percent of households in different income brackets 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 2007, 1 in 8 households 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 2005-2007, about 81.8% of Meeker County residents owned their home and 18.2% were renters. Of these, approximately 27.5% of homeowners and 45.9% of renters in Meeker 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

**Housing Affordability by Occupation, Meeker County**

**Income**. In Meeker County, a family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of $52,128 to afford the basic cost of living.6 The median household income for Meeker County was $49,309 in 2007.7

**Jobs.** 38% of jobs in Meeker County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.8 The average unemployment rate in Meeker County was 11.5% in March, 2009, up from 7.0% in March 2006.9

**Housing Costs.** In Meeker County, a median-priced home cost $138,500 in 2008, and the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment was $599 per month in 2009. Since 2001, home prices have increased by 60.7%, and the fair market rent has increased by 25.3%.3

**Homelessness in Minnesota**

- On a single day in 2006, 67 people were sheltered in the Southwest Region, including 25 children.12
- Roughly 9,200 Minnesotans are homeless and 7,700 are precariously housed in temporary or unstable housing. 38% are children and youth.13
- 39% of Minnesota’s homeless population cite the inability to afford housing as a primary reason for leaving previous housing.14

**Extreme Cost Burden**

- Approximately 16.8% of renter households pay at least half of their income on housing in Meeker County.15
- For homeowner households in Meeker County, 8.9% pay at least half of their income on housing.16