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.

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 2000, about 81.0% of Sibley County residents owned their home and 19.0% were renters. Of these, approximately 13.4% of homeowners and 26.2% of renters in Sibley 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, Sibley County**

- **Needed to own median home**
- **Needed to rent 2BR apartment**

**Housing Costs.** In Sibley County, a median-priced home cost $118,900 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 53.3% and the fair market rent has increased by 44.0%.5

**Income.** In Sibley County, a family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of $51,876 to afford the basic cost of living.6 The median household income for Sibley County was $49,918 in 2007.7

**Jobs.** 37% of jobs in Sibley County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.8 The average unemployment rate in Sibley County was 9.8% in March, 2009, up from 5.5% in March 2006.9

**Foreclosures in Minnesota**
- In Sibley County in 2008, there were about 75 foreclosures, a 38.9% increase from 2007.10
- Left unaddressed, abandoned foreclosed properties destabilize neighborhoods, erode the local tax base and drive up the costs of municipal services.
- Of homeowners seeking foreclosure counseling in 2008, three-quarters were considered to be low- and moderate-income. Half experienced a reduction of income before seeking counseling. 60% had prime mortgages.11

**Homelessness in Minnesota**
- On a single day in 2006, 342 people were sheltered in the Southeast Region, including 181 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 9.0% of renter households pay at least half of their income on housing Sibley County.15
- For homeowner households in Sibley County, 4.0% pay at least half of their income on housing.16