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.

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.

Even before the current economic downturn, housing needs were severe. In 2008, 1 in 8 Minnesota 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.

In 2000, about 70% of Stevens County residents owned their home and 30% were renters. Of these, approximately 13.5% of homeowners and 36.7% of renters in Stevens County spent 30% or more of their household income on housing.
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, Stevens County**

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

**Foreclosures in Minnesota**
- From 2005-2009 in Stevens County, there were 21 foreclosures. Of these, 9 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, 358 people were known to be homeless in the West Central Region, including 132 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 19% of renter households pay at least half of their income on housing in Stevens County.16
- For homeowner households in Stevens County, 5% pay at least half of their income on housing.17