

Housing Affordability in Stearns County

2011



Minnesota Housing Partnership
Homes for all.

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 such as food or medicine.

For low-and moderate-income Minnesotans, extended economic hardship is a reality.

The foreclosure crisis has left many homeowners owing more than their home is worth, while rents continue to rise.

Households Paying 30% or More of their Income for Housing ¹				
Household Income	RENTERS		HOMEOWNERS	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than \$20,000	4,990	94%	3,466	74%
\$20,000 – \$34,999	2,678	55%	2,101	36%
\$35,000 – \$49,999	61	2%	1,803	32%
\$50,000 and over	0	0%	2,475	10%
All income levels	7,729	51%	9,845	24%

The burden of housing costs weighs more heavily on lower-income families, as the table shows. Renters are also more likely to face unaffordable housing costs.

RECESSION TAKES A TOLL. Even before the Great Recession, housing burden had increased substantially. Then from just 2007 to 2009, the number of Minnesota households paying more than HALF their income for housing grew by 9% (an increase of nearly 24,000 households) while the number of all Minnesota households increased by only 1%. **In 2009 the cost of housing consumed more than half of income for almost 1 in 7 Minnesota households, leaving many unable to pay for transportation, food, or other basic needs.**² In 2000, only 1 in 12 households experienced this level of cost burden.³

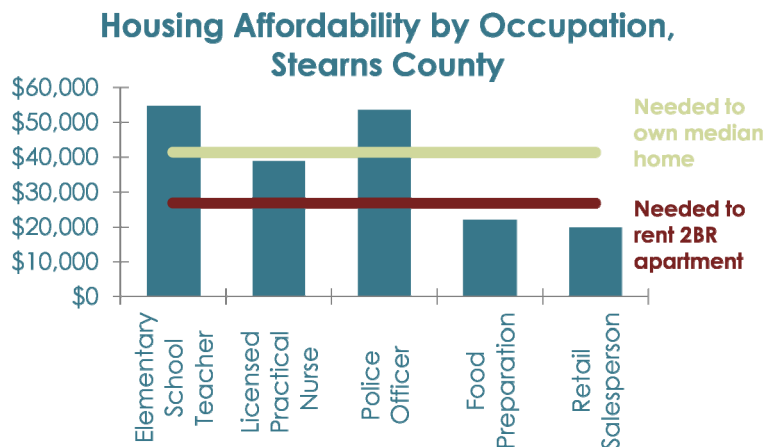
A SHIFT TO RENTING. In 2010, about 72% of Stearns County households owned their home and 28% were renters.⁴ With the foreclosure crisis, rental is becoming increasingly important. Statewide, home ownership rates have fallen to 73%, a significant drop since peaking at 76% in 2006.⁵ Minnesota homeowners owned an estimated 21,000 fewer homes in 2009 than in 2006.⁶



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Lower-income households face extreme affordability challenges.

The chart below compares median earnings across different occupations to the income required to afford housing.⁷



OWNER COSTS AND EQUITY. In Stearns County, approximately 9% of homeowner households pay at least half of their income on housing.⁸ In addition,

- The median sale price for homes (excluding foreclosures) was \$142,500 in 2010 in the county. Since 2006, median home prices have decreased by 17%, after adjusting for inflation. Compared to 2000-1, real median home prices have increased by 1%.⁹
- Statewide, a drop in home prices as a result of the foreclosure crisis and recession has left many owing more on their home than it is worth.
- The median income for homeowners is \$60,169.¹⁰

AFFORDABILITY FOR RENTERS. Approximately 29% of renter households now pay at least half of their income for housing in Stearns County.¹¹ In addition,

- The fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in 2011 is \$671 per month.¹² Since 2000, the fair market rent has increased by 3%, after adjusting for inflation.¹³
- In most Minnesota counties, renter incomes have fallen. According to the most recent data available, in Stearns County, real renter incomes have fallen by 12% since 1999.¹⁴
- The median income for renters is \$27,361.¹⁵

Foreclosures in Minnesota

- From 2005-2010 in Stearns County there were 2,170 foreclosures. Of these, 512 occurred in 2010.¹⁶
- About 6% of primary mortgages in Minnesota were delinquent by 60 days or more in early 2011.¹⁷
- The most common reason people sought foreclosure counseling in 2010 was loss or reduction of income.¹⁸

Homelessness in Minnesota

- On a single day in 2009, 482 people were known to be homeless in the Central Region, including 208 children and youth through age 21.¹⁹
- An estimated 13,100 Minnesotans are homeless on any given night.
- The number of homeless people identified increased 25% from 2006 to 2009.²⁰

Unemployment, Jobs, and Poverty

- The average unemployment rate in Stearns County was 6.2% in May, 2011, up from 4.0% in May, 2007, prior to the Great Recession.²¹
- Of the available jobs in Stearns County and counties nearby, 46% pay less than the wage required to afford basic needs.²²
- In 2009, 13% of people in Stearns County were living in poverty. Children face a poverty rate of 12%.²³

SOURCES: 1 American Community Survey (ACS) 2009. 2 Ibid. 3 US Census 2000. 4 US Census 2010. 5 ACS 2006 & US Census 2010. 6 ACS 2006 & 2009. 7 OES Wage Data by economic development region, MN DEED, 4th quarter, 2010; HUD Fair Market Rent (FMR), 2011; MN Dept of Revenue Sales Ratio Study, 2009-10. 8 ACS 2009. 9 MN Dept of Revenue Sales Ratio Study 2000-1, 2005-6, & 2009-10. 10 ACS 2009. 11 Ibid. 12 HUD FMR, 2011. 13 HUD FMR 2000 & 2011. 14 US Census 2000, ACS 2009. 15 ACS 2009. 16 HousingLink, 2005-2010. 17 National Delinquency Survey, Mortgage Bankers' Association, Q1 2011. 18 MN Home Ownership Center, 2011. 19 Wilder Research Center, 2010. 20 Ibid. 21 Local Area Unemployment Statistics, MN DEED (unadjusted). 22 The Cost of Living in Minnesota, JOBS NOW Coalition, 2009. 23 Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, 2009.