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.

**Housing Affordability in Washington County 2011**

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.

**Households Paying 30% or More of their Income for Housing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>RENTERS</th>
<th>HOMEOWNERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20,000</td>
<td>3,597</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 – $34,999</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 – $49,999</td>
<td>1,751</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 and over</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All income levels</td>
<td>7,332</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

**A SHIFT TO RENTING.** In 2010, about 83% of Washington County households owned their home and 17% were renters. 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. Minnesota homeowners owned an estimated 21,000 fewer homes in 2009 than in 2006.
Lower-income households face extreme affordability challenges.

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

**Foreclosures in Minnesota**
- From 2005-2010 in Washington County there were 5,301 foreclosures. Of these, 1,253 occurred in 2010.\(^6\)
- About 6% of primary mortgages in Minnesota were delinquent by 60 days or more in early 2011.\(^7\)
- The most common reason people sought foreclosure counseling in 2010 was loss or reduction of income.\(^8\)

**Homelessness in Minnesota**
- On a single day in 2009, 167 people were known to be homeless in the Washington/Scott/Carver County Region, including 103 children and youth through age 21.\(^9\)
- An estimated 13,100 Minnesotans are homeless on any given night.
- The number of homeless people identified increased 25% from 2006 to 2009.\(^10\)

**Unemployment, Jobs, and Poverty**
- The average unemployment rate in Washington County was 6.1% in May, 2011, up from 3.8% in May, 2007, prior to the Great Recession.\(^11\)
- Of the available jobs in Washington County and counties nearby, 36% pay less than the wage required to afford basic needs.\(^12\)
- In 2009, 6% of people in Washington County were living in poverty. Children face a poverty rate of 7%.\(^13\)