Access to safe, affordable homes builds a strong foundation for families and communities. But too many Minnesotans lack good housing options.

Mirroring the state trend, the cost of rent continues to rise while renter income is declining, making it increasingly challenging for renters to make ends meet.

Income for families who own their homes is not rising nearly as quickly as home values – and homeownership among young families is declining.

Countywide, 13,896 households pay more than 30 percent of their income toward housing costs, putting them at risk of being unable to afford basic needs like groceries, clothes, prescriptions and transportation. This includes 49% of seniors who rent and more than 74% of owners and 87% of renters who earn less than $20,000 per year.

### Renters

- **Median rent, 2000:** $651
- **Median rent, 2015:** $742 (up 14%)
- **Median renter income, 2000:** $33,374
- **Median renter income, 2015:** $31,784 (down 5%)
- **Fair market rent for 2-bedroom apartment:** $735
- **Median-income renter can afford:** $795

### Owners

- **Median home value, 2000:** $140,530
- **Median home value, 2015:** $166,400 (up 18%)
- **Median owner income, 2000:** $69,192
- **Median owner income, 2015:** $69,976 (up 1%)
- **Change in homeownership rate for households younger than 35 years old, 2000-2015:** -19%

### Cost Burden

- **Total # cost burdened RENTER households:** 7,286
- **Total # cost burdened OWNER households:** 6,610
- **Total # cost burdened SENIOR households:** 3,525

### Percentages

- **87%** of households pay more than 30% of their income toward housing costs.
- **74%** of renters and **63%** of owners fall into this category.
WAGES: Housing remains a challenge even for workers who are fully employed. The median earnings for most of the top in-demand and high-growth jobs do not cover housing costs at an affordable level. Those working at the median wage – and especially those earning the minimum wage – cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment or the mortgage for a median-value home.

Housing Stock: While a significant portion of the rental and owner-occupied housing is aging (built before 1960), new construction is not keeping up with demand. Of particular concern is the gap between the number of available units for extremely low income households – and the number of people who need them.

Wages & housing affordability for top in-demand jobs in Stearns County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual median income</th>
<th>Food prep &amp; serving</th>
<th>Cashier</th>
<th>Retail sales</th>
<th>Personal care aide</th>
<th>Nursing assistant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$20K</td>
<td>$18,688</td>
<td>$19,135</td>
<td>$21,549</td>
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<td>$60K</td>
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</tbody>
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- Salary needed to afford median-value home: $49,920
- Salary needed to afford two-bedroom apartment: $26,460

New job openings in Central Planning Area by 2024: 97,320
County median household income: $56,336
Hours / week minimum wage employee must work to afford a two-bedroom apartment: 54

HOMELESSNESS: Across the state, homelessness has declined since 2012, but too many families, seniors and children in the Central region are still suffering the devastating consequences of having no place to call home.

- Number of homeless children in 2015: 787
- Percentage change in homelessness 2012-2015: 30%
- Number of homeless children: 272
- Number of homeless seniors: 61