Affordable Housing in Cass County

What is Affordable Housing?

Housing is considered affordable if it consumes 30% or less of a household’s gross income. Generally, when households spend more than 30% of their income to meet housing costs, they do not have enough income to meet other basic needs or weather financial setbacks.

The Supply of Affordable Housing Lags Demand

The current and projected unmet affordable housing need through the year 2010 in Cass County is conservatively estimated at 3,239 low-income households.¹

Lower Income Households Face Extreme Affordability Challenges

The table below shows the number and percent of households in different income brackets that pay over 30% of household income for rental or ownership costs. It illustrates that households with lower incomes spend more of their income on housing costs than those with higher incomes. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the median household income for Cass County was $34,332.

Rental

- A household would need to earn $20,760 to afford the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment ($519/mo).³
- A minimum wage worker would need to work 65 hours per week to afford Cass County’s fair market rent.⁵
- Approximately 30% of renters in Cass County pay over 30% of their household income on housing, and 15% of renters pay over 50%.⁶

Homeownership

- Between 1990 and 2000 home prices in Cass County rose 64% while incomes rose 36%.⁴
- A household would need to earn $46,282 to afford the median priced home ($146,045) in Cass County.⁶
- Approximately 21% of homeowners in Cass County spend over 30% of their household income on housing, and 8% spend over 50%.⁸

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Number of Households Paying Over 30% in Rent</th>
<th>Percent of Households Paying Over 30% in Rent</th>
<th>Number of Households Paying Over 30% for Ownership Costs</th>
<th>Percent of Households Paying Over 30% for Ownership Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $19,999</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$34,999</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000-$49,999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86% of Cass County residents own their home and 14% are renters.²
Homelessness in the Central Region

A one-day survey of people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota estimates that 8,800 Minnesotans are homeless and over 11,000 are precariously housed in temporary or unstable housing.9 Thirty-nine percent (39%) of these are children and youth.10

• On August 26, 2004, 327 people were sheltered in the Central Region, and an additional 39 were turned away because the shelters were full.11

The gap between the cost of housing and what people can afford is a major cause of homelessness.

• One-third of Minnesota’s homeless population cite the inability to afford housing cost as the primary reason for leaving previous housing.12

• Forty percent (40%) report being on the waiting list for Section 8, or other subsidized housing, while 16% are unable to get on the list because it is closed. The median wait time on a subsidized housing list exceeds 10 months.13

In 2003, 30% of all adults experiencing homelessness in Minnesota reported income from work, with 13% working full time.14

• 29% of surveyed adults experiencing homelessness in the Central Region are employed.15

• Of the adults experiencing homelessness in the Central Region who report being employed, 52% are employed full time.16

Other Important Cass County Housing Facts

• 14% of all Cass County residents and 18% of children under 18 live in poverty.17

• Cass County’s population increased by 6% between 2000 and 2005.18

• The average annual unemployment rate in Cass County was 6% in 2005.19

• A family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of $43,836 to afford the basic cost of living in Cass County. 42% of jobs in Cass County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.20

Sources:


For more information about this fact sheet or the Minnesota Housing Partnership, call (651) 649-1710 or email info@mhponline.org, or visit our website at www.mhponline.org.