

Housing Affordability in St. Louis County

May 2009



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 and will struggle to weather financial setbacks. For 2009, housing costs continue to consume a large portion of families' income, with substantial unemployment threatening Minnesotans.

Renters

Home Owners

Household Income	Number of Households Paying 30% or More in Rent	Percent of Households Paying 30% or More in Rent	Number of Households Paying 30% or More in Ownership Costs	Percent of Households Paying 30% or More in Ownership Costs
Less than \$20,000	8,743	80.6%	5,349	68.7%
\$20,000 – \$34,999	2,372	43.9%	3,318	29.9%
\$35,000 – \$49,999	1,007	22.9%	2,887	29.6%
\$50,000 and over	0	0.0%	3,171	9.5%
All Income Levels	12,122	49.0%	14,725	23.7%

The table above shows the number and percent of households in different income brackets 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.**¹

Even before the current economic downturn, housing needs were severe. In 2007, 1 in 8 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.**²

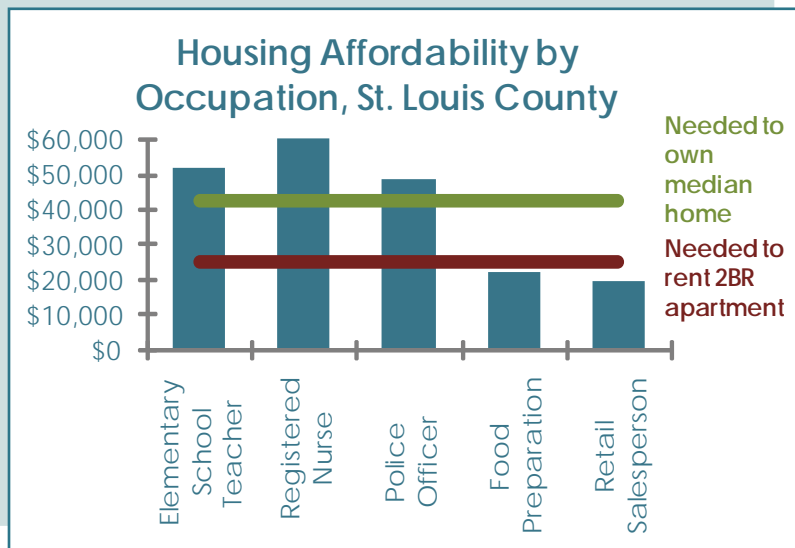
In 2007, about 71.5% of St. Louis County residents owned their home and 28.5% were renters. Of these, approximately 23.7% of homeowners and 49.0% of renters in St. Louis County spent 30% or more of their household income on housing.³



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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.⁴



HOUSING COSTS. In St. Louis County, a median-priced home cost \$132,900 in 2008, and the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment was \$621 per month in 2009. Since 2001, home prices have increased by 56.5%, and the fair market rent has increased by 31.8%.⁵

INCOME. In St. Louis County, a family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of \$49,524 to afford the basic cost of living.⁶ The median household income for St. Louis County was \$42,698 in 2007.⁷

JOBS. 34% of jobs in St. Louis County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.⁸ The average unemployment rate in St. Louis County was 10.1% in March, 2009, up from 5.8% in March 2006.⁹

SOURCES: 1 American Community Survey, 2007. 2 Ibid. 3 Ibid. 4 OES Wage Data by economic development region, MN DEED, 4th quarter, 2008; HUD Fair Market Rents, 2009; MN Department of Revenue Sales Ratio Study, 2007-8. 5 MN Dept of Revenue Sales Ratio Study 2000-1 & 2007-8; HUD Fair Market Rents, 2001 & 2009. Not adjusted for inflation. 6 The Cost of Living in Minnesota Family Wage & Budget Calculator, JOBS NOW Coalition, 2009. 7 Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, 2007. 8 The Cost of Living in Minnesota, JOBS NOW Coalition, 2007. 9 Local Area Unemployment Statistics, MN DEED, March 2009. 10 Minnesota Foreclosure Supplement, 2008, HousingLink, 2009. 11 2008 Foreclosure Counseling Program Report, Minnesota Home Ownership Center, April 2009. 12 Wilder Research Center, 2007. 13 Ibid. 14 Ibid. 15 American Community Survey, 2007. 16 Ibid.

Foreclosures in Minnesota

- In St. Louis County in 2008, there were about 476 foreclosures, a 32.6% increase from 2007.¹⁰
- Left unaddressed, abandoned foreclosed properties destabilize neighborhoods, erode the local tax base and drive up the costs of municipal services.
- Of homeowners seeking foreclosure counseling in 2008, three-quarters were considered to be low- and moderate-income. Half experienced a reduction of income before seeking counseling. 60% had prime mortgages.¹¹

Homelessness in Minnesota

- On a single day in 2006, 380 people were sheltered in the St. Louis County Region, including 176 children.¹²
- Roughly 9,200 Minnesotans are homeless and 7,700 are precariously housed in temporary or unstable housing. 38% are children and youth.¹³
- 39% of Minnesota's homeless population cite the inability to afford housing as a primary reason for leaving previous housing.¹⁴

Extreme Cost Burden

- Approximately 22.5% of renter households pay at least half of their income on housing in St. Louis County.¹⁵
- For homeowner households in St. Louis County, 8.2% pay at least half of their income on housing.¹⁶