

# Housing Affordability in Traverse County

May 2009

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.

Minnesota  
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Homes for all.



## 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	112	62.2%	109	39.8%
\$20,000 – \$34,999	4	5.0%	28	11.8%
\$35,000 – \$49,999	0	0.0%	6	2.6%
\$50,000 and over	0	0.0%	3	1.1%
All Income Levels	116	35.7%	146	14.5%

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.**<sup>1</sup>

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.**<sup>2</sup>

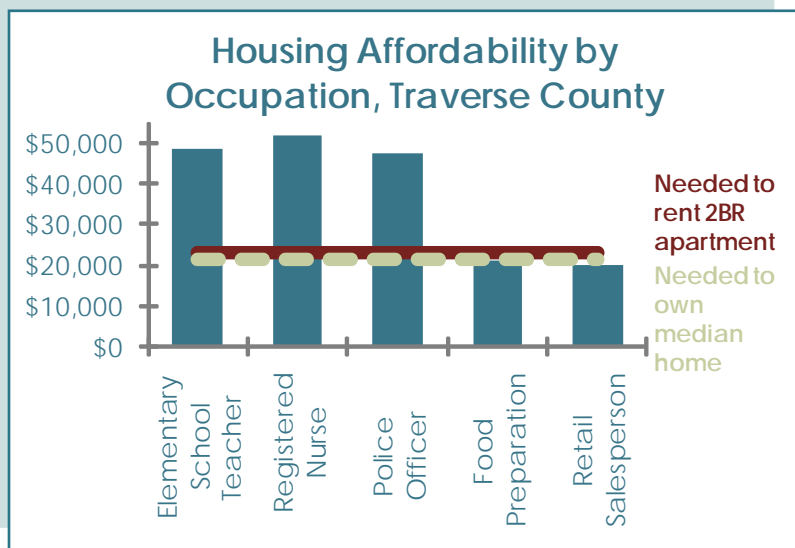
In 2000, about 81.0% of Traverse County residents owned their home and 19.0% were renters. Of these, approximately 14.5% of homeowners and 35.7% of renters in Traverse County spent 30% or more of their household income on housing.<sup>3</sup>



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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.<sup>4</sup>



**HOUSING COSTS.** In Traverse County, a median-priced home cost \$66,500 in 2008, and the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment was \$577 per month in 2009. Since 2001, home prices have increased by 168.7%, and the fair market rent has increased by 38.7%.<sup>5</sup>

**INCOME.** In Traverse County, a family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of \$41,664 to afford the basic cost of living.<sup>6</sup> The median household income for Traverse County was \$42,342 in 2007.<sup>7</sup>

**JOBS.** 39% of jobs in Traverse County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.<sup>8</sup> The average unemployment rate in Traverse County was 9.3% in March, 2009, up from 4.8% in March 2006.<sup>9</sup>

**SOURCES:** 1 US Decennial Census, 2000. 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 US Decennial Census, 2000. 16 Ibid.

## Foreclosures in Minnesota

- In Traverse County in 2008, there were about 4 foreclosures, a 33.3% increase from 2007.<sup>10</sup>
- 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.<sup>11</sup>

## Homelessness in Minnesota

- On a single day in 2006, 175 people were sheltered in the West Central Region, including 59 children.<sup>12</sup>
- Roughly 9,200 Minnesotans are homeless and 7,700 are precariously housed in temporary or unstable housing. 38% are children and youth.<sup>13</sup>
- 39% of Minnesota's homeless population cite the inability to afford housing as a primary reason for leaving previous housing.<sup>14</sup>

## Extreme Cost Burden

- Approximately 15.0% of renter households pay at least half of their income on housing in Traverse County.<sup>15</sup>
- For homeowner households in Traverse County, 6.0% pay at least half of their income on housing.<sup>16</sup>