The demand for affordable housing exceeds supply.

The unmet affordable housing need through the year 2010 in Wadena County is conservatively estimated at 875 low-income households. Meanwhile, the number of households in the state spending more than half of their income on housing increased from 1 in 15 in 2000 to 1 in 8 in 2006. Minnesota experienced the fastest increase of extremely cost burdened households of any state in the nation during this time period.

The table above 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 the burden of housing costs weighs more heavily on lower-income families.

About 78% of Wadena County residents own their home and 22% are renters.

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.

**WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?**

Housing is considered affordable if it consumes 30% or less of a household’s gross income.
Lower-income households face extreme affordability challenges.

The chart below compares the median earnings of different workers to the income required for affordable housing.\(^5\) The median household income for Wadena County was $33,769 in 2006.\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School Teacher</td>
<td>$91,250</td>
<td>$566 per month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salesperson</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Wadena County, a median-priced home is $91,250, and the fair market rent for a two bedroom apartment is $566 per month. Since 2000, home prices have increased by 67.4% and fair market rent has increased by 28.1%.\(^7\)

Approximately 16% of homeowners and 34% of renters in Wadena County spend over 30% of their household income on housing.\(^8\)

In Wadena County, a family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of $42,240 to afford the basic cost of living.\(^9\)

41% of jobs in Wadena County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.\(^10\)

The average annual unemployment rate in Wadena County was 6.6% in 2007.\(^11\)

**Foreclosures in Minnesota**

- In Wadena County in 2007, there were about 18 foreclosures, a 21% decrease from 2005.\(^12\)
- Left unaddressed, abandoned foreclosed properties destabilize neighborhoods, erode the local tax base and drive up the costs of municipal services.

**Homelessness in Minnesota**

- In 2006, 28% of all adults experiencing homelessness in Minnesota reported income from work, with 12% working full time.\(^13\)
- 39% of Minnesota’s homeless population cite the inability to afford housing as a primary reason for leaving previous housing.\(^14\)
- Roughly 9,200 Minnesotans are homeless and 7,700 are precariously housed in temporary or unstable housing. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of these are children and youth.\(^15\)
- On a single day in 2006, 354 people were sheltered in the Central Region, including 101 children.\(^16\)

**Extreme Cost Burden**

- Approximately 16% of renter households pay over 50% of their income on housing in Wadena County.\(^17\)
- For homeowner households in Wadena, 5% pay over 50% of their income on housing.\(^18\)

**Sources:**
4. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
18. Ibid.