

## CHAPTER 2 - HOUSING

As required by Wisconsin Statutes Sec 66.1001(2)(b), the Housing element of this plan will address objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs that local units of government in the MRRPC Region can employ to achieve a housing supply that is adequate for the housing needs of residents with various levels of income, mobility, and independence. This element will describe the age, structural, value, and occupancy characteristics of housing in the Region. The element will present goals and objectives that promote the development or redevelopment of properties for low- and moderate-income housing, and the rehabilitation of existing housing stock. This element also examines existing and projected housing units in the Region, building permit trends, availability of complete plumbing and kitchen facilities, household income and how it relates to housing affordability, and subsidized housing.



### HOUSING UNITS AND PROJECTIONS

From 1970 to 2010, according to the US Census, the number of housing units nationwide nearly doubled, with a 91.7% increase (see Table 2.1). The state of Wisconsin saw a more modest increase of 78.2% in that time, and the MRRPC Region was only slightly ahead of the state's rate, at 79.6%. Pierce County had the highest rate of housing increase (106.1%) during that period, and Buffalo County had the lowest (45.0%). These patterns are roughly the same during the 20-year periods of 1970-1990 and 1990-2010, with Buffalo County having the lowest county rate of housing increase, the national rate being higher than the State and Region, and the State and Regional rates being fairly similar to each other. However, La Crosse County had the highest rate of increase (50.3%) from 1970 to 1990; and between 1990 and 2010, the housing growth rate for the nation (28.8%) had decreased to be comparable to the state's (27.7%) and the MRRPC Region's (28.2%).

In the coming decades housing increases in the State, Region and Nation are projected to be more moderate than in the period from 1970 to 2010 (see Table 2.1). The Region is expected to see an increase rate of only 10.8% between 2010 and 2020, and the State is expected to increase its housing at a rate of only 10.6% during that same decade. This is a result of the intertwined housing and financial crises of the late-2000s, which precipitated the Great Recession, and whose long-term effects are still being felt in real-estate markets and commercial and residential lending. During the period from 2010 to 2020, Pierce County is expected to continue its highest rate of growth (17.3%) in the Region. However, several counties in the Region are expected to see increases in single digits during this period; Crawford County (5%) and Vernon County (7%).

Overall, the growth in housing from 2010 to 2034 is expected to be at lower rates than it was in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The State is expected to have a housing growth rate of 25.5% during that period, and the MRRPC Region is expected to see a 26% growth rate. Pierce County is expected to have the highest growth rate (41%) from 2010 to 2034, followed by Monroe County (27%), Jackson County (26.8%) and Trempealeau County (25.8%) while Crawford County is expected to see only a 12% growth rate.

**Table 2.1 Housing Trends and Projections**

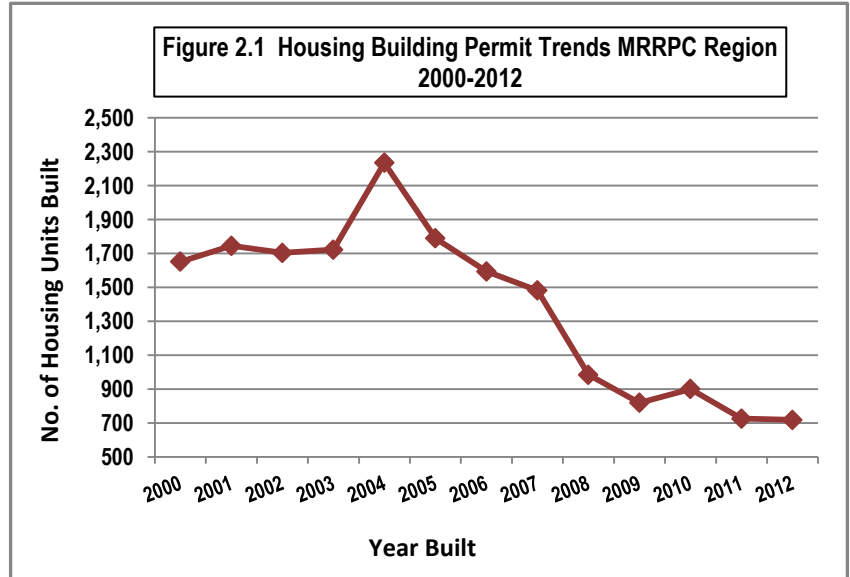
	Housing Units <sup>(1)</sup>					% Chg 70-00	% Chg 00-10	Housing Projections			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010			2020 <sup>(2)</sup>	2030 <sup>(2)</sup>	2034 <sup>(2)</sup>	% Chg 10-34
Buffalo	4,597	5,478	5,586	6,098	6,664	32.65	9.28	7,334	8,004	8,272	24.13
Crawford	5,207	6,770	7,315	8,480	8,802	62.86	3.80	9,272	9,742	9,930	12.82
Jackson	5,649	6,975	7,627	8,029	9,727	42.13	21.15	10,815	11,902	12,337	26.83
La Crosse	25,433	33,277	38,227	43,480	48,402	70.96	11.32	53,547	58,692	60,750	25.51
Monroe	10,168	12,741	14,135	16,672	19,204	63.97	15.19	21,365	23,526	24,390	27.00
Pepin	2,357	2,881	2,919	3,036	3,579	28.81	17.89	3,934	4,289	4,431	23.81
Pierce	7,826	10,354	11,536	13,493	16,132	72.41	19.56	18,918	21,704	22,818	41.45
Trempealeau	7,639	9,744	10,097	11,482	12,619	50.31	9.90	13,972	15,324	15,865	25.72
Vernon	8,448	10,141	10,830	12,416	13,720	46.97	10.50	14,748	15,777	16,188	17.99
<b>Region</b>	<b>77,324</b>	<b>98,361</b>	<b>108,272</b>	<b>123,186</b>	<b>138,849</b>	<b>59.31</b>	<b>12.71</b>	<b>153,904</b>	<b>168,959</b>	<b>174,981</b>	<b>26.02</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>1,472,332</b>	<b>1,863,897</b>	<b>2,055,676</b>	<b>2,321,144</b>	<b>2,624,358</b>	<b>57.65</b>	<b>13.06</b>	<b>2,903,228</b>	<b>3,182,098</b>	<b>3,293,646</b>	<b>25.50</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>68,704,315</b>	<b>88,410,627</b>	<b>102,263,678</b>	<b>115,904,641</b>	<b>131,704,730</b>	<b>68.70</b>	<b>13.63</b>	<b>146,600,728</b>	<b>161,496,725</b>	<b>167,455,124</b>	<b>27.14</b>

(1) U.S. Dept of Commerce-Bureau of the Census; (2) Calculated Using Housing Building Permit Trends U.S. Census Bureau 2000-2012 - prepared by MRRPC

### HOUSING BUILDING PERMIT TRENDS BY COUNTY 2000 – 2010

In the decade between 2000 and 2010, permit activity for housing peaked in the Region in 2004, when there were 1,864 buildings constructed, and 2,234 units (see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.1). The number of buildings and units declined steadily each year after that, with the number of units slightly increasing from 2009 to 2010 and then declining again in 2011 and 2012. In 2010, the Region had 686 building permits and 900 unit permits. This, of course, reflects the tumult in the national housing market in the last half of the decade, generating high foreclosure activity. During this period homebuyers were scarcer than they had been in the first half of the decade, meaning that fewer new housing starts. The slight increase in housing unit building permits in 2010 suggests an increase in new multi-unit dwellings, though these did not increase their share of the Region's housing mix in 2011 (see Table 2.5).

In the peak year of 2004, La Crosse County had the highest number of building permits (500 for buildings, 727 for units), and Pepin County had the smallest (48 building and 53 unit). By 2010, those two counties were ranked the same, but both had declined by more than half: La Crosse had 223 building and 287 unit permits, while Pepin had 17 building and 18 unit permits. Housing construction is mostly dependent on success of people becoming home buyers through income earned in other sectors of the economy. With manufacturing, agriculture, and health care industries being major drivers of the regional economy, construction also benefits and is also one of the top employment sectors in the region driven largely by housing.



**Table 2.2 Housing Building Permit Trends 2000-2012 (Estimates with Imputation) <sup>(1)</sup>**

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation	
	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units
Buffalo	75	81	82	91	92	100	100	122	91	104	58	61	56	56
Crawford	54	57	46	47	48	48	44	44	60	60	49	49	41	41
Jackson	86	89	99	103	110	111	129	130	171	171	149	149	118	118
La Crosse	452	571	473	578	454	545	483	584	500	727	469	521	413	558
Monroe	191	235	200	233	169	196	173	199	228	262	226	262	193	226
Pepin	44	46	32	64	41	43	38	42	48	53	39	41	40	42
Pierce	294	309	334	373	363	446	366	377	454	500	394	401	267	312
Trempealeau	147	153	126	140	136	140	122	128	167	177	172	172	121	124
Vernon	96	110	78	116	67	74	78	96	145	180	100	133	114	117
<b>Region</b>	<b>1,439</b>	<b>1,651</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>1,745</b>	<b>1,480</b>	<b>1,703</b>	<b>1,533</b>	<b>1,722</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>2,234</b>	<b>1,656</b>	<b>1,789</b>	<b>1,363</b>	<b>1,594</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>26,015</b>	<b>34,154</b>	<b>27,395</b>	<b>37,773</b>	<b>28,016</b>	<b>38,208</b>	<b>30,654</b>	<b>40,884</b>	<b>31,602</b>	<b>39,992</b>	<b>27,553</b>	<b>35,334</b>	<b>20,839</b>	<b>27,329</b>

**Table 2.2 Housing Building Permit Trends 2000-2012 (Estimates with Imputation) <sup>(1)</sup> - Continued**

	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2000-2012	2000-2012
	Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Estimates with Imputation		Total of Est. Construct. Bldgs.	Total of Est. Construct. Units
	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units	Bldgs.	Units
Buffalo	39	43	42	42	27	27	25	25	18	18	32	34	737	804
Crawford	40	40	32	32	26	26	40	48	31	31	36	41	547	564
Jackson	126	126	96	96	55	55	58	58	52	52	47	47	1,296	1,305
La Crosse	402	569	272	332	234	321	223	287	240	278	255	303	4,870	6,174
Monroe	168	202	134	211	208	141	97	174	116	157	90	95	2,193	2,593
Pepin	18	19	8	8	18	19	17	18	15	15	16	16	374	426
Pierce	190	193	88	111	75	75	87	121	40	66	57	59	3,009	3,343
Trempealeau	119	172	95	102	75	89	76	92	51	64	54	70	1,461	1,623
Vernon	87	117	50	50	61	66	63	77	44	45	52	53	1,035	1,234
<b>Region</b>	<b>1,189</b>	<b>1,481</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>819</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>15,522</b>	<b>18,066</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>17,158</b>	<b>21,837</b>	<b>10,728</b>	<b>15,509</b>	<b>8,315</b>	<b>10,780</b>	<b>8,031</b>	<b>10,864</b>	<b>6,869</b>	<b>9,939</b>	<b>8,133</b>	<b>12,041</b>	<b>251,308</b>	<b>334,644</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Building Permits 2000-2010

(1) Estimates with Imputation - includes reported data for monthly and annual respondents and imputed data for monthly and annual nonrespondents

**HOUSING OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS**

The MRRPC Region had a lower overall housing vacancy rate (9.9%) in 2010 than the State (13.1%) and the Nation (11.4%); see Table 2.3. Crawford County had the highest vacancy rate (22.6%), but most of these vacancies are a result of Crawford County also having the highest rate of housing that is vacant because it is for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use (16.3%). La Crosse County had the lowest overall housing vacancy rate (4.7%), and the lowest rate of vacancies due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use (0.8%). The rate of homeowner vacancy in the Region (1.7%) was lower than for the State (2.2%) and the Nation (2.4%). Crawford and Pepin Counties had the highest rate of homeowner vacancy (2.0%), and Trempealeau County had the lowest rate (1.4%). The vacancy rate for rental housing was 6.2% in the Region, lower than both the State (8.0%) and the Nation (9.2%). Buffalo County had the highest rate of rental housing vacancies (11.8%), and La Crosse County had the lowest rate (3.6%).

**Table 2.3 Housing Occupancy Characteristics**

	Vacant housing units								<sup>(1)</sup> Homeowner vacancy rate (%)	<sup>(2)</sup> Rental vacancy rate (%)
	% Occupied housing units	% Vacant housing units	% For rent	% Rented, not occupied	% For sale only	% Sold, not occupied	% For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	% All other vacant		
Buffalo	85.7	14.3	2.6	0.2	1.2	0.2	7.3	2.9	1.8	11.8
Crawford	77.4	22.6	2.0	0.1	1.2	0.3	16.3	2.7	2.0	9.3
Jackson	80.6	19.4	1.6	0.2	1.0	0.3	13.0	3.2	1.6	7.2
La Crosse	95.3	4.7	1.3	0.2	1.0	0.1	0.8	1.3	1.6	3.6
Monroe	90.5	9.5	2.0	0.1	1.1	0.3	3.7	2.3	1.7	7.2
Pepin	85.2	14.8	1.6	0.1	1.4	0.3	8.5	2.9	2.0	8.5
Pierce	93.0	7.0	1.9	0.1	1.3	0.3	1.7	1.7	1.9	7.3
Trempealeau	91.3	8.7	2.4	0.1	1.0	0.2	2.8	2.1	1.4	9.3
Vernon	84.7	15.3	1.6	0.1	1.2	0.3	9.0	3.2	1.7	8.2
<b>Region</b>	<b>90.1</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>6.2</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>86.9</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>8.0</b>
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>88.6</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>9.2</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce - Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 (1) The homeowner vacancy rate is the proportion of the homeowner inventory that is vacant "for sale." It is computed by dividing the total number of vacant units "for sale only" by the sum of owner-occupied units, vacant units that are "for sale only," and vacant units that have been sold but not yet occupied; and then multiplying by 100. (2) The rental vacancy rate is the proportion of the rental inventory that is vacant "for rent." It is computed by dividing the total number of vacant units "for rent" by the sum of the renter-occupied units, vacant units that are "for rent," and vacant units that have been rented but not yet occupied; and then multiplying by 100.

## AGE OF HOUSING

Despite the large increase in the number of housing units seen between 1970 and 2010, a plurality of housing in the Region in 2007-2011 (24.5%), and in each of the 9 counties, was built in 1939 or earlier, according to the American Community Survey (ACS) of the US Census (see Table 2.4). This was higher than the state's percentage (21.7%), and much higher than the national percentage (13.9%). Of all counties in the MRRPC Region, Buffalo County had the highest percentage (31.8%) of housing units built in 1939 or earlier; La Crosse County had the lowest (20.7%). More housing units were built between 1940 and 1959 in the State (17.3%) and the Nation (16.8%) than in any other time period of the survey. The building boom that began in 1970 left the Region with a large number of housing units, according to the ACS in 2007-2011. The percentage of housing units built between 1970 and 1979 in the MRRPC Region (15.6%) was the second-highest for all time periods in the survey. This percentage was similar to the State's (15.1%) and the Nation's (16.2%). The Region (13.8%), State (13.9%), and Nation (14.0%) all had very similar percentages of housing built between 1990 and 1999.

The age of the Region's housing is perhaps best illustrated by the median years the structures were built, according to the ACS, 2007-2011 (see Table 2.4). Buffalo County has the oldest median house age, with a construction year of 1963, and Pierce County has the most recent median house age with a construction year of 1976. The median (as well as the mean) of all the counties' median construction years is 1971, which is the same as the state's median construction year. The Nation, however, has a median construction year of 1975, indicating that the housing stock in the MRRPC Region tends to be older than in the rest of the country. In fact, only Pierce County has a median construction year (1976) that is more recent than the national one, and Monroe County's is the same as the national one.

While older housing has more opportunity to fall into disrepair, age of housing structures is not necessarily a problem. Older housing, especially that built before World War II, is typified by higher densities, closer proximity to the center of municipal areas, walkability, and architectural sophistication. These are all attractive points to younger home-owners who wish to avoid some of the features of suburban development typical of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (large lots; automobile dependence; greater distances from retail, work, and school; etc.). When smaller communities, especially, attempt to revitalize their city or village center, they have recently begun trying to attract members of the "creative class" (typically people who are younger, well-educated, affluent, and employed in technology-based businesses), especially the entrepreneurs among them. They include software designers, graphic artists, engineers, architects, freelancers, and other new-economy workers who can do their work anywhere there is a broadband connection they can access. The availability of older housing stock can be an attractive feature of a small community for a home buyer who is motivated more by a place to live than by a place to work, since many of these workers are, in fact, creating their own jobs wherever they go. The median value of owner-occupied housing in the MRRPC counties rose from 2000 to 2011 at a faster rate than the state or the nation (see Table 2.6), despite the housing crisis and the onset of the Great Recession in the mid-2000s. This suggests that housing in the MRRPC Region holds its value, and remains an attractive real estate investment.

**Table 2.4 Age of Housing**

	Total:	Built 2000 or later	%	Built 1990 to 1999	%	Built 1980 to 1989	%	Built 1970 to 1979	%	Built 1960 to 1969	%	Built 1940 to 1959	%	Built 1939 or earlier	%
Buffalo	6,639	754	11.4	748	11.3	538	8.1	911	13.7	558	8.4	1,018	15.3	2,112	31.8
Crawford	8,806	903	10.3	1,155	13.1	934	10.6	1,589	18.0	722	8.2	1,214	13.8	2,289	26.0
Jackson	9,623	1,231	12.8	1,425	14.8	871	9.1	1,552	16.1	790	8.2	1,259	13.1	2,495	25.9
La Crosse	48,113	6,181	12.8	7,221	15.0	5,274	11.0	7,643	15.9	4,512	9.4	7,320	15.2	9,962	20.7
Monroe	19,087	2,783	14.6	2,890	15.1	2,343	12.3	2,939	15.4	1,177	6.2	2,559	13.4	4,396	23.0
Pepin	3,559	545	15.3	357	10.0	387	10.9	486	13.7	262	7.4	494	13.9	1,028	28.9
Pierce	16,038	2,911	18.2	2,238	14.0	1,714	10.7	2,805	17.5	1,171	7.3	1,602	10.0	3,597	22.4
Trempealeau	12,554	1,613	12.8	1,401	11.2	1,205	9.6	1,744	13.9	1,054	8.4	1,655	13.2	3,882	30.9
Vernon	13,663	1,862	13.6	1,648	12.1	1,418	10.4	1,859	13.6	871	6.4	1,948	14.3	4,057	29.7
<b>MRRPC</b>	<b>138,082</b>	<b>18,783</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>19,083</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>14,684</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>21,528</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>11,117</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>19,069</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>33,818</b>	<b>24.5</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>2,609,819</b>	<b>318,237</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>361,764</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>256,008</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>395,231</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>261,128</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>452,113</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>565,338</b>	<b>21.7</b>
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>131,034,946</b>	<b>18,073,687</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>18,307,034</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>18,428,096</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>21,251,589</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>14,747,639</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>22,045,575</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>18,181,326</b>	<b>13.9</b>

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## TYPE OF HOUSING STRUCTURES

Housing in the MRRPC Region is typified by single-unit, detached houses; over two-thirds of all housing in the Region, and in every county except La Crosse County, fit this description in 2011 (see Table 2.5). A higher percentage (70%) of housing in the MRRPC Region is single-unit, detached, than in the state (66.0%) or the nation (60.3%). Buffalo County has the highest proportion (79%) of its housing as single-unit, detached, while La Crosse County has the lowest such proportion (61.5%), coming much closer to the national figure. Single-family, detached houses have long been the most-desired housing option for many Americans, and for decades, governmental housing policies have favored this type of housing over others. In fact, single-unit, detached housing grew as a percentage of all housing in the Region, State, and Nation between 2000 and 2011. However, a proliferation of single-family, detached housing can contribute to sprawl settlement patterns, especially large, single-story homes on large lots. It is a less efficient use of land than denser forms of housing, and poses some challenges in terms of upkeep and affordability for an aging population. Single-unit, detached housing is not necessarily owned by its occupant; many such houses are rented. However, since 81.9% of all owner-occupied housing is single-family, detached, we tend to think of home-ownership and single-family homes as synonymous.



Bernhardt Valley, Town of Farmington

Single-unit, attached housing (for example, condominiums) accounted for only 3.3% of housing in the Region in 2011, compared to 4.4% in the State and 5.8% in the Nation (see Table 2.5). Pierce County, though, has 6.3% of its housing as single-unit, attached, and La Crosse County has 5.2%. The other counties in the Region have much lower proportions of their housing as single-unit, attached, with Crawford County lowest, at 0.7%. Single-unit, attached housing can resemble multi-unit rental housing, and has some of the same characteristics: it is denser, so it contributes less to sprawl settlement patterns; and it transfers maintenance of the building outside of individual units and the upkeep of the grounds to another entity (though funded by unit owners through fees). The major difference between this and multi-unit rental housing is that residents of single-unit, attached housing are typically owners of their units, with the ability to buy and sell them individually. The major difference between this and single-unit, detached, is that single-unit, attached housing typically does not involve ownership of a plot of land, but only the housing unit itself, as an individual property distinct from the building it is within. Since single-unit, attached, housing is typically smaller than detached houses, and since it does not usually involve land-ownership, it has less upkeep and maintenance responsibilities than single-unit, detached housing. Being relieved of the obligation to mow a lawn or clean gutters as one ages can be an inviting prospect, and communities that have single-unit, attached housing to meet the demands of their aging residents will be in a good position to retain many of those residents and the tax base they represent. Single-unit, attached housing grew as a percentage of all housing in the Region, State, and Nation from 2000 to 2011.

Two-unit housing (i.e., duplexes) is more common in Wisconsin than in the Nation as a whole: 6.9% of all housing in the State is two-unit housing, while nationally, it is only 3.8% (see Table 2.5). In the MRRPC Region, 5.1% of all housing is two-unit, meaning that such housing is less common in the Region than it is throughout the state, but still more common than in the Nation as a whole. La Crosse County has far and away the highest rate of two-unit housing (8.2%) in the Region, and Vernon County has the lowest rate (2.2%). Two-unit housing makes it possible for a property owner to live in one half of the property while renting the other half to a tenant. This combines the benefits of an owner-occupant (perceived as paying closer attention to maintenance and upkeep of their properties than absentee landlords) with the opportunities for renters to find affordable housing. Two-unit housing declined as a percentage of all housing in the Region, State, and Nation from 2000 to 2011.

Multi-unit housing (3 or more units) occurred in the MRRPC Region at a lower rate (13.5%) in 2011 than in the State (18.5%) and the Nation (22.0%); see Table 2.5. This type of housing is usually rental; 54.3% of all rental housing is in multi-unit buildings. Multi-unit housing can range from a large house that has been divided into multiple units to high-rises with several thousand units. It is a wide category, including many varied types and sizes of housing. It is the second-most common type of housing, after single-unit, detached, in the Region, State, and Nation. La Crosse County had the highest percentage (20.1%) of multi-unit housing in the Region, while Crawford and Vernon Counties had the lowest (7.2%). Multi-unit housing typically is less expensive than other forms of housing, making it often the affordable choice for low- and moderate-income individuals. Its lower cost is in some ways a reflection of the greater efficiencies gained through multi-unit housing's

higher density. Multi-unit buildings slightly declined as a proportion of all housing in the Region from 2000 to 2011, while it increased in the State and remained steady throughout the Nation. This reflects the fact that most housing construction in the 2000s was driven by single-unit, detached houses, and fewer multi-unit buildings were built. The foreclosure crisis of the late-2000s drove many former home-owners into the rental market, which resulted in an increase in rents: the median gross rent nation-wide increased by 44.7% from 2000 to 2011, while the rate of inflation during those same years was 31% (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistic's Inflation Calculator).



Multi-Unit Housing in City of La Crosse

The percentage of occupied housing that is a mobile home, boat, recreational vehicle (RV), van, or other non-permanent shelter was higher in the MRRPC Region (8.1%) in 2011 than in the State (3.8%) and the Nation (6.6%); see Table 2.5. Crawford County had the highest percentage of people living in non-permanent shelter (16.4%), and Pierce County had the lowest (4.5%). The percentage of people living in such housing declined in the Region, the State, and the Nation between 2000 and 2011, and the percentage declined in every county in the MRRPC Region except Buffalo County. While some of these housing arrangements could be vacation properties, the data comes from the US Census, which measures where respondents live on April 1 of that year. Therefore, these non-permanent shelters represent the living space of one out of every 12.5 residents of the MRRPC Region. Such shelters are typically less expensive than housing in the other, permanent, categories discussed above. This is reflected in such housing being disproportionately represented in Crawford (16.4% of all housing), Vernon (13.3%), Jackson (12.5%), and Monroe (9.7%) counties, which consistently have some of the Region's highest rates of poverty and unemployment, and some of the Region's lowest income.

**Table 2.5 Type of Occupied Housing Units, 2000-2011**

	Total		1-unit, detached		1-unit, attached		2 units		3 or more units		Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	
	2000	2011*	2000	2011*	2000	2011*	2000	2011*	2000	2011*	2000	2011*
	No.	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Buffalo	6,098	6,639	77.3	79.0	0.8	1.1	6.3	3.4	7.5	7.7	8.0	8.8
Crawford	8,480	8,806	67.9	72.1	1.2	0.7	2.8	3.6	7.1	7.2	21.0	16.4
Jackson	8,029	9,623	71.5	76.0	0.4	0.8	3.0	2.6	9.0	8.0	16.1	12.5
La Crosse	43,479	48,113	60.0	61.5	3.1	5.2	9.6	8.2	21.0	20.1	6.2	5.0
Monroe	16,672	19,087	70.9	72.2	1.5	1.9	6.0	4.1	10.1	12.1	11.5	9.7
Pepin	3,036	3,559	78.8	78.5	1.5	1.7	2.6	2.3	10.3	11.2	6.8	6.3
Pierce	13,493	16,038	72.3	72.8	2.3	6.3	4.9	3.4	14.4	13.0	6.0	4.5
Trempealeau	11,482	12,554	73.9	76.1	0.9	2.3	5.7	4.7	10.2	9.9	9.3	7.0
Vernon	12,416	13,663	73.9	76.0	0.9	1.3	3.7	2.2	6.1	7.2	15.4	13.3
<b>Region</b>	<b>123,185</b>	<b>138,082</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>2,321,144</b>	<b>2,609,819</b>	<b>66.0</b>	<b>66.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>115,904,641</b>	<b>131,034,946</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>6.7</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce - Bureau of the Census, \*American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2007-2011

### VALUE OF HOUSING, MEDIAN VALUE OF OWNER OCCUPIED UNITS

Housing values in the MRRPC Region increased between 2000 and 2011 at a higher rate (66.3%) than the State (51.2%) and the Nation (55.7%); (see Table 2.6). Vernon County saw the highest increase in housing values during that time (81.6%), and Crawford County saw the lowest increase (54.6%). These increases occurred during a decade that saw a severe crisis nationwide in home values and foreclosures. The median value of a home in the Region was \$140,000 in 2011, compared to \$169,700 in the State and \$186,200 in the Nation. Pierce County had the highest median home value in 2011 (\$197,400) and Crawford County had the lowest (\$116,100).

**Table 2.6 Value of Housing, Median Value of Owner Occupied Units**

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2011*	% Chg 60-70	% Chg 70-80	% Chg 80-90	% Chg 90-00	% Chg 00-11
Buffalo	7,100	9,800	33,600	43,000	78,600	134,100	38.0	242.9	28.0	82.8	70.6
Crawford	6,700	9,600	32,800	42,900	75,100	116,100	43.3	241.7	30.8	75.1	54.6
Jackson	6,300	9,800	31,600	39,600	76,800	124,000	55.6	222.4	25.3	93.9	61.5
La Crosse	11,200	16,700	47,800	58,400	96,900	151,900	49.1	186.2	22.2	65.9	56.8
Monroe	7,800	11,600	36,800	48,600	77,500	131,900	48.7	217.2	32.1	59.5	70.2
Pepin	6,500	10,700	34,600	40,700	79,200	139,200	64.6	223.4	17.6	94.6	75.8
Pierce	8,600	14,500	47,900	65,500	123,100	197,400	68.6	230.3	36.7	87.9	60.4
Trempealeau	7,300	10,800	35,400	40,900	77,000	132,100	47.9	227.8	15.5	88.3	71.6
Vernon	7,600	10,300	34,700	43,600	73,400	133,300	35.5	236.9	25.6	68.3	81.6
<b>MRRPC Region**</b>	<b>7,678</b>	<b>11,533</b>	<b>37,244</b>	<b>47,022</b>	<b>84,178</b>	<b>140,000</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>222.9</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>79.0</b>	<b>66.3</b>
<b>State of Wis.</b>	<b>12,600</b>	<b>17,300</b>	<b>48,600</b>	<b>62,500</b>	<b>112,200</b>	<b>169,700</b>	<b>37.3</b>	<b>180.9</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>79.5</b>	<b>51.2</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>11,900</b>	<b>17,130</b>	<b>47,300</b>	<b>79,100</b>	<b>119,600</b>	<b>186,200</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>176.1</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>55.7</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of the Census, \*American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2007-2011

\*\* Average (mean) of MRRPC Region's 9 counties

## HOUSING UNITS SOLD AND MEDIAN SALES PRICE

Based on a Wisconsin Realtors Association report the average number of houses sold annually in the Region from 2007 through 2012 totaled 2,689 with an average median sales price of \$115,302, Table 2.7.

## INCOME SPENT ON A HOUSING MORTGAGE

The number of households in each county that spent 30% or more of their income on a housing mortgage varied from 28.6% of all households in La Crosse County to 37.8 % in Vernon County. Most counties were in the 34% to 36% range. The State and Nation as a whole had 34% and 37.5% respectively of households paying more than 30% or more of their income on a housing mortgage, Table 2.8.

**Table 2.7 Housing Units Sold and Median Sales Price 2007-2012**

Jurisdiction	Annual Average of Housing Units Sold	Annual Average Median Housing Sales Price
Buffalo	100	\$100,900
Crawford	89	\$108,033
Jackson	140	\$97,792
La Crosse	1,101	\$140,917
Monroe	420	\$114,483
Pepin	93	\$98,183
Pierce	403	\$151,292
Trempealeau	194	\$109,892
Vernon	149	\$116,225
<b>Region</b>	<b>2,689</b>	<b>\$115,302</b>
<b>State of Wis.</b>	<b>57,323</b>	<b>\$144,167</b>

Source: Wisconsin Realtors Association

**Table 2.8 Income Spent on Housing Mortgage**

Jurisdiction	Housing Units with a Mortgage	Less than 20%	20.0 to 24.9%	25.0 to 29.9%	30.0% or More
Buffalo	2,352	34.1%	15.2%	13.4%	37.3%
Crawford	2,865	36.3%	17.7%	11.4%	34.6%
Jackson	3,719	35.3%	14.1%	14.0%	36.6%
La Crosse	19,840	39.7%	18.2%	13.5%	28.6%
Monroe	7,748	38.0%	16.7%	11.7%	33.6%
Pepin	1,345	32.8%	21.0%	12.0%	34.1%
Pierce	8,421	28.8%	19.0%	16.7%	35.5%
Trempealeau	5,447	33.6%	18.8%	12.5%	35.1%
Vernon	5,224	34.0%	16.6%	11.6%	37.8%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>1,070,534</b>	<b>34.0%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>51,094,469</b>	<b>34.1%</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>37.5%</b>

Source: Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Yr Est.

**INCOME SPENT ON RENTAL HOUSING**

The number of households in each county that spent 30% or more of their income on rent varied from 33.9% in Pepin County to 51.7% in Pierce County. Six or the majority of counties were in the 36% to 46% range. The State and Nation as a whole had 47.4% and 51.5 % respectively of households paying more than 30% or more of their income on rent, Table 2.9.

**Table 2.9 Income Spent on Rental Housing**

Jurisdiction	Total Occupied Rental Units	Less than 15.0%	15.0 to 19.9%	20.0 to 24.9%	25.0 to 29.9%	30.0 or More
Buffalo	1,068	14.0%	13.3%	10.3%	16.9%	45.5%
Crawford	1,397	16.0%	15.5%	11.1%	14.6%	42.8%
Jackson	1,651	19.0%	11.4%	12.1%	11.8%	45.8%
La Crosse	15,088	15.4%	15.7%	11.4%	8.2%	49.3%
Monroe	4,498	15.5%	17.0%	14.5%	13.8%	39.2%
Pepin	613	18.3%	15.0%	17.1%	15.7%	33.9%
Pierce	3,363	10.3%	13.7%	9.0%	15.3%	51.7%
Trempealeau	2,454	19.2%	16.7%	13.4%	13.9%	36.8%
Vernon	2,202	18.5%	12.0%	18.7%	13.2%	37.6%
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>663,905</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>47.4%</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>35,928,531</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>51.5%</b>

Source: Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Yr Est.

**HOUSING LACKING COMPLETE PLUMBING AND/OR KITCHEN FACILITIES**

Analyzing the region's housing condition based on lack of kitchen and plumbing facilities shows that on a percentage basis the region's households lacking complete plumbing and or kitchen facilities varied from a low of 0.3% of all households in Pierce County to 8.2% of all households in Pepin County. Regionally 2.8% of all households in the region lacked complete plumbing and/or kitchen facilities, which was one percent higher than the state and nation that reported 1.3% and 1.4 % respectively, Table 2.10.

The data on plumbing facilities were obtained from the American Community Survey. Complete plumbing facilities include: (a) hot and cold running water, (b) a flush toilet, and (c) a bathtub or shower. All three facilities must be located inside the house, apartment, or mobile home, but not necessarily in the same room. Housing units are classified as lacking complete plumbing facilities when any of the three facilities is not present. Plumbing facilities provide an indication of living standards and assess the quality of household facilities within the housing inventory. These data provide assistance in the assessment of water resources and to serve as an aid to identify possible areas of ground water contamination. The data is also used to forecast the need for additional water and sewage facilities, aid in the development of policies based on fair market rent, and to identify areas in need of rehabilitation loans or grants.

A unit has complete kitchen facilities when it has all three of the following facilities: (a) a sink with a faucet, (b) a stove or range, and (c) a refrigerator. All kitchen facilities must be located in the house, apartment, or mobile home, but they need not be in the same room. A housing unit having only a microwave or portable heating equipment such as a hot plate or camping stove should not be considered as having complete kitchen facilities. An icebox is not considered to be a refrigerator. Kitchen facilities provide an indication of living standards and assess the quality of household facilities within the housing inventory. These data provide assistance in determining areas that are eligible for programs and funding, such as Meals on Wheels. The data also serve to aid in the development of policies based on fair market rent, and to identify areas in need of rehabilitation loans or grants.

**Table 2.10 Occupied Housing Units Lacking Complete Plumbing/Kitchen Facilities**

Jurisdiction	Total No. of Occupied Housing Units	Housing Units Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities	Housing Units Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities	Total	%
Buffalo	5,754	32	93	125	2.2
Crawford	6,785	74	81	155	2.3
Jackson	8,145	199	182	381	4.7
La Crosse	45,704	100	307	407	0.9
Monroe	17,302	423	455	878	5.1
Pepin	3,069	147	104	251	8.2
Pierce	14,960	30	19	49	0.3
Trempealeau	11,513	161	203	364	3.2
Vernon	11,831	400	452	852	7.2
<b>Region</b>	<b>125,063</b>	<b>1,566</b>	<b>1,896</b>	<b>3,462</b>	<b>2.8</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>2,279,738</b>	<b>10,910</b>	<b>18,277</b>	<b>29,187</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>114,761,359</b>	<b>639,418</b>	<b>1,000,070</b>	<b>1,639,488</b>	<b>1.4</b>

Source: Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Yr Est.

### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY GAP

Housing is considered affordable by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development standards if a household spends no more than 30 percent of its income on housing costs such as rent, principal, interest, mortgage insurance, taxes and utilities. The Region's median household income is \$47,954 meaning half of the households earn more and half less than this amount, Table 2.11. Income available for housing for a median income earning household based on the 30 percent standard is therefore \$1,199 a month  $\{(47,954 / 12) \times 30\}$ . Based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Market Rent Survey information in Table 2.13 a median income household in the Region could afford up to a three bedroom apartment in all counties with the exception of Pierce County's three bedroom fair market rent of \$1,296 without exceeding the 30% cost on housing standard. The following further describes housing affordability in the Region based income levels of households.

Low Income Households - Housing subsidized by the government or housing developed by non-profit or faith based organizations would likely be necessary to provide decent and affordable housing for most households with income 50% or less than the Region's median household income of \$23,977  $(47,954 \times 50\%)$ . Using the HUD standard of 30 percent of income for housing costs would mean those households with income right at the 50 percent of the Region's median household income would have \$599  $\{(23,977 / 12) \times 30\}$  per month for housing costs. A household with this level of income could afford an efficiency or one bedroom apartment based on HUD's fair market rent figures for the region, Table 2.13. Most low income households however would have much less than this to pay for housing. For example a one-person household earning a minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour and working 2,080 hours per year would have approximately \$377 available for rent based on the 30% not to exceed HUD housing cost standard. Jackson County with a Fair Market Rent Rate of \$372 for an efficiency unit is the only county that has a rate this low, Table 2.13. Approximately 28,655 households or 23 percent of the 125,063 occupied households in the region are low income households with incomes of 50% or less than the Region's median income. This percentage of low income households in the Region was the same as the State and two percent less than the Nation, Table 2.11.

Moderate Income Households - Based on HUD's 30 percent housing expenditure standard, most moderate income households in the region earning between 50 and 80 percent of the Region's median income of \$47,954 would likely be able to afford higher density multi-family housing at market non-subsidized average rents in the Region from \$599 to \$959 per month, Table 2.13. On a Regional average this would equate to annual incomes between \$23,977 and \$38,363. People in this moderate income category would be able to afford a one bedroom unit up to a three bedroom unit in most counties. There are 25,129 moderate income households in the Region or 17 percent of all occupied housing units in the region. This was one percent more than both the State and Nation, Table 2.11.

**Table 2.11 Low Income Households 50% or less & Moderate Income Households Between 50-80% of County Median Income**

Jurisdiction	2007-2011 Total Households	2007-2011 Median Household Income	2007-2011 Number of Low Income Households Earning 50% or Less than their County Median Income	2007-2011 Number of Moderate Income Households Earning between 50 and 80% of their County Median Income
Buffalo	5,754	\$46,073	1,213 / 21%	963 / 17%
Crawford	6,785	\$40,933	1,520 / 22%	1,132 / 17%
Jackson	8,145	\$44,106	1,874 / 23%	1,334 / 16%
La Crosse	45,704	\$50,510	11,177 / 24%	7,147 / 16%
Monroe	17,302	\$48,306	3,582 / 21%	3,237 / 19%
Pepin	3,069	\$48,717	739 / 24%	522 / 17%
Pierce	14,960	\$61,443	3,437 / 23%	2,497 / 17%
Trempealeau	11,513	\$47,437	2,459 / 21%	2,051 / 18%
Vernon	11,831	\$44,058	2,654 / 22%	2,092 / 18%
<b>Region</b>	<b>125,063</b>	<b>\$47,954</b>	<b>28,655 / 23%</b>	<b>25,129 / 17%</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>2,279,738</b>	<b>\$52,374</b>	<b>531,064 / 23%</b>	<b>346,411 / 16%</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>114,761,359</b>	<b>\$52,762</b>	<b>28,291,021 / 25%</b>	<b>16,341,971 / 16%</b>

Source: Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Yr Est.

**Medium Income Households** - Households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the Region's median income of \$47,954 would likely be able to afford market-rate multi-family rents or modest single family housing. On a Regional average this would equate to households with incomes between \$38,363 and \$57,545. People in this medium income category would have from \$959 per month to \$1,439 per month for housing based on the 30% of income standard. Those householders at the lowest income level in this income Medium Income category could afford at least a two bedroom in all counties and a three bedroom in all but counties except La Crosse and Pierce. Those income earners in highest income level in this Medium Income Household category could afford market rate three or four bedroom unit or purchase a modest home up to \$110,000 range, Table 2.12. There were approximately 24,350 housing units or 19.47 percent of all occupied housing units that are classified as medium income households in the Region. The State and Nation had lower rates of medium income households with 18.43% and 16.96% respectively, Table 2.12.

**Higher Income Households** – Households with incomes more than 120 percent of the median income would be able to afford various forms of market rate housing. On a regional average a higher income household would earn more than \$57,545 annually. Approximately 51,083 households or 41 percent of all occupied households in the region are within this income bracket. This was slightly less than the State and Nation with percentages of 41.85% and 42.77% respectively, Table 2.12.

**Table 2.12 Medium Income Households With Income levels of 80 –120% of County Median Income and Higher Income Households with Income over 120% of County Median Income**

Jurisdiction	2007-2011 Median Household Income	2007- 2011 Number of Medium Income Households Earning between 80 and 120 percent of their County Median Income	%	2007-2011 Number of Higher Income Households Earning over 120 Percent of the County Median Income	%
Buffalo	\$46,073	1,263	21.95	2,315	40.23
Crawford	\$40,933	1,282	18.89	2,851	42.02
Jackson	\$44,106	1,601	19.66	3,336	40.96
La Crosse	\$50,510	8,313	18.19	19,067	41.72
Monroe	\$48,306	4,113	23.77	6,370	36.82
Pepin	\$48,717	556	18.12	1,252	40.8
Pierce	\$61,443	2,900	19.39	6,126	40.95
Trempealeau	\$47,437	2,216	19.25	4,787	41.58
Vernon	\$44,058	2,106	17.8	4,979	42.08
<b>Region</b>	<b>\$47,954</b>	<b>24,350</b>	<b>19.47</b>	<b>51,083</b>	<b>40.85</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>\$52,374</b>	<b>420,136</b>	<b>18.43</b>	<b>954,168</b>	<b>41.85</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>\$52,762</b>	<b>19,458,629</b>	<b>16.96</b>	<b>49,086,684</b>	<b>42.77</b>

Source: Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey Estimates

**Table 2.13 Housing Affordability**

	(1) Monthly Income Available for Housing for Low Income Household Earning 50% of Median Income Household \$	Monthly HUD Fair Market Rent \$				Monthly Difference or Rental Affordability Gap for Low Income Household \$				(2) Monthly Income Available for Housing for Moderate Income Household Earning 80% of Median Income Household \$	Monthly Difference or Rental Affordability Gap for Moderate Income Household \$			
		Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom		Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom
Buffalo	576	501	504	682	899	75	72	-106	-323	921	420	417	239	22
Crawford	512	460	463	626	784	52	49	-114	-272	819	359	356	193	35
Jackson	551	372	463	626	780	179	88	-75	-229	882	510	419	256	102
La Crosse	631	416	520	699	972	215	111	-68	-341	1,010	594	490	311	38
Monroe	604	396	499	666	895	208	105	-62	-291	966	570	467	300	71
Pepin	609	397	528	626	922	212	81	-17	-313	974	577	446	348	52
Pierce	768	592	736	920	1296	176	32	-152	-528	1,229	637	493	309	-67
Trempealeau	593	405	463	626	837	188	130	-33	-244	949	544	486	323	112
Vernon	551	397	463	626	797	154	88	-75	-246	881	484	418	255	84
<b>Region</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>677</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>-78</b>	<b>-310</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>50</b>
Wisconsin	655	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1,047	NA	NA	NA	NA
U.S.	660	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1,055	NA	NA	NA	NA

**SUBSIDIZED HOUSING**

Subsidized housing is provided through government assistance in the form of project-based assistance, where the subsidy is attached to a housing unit, and voucher-based assistance, where the subsidy is attached to the household, person or family receiving assistance. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit program LITHC is also used to provide affordable housing for low- and moderate income households. The program provides Federal tax credits that can be used as an incentive for developers to construct or rehabilitate affordable housing units. The subsidized and tax credit units inventoried in this section are primarily in multi-family housing complexes. The MRRPC Region has a total of 4,831 units of low income subsidized housing, (Table 2.14) and has 593 housing vouchers issued, (Table 2.15). These 5,424 subsidized units represent 4.3% of the 125,063 occupied housing units in the Region, Table 2.10. Subsidized housing is provided to three groups: those with low-income; the elderly; and those with special needs or disability. Units of subsidized housing can be designated for one of these groups, or can be open to any of the three groups. Over four-fifths (83.1%) of all subsidized housing units in the Region are for low-income residents, and nearly half (45.1%) are designated for elderly and/or special needs/disabled residents.

La Crosse County has 40.4% of all subsidized housing in the Region, and has the highest percentage of low-income units (42.0%) and elderly and/or special needs/disabled units (42.0%) in the Region. Pepin County has the lowest percentage (2.0%) of low-income units, while Buffalo County has the lowest percentage (1.0%) of elderly and/or special needs/disabled units in the Region.

In 2012 there were 5,440 subsidized low income housing units in the Region (4,831 project based units and 609 housing vouchers) or about 19 percent of the potential need to assist the 28,655 low income households in the region with affordable living conditions, Tables 2.11, 2.14 and 2.15.

**Project Based Subsidized Housing**

Project-based housing assistance inventory includes several types of housing developments that receive government assistance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Program, including public housing and other forms of assisted housing that are intended to house families, the elderly, persons with disabilities, homeless persons, and provide affordable housing outside the urban centers of the region. Project-based housing units are typically in multi-family housing developments.

**Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Units** LIHTC program is another form of Project Based subsidized housing. This subsidy is in the form of an indirect Federal subsidy used to finance the development of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. The LIHTC Program, which is based on Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code, was enacted by Congress in 1986 to provide the private market with an incentive to invest in affordable rental housing. Federal housing tax credits are awarded to developers of qualified projects. Developers sell these tax credits to investors to raise capital for their projects, which reduces the debt the developer would otherwise have to borrow. A tax credit property can offer more affordable rents because the debt is lower. The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority administers the LIHTC program in Wisconsin and develops the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), which is used to award tax credits to developers.

**Table 2.14 Inventory of Project Based Subsidized Housing**

	Total Units	Subsidized Low Income Units	Elderly Units and/or Special Needs Disabled Units
Buffalo County	148	128	24
Crawford County	366	350	155
Jackson County	328	309	172
La Crosse County	2,334	2,034	1035
Monroe County	461	446	227
Pepin County	134	93	63
Pierce County	815	686	390
Trempealeau County	683	510	295
Vernon County	429	275	167
<b>Region</b>	<b>5,698</b>	<b>4,831</b>	<b>2,528</b>

**USDA Rural Development** - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the primary Federal program addressing the need for affordable housing in rural areas of the Region. USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to develop affordable housing in cities, villages, and towns with a population under 20,000 residents outside urbanized areas. The USDA assists with the development of multi-family housing as well as single-family housing intended to help meet the needs of low and moderate income households in rural areas. Guarantees may be used in conjunction with other programs, such as the LIHTC and HOME programs. A tenant's income cannot exceed 115 percent of the area median income adjusted for family size. The rent for any unit at initial occupancy, including tenant paid utilities, cannot exceed 30 percent of 115 percent of the area median income and the average rent for all units in a development cannot exceed 30 percent of 100 percent of area median income. In addition to loan guarantees, direct loans are provided for the development of affordable housing in rural communities for seniors, individuals, and families. Low and very-low income households are targeted as tenants, but moderate-income households are also eligible. USDA rental assistance may also be provided with the loan to increase affordability. The rental assistance is a project-based tenant subsidy that pays a portion of tenant costs, reducing them to 30 percent of the tenant's income.

**Tax-Exempt Bonds** known as private activity bonds, are bonds where the interest earned by the bondholder is exempt from Federal (and often local and State) taxes. Because the interest is tax-exempt, the debt has a lower interest rate than traditional financing. These bonds are used to attract private investment for projects that have public benefit. Projects that are eligible for tax-exempt bond funding under Section 142(d) of the Internal Revenue Code include airports, highways, water supply facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, public educational facilities, and qualified residential rental projects. Each state receives an annual allocation, called a volume cap, to be allocated to issuers of private activity bonds. The 2011 volume cap for each State is based on the greater of \$277,820,000 or 95 multiplied by the State's 2010 population. The 2011 volume cap for Wisconsin was \$540,264,000. WHEDA is allocated 50 percent of the total amount of the volume cap less \$10 million allocated to the State building commission. The volume cap allocated to WHEDA is further allocated to local issuers by WHEDA or utilized by WHEDA for single-family housing bonds, multi-family housing bonds, and beginning farmer bonds. From the volume cap allocated to WHEDA, \$15 million must be set aside for issuers of multi-family housing bonds. Multi-family Housing Bonds Tax-exempt bonds can be issued to fund loans for the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, and refinancing of a variety of multi-family housing projects. Borrowers may be for-profit corporations, limited partnerships, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporations, or governmental agencies such as State housing agencies, cities, counties, redevelopment agencies, and local housing authorities. The project must meet certain affordability requirements for private activity bonds to

be used to finance a “qualified residential rental project.” Multi-family tax-exempt bonds are often combined with Federal tax credits to provide further benefit to developers. Eligible borrowers for multi-family tax-exempt bonds issued by WHEDA include for-profit, qualified nonprofits, housing authorities, or other entities meeting criteria established by WHEDA. Developments must be residential rental housing for families, the elderly, or persons with disabilities. Projects must meet the LIHTC program affordability requirements.

#### Other Housing Programs that Benefit Low- and Moderate-Income Households

In addition to the subsidized and tax credit housing programs discussed in this chapter, other programs in the Region may add to the inventory of housing units that are affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

- + Housing trust funds
- + HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) programs
- + Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- + Habitat for Humanity and other private or faith-based organization

#### **Voucher Based Subsidized Housing**

Housing vouchers allow low and moderate income households pay rent with a voucher instead of or in addition to cash for a residence in the private market. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is HUD’s primary voucher-based assistance program. The voucher program provides affordable housing choices for low-income families by providing rental assistance that allows families to reside in privately-owned rental units. These units are usually found in multi-family housing developments; however, vouchers may also be used for single-family and two-family rental units if they meet program requirements. Typically, a public housing agency administers the voucher program with annual funding from HUD. The PHA generally pays the landlord the difference between 30 percent of a family’s gross monthly household income and the PHA determined payment standard, about 80 to 100 percent of the HUD-determined Fair Market Rent (FMR). Households may use a voucher at any location within an administration area where the landlord is willing to participate in the program and the housing unit meets program requirements.

**Table 2.15 Inventory of Housing Vouchers**

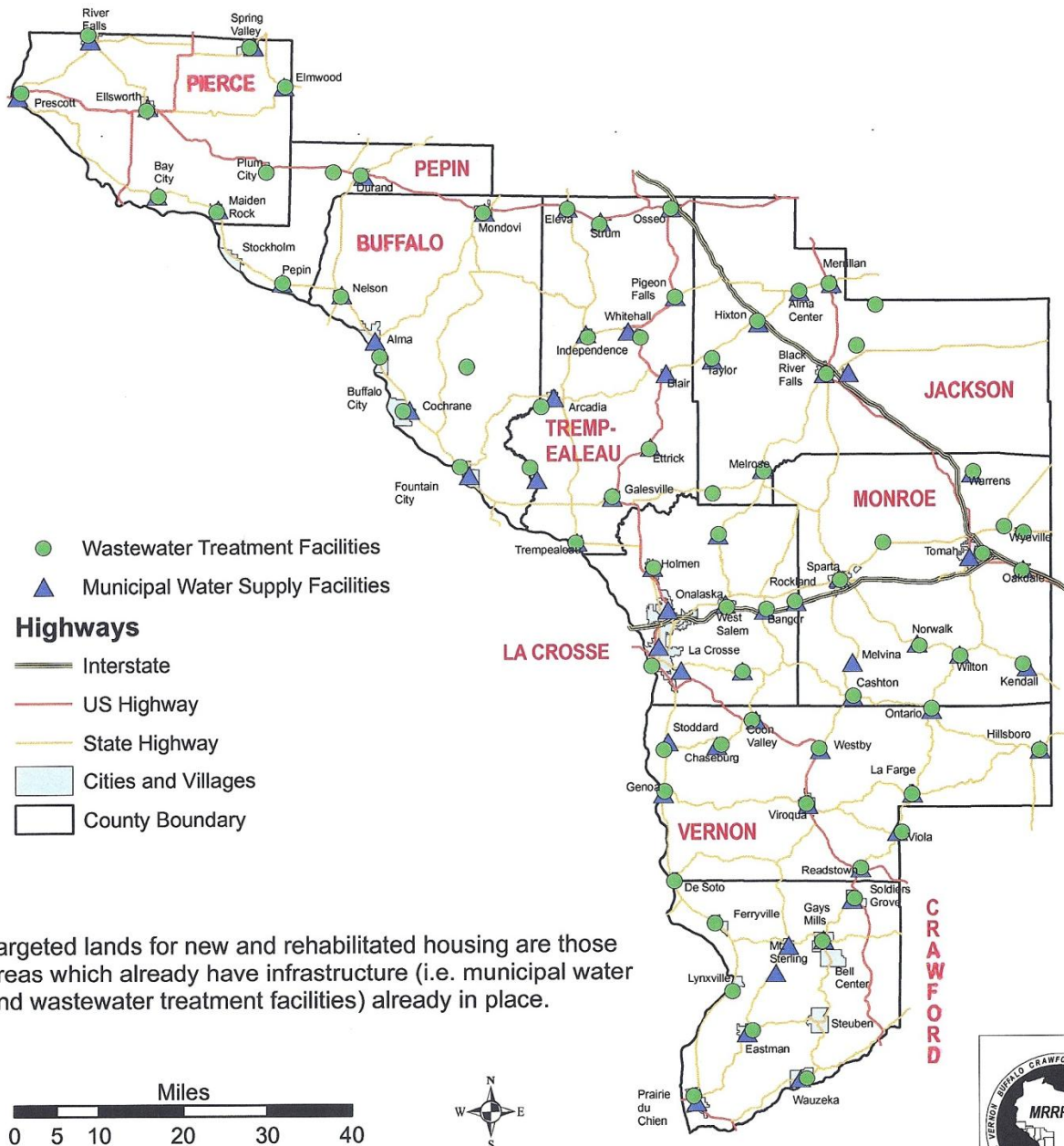
	HUD Housing Choice Vouchers	Currently Leased	Pending	Veteran Administration Support Housing Vouchers	Currently Leased	Pending	Total Vouchers Allowed	Number of Housing Choice Applicants on Waiting List
Buffalo/Pepin <sup>(1)</sup>	15	6	1	0	0	0	15	16
Crawford <sup>(2)</sup>	25	13	3	0	0	0	25	15
Jackson <sup>(3)</sup>	15	15	0	0	0	0	15	6
La Crosse	141	125	0	0	0	0	141	115
Monroe <sup>(4)</sup>	132	97	0	0	0	0	132	50
Monroe <sup>(5)</sup>	16	13	0	60	44	0	76	11
Pierce <sup>(6)</sup>	75	61	0	0	0	0	75	157
Pierce/St. Croix <sup>(7)</sup>	90	3	0	0	0	0	90	3
Trempealeau <sup>(8)</sup>	222	202	0	0	0	0	222	53
Vernon <sup>(3)</sup>	15	14	0	0	0	0	15	9
<b>Region</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>44</b>		<b>806</b>	<b>435</b>

Source: City and County Housing Authorities; WEST CAP, WHEDA, Horizon Mgt. Group, and Alliant Properties

#### **Regional Housing Goals and Recommendations**

Regional housing goals and recommendations are listed in Chapter 9 – Implementation.

## MAP 2.01 MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGION TARGETED LAND AREAS FOR NEW AND REHABILITATED HOUSING



Prepared by: Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission /dab

