

## **CHAPTER 3**

### ***Housing***

#### **Introduction**

Housing in the Town of Erin Prairie is significant for several reasons. First, it is typically one of the largest expenditures in a person's life. Second, housing and the land it occupies generates significant tax revenue. Finally, the desire to develop land for housing can have visible effects on the Town's land use patterns.

The housing chapter analyzes various housing characteristics in order to identify housing needs in the future. Land use issues related to housing will be addressed in the Land Use chapter.

#### **Age Characteristics**

Table 3-1 shows the year a home in the Town of Erin Prairie was constructed within a specified time period. Almost a third of the current housing stock was constructed before 1940 and over 67% of the housing stock is nearly 30 years old or older. An aging housing stock could indicate a need to replace septic systems, siding, furnaces, windows, or other repairs.

Table 3-1 - Year Structure Constructed

Year Built	Homes	Percent of Total
TOTAL HOMES	249	100%
1999 to 2007*	11	4.4%
1995 to 1998	25	10.0%
1990 to 1994	13	5.2%
1980 to 1989	33	13.3%
1970 to 1979	56	22.5%
1960 to 1969	13	5.2%
1940 to 1959	18	7.2%
1939 or earlier	80	32.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, \*based on 2006 estimated population divided by 2.9 persons per household.

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Table 3-2 shows the number of new sanitary permits issued in the Town of Erin Prairie since 2000. Most of these permits were likely issued to replace failing systems.

Table 3-2 - New Sanitary Systems

Year Issued	Total Housing Units
2000	7
2001	9
2002	7
2003	8
2004	8
2005	8
2006	6
*2007	4

Source: St. Croix Zoning Office \*data through July 6th

## **Structural Characteristics**

The type of heating fuel used in homes can indicate potential energy expenditures within the Town and reveal trends in heating systems related to new construction. Most homes are heated by bottled/tank/LP gas or fuel oil/kerosene (see Table 3-3). A smaller portion of homes use electricity, wood, or utility gas. Utility gas is available to some residents living along C.T.H. K and then south along C.T.H. T.

Table 3-3 - Types of House Heating Fuel

Fuel Type	Number	Percent
Utility Gas	3	1.3%
Bottled, Tank, or LP Gas	159	68.5%
Electricity	11	4.7%
Fuel Oil, Kerosene, Etc	50	21.6%
Coal or Coke	0	0.0%
Wood	9	3.9%
Solar Energy	0	0.0%
Other Fuel	0	0.0%
No Fuel	0	0.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

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All homes in the Town of Erin Prairie are single family units with over 97% being single family homes while the rest being mobile homes (see *Table 3-4*). There are no multi-family dwelling units in the Town.

The need for multi-family and other types of housing is currently met by the City of New Richmond and the Village of Baldwin. These communities have larger population bases and require a variety of housing options to meet area resident's needs. These areas are more suitable for multi-family dwellings because they have access to municipal utilities. It is likely these and other surrounding communities will continue to fill the need for multi-family housing.

A 1-Unit, detached structure is a separate building that either has open spaces on all sides. A 1-Unit, attached structure is separated from other structures by dividing walls that extend from ground to roof.

Table 3-4 - Housing Units in a Structure

Units	Number	Percent
Total Housing Units	240	100.0%
1 Unit, detached	233	97.1%
1 Unit, attached	0	0.0%
2 Units	0	0.0%
3 or 4 Units	0	0.0%
5 to 9 Units	0	0.0%
10 to 19 Units	0	0.0%
20 or more Units	0	0.0%
Mobile Home	7	2.9%
Boat, RV, Van, etc	0	0.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

## Home Values

Table 3-5 reveals that the median owner-occupied housing value almost doubled between 1990 and 2000. The increases can be attributed to normal appreciation, demand for homes in this area, or the construction of larger homes by new residents. The recent decline in the housing market may slow the appreciation in home values in the future.

Table 3-5 - Median Owner-Occupied Housing Value

1990	2000	% Change
\$78,800	\$147,700	87.44%

Source: US Census Bureau 1990, 2000,

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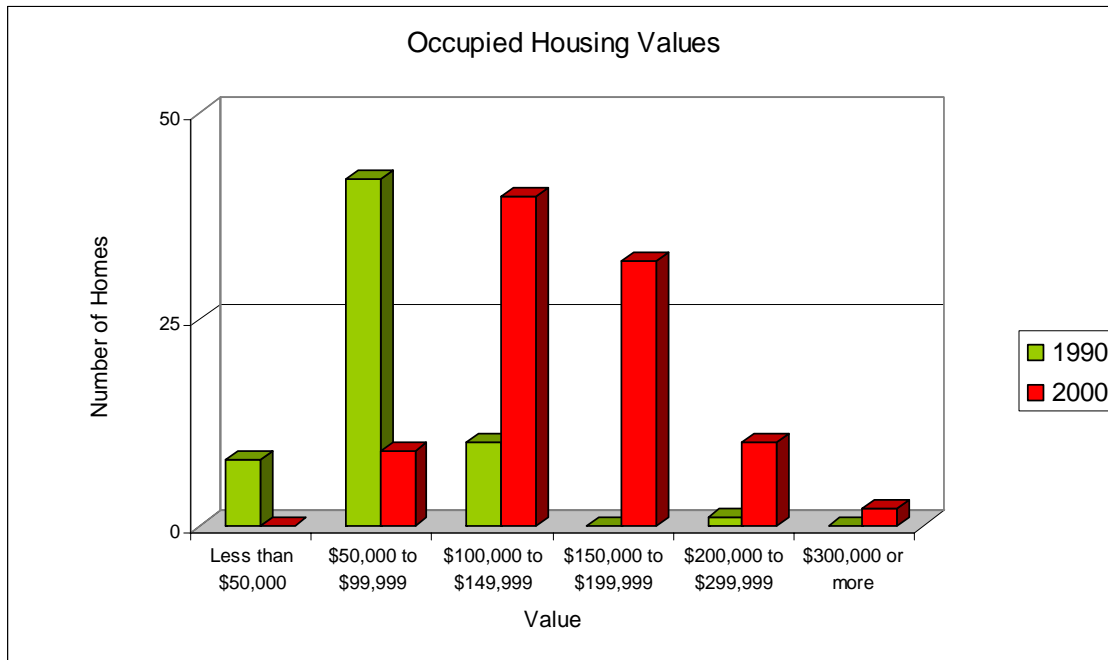
Table 3-6 and Figure 3-1 show that a majority of housing in 2000 is valued between \$100,000 and \$199,999. This is in sharp contrast to 1990 when a majority of housing was valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999. There has been a notable increase in homes valued over \$200,000.

Table 3-6 - Owner-Occupied Housing Value

Value	1990	2000	Number and % Increase/Decrease
Less than \$50,000	8	0	-8 (-100%)
\$50,000 to \$99,999	42	9	-33 (-78.6%)
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10	40	30 (300%)
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0	32	32 (-)
\$200,000 to \$299,999	1	10	9 (900%)
\$300,000 or more	0	2	2 (-)

Source: US Census Bureau 1990, 2000

Figure 3-1 - Owner-Occupied Housing Value



## Occupancy Characteristics

All housing units are classified as either owner-occupied or renter-occupied. A housing unit is considered owner-occupied if the owner or co-owner lives in the unit even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. All occupied units, which are not owner-occupied, whether they are rented for cash rent or occupied without payment of cash rent, are classified as renter-occupied.

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In 2000, the majority of housing in the Town of Erin Prairie was owner-occupied (85.0%). This compares to St. Croix County (76.4%) and the State of Wisconsin (68.4%). This percentage for the Town grew slightly over 1990. The renter-occupied units are either single family dwellings or mobile homes. As stated earlier, there are no multi-family dwelling units in the Town.

Table 3-7 - Owner-Occupied vs. Renter-Occupied Housing Percentages

Year	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	Number and % Change
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	167	84.3%	193	85.0%	26 (15.6%)
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	31	15.7%	34	15.0%	3 (9.7%)
Total	198	100.0%	227	100.0%	-

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

## **Housing Affordability Analysis**

HUD defines affordable housing as housing (for rent or purchase) for which the occupant is paying no more than 30% of their household income for gross housing costs.

Table 3-8 reveals that over 75% of residents owning homes pay less than 30% of their household income for housing costs. The monthly owner costs are calculated from the mortgage payment, real estate taxes, home owners insurance, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees.

Table 3-8 - Monthly Housing Costs-Percentage of Household Income

Year 1999	Number	Percent
Less than 15%	35	37.6%
15 to 19%	15	16.1%
20 to 24%	27	29.0%
25 to 29%	4	4.3%
30 to 34%	2	2.2%
35% or more	10	10.8%
Not computed	0	0.0%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000

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Costs associated with renting can vary significantly compared to homeownership. Renters do not have to directly pay property taxes, insurance costs are less, and utility costs may be included with the rent.

Gross rent is the amount of the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water and sewer) and fuels if these are paid for by the renter or for the renter by someone else (*Table 3-9*). Approximately 65% of the households that rent are paying less than 30% of their income on housing.

Units for which no cash rent was paid and units occupied by households that reported no income or a net loss in 1999 comprise the category "Not computed."

Table 3-9 - Gross Rent-Percentage of Household Income

Year 1999	Number	Percent
Less than 15%	10	43.5%
15 to 19%	3	13.0%
20 to 24%	2	8.7%
25 to 29%	0	0.0%
30 to 34%	0	0.0%
35% or more	0	0.0%
Not Computed	8	34.8%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000

## **Housing Assistance Programs and Agencies**

The ability to afford or maintain housing can be challenging for some residents. There are several county, state, and federal programs and agencies that assist first time homebuyers, disabled, elderly residents, and low-medium income citizens to meet their rental/home ownership needs.

### **HUD**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides subsidized housing through low-income public housing and the Section 8 Program. Under the Section 8 Program, rental subsidies are given to low-income households, including households renting private apartments. HUD is also responsible for providing funds to communities through various grant programs.

### **Rural Development –United States Department of Agriculture**

The Rural Development Program provides housing opportunities for individuals living in predominantly rural areas (population <10,000). The Rural Development Program provides support for rental housing, mortgage loans for homebuyers, and support for cooperative housing development.

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## **Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)**

This agency finances housing development through the sale of bonds. WHEDA provides mortgage financing to first-time homebuyers, and financing for multi-family housing.

## **West CAP**

West CAP is a non-profit corporation that works in partnership with local communities to plan and develop good quality, affordable housing for low and moderate-income families and individuals.

## **Movin' Out**

Movin' Out is a housing organization that provides assistance, housing counseling, information, and gap financing for rehabilitation and purchase to Wisconsin households with a member with a permanent disability.

## **Habitat for Humanity**

Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit organization that builds homes for low-income families.

## **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

The CDBG program provides grants to local governments for housing rehabilitation programs for low- and moderate-income households.

## **Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)**

The LIEAP program provides payments to utility companies or individuals to help pay for home heating costs in the winter.

## **Housing Cost Reduction Initiative (HCRI)**

This state program provides funding to local public and non-profit agencies to reduce housing costs for low- and moderate-income households.

## **Housing Development Issues**

Many municipalities in St. Croix County have experienced significant residential growth since 1990. This has slowed significantly the past two years due to the over saturation of the housing market and issues related to lending.

Typically, the cities and villages located near Interstate 94, S.T.H. 34, S.T.H. 64, and close to the Minnesota border have grown the most. Towns have experienced growth differently due to zoning jurisdictions, the desires of local government, and enrollment into state programs such as Farmland Preservation.

Housing in Erin Prairie is mainly affected by the large amount of land being farmed, existing zoning classifications, and farmlands enrolled in Farmland Preservation. These factors have created a rural landscape that is valued by residents. As many nearby municipalities have grown, some Erin Prairie residents have indicated a desire to be

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able to sell farmland for residential development to gain land equity similar to surrounding municipalities. Current land use controls have limited that ability. A 2006 Erin Prairie Land Use Survey (see *Appendix B*) asked residents questions related to future residential development in the Town of Erin Prairie.

When asked if residents supported zoning changes in the Town of Erin Prairie that would increase property values closer to that in surrounding townships, 130 residents said “Yes” and 85 responded “No”.

When asked if residents supported managed development in Erin Prairie with the understanding that a landowner will maintain the right to farm, 166 residents said “Yes” and 48 responded “No”.

When asked to indicate your preference for future development growth in the Town of Erin Prairie, the response was:

- 39 residents indicated 1 home/35 acres
- 41 residents indicated 2 homes/40 acres
- 27 residents indicated 8 homes/40 acres
- 11 residents indicated 10 homes/40 acres
- 23 residents indicated 12 homes/40 acres
- 51 residents indicated 20 homes/40 acres
- 21 residents indicated “Other”

When asked if residents supported managed development in Erin Prairie with the understanding that a landowner will maintain the right to farm, 166 residents said “Yes” and 48 responded “No”.

When asked if residents were in favor of conserving prime farmland/open space in Erin Prairie, 169 residents said “Yes” and 32 responded “No”.

The survey indicates that farming and the preservation of farmland are important to residents and that managed development would be acceptable as long as it does not interfere with a person’s right to farm.

Housing and the survey results will be examined more closely in the Land Use chapter.

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## **Housing Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs, and Actions**

**Goal 1:** Provide a variety of single family housing options to meet the needs of existing and future residents in the Town of Erin Prairie.

### **Objectives**

1. Provide single family housing that is affordable to people of various incomes.
2. Provide opportunities to increase land equity among landowners.

### **Programs, Policies, and Actions:**

1. Review and revise existing land use regulations to help achieve Town goals.
2. Pursue strategies, such as Transfer of Development Rights, that will increase landowner equity to levels comparable with surrounding townships while protecting valuable farmland.
3. Support the right of landowners to rezone their land.
4. Allow alternative types of residential development, such as Conservation Subdivisions, that allow increased residential development yet conserve farmland/open space.
5. Support the use of assistance programs that help residents purchase or make repairs to their homes.
6. Work with St. Croix County and the City of New Richmond to allow growth that meets both their long range goals and the goals of the Town of Erin Prairie.

**Goal 2:** Support housing that protects the Town's natural resources and farmland.

### **Objectives**

1. Protect valuable wildlife habitat.
2. Preserve the rural character of the Town of Erin Prairie.
3. Preserve the ability and right to farm.

### **Programs, Policies, and Actions:**

1. Identify and maintain environmental corridors.
2. Pursue strategies, such as Transfer of Development Rights, that will increase landowner equity to levels comparable with surrounding townships while protecting valuable farmland.
3. Allow alternative types of residential development, such as Conservation Subdivisions, that allow increased residential development yet conserve farmland/open space.
4. Support development that does not fragment farmland.