


[News](#)
[\(/category/news/\)](#)
[Events](#)
[\(/finance-commerce-events/\)](#)
[Podcast](#)
[\(https://finance-commerce.com/beyond-the-skyline/?link-navbar\)](#)
[Public Notices](#)
[\(https://finance-commerce.com/public-notice/\)](#)
[Press Releases\(https://finance-](#)
[commerce.com/category/professional-announcements/\)](#)
[Advertising \(https://financ-](#)
[commerce.com/advertisin](#)
[Search...](#)
[Home\(/\) > Regular Features\(https://Finance-Commerce.Com/Category/Special-Features/Regular-Features/\)>](#)
[Q & A\(https://Finance-Commerce.Com/Category/Special-Features/Regular-Features/Q-A/\)>](#)
[Q&A: Housing challenges abound in St. Croix County](#)


Melissa Meschke (left) and Susan Badke

Q&A: Housing challenges abound in St. Croix County

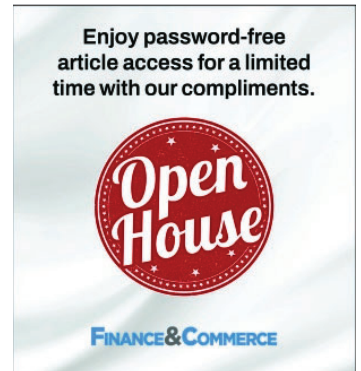
September 12, 2025

The Blueprint

- Study shows St. Croix County needs 4,300 to 4,600 new housing units by 2050.
- Rental vacancy fell to 1.4% and homeowner vacancy rate hit zero in 2023.
- Over 36% of renters and 23% of homeowners are cost burdened.
- Rising construction costs and labor shortages hinder affordable housing.

Like other communities on the Minnesota side of the river, Wisconsin's St. Croix County is struggling to meet the demand for new housing, even as it deals with rising construction costs and affordability challenges.

ACCEPT



(https://i951.finance-commerce.com/s/7r8?profileid=c749ea96-f06a-46a5-a73e-1d84c03aeba2)

Upcoming business events

Sep – Dec 2025

15 SEP, MON

16 SEP, TUE

- 8am Engineering the Future: h
- 8:30am A Conference Renaissance

17 SEP, WED

- High Performance Home Builder Su
- 11am Revitalize & Reimagine: Ir

GMT-05

See the full list of events here

(<http://finance-commerce.com/business-outlook-calendar/>)

Editor's Picks

(<https://finance-commerce.com/category/ec-picks/>)



Brooklyn Park warehouses sell for \$63.5M in portfolio deal
9/12/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/brooklyn-park-warehouses-sell-63-5m/>)

A new study, conducted by the [West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission](https://finance-commerce.com/tag/west-central-wisconsin-regional-planning-commission/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/west-central-wisconsin-regional-planning-commission/>) (WCWRPC), finds that St. Croix County needs to add up to 4,600 new housing units by 2050 to accommodate growth.

Meanwhile, the housing market is tight. Rental vacancy rates dropped to 1.4% in 2023, and the homeowner vacancy rate fell to zero in 2023, “signaling an acute lack of available housing stock,” according to the study.

What’s more, the study reveals, more than 36% of renters and 23% of homeowners are “cost burdened,” which means they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

In the following interview, Melissa Meschke, executive director of St. Croix EDC, and Susan Badke senior planner/deputy director of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, break down the results of the study, crunch some of the numbers, and talk about opportunities and challenges in the [St. Croix County housing](https://finance-commerce.com/tag/st-croix-county-housing/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/st-croix-county-housing/>) market.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: What is the reason for this study and what is your biggest takeaway?

Meschke: This housing study came out of continued conversations that really focused around housing. I couldn’t go a single day without bringing up housing when working with businesses. It’s hard to attract people to your company, it’s hard to retain people, when there’s nowhere for them to live. Living is too expensive or they’re living too far away.

So we started this collaborative community effort about a year ago, and really worked to get community buy in. We got funding from local community partners, including municipalities as well as individual businesses like our health care organizations in the area, so we had a lot of community support right from the beginning, which was really great.

And throughout this process, we involved many stakeholders along the way. Susan completed, I think, almost 50 interviews for local stakeholders. We also worked with all the municipalities to gather the data. The EDC wanted it to be a collaborative effort and have a lot of community support. And I think we achieved that, which is really exciting.

Throughout this process, we worked with many different people that gave us many different perspectives. We knew that we didn’t have enough housing in St. Croix County, and we knew the housing that we had and that was being created is too expensive.

Some of the things that really stuck out for me throughout this process was helping people understand what affordable housing is. Everybody has in their mind what affordable housing might look like. A lot of people think of LIHTC projects or low-income housing. But what Susan and I tried to focus on with this housing study was that those middle ground people that have great jobs that are supporting our communities, like teachers and police officers, we need them in the community to be successful. So we did a lot of educating around what affordable housing is, talking about that 30% threshold that people should be spending on housing to not be housing cost burdened.

Badke: What I heard throughout interviews was the data really validates what a lot of people think and what they see in the housing market. St. Croix County is a growing county. Much of it is from net migration of folks moving into the county. We certainly have some births and deaths, and that plays a role in population trends. Many [folks moving in are] from Minnesota. That’s shown in the data, and that was echoed in interviews.

Many seniors, as well, are choosing to stay in their current home, and that’s for a variety of reasons. And these trends that we’re seeing in St. Croix County, they’re not really unique to St. Croix County. It’s trends that we’re seeing throughout the state and nationwide, as well. Those seniors

ACCEPT



Q&A: Housing challenges abound in St. Croix County
9/12/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/st-croix-county-housing-study-2025/>)



Falcon Apartments in North Branch hits the market
9/11/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/falcon-apartments-north-branch-for-sale/>)



Trident plans Shoreview apartment project
9/11/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/shoreview-apartment-development-380-homes/>)



Faribault data center clears review amid Twin Cities growth
9/10/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/faribault-data-center-twin-cities-growth/>)

News (<https://finance-commerce.com/category/news/>)



Who Owns The Seller’s Privileged Communications Following A Merger

How Minnesota and other jurisdictions have addressed the issue.

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/who-own-sellers-privileged-communications-following-a-merger/>)

Special Publications (<https://finance-commerce.com/category/special-publications/>)



Milestones 2025
9/8/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/milestones-2025/>)



Finance & Commerce’s Top Projects of 2024
7/18/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/07/finance-commerce-top-projects-of-2024/>)



Finance & Commerce’s 2025 Reader Rankings Final Winners
6/30/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/06/2025s-finance-commerce-reader-rankings-final-winners/>)

that are staying in their homes, some just frankly want to stay there. You have a passion for your house that you grew up with, had a family, but many have expressed a desire to maybe downsize and there just isn't housing available for folks to downsize to.

Interest rates play a role in that, as well. If you've got a mortgage and you have refinanced and have a relatively low interest rate, you're not looking to move. And so that kind of disrupts that natural housing life cycle. Whereas a senior might traditionally have moved, that would free up a housing unit for a workforce family that's looking to move in, or someone that's maybe renting, that's looking to buy their first home. Housing costs are certainly increasing and have increased at rates that are much higher than our wages.

I spoke with some of the superintendents in various school districts throughout the county, and they echoed that need. If we want to retain and attract either entry level teachers or even upper level teachers, we really need to have housing opportunities and options available for all spectrums of ages, incomes, the full range.

We estimate and project that based on population projections prepared by the state, that St. Croix county is, over the next 25 years, in need of about 4,300 to 4,600 dwelling units. We don't say you need X amount at this price point. That's really a detailed market study. But I would stress that workforce housing need as our demographics are changing. How do we recruit, attract and retain younger folks to stay in St. Croix County? It's really important that we look at housing costs as a part of that.

Q: What are some of the barriers to new development in St. Croix County?

Badke: When we're talking about developing housing that is maybe affordable for our workforce, there certainly are some barriers or challenges. And again, not necessarily unique to St. Croix County, but many communities and counties are struggling with it.

We've seen an increase in building material costs. From January 2020 to December 2024, single-family construction costs increased about 40% and I would guess that that increase has actually continued to go up since the end of 2024.

Residential construction employment in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area is still low. In the 2008 recession, many of those contractors left the trades, switched gears. We weren't building much, and so they exited that segment of the workforce. We just haven't filled the gap. That's a challenge. When you have fewer folks working in the trades, labor costs certainly have increased.

Development of affordable housing is not affordable. This is their livelihood. This is their job. Unless they're mission-driven for affordable housing, they're looking to make a profit, and so it is challenge to meet this need and to build housing that's affordable for the workforce.

Meschke: From a new development standpoint, these developers are having a really hard time just getting these projects to pencil between interest rates and rising costs. I'm working with some developers that have to charge market-rate rent because otherwise the product doesn't work. I think that's a challenge.

And then, from a single-family home development standpoint, they can build these \$500,000, \$750,000 homes, and they sell. So where is the motivation to build smaller, more affordable housing?

Q: What are some of the hot spots for new development in St. Croix County?

Meschke: I would say definitely the city of New Richmond, city of River Falls. They are both very active in housing, both multifamily and single-family. Those really stick out in my work. Those were two of the most vibrant and fast-growing.

A lot of people talk about Hudson, but Hudson's pretty full, so at this point we're thinking about redevelopment. It gets a lot of attention right across the border, but those smaller communities just a little bit further from the border are the ones that are the fastest growing.

commerce-reader-rankings-final-winners/)



Finance & Commerce announces
Empowering Women awards
6/26/2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/06/2025>

empowering-women-minnesota-business-awards/)

Beyond The Skyline Podcast



(<https://finance-commerce.com/beyond-the-skyline/?link-sidebar>)

Beyond the Skyline is a podcast and video interview about economic development, real estate and construction in Minnesota.

Listen here (<https://finance-commerce.com/beyond-the-skyline/?link-sidebar>)

Badke: I echo that. We held seven roadshow sessions this summer to present some of the findings. And there was a builder working over in Woodville who found some lots that were available. I don't recall the exact specifics, but it was really encouraging, because, of course, Woodville needs housing, too.

New Richmond and River Falls are doing a lot of great things and seeing a lot of growth. But to hear that Woodville is seeing growth ... that's encouraging and exciting.

Tags: St. Croix County housing (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/st-croix-county-housing/>)
 River Falls housing growth (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/river-falls-housing-growth/>)
 West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/west-central-wisconsin-regional-planning-commission/>)
 New Richmond housing (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/new-richmond-housing/>)
 Wisconsin housing market (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/wisconsin-housing-market/>)
 housing affordability (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/housing-affordability/>)
 St. Croix housing study (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/st-croix-housing-study/>)
 rental vacancy Wisconsin (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/rental-vacancy-wisconsin/>)
 workforce housing Wisconsin (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/workforce-housing-wisconsin/>)
 new housing development (<https://finance-commerce.com/tag/new-housing-development/>)

Related Articles

- [Unskilled labor wages drive rising construction costs](https://finance-commerce.com/2025/04/rising-construction-costs-unskilled-labor-wage-growth/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/04/rising-construction-costs-unskilled-labor-wage-growth/>)
- [U.S. home sales rose in July as mortgage rates eased slightly](https://finance-commerce.com/2025/08/us-existing-home-sales-july-2024/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/08/us-existing-home-sales-july-2024/>)
- [U.S. home sales fall as mortgage rates, prices hit high](https://finance-commerce.com/2025/07/us-home-sales-drop-high-mortgage-rates/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/07/us-home-sales-drop-high-mortgage-rates/>)
- [Rising house prices widen racial wealth gap](https://finance-commerce.com/2025/02/rising-house-prices-widen-racial-wealth-gap/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/02/rising-house-prices-widen-racial-wealth-gap/>)
- [Q&A: Housing advocate Nick Erickson sees bipartisan support for reforms](https://finance-commerce.com/2025/01/qa-housing-advocate-nick-erickson-sees-bipartisan-support-for-reforms/) (<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/01/qa-housing-advocate-nick-erickson-sees-bipartisan-support-for-reforms/>)

Related Content



Q&A: Water Street Partners founders on their past, present..

Founded in 2017 by Joe Boone and Jim Hegedus, Water Street Partners has grown with Oppidan's support and is [...]

September 5, 2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/09/water-street-partners-expands-fund-three-oppidan/>)



Q&A: United Properties' Connor McCarthy on 'very healthy'...

United Properties promoted Connor McCarthy to senior VP of commercial development, expanding his role across M[...]

August 29, 2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/08/connor-mccarthy-united-properties-promotion/>)



Q&A: Eagan's Jill Hutmacher's guide for redevelopment policy

Eagan's community development director Jill Hutmacher discusses transforming vacant offices, including Thoms[...]

August 22, 2025

(<https://finance-commerce.com/2025/08/eagan-office-redevelopment-thomson-reuters-campus/>)