The current economic situation is on many minds these days. Foreclosures are especially important to local planners and outreach professionals. Fortunately, data about foreclosures in Wisconsin are publicly available. Unfortunately, while the problem is not as severe as many parts of the country, the news in Wisconsin is not good.

In 2000, there were 6,407 properties facing a foreclosure civil case in Wisconsin. While not all foreclosure civil cases actually end in a foreclosure, the data collected over time provides insights into the scope and scale of the problem. In 2007, the number of cases soared to 19,240. Foreclosure cases increased 200% in that period, while total housing units in the state only increased by 10%. The rate of total foreclosure civil cases per thousand housing units provides a useful comparison and has grown over the last several years, as shown in Chart 1.* The period between 2002 to 2005 showed a period of stability, but more recent years have shown large increases.

Foreclosures impact both rental units and owner occupied housing units. The percentage of housing units that is owner-occupied and the percentage of owner occupied housing units with a mortgage varies from county to county. The 2005-2007 American Community Survey reports that 70% of the 1.6 million occupied housing units in Wisconsin were owner occupied and only 69% of the owner occupied units had a mortgage. In other words, only 48% of the occupied housing units in the state are owner-occupied units with a mortgage. The number of foreclosure cases per

*continued on pg. 2
housing units may understate the impact of foreclosures
on home owners that have a mortgage. The denominator
here includes all housing units in Wisconsin--which
includes homes that do not have an associated mortgage.
This is done for ease of data accessibility.

Map 1 shows the distribution of foreclosure cases by
Wisconsin counties in 2007. As might be expected,
the most populous regions of the state have the most
foreclosure cases. That year, 25% of all Wisconsin
foreclosure cases occurred in Milwaukee County, although
it only accounts for 16% of housing units in Wisconsin.
Counties in the southeast and Fox River Valley regions of
the state have the highest counts of foreclosure cases.

The map of foreclosure case rates (Map 2) shows a much
different picture than the map of total foreclosure cases.
There is more variation across the state--high foreclosure
case rates are not limited to the counties with high
population. Dane County, which had the second highest
number of foreclosure cases (819) in 2007, had the eleventh
lowest rate when expressed as the number of cases
per thousand housing units (3.89 per thousand).
Sheboygan County, which had the highest rate in the state--16.49 per thousand
housing units, much higher than the 7.52 rate for the entire state. Milwaukee, Kenosha, and Rock Counties in the southeast all had high rates of foreclosure cases, while Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix Counties had high rates in the west. The northern band of counties between Bayfield and Florence show low rates of foreclosure cases.

Maps 3a and 3b both show foreclosure case rates for 2000. Map 3a shows the rates using the same scale as shown in Map 2 for 2007. Most counties in 2000 would be in the lowest classification for 2007. Most of the counties with the highest rates in 2007, also had high rates in 2000. This map gives a good idea about just how much the foreclosure case rate has risen. Map 3b shows the foreclosure case rate in 2000 using a scale that shows more variation within
shows some similarities--higher rates in the southeast-
and some differences--there was more variation in the
northern band of counties in 2000 than there was in 2007.

Between 2000 and 2007, 13 counties moved
up the rank of foreclosure case rates within
the state by 10 slots or more.
Fourteen counties moved down the
rankings by 10 slots or more.
2008 is shaping up to be even
worse than recent
years. The number
of foreclosure cases between January to September 2007 and January to September 2008 has increased for all but four counties.” There has been a 31% increase in foreclosure activity in the state between these two time periods. If the trend seen in the first nine months of 2008 continues through the end of the year, then Sheboygan County will once again have the highest foreclosure case rate in the state.

Source: UW-Extension’s Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED). For more information about these and other data, continue to “On the Web.” Also, be sure to check with CCED for more up-to-date information.

*Portage County is not included in these data.

**ON THE WEB: Foreclosure Data: UWEX, CCAP, & RealtyTrac**

Foreclosure data is readily available on various websites. A good starting place is UW-Extension’s Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED) website, found here: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/economies/communityindicators/Indicators_Links.cfm#subprime. Several reports produced through their “Community Indicators” section offer insight into how the foreclosure crisis is affecting Wisconsin. In addition to reports, Extension offers the data underlying the reports through downloadable Excel documents. County foreclosure data is taken from non-duplicate cases reported by the Wisconsin’s Consolidated Court Automation Program (CCAP) system. Annual data are collected for 2000 to 2007 and quarterly data are presented for 2008. Additionally, the Center for Community and Economic Development offers a useful video that shows how to access CCAP data, found here: http://www.uwex.edu/li/camtasia/foreclosures/foreclosure_filings.html. CCAP data can be found at http://www.wicourts.gov/ and continuing to “Case Search,” then “Circuit Court.” Unfortunately, Portage County is not included within this dataset. Additionally, in preparation for distributing HUD Neighborhood stabilization funds, the CCED has created a worksheet and maps for the Department of Commerce that illustrate foreclosure cases by census tract. See: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/foreclosure_cases_censustract.cfm

A company called RealtyTrac provides some of the most followed statistics regarding housing trends and foreclosures in the country. This is a good place to start for national level data. However, as RealtyTrac does not report on 900 rural counties in the US, users interested in rural areas (like much of Wisconsin) may not be able to find what they need through this website. It is also important to note that RealtyTrac reports “foreclosure filings”. These data are useful for making state comparisons given the lack of public data for other states. RealtyTrac can be found here: http://www.realtytrac.com/.

Recently, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York added dynamic maps to its web site. These maps show conditions and density of owner-occupied subprime mortgage loans for the states, counties and zip codes in the United States. The maps are based on data for owner-occupied mortgage loans that have been securitized into a product that is categorized as subprime, based on the grade assigned to the security. See: http://www.newyorkfed.org/mortgagemaps/

### Image: Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA) website
FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

As we near the end of 2008, somber and sobering economic news is front and center in most media outlets and at almost every level imaginable. It has been a tumultuous year politically and economically and there are reminders everywhere of the challenges that face many people and communities in Wisconsin. One of the more visible and painful results of the economic malaise swirls around housing and homeownership and so the focus of this issue of Population Notes is on county level data on foreclosures in Wisconsin. As our feature article shows, there were significant increases in the number and the rates of foreclosures in 2007 and in 2008 through the first nine months of the year. The article makes use of data compiled by colleagues at the Center for Community and Economic Development and the analysis presented here only begins to scratch the surface in terms of a difficult issue and really only serves to point the way for thinking about the ripple effects on local communities and economies. For example, here in the APL, we work with school districts to help them understand and anticipate trends in enrollment out into the future and now are working through ways to incorporate the downturn in the economy and the housing market into our projections. The issue of home foreclosures in Wisconsin is distressing and catastrophic for many communities and it is our hope that what we present here may be of some use for colleagues who are working to address the crisis.

Regards, Dan

TRIVIA QUESTION

We know that the current housing market crisis is related to subprime lending. What Wisconsin county had the highest percent of conventional mortgages by subprime lenders in 2004?

19.4% of Milwaukee County’s home mortgages were through subprime lenders. Jackson County (19.1%) and Juneau County (18.6%) were not far behind.

Source: UW-Extension Center for Community and Economic Development through Dataplace, www.dataplace.org