

A Resource At Risk: The Twin Cities Region's Manufactured Housing in 2015

Key findings

Manufactured homes—factory-made dwelling units built on permanent chassis (transportable frames)—made up 1.3% of all housing units in the Twin Cities region in 2015. Manufactured housing is an important and often overlooked affordable housing asset in the Twin Cities region: nearly 39,000 residents, most of whom have low incomes, live in manufactured homes in the region's manufactured home parks.

Every year since 1975 we have surveyed manufactured home parks in the Twin Cities region to develop data on the number of spaces (pads), the number of manufactured homes, and the parks' occupancy trends. This *Metro-Stats* uses our survey and federal data sources to provide a snapshot of manufactured housing in the Twin Cities region today and the development trends that may affect its future.

Our focus

How many Twin Cities residents live in manufactured home parks?

Are development trends affecting manufactured home parks in the region?

How do manufactured home parks expand housing options?

Our findings

In 2015, nearly 39,000 residents lived in manufactured home parks across the Twin Cities region, about as many people as live in the City of Maplewood.

Typically, residents of manufactured housing have incomes well below the metro midpoint. The majority of residents are White; however, Latinos are overrepresented in the region's manufactured housing.

[Below](#)

Over the past 25 years, the region has seen a steady loss of manufactured home parks: no new parks have been built since 1991, but 10 have closed in this period.

Redevelopment pressures, aging infrastructure, and new transportation investments are putting the future of manufactured home parks in the region at risk.

[Page 5](#)

Manufactured housing is an affordable option for low-income residents and enables homeownership for economically disadvantaged families.

Today's vacancies at manufactured home parks could house an additional 1,200 to 1,900 low-income households. For context, about 800 units of affordable housing were added to the region's housing stock in 2014.

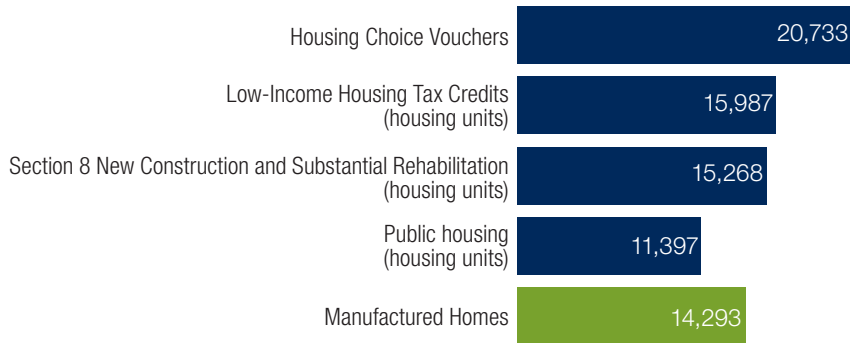
[Page 6](#)

Manufactured homes are a small but important part of the region's housing stock

In 2015, the seven-county region had 14,293 manufactured homes in 83 manufactured home parks. This represents 1.3% of the overall housing units in the region. These parks are found in 51 cities and townships, about a quarter of the Twin Cities region's jurisdictions. Our data show that nearly 39,000 people live in manufactured homes in the seven-county Twin Cities region in 2015—about the same number as live in the City of Maplewood.

Manufactured home parks provide an important housing option for the region's low-income residents—and do so without subsidies. Manufactured homes outnumber public housing units and nearly outnumber affordable rental units constructed or rehabilitated with Low-Income Housing Tax Credit dollars (Figure 1). Manufactured housing, however, is often overlooked as a source of affordable housing relative to these other public programs.

FIGURE 1. AFFORDABLE HOUSING RESOURCES AND MANUFACTURED HOMES IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION

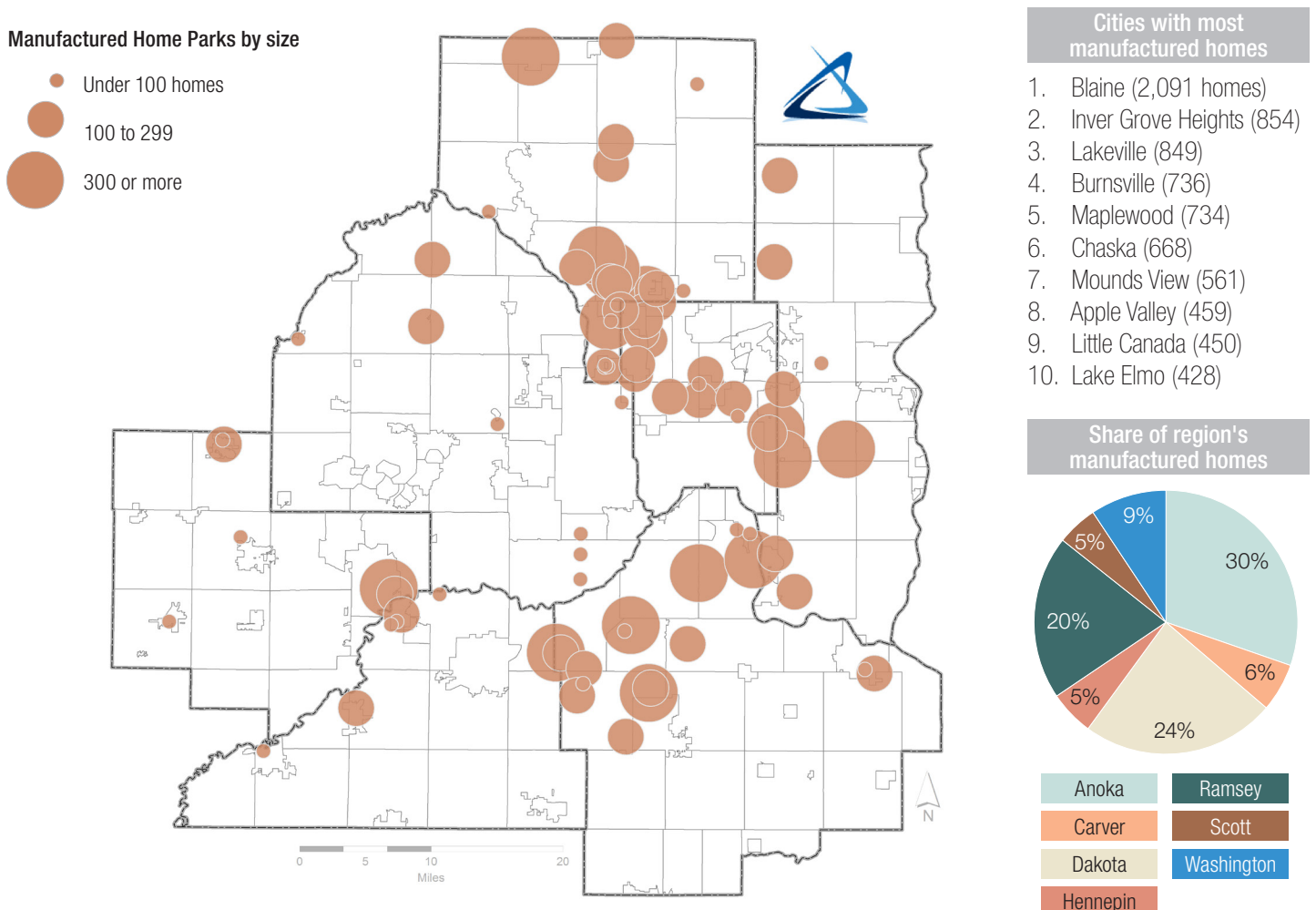


Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Picture of Subsidized Households, 2015*; National Housing Preservation Database, 2016; Metropolitan Council, *Manufactured Home Park Survey, 2015*.

Manufactured housing is primarily located in Anoka, Dakota, and Ramsey counties

The region’s manufactured home parks are distributed across the seven counties—however, most are in Anoka, Ramsey and Dakota counties (Figure 2). In 2015, Anoka County had about a quarter of the region’s manufactured home parks and 30% of its homes. Dakota and Ramsey counties had around a fifth of the parks and 24% and 20% of its homes, respectively. Together, these three counties had nearly two-thirds of the region’s manufactured home parks and three-quarters of manufactured homes in 2015.

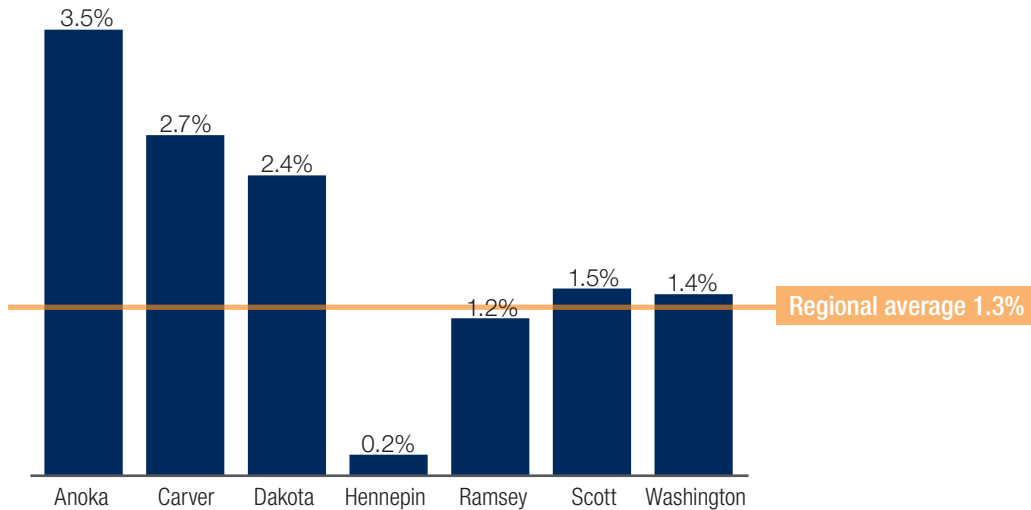
FIGURE 2. MANUFACTURED HOME PARKS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION, 2015



Source: Metropolitan Council, *Manufactured Home Park Survey, 2015*.

Overall, 1.3% of the region’s residents live in manufactured home parks (Figure 3). With the second-smallest number of manufactured homes and the largest county population, Hennepin County has the lowest share of residents living in manufactured housing at 0.2%. In contrast, Carver County (2.7%) had a share above the regional average despite its small number of parks because of its relatively smaller population. Given the large numbers of parks in Anoka and Dakota counties, these two counties had shares well above the regional average—3.5% and 2.4% respectively.

FIGURE 3. SHARE OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN MANUFACTURED HOMES BY COUNTY, 2015

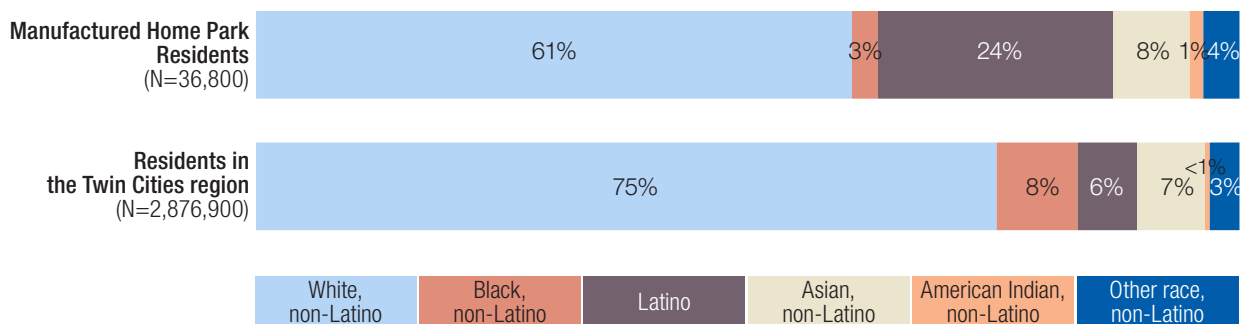


Source: Metropolitan Council Preliminary Population Estimates, 2015 (May 2016); Metropolitan Council, Manufactured Home Park Survey, 2015.

Manufactured home residents are racially and ethnically diverse and have low incomes

Overall, the region’s parks are more racially and ethnically diverse than the region as a whole. Among residents of color, Latinos are especially overrepresented in the parks. Nearly a quarter (24%) of manufactured home residents are Latino, compared to only 6% in the region (Figure 4). While the shares of Asians, American Indian and other residents of color residing in parks are proportional to their shares in the region, Black residents are underrepresented in the parks. Only 3% of the residents living in manufactured home parks are Black, compared to 8% of the region’s residents.

FIGURE 4. RACE AND ETHNICITY OF MANUFACTURED HOME PARK RESIDENTS VERSUS REGION OVERALL



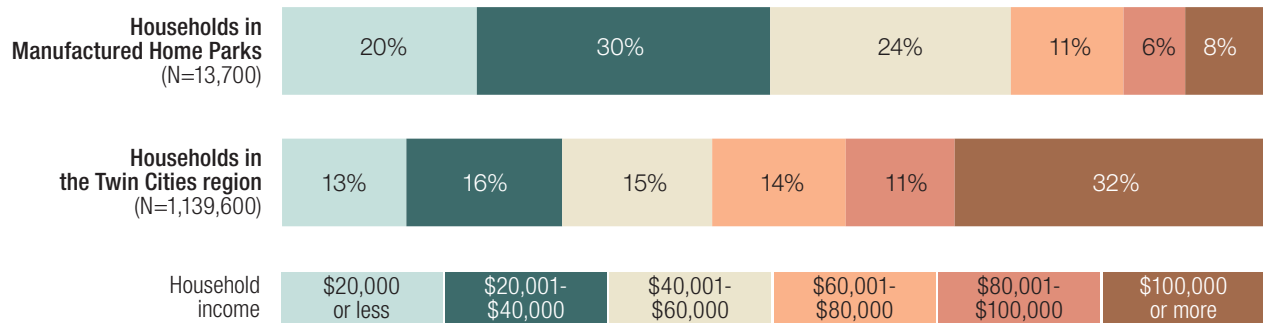
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2010-2014.

Note: The Ns here do not match other figures because the data source differs, and race and ethnicity may not be available for all persons.

Manufactured home parks are especially important for the region’s very low- and extremely low-income residents. Parks serve some of the lowest income families in the region. In 2010-2014, the median income for owners of manufactured housing units (\$40,000) is less than half of the median income of homeowners in the region

(\$86,000). Households living in manufactured homes are more likely to have lower incomes than the region's households (Figure 5). For instance, nearly three-quarters of households residing in manufactured homes have incomes below \$60,000 compared to only 44% of the region's households.

FIGURE 5. HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF MANUFACTURED HOME PARK RESIDENTS VERSUS REGION OVERALL



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2010-2014.
 Note: The Ns here do not match other figures because the data source differs, and income may not be available for all households.

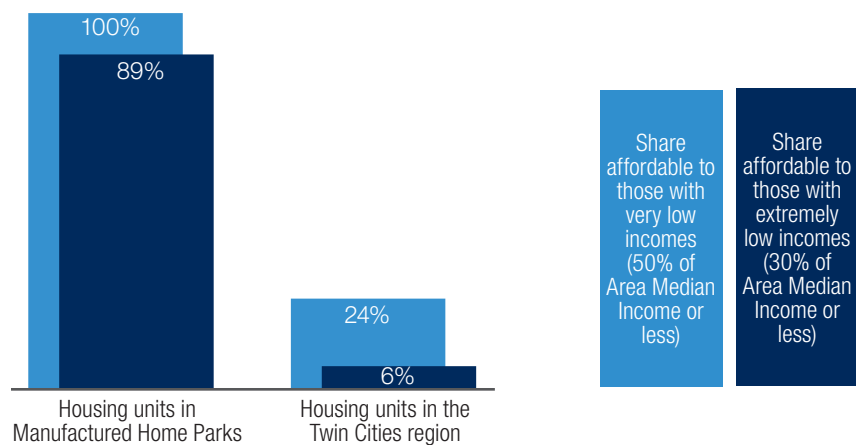
Poverty figures tell a similar story about how manufactured home parks provide housing to lower-income residents (Figure 6).¹ In manufactured home parks, 44% of residents live in households with incomes at or below 185% of federal poverty level, compared to 22% of all residents in the region. The parks are also an important source of housing for the region's residents with disabilities: 14% of the park residents have disabilities compared to 9% of the residents of the region.

Manufactured homes differ from traditional homes in terms of the ownership of land on which the building sits. Manufactured home owners often do not own the land but instead rent it from a park owner who provides a foundation along with utilities such as water, sewer, electricity, and storm shelters.

Manufactured housing provides an affordable source of housing for very low- and extremely-low income residents and enables homeownership for economically disadvantaged families.

The stock of manufactured homes is far more affordable than other types of housing. A much higher portion of manufactured homes are affordable to households earning 30% and 50% of Area Median Income compared with housing units across the region overall.²

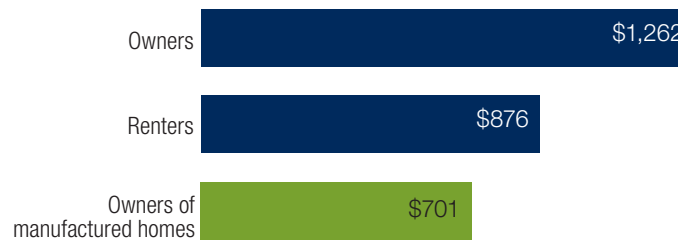
FIGURE 6. AFFORDABILITY OF MANUFACTURED HOMES VERSUS REGION'S HOUSING UNITS OVERALL



Source: Metropolitan Council Estimates from MetroGIS Regional Parcel Datasets for 2014/2015; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 2008-2012; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2009-2013.

Manufactured homes also offer homeownership opportunities to families for whom ownership is otherwise difficult or not possible. In fact, the homeownership rate among manufactured home residents (90%) is higher than the rate for the region's residents (74%). Moreover, manufactured homes house families at costs that are much lower than other types of housing with median monthly housing costs for manufactured home owners only 55% of the median monthly housing costs of homeowners in the region (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. MEDIAN MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS BY HOUSING TENURE/TYPE, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Housing Survey, 2013.
 Note: Data presented here are for the 16-county Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Trends affecting manufactured home parks in the Twin Cities region

The region's manufactured home park stock has declined steadily over the last 25 years. No new parks have been built since 1991 but 10 parks have closed since then. Redevelopment pressures, aging infrastructure, and locations near anticipated transportation investments are putting manufactured home parks at risk.

Redevelopment In locations where land prices are relatively high, redevelopment pressures often put manufactured home parks out of business. For instance, Collins Mobile Home Park in Bloomington closed in 1994 to make room for Wal-Mart, Shady Lane Court in Bloomington was bought out by a condo developer 2006, and Spring Lake Park's SLP Mobile Home Park closed in 2014 as the owners sold the land for redevelopment. Another park in Saint Anthony, Lowry Grove, is currently in the process of closing due to the sale of the property to a developer.

Redevelopment pressures, aging infrastructure, and locations near anticipated transportation investments put manufactured home parks, a valuable source of affordable housing, at risk.

Aging infrastructure Aging infrastructure is another significant threat to the region's manufactured home parks. Water and sewer systems that are typically privately owned require costly repairs as they approach the end of their expected useful life—usually 40 to 50 years. Of the 83 parks that existed in the region in 2015, 90% were at least 40 years old. This suggests that in the coming decades water and sewer system problems are likely to burden park owners, at times threatening the financial viability of parks across the region.

There are already examples of closures due to infrastructure problems. For instance, in 2007, growing local infrastructure problems prompted the Washington County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the land owner, to close Whispering Oaks in Oakdale for a new mixed-income development. Woodlyn Court in Anoka closed in 2008 because the owners decided that it would be too expensive to repair the park's aging septic system. The Park of Four Seasons in Blaine has been experiencing problems with its water system, making it vulnerable to closure.

Road improvement projects In some instances, road expansions make manufactured home parks vulnerable to closure since many tend to be located along major thoroughfares. For instance, Mounds View Mobile Home Park is currently facing the risk of losing a number of manufactured home units due to right-of-way issues related to the building of a sound barrier along I-35W. Losses in units in Colonial Village, another park along I-35W in Mounds View, may happen due to similar right-of-way issues. Similarly, road improvements projected to take place in Jackson Township at the intersection of Highway 41 and Highway 169 are likely to affect two parks: Jackson Heights Trailer Park and Mobile Manor Court.

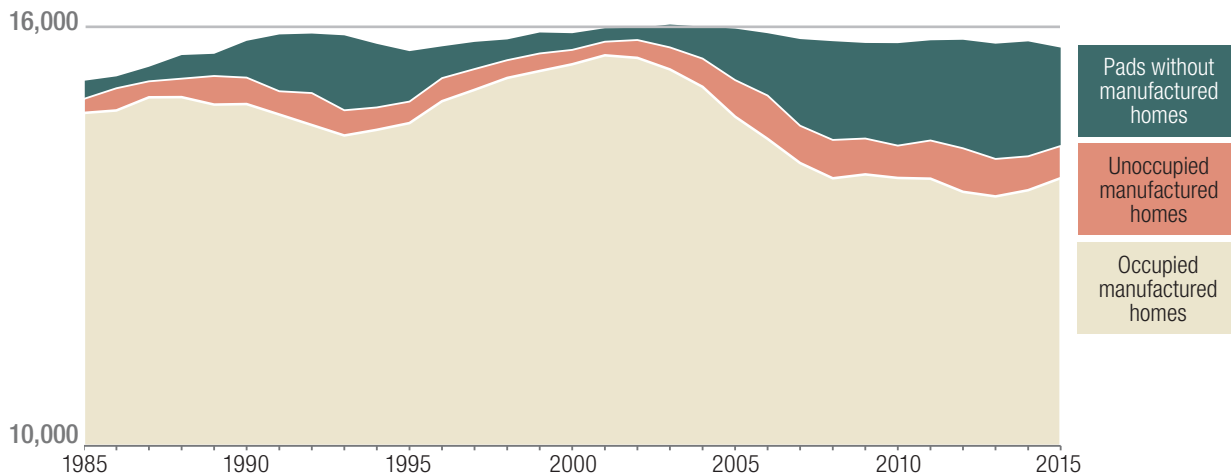
Manufactured housing expands the region's affordable housing options

Despite the steady closure of parks since 1991, the number of available pads in the region has barely changed, suggesting that expansions of existing parks made up for pads lost due to park closures (Figure 8). This underscores another key trend in manufactured housing: since 2000, manufactured home parks have been an increasingly underutilized resource. While the number of pads in the region's parks (park capacity) has remained fairly constant, the number of manufactured homes and their occupancy has declined noticeably over the last decade and a half. As a result, the region had 1,408 empty pads and 460 unoccupied manufactured homes in 2015.

A number of factors contributed to these vacancies:

- During the housing boom, easy access to credit enabled many manufactured home residents to buy 'stick built' homes, reducing the demand for manufactured homes.
- The Great Recession that followed the housing boom hurt low-income residents of the region especially hard, and job loss may have caused manufactured homeowners to lose their homes. Most of these vacant homes were purchased and moved to North Dakota, where the oil boom created a severe housing shortage.
- In the aftermath of the housing crisis, the limited credit available for the purchase of manufactured homes has made it harder to buy manufactured homes in the region.

FIGURE 8. MANUFACTURED HOME PARK USE, 1985-2015



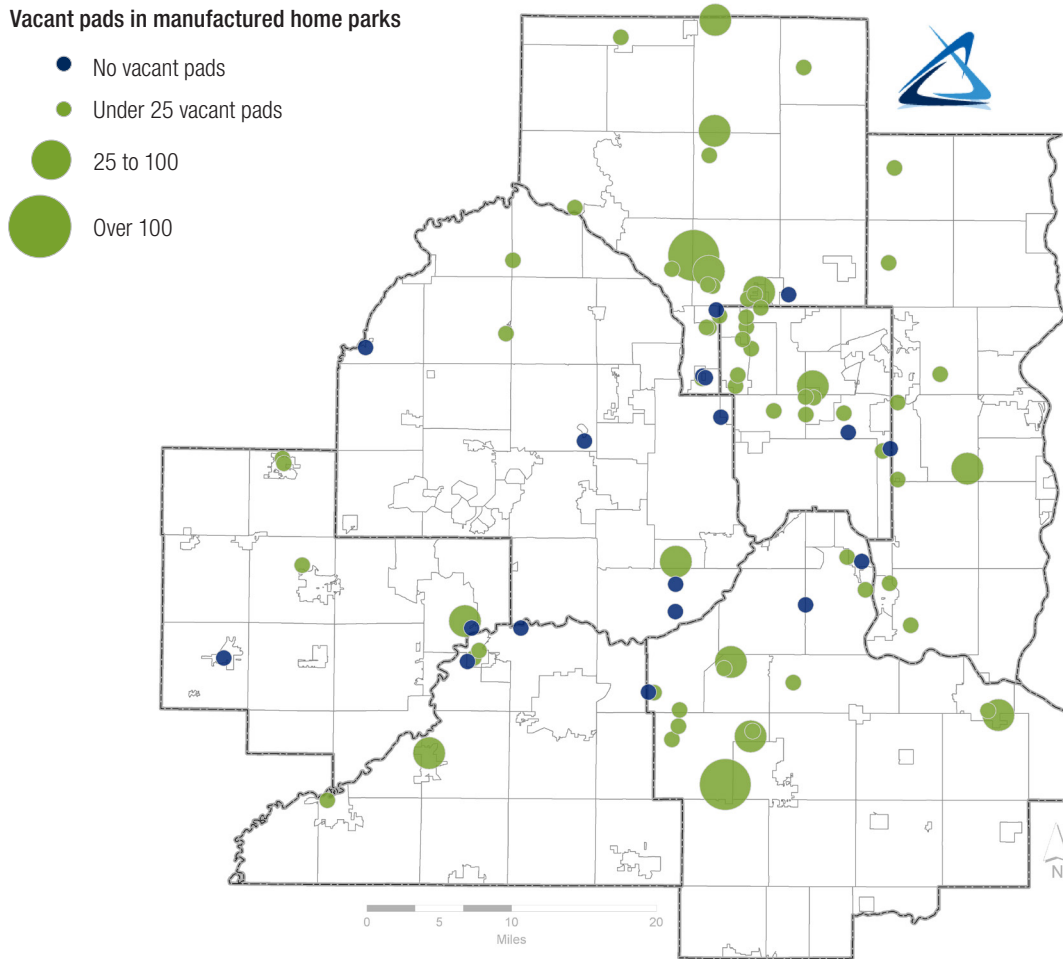
Source: Metropolitan Council, Manufactured Home Park Survey, 1985-2015.

Figure 9 shows the number of vacant pads within each manufactured home park in the region. This unused park capacity presents an opportunity for the Twin Cities to expand its affordable housing stock:

- If all of the empty pads had a double-wide home placed on them, and a family moved into each unoccupied home, the region could provide affordable housing to 1,164 additional families.
- If each empty pad had a single-wide home on it and a family rented or owned all of the unoccupied homes, this would mean 1,868 more affordable homes in the region.

For context, in 2014, the Twin Cities region added 777 units that were affordable to households that made 60% or less than the Area Median Income. Filling the existing manufactured home park spaces and unoccupied manufactured homes could offer low-income residents more affordable housing in one fell swoop than the region has added to its housing stock in 2013 and 2014 combined.

FIGURE 9. VACANT PADS AT MANUFACTURED HOME PARKS IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION, 2015



Source: Metropolitan Council, *Manufactured Home Park Survey, 2015*.

Endnotes

Unless otherwise cited, data in the text of this report is based on our analysis of 2010-2014 American Community Survey Public Microdata Sample published by the U.S. Census Bureau and Metropolitan Council's Manufactured Home Park Survey.

¹ Typically, "poverty" refers to 100% of the federal poverty threshold. However, this is an unrealistically low measure of poverty for the Twin Cities given the region's relatively high median income. This report uses 185% of the federal poverty threshold as its measure of poverty. See Metropolitan Council's report, *Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities Region*, Appendix, p. A36 for more information on how we measure poverty.

² Area Median Income (AMI) is a measure determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that describes midpoints of income for households within a region. In 2014, the Area Median Income for the 16-County Minneapolis-St.Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metropolitan Statistical Area for a family of four was \$82,900.

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