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Article updated: 10/8/2013 10:06 AM

## Report: Batavia sees decrease in affordable housing

By **Susan Sarkauskas**

A housing analysis indicates that the amount of affordable housing in Batavia has decreased since 2000, according to a report given to the Batavia City Council Monday night.

The preliminary report, however, doesn't say why the decrease happened, such as whether there were fewer units in 2011 than 2000, the time period studied, whether increases in housing prices outpaced increases in household income, or whether incomes dropped.

"Affordable" housing, according to planners from Kane County and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, costs 30 percent or less of a household's income.

The housing study is being conducted on behalf of Batavia, North Aurora, Geneva and St. Charles, dubbed the Fox Valley Cluster, to determine what the towns have in housing stock and what they may need by 2040. It is part of CMAP's "Homes for a Changing Region" initiative, begun in 2005.

By the end of 2014, CMAP will have prepared similar reports for 39 towns grouped in clusters.

"Really, housing issues aren't constrained by municipal borders," said Brett Hanlon, a Kane County planner who is working on the report.

Batavia was the first of the Fox Valley Cluster participants to receive an update. There will also be a cluster report.

According to the planners, national and regional trends indicate a desire for more rental housing, and for smaller lot sizes.

The vacant site of the former Siemens-Furnas factory, at McKee Street and Van Nortwick Avenue, was identified as a "key area" for housing development in Monday's presentation. It is one of the largest available sites in the city limits, other than the Mooseheart farmland the city annexed in 2011.

The study assumes the city's population will grow slightly, to 26,045 by 2040. It also factors in senior citizens as an increased percentage of the population.

The report showed that in 2000, about 75 percent of owner-occupied dwellings fell in the "affordable" category, and 7 percent in "unaffordable," according to Kane County planner Ellen Johnson. By 2011 about 65 percent of the dwellings were affordable, and 12 percent unaffordable.

"This trend is seen throughout the region," Johnson said.

Batavia has an adequate supply of affordable owner-occupied housing for households making \$50,000 to \$100,000, according to the report; above and below that, demand exceeds supply.

“The households at the lower end are paying an unaffordable amount for housing,” she said. Without more units, the gap will widen.

The study shows a shortfall in affordable rental housing on the low and high ends of the income spectrum, and the planners expect demand will increase across the board.

The planners will conduct a community workshop and an online workshop in November.

A draft report will be presented to the city councils and village board in February, and the final report will be released in May.

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