
State of Illinois Defense Industry Adjustment (DIA) Program

Rockford Region Community Profile

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
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**Nathalie P. Voorhees Center
for Neighborhood and
Community Improvement**



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Regional Community Profile

This community profile for the two-county Rockford region provides an overview of regional demographic and housing trends. Several of the indicators are analyzed at the county level and others at the census tract level. Conducting demographic and housing market analyses provides better understanding of local trends and is foundational for economic analysis; such analyses plays an integral role in developing a sound assessment of economic challenges and informing policy decisions to address these challenges.

This profile focuses on the following eight indicators: Population, Educational Attainment, Median Household Income, Median Home Value, Median Gross Rent, Residential Vacancy Rates, Number of Owner-Occupied Units, and Number of Renter-Occupied Units. The demographic and housing indicators selected provide a robust foundation from which to evaluate community and economic change; analysis of demographic and housing market changes offers an understanding of how populations and housing trends fit into the regional economy and markets.

Change in population over time can be an indicator of regional health, with population growth signifying economic, educational, and housing opportunity. Educational attainment data help in assessing the socioeconomic condition of the population. Median household income serves as a measure of economic well-being, and is used to evaluate poverty status and local economic opportunity.

With regard to housing indicators, the median home value signals what a home might sell for if it was on the market, and points to the strength of a housing market within a particular geography. Median gross rent provides a reliable measure of costs, and can help to make assessments of affordability and housing cost burden. Residential vacancy data is a good measure of neighborhood stability, and an indicator of the health of a housing market within a specific economic cycle. Changes in housing tenure and shifts in the number of owner-occupied and renter-occupied units are useful measures to understand area trends and can help inform regional economic and community development planning efforts.

This report covers the two-county Rockford region comprised of Boone and Winnebago County. Unless otherwise indicated, regional data refer to data compiled from these two counties.

For any questions, please contact Yittayih Zelalem, Co-Director of the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood & Community Improvement at the University of Illinois at Chicago at [312-996-6674](tel:312-996-6674) or e-mail at yittazel@uic.edu.

Rockford Region Demographic and Housing Highlights

- As of 2014, the population of the Rockford region was 346,031 which marks a 2.0% increase from 2005 figures, outpacing state growth during this period. Boone County saw steady population growth since 2005, adding an additional 4,000 residents. Winnebago County's population peaked in 2010 and had declined by 2014, but remains above 2005 figures.
- 29.3% of the region's population age 25 and older holds a college degree (Associates, Bachelors, Graduate, or Professional degree). This figure is lower than the state and national averages. Figures have increased slightly since 2005.
- Median household income in the Rockford region was \$49,266 in 2014, which is slightly lower than the state and national averages. Similar to state and national figures, median income has yet to rebound to 2005 levels, with declines being slightly more severe in Rockford than in Illinois as a whole.
- Median home value in the two-county region was \$124,619 in 2014, which is slightly lower than the state and national figure of \$175,700. Declines in home value following the housing bubble and mortgage crisis were less severe in Rockford, with prices in 2014 sitting 13.5% below 2005 housing value levels. Meanwhile, housing values in the State of Illinois fell 20.5% from 2005 to 2014.
- Median gross rent in the Rockford region was \$748 in 2014, which is lower than the state and national average of \$903 and \$920 respectively. This marks a 2.4% increase from 2005 figures.
- The residential vacancy rate in the Rockford region sits at slightly below 4%, which is higher than the state and national average. Figures have decreased since peaking at just above 5% in 2013.
- As of 2014, 68.7% of households lived in owner-occupied units while 31.3% live in renter-occupied units. Homeownership rates outpace the state and national average, but declined at a greater rate since 2005.

Population

As of 2014, 346,031 people lived in the Rockford region. Both Boone and Winnebago County experienced net population growth since 2005. Boone County's growth was steady, adding an additional 4,000 residents by 2014. Winnebago's population peaked in 2010 at 295,803 and has since declined to 292,026, but remains above 2005 figures. As a whole, the region grew by over 2%, which outpaces that of Illinois as a whole.

Table 1: Population, 2005-2014

	2005	2010	2014	Change, % (2005-2014)
Boone County	50,483	52,400	54,005	6.98
Winnebago County	288,695	295,803	292,026	1.15
Two-County Region	339,178	348,203	346,031	2.02
Illinois	12,763,371	12,785,043	12,868,747	0.83
U.S.	296,410,404	301,461,533	314,107,084	5.97

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates.

Educational Attainment

In 2014, 29.3% of the Rockford regional population age 25 years and over had a college degree (Associates, Bachelor's, Graduate, or Professional degree). This figure is lower than the state and national average, with 39.4% of all Illinois residents holding an Associate's degree or higher. Concurrent with state and nationwide trends, the number of persons with college degrees in the region increased from figures in 2005. Similarly, the proportion of those with less than a high school education declined during this period (See Table 2).¹ Educational attainment data is helpful in assessing socioeconomic condition and can be an indicator of work-skill gaps that exist in the region; this would in turn provide insight into the employment sectors in which a region should invest.

¹ Data are classified according to the highest degree or to the highest level of school that a respondent has completed.

Table 2: Educational Attainment, 2009-2014

	Total Population, 25+		% Less than 9 th Grade		% 9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma		% High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)		% Some College, No Degree		% Associates & Bachelor's Degree		% Graduate or Professional Degree	
	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014
Boone County	32,620	34,535	5.8	6.0	8.4	7.6	40	36.2	20.2	22.6	19.2	20.6	6.3	7.0
Winnebago County	194,960	195,836	5.6	4.6	10.7	8.8	34.2	33.4	21.5	23.4	21.2	21.7	6.8	7.9
Two-County Region	227,580	230,371	5.6	4.8	10.4	8.6	35.0	33.8	21.3	23.3	20.9	21.5	6.7	7.8
Illinois	8,309,322	8,560,555	6.3	5.5	8.0	6.9	28.1	27.0	20.6	21.2	25.8	27.2	11.2	12.2
U.S.	197,440,772	209,056,129	6.4	5.8	9.1	7.8	29.3	28.0	20.3	21.2	24.8	26.2	10.1	11.0

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates.

Median Household Income

The 2014 median household income in the Rockford region was \$49,266. Incomes were higher in Boone County when compared to Winnebago County. Median household income has declined nationally and in Illinois since 2005. However, the rate of decline in the Rockford region outpaced that of Illinois and the US, declining almost 8% compared to 6.19% for the state as a whole. As observed in Map 1, growth in income tended to be concentrated in the City of Rockford and areas immediately north.²

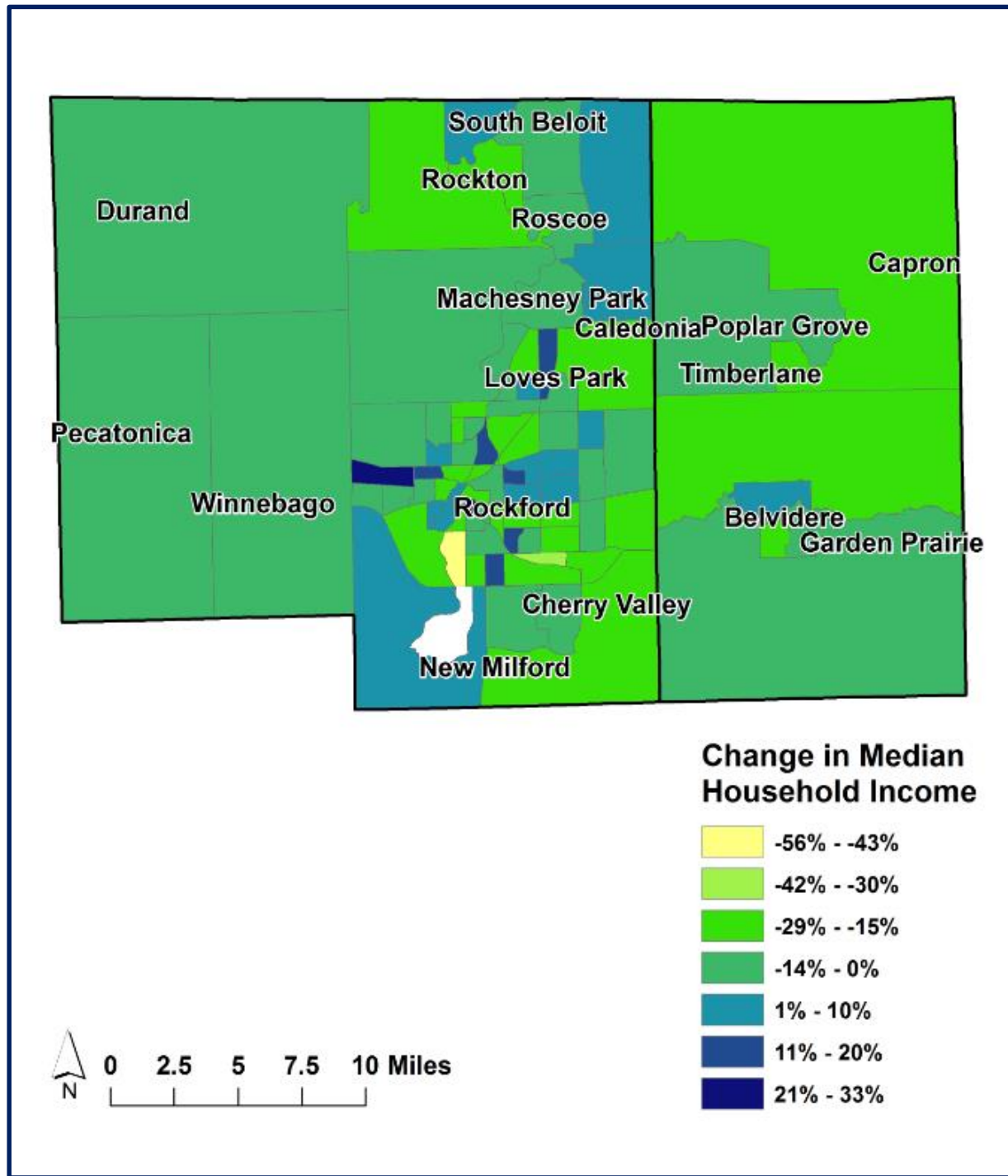
Table 3: Median Household Income

	2005-2009	2010-2014	Change, %
Boone County	65,330	60,166	-7.90
Winnebago County	51,735	47,523	-8.14
Two-County Region	53,529	49,266	-7.96
Illinois	60,938	57,166	-6.19
U.S.	56,748	53,482	-5.76

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates. In 2014 dollars. 2005-2009 figures are adjusted for inflation.

² Income figures are 2014 dollars. Household income refers to the reported amount of income from wages/salaries and other sources in the past twelve months. It serves as a measure of economic well-being and is used to determine poverty status, to understand local economic opportunity, and analyze earning potential.

Map 1: % Change in Median Household Income by Census Tract, 2009-2014



Median Home Value

The 2014 median home value in the Rockford region is \$124,619.³ This is slightly lower than the state and national average. Median value was higher in Boone County and lower in Winnebago County. Home values have declined since 2005 in the wake of the housing bubble and mortgage crisis and have yet to fully rebound. However, dips in the Rockford region were less severe. 2014 values were only 13.54% lower than 2005 levels compared to 20.55% lower in Illinois and 14.12% lower nationally. As observed in Map 2 below, changes in home value varied across the region, with declines observed in Boone County and parts of Rockford and modest value growth seen in areas north of Rockford.

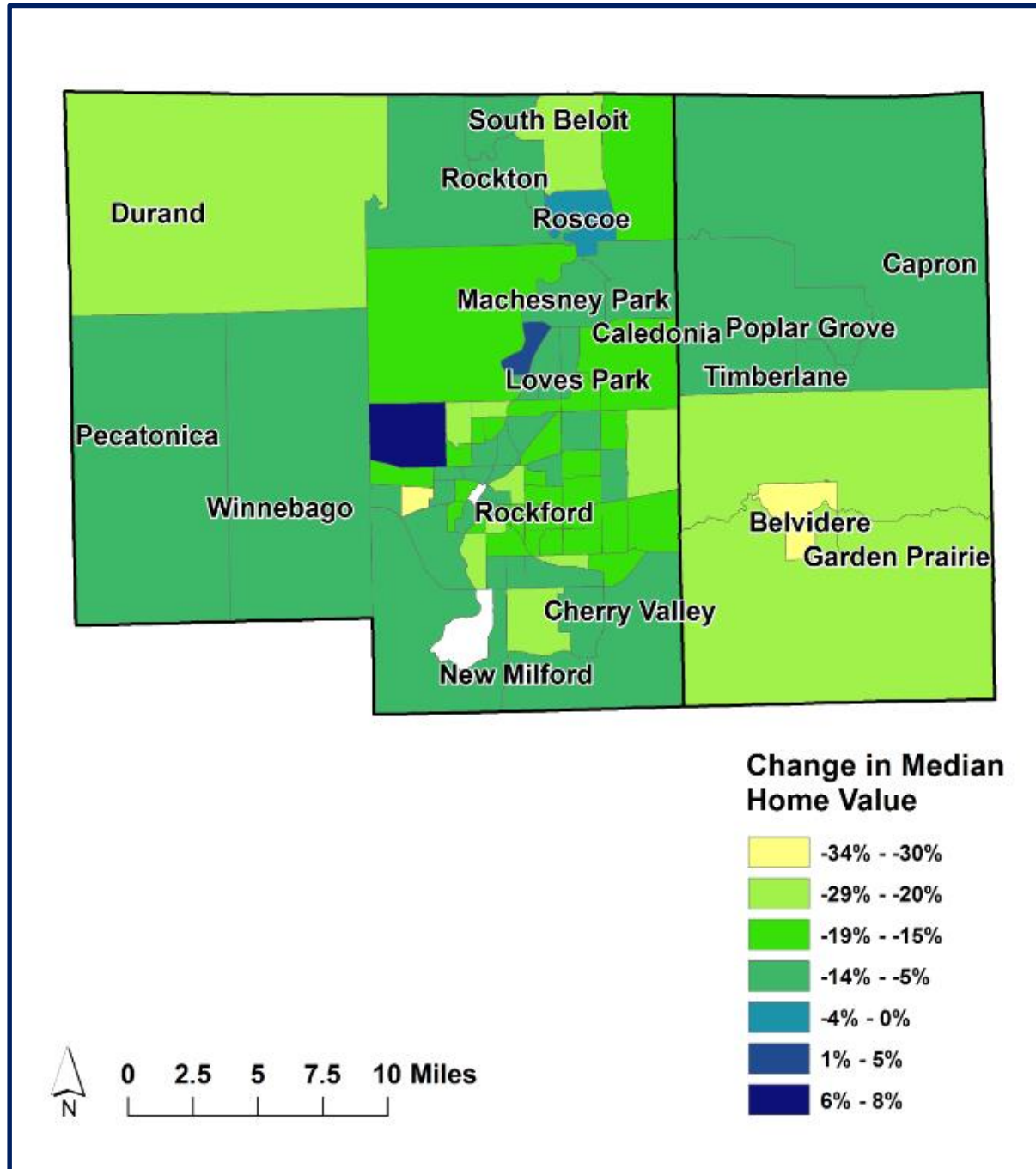
Table 3: Median Home Value

	2005-2009	2010-2014	Change, %
Boone County	183,955	150,900	-17.97
Winnebago County	137,277	119,400	-13.02
Two-County Region	144,129	124,619	-13.54
Illinois	221,143	175,700	-20.55
U.S.	204,591	175,700	-14.12

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates. In 2014 dollars. 2005-2009 figures are adjusted for inflation.

³ Home value refers to an estimate of how much a property would sell for if it were for sale. Because home value is estimated by the survey respondent, it tends to be slightly higher than actual value. These 2009 and 2014 five-year ACS data capture the ups and downs that the housing market has experienced over the past decade.

Map 2: % Change in Median Home Value by Census Tract, 2009-2014



Median Gross Rent

Median gross rent in the Rockford region was \$748 in 2014. This is lower than the state and national average. Counter to state and nation-wide trends, rents in Boone County decreased since 2005 (it is important to note that less than 20% of households in Boone County rent). Rents in Winnebago County increased 3.13% since 2005, slightly outpacing the state and national average. (Roughly 35% of households rent in Winnebago County). Per Map 3, areas of rent growth did not exhibit strong spatial patterns, with increases observed throughout the region.⁴

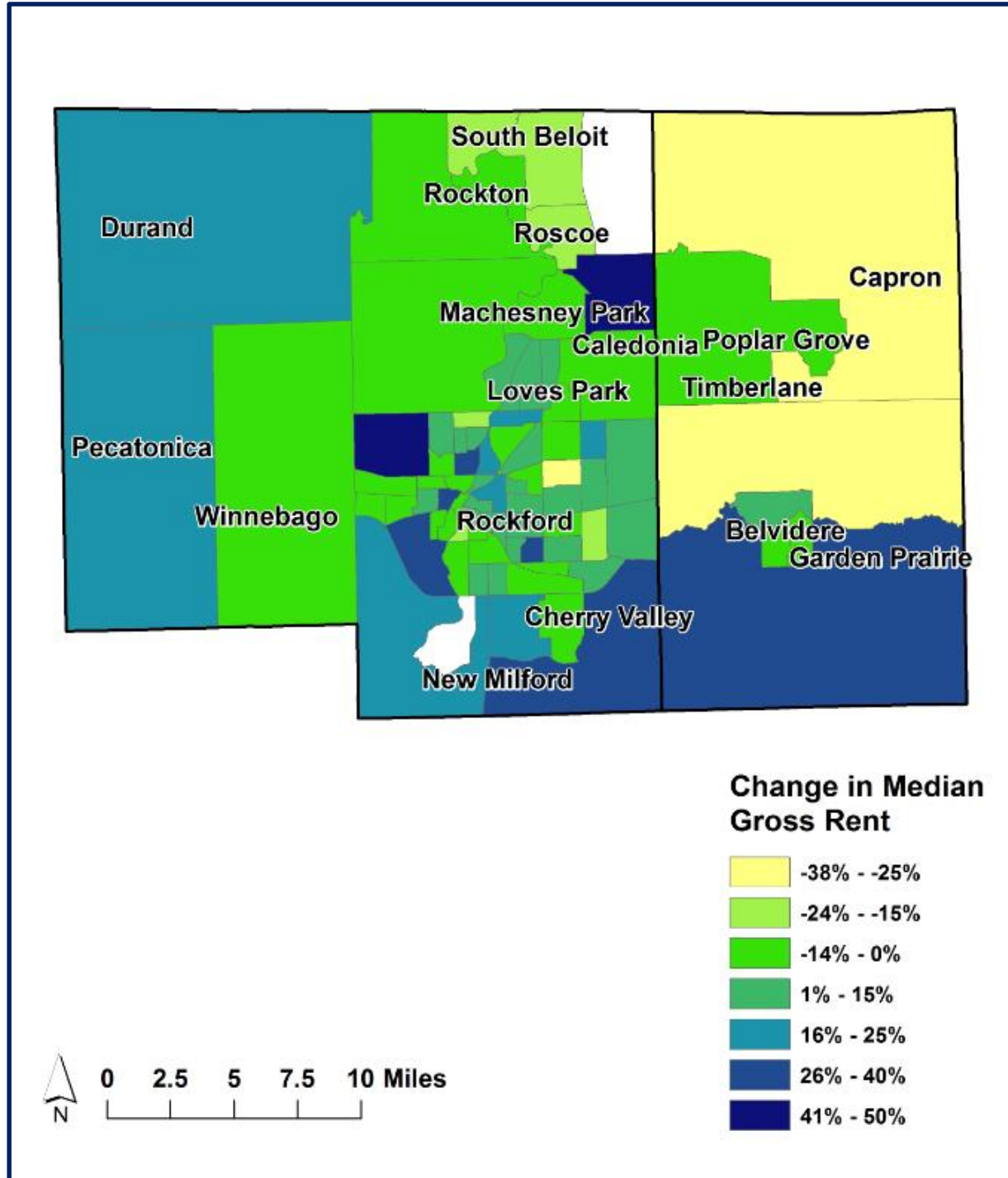
Table 3: Median Gross Rent

	2005-2009	2010-2014	Change, %
Boone County	761	720	-5.44
Winnebago County	727	750	3.13
Two-County Region	730	748	2.37
Illinois	897	903	0.65
U.S.	902	920	2.04

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates. In 2014 dollars. 2005-2009 figures are adjusted for inflation.

⁴ Median gross rent (equaling rent plus utilities) provides a reliable measure regarding the affordability of rental housing, particularly in areas with a relatively homogeneous rental housing stock. Low rents can be an indicator of affordability as well as an indicator of weak housing markets.

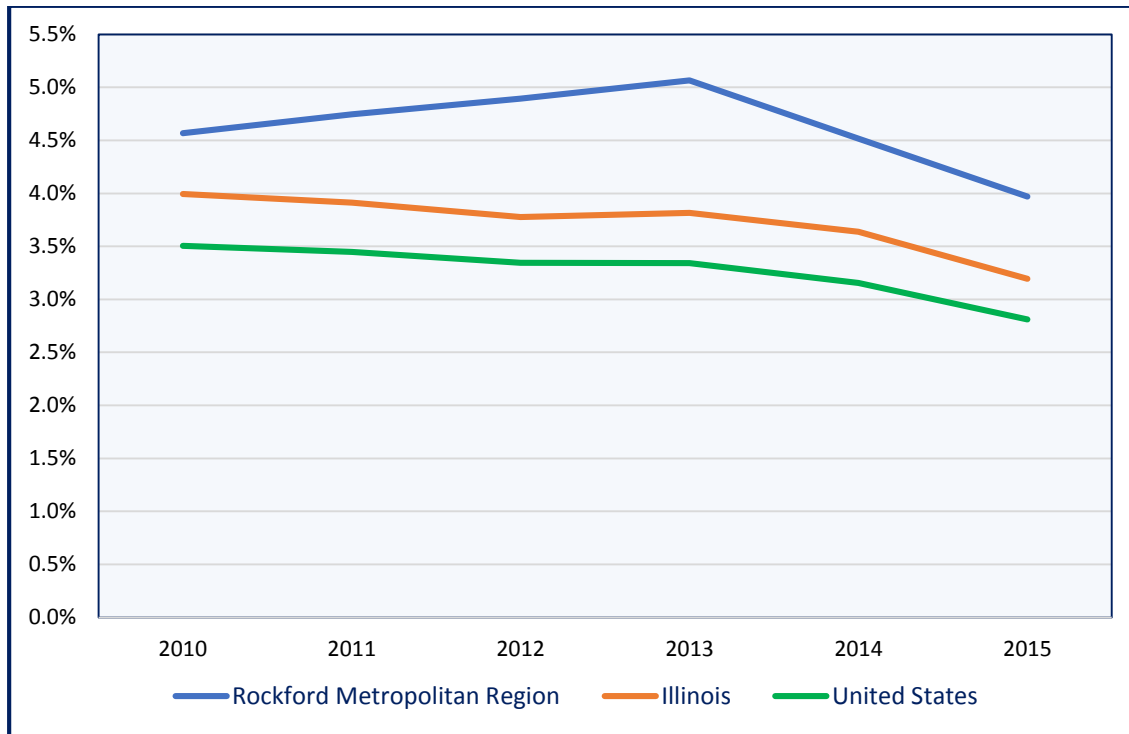
Map 3: % Change in Median Gross Rent by Census Tract, 2009-2014



Residential Vacancy

Residential vacancy rates are slightly higher when compared to Illinois and the US as a whole. Figures peaked at slightly above 5% in 2013, likely in part due to vacancies resulting from the foreclosure crisis. Since then, figures have decreased concurrently with state and national trends and in 2015 sat just below 4%.⁵

Figure 1: Residential Vacancy, 2010-2015



Source: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) USPS Vacancy Data.

⁵ In partnership with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) aggregates data quarterly on addresses identified by the USPS as having been “vacant” or “no stat” in the previous quarter. Vacant addresses are those that are identified as being vacant (not collecting their mail) for 90 days or longer.

Housing Tenure: Owner Occupied Housing Units

As of 2014, 68.7% of households in the Rockford region lived in owner-occupied units which is higher than the state and national averages. Figures and trends differed notably between counties. 82.6% of households in Boone County are owners, which, counter to state and national trends, marks an increase since 2005. Winnebago County figures in 2014 match those of the state, but declined 6.3% since 2005, outpacing drops state- and nation-wide. As observed in Map 4 below, growth in the rate of owner-occupied units was observed in a few tracts in the City of Rockford as well as areas north and east.⁶

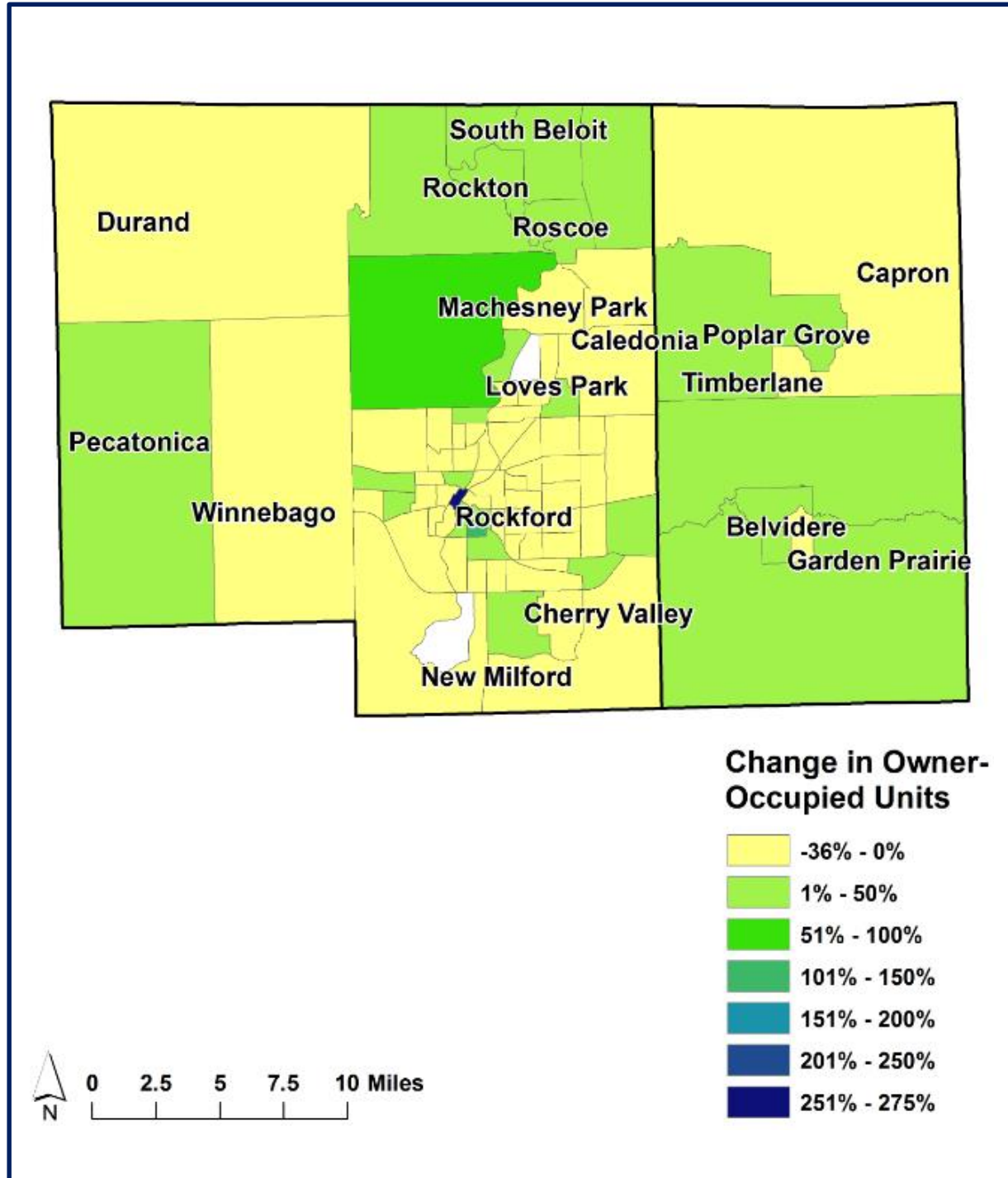
Table 3: Percentage of Owner Occupied Housing Units

	2005-2009	2010-2014	Change, %
Boone County	80.3	82.6	2.9
Winnebago County	71.0	66.5	-6.3
Two-County Region	72.2	68.7	-4.8
Illinois	69.3	66.9	-3.5
U.S.	66.9	64.4	-3.7

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates.

⁶ A housing unit is owner-occupied if the owner or co-owner lives in the unit. It can be with or without a mortgage or have some other forms of outstanding debt. Owner-occupied mobile homes are also included in this category. The percentage of renters versus owners reflects the nature of local housing markets, the type of housing stock available, and local economic conditions.

Map 4: % Change in Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Census Tract, 2009-2014



Housing Tenure: Renter Occupied Housing Units

In 2014, 31.3% of households in the Rockford region lived in renter-occupied units, which is lower than the state and national averages. Counter to state and national trends, the proportion of renter households has declined in Boone County since 2005. Rates of rental units grew 15.3% in Winnebago County, outpacing increases in the state and nation during this period. Growth in rental units occurred throughout the region, with increases observed north and south of the City of Rockford (see Map 5 below).⁷

Table 3: Percentage of Renter Occupied Housing Units

	2005-2009	2010-2014	Change, %
Boone County	19.7	17.4	-11.6
Winnebago County	29.0	33.5	15.3
Two-County Region	27.8	31.3	12.5
Illinois	30.7	33.1	7.8
U.S.	33.1	35.6	7.6

Source: 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 ACS Estimates.

⁷ A renter-occupied unit can be with or without payment of rent, and can include rental units in developments that provide services such as continuing care facilities for people with disabilities or aging.

Map 5: % Change in Renter-Occupied Units by Census Tract, 2009-2014

