

SFGate.com
SFGate.com

Print This Article

Back to Article

Bay Area cities issue fewer housing permits

Carolyn Said, Chronicle Staff Writer

Friday, June 6, 2008

Amid the worst housing downturn since the Depression, fewer units are being built, exacerbating the Bay Area's critical need for places to live, a government group said Thursday.

Cities in the nine Bay Area counties issued 22,843 permits in 2007, down 24 percent from an annual average of 29,978 issued from 1999 through 2006, according to the Association of Bay Area Governments. Particularly striking was that most of the permits were for housing designed for affluent populations.

Only 2,700 permits were for very low income households (defined as earning less than half of an area's median income), 1,462 were for moderate-income households (earning less than 80 percent of the median), and 1,888 were for moderate-income households (earning up to 120 percent of the median).

The vast majority, 16,793 permits, were for above-moderate-income households. "Are we contributing to the increase of working homeless?" said Dixie Baus, director of affordable housing at San Jose's Core Cos., addressing an audience of about 80 planners and officials from cities who attended ABAG's Thursday conference in Berkeley on Bay Area housing.

Baus said the housing downturn and mortgage crunch has made developing affordable housing more difficult, because "banks are scared" to lend money.

Joseph Perkins, CEO of the Home Builders Association of Northern California - whose members build three-quarters of the new housing in the region every year - said that the recent erosion in home prices has not increased affordability because of lenders' reluctance to issue mortgages.

"We need to get banks to finance affordable loans," he said.

The Bay Area needs to plan to make sure it has sufficient housing to match expected growth in jobs and population, several speakers said. Higher-density urban infill projects close to transportation are especially important in an era of \$4-per-gallon gas and increasing concerns about global warming.

"We need to become intelligently more urban (in planning) how and where to house future populations," said Don Weden, former planner for Santa Clara County. California's population will add the population equivalent of another Los Angeles every eight years over coming decades, he said, while the Bay Area's population over the next 25 years is expected to increase by 2 million - the equivalent of adding two more San Joses. Moreover, by 2030, one-fifth of Bay Area residents will be age 65 or older, many of them nondrivers.

"This is a critical public policy issue for local governments," Weden said.

Hot deals 4 u.
Save up to 50%
on our latest messaging devices.

RED HOT DEAL DAYS!

Free Activation Fri-Mon

Free Overnight Shipping
Order today, get it Saturday!

verizonwireless

Learn More

Permits down

Most Bay Area counties issued fewer housing permits in 2007 than they did in previous years.

County	Permits 2007	Permits 1999-2006 average	Change
Alameda	7,367*	4,814	53%
Contra Costa	3,302	6,857	-52
Marin	181	840	-78
Napa	319	747	-57
San Francisco**	2,197	2,180	1
San Mateo	1,185	1,458	-19
Santa Clara	5,543	7,432	-25
Solano	1,013	2,652	-62
Sonoma	1,736	2,998	-42
Bay Area	22,843	29,978	-24

*While most cities saw decreases, Dublin issued 3,950 permits, up from an average of 548 in the past, which offset declines in other cities in the county.

**San Francisco numbers are units constructed, not permits.

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments

E-mail Carolyn Said at csaid@sfgate.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/06/06/BU3M1143B5.DTL>

This article appeared on page **D - 1** of the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Chronicle Sections

© 2008 Hearst Communications Inc. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Contact](#)