Houston, Dallas are hottest markets for housing projects

The Business Journals - by G. Scott Thomas

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Houston, Dallas, New York, Los Angeles and Washington are the nation's hottest housing markets.

New York City may be the nation's largest metropolitan area in terms of population, but it can't compete with Houston when it comes to residential construction activity.

The collective value of all private housing projects authorized in the Houston area last year was $4.17 billion, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That's easily the highest total posted by any of the nation's 366 metros.

Dallas holds second place with $3.87 billion of new privately owned housing units being authorized in 2010, followed by New York with $3.05 billion. All figures encompass central cities and their suburbs.

Rounding out the top five in residential construction valuation are Los Angeles at $2.38 billion and Washington at $2.10 billion.

The latest numbers for all 366 metros can be found in the database below, reflecting the value of all private residential projects that went through the building-permit process last year. (Earlier 65 markets suffer construction declines of more than 75 percent

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Every market across America has suffered a decline in home building activity since 2005.

How seriously has the recession damaged the construction industry?

So severely that every market across America has suffered a decline in activity since 2005.

On Numbers analyzed U.S. Census Bureau data for the 170 metropolitan areas that issued building permits for more than 2,000 housing units in 2005. Every one of those markets experienced a drop of at least 13 percent by 2010. Sixty-five metros fell by 75 percent or more.

The database below has the complete breakdown. Use the tab to isolate the list to a single state, or simply hit Search to see everything at once. Re-sort by clicking any column header. Reverse the direction by clicking a second time

Merced, Calif., was hit the hardest. A total of 3,665 privately owned housing units were authorized in the Merced area in 2005, a figure that plummeted 97.1 percent to 106 in 2010.

Next were two Florida metros: Cape Coral-Fort Myers, with a drop of 95.7 percent, and Port St. Lucie, with a decline of 95.4 percent.

The Atlanta area experienced the sharpest decline of any major market, falling 89.6 percent from 72,861 units authorized in 2005 to 7,575 in 2010.

The Census Bureau defines a housing unit as any self-contained home. A building with 10 apartments, for example, counts as 10 units.

The smallest decline was registered in Gulfport-Biloxi, Miss., which rebuilt after being devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Its five-year drop was 13.8 percent.

Short-term U.S. construction numbers are brighter

The Business Journals - by G. Scott Thomas

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Ron Bath | Business First

101 markets registered one-year gains in construction activity between 2009 and 2010.

Yesterday's edition of On Numbers told the unhappy story of America's construction slowdown since 2005. Today's version takes a shorter -- and more upbeat -- look at the same problem.

On Numbers studied recent construction activity in 170 major markets, as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau. Every single one of those metros, as reported yesterday, experienced a decline between 2005 and 2010.

But the picture is a bit sunnier when confined to 2009-2010, the most recent period for which official construction data are available.

Nearly 60 percent of the major markets -- 101, to be precise -- registered one-year gains in construction activity. San Jose led the way with a 282 percent leap. A total of 1,094 privately owned housing units were authorized in the San Jose area in 2009, jumping to 4,179 in 2010.

Five other markets posted upswings of at least 100 percent: Lansing, Mich.; Fort Collins, Colo.; Detroit; Montgomery, Ala.; and New Haven, Conn.

The following database contains breakdowns for all 170 markets. Use the tab to winnow the list to a single state, or simply hit Search to view the entire database. Click any column header to re-sort the list.

A housing unit, as defined by the Census Bureau, is any self-contained home, regardless of size. A building with 100 apartments, for example, would count as 100 units.

Mobile, Ala., suffered the biggest one-year drop of any market, falling 61.1 percent from 2,635 units in 2009 to 1,026 units in 2010.

The total value of all building permits issued in the 366 metros last year was $88.46 billion. Twenty metros topped $1 billion in residential construction valuation, and another 24 were between $500 million and $1 billion.