



Housing costs in L.A. region push many away

By Kerry Cavanaugh, Staff Writer

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The continued high cost of housing hurts young workers, the middle class and businesses by forcing employees to live far from their jobs, according to a report released Tuesday by the Los Angeles Business Council.

Despite a recent building boom that created more supply and the current foreclosure crisis that has pushed down prices, too few residents can afford to live near their work.

"A lack of housing near job sites consistently serves as one of the major obstacles to doing business in this region, and the situation is getting worse," said Antonio Manning, a vice president for Washington Mutual and one of the report's authors.

The Workforce Housing Scorecard marks the first time the council has attempted to quantify the number of homes versus jobs created in Los Angeles County.

It found that the county added more than 1.4 million residents from 1990 to 2007 but only built about 195,000 housing units.

The San Fernando Valley, the Westside, Santa

Clarita, Santa Monica and Pasadena all boosted home construction to keep pace with new jobs.

But the report doesn't say whether the new homes in those communities were affordable for the people working in those new jobs.

"Where it gets tricky is when you talk affordable housing," said Mary Leslie, the council's president.

Fewer than 11 percent of the homes for sale during the first quarter of 2008 were affordable to families earning the median income of \$53,000.

Since many employees move away from their jobs to find cheaper housing, the council is also pushing the proposed half-percent sales tax that would pay for the "subway to the sea" from downtown to the Westside, the Gold Line extension through the San Gabriel Valley and other public transit improvements.

Legislation was passed over the weekend to allow the sales tax increase. It needs the governor's signature to go on the November ballot.

"We have a sizable group of employers on the Westside that know that transportation infrastructure is critical for future growth," Leslie said.

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