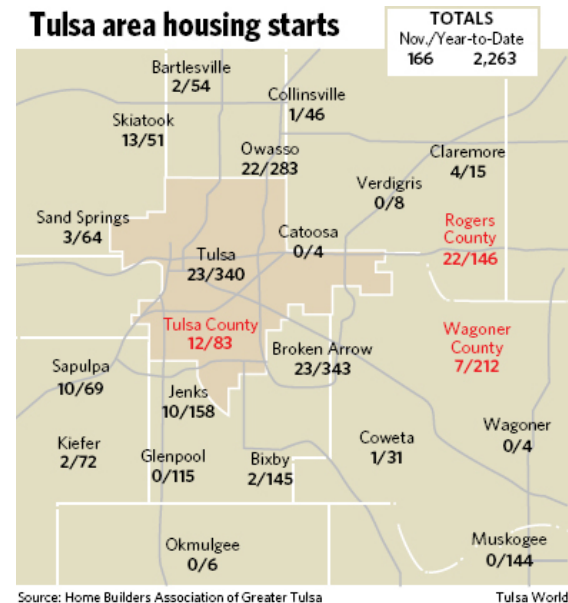


Broken Arrow leads in home construction

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Robert Evatt

For the year, BA leads metro area in home construction



Tulsa area home construction last month fell significantly from October's level but outperformed November 2008 by a wide margin.

New Orders Weekly reported that construction began on 166 homes last month, down 33.3 percent from the 249 starts in October. The total, however, was 12.2 percent above the 148 homes begun November 2008.

The year-to-date total now stands at 2,263, compared with 2,617 for the first 11 months of 2008, the permit tracking service said. While the 2009-permit total still trails last year's pace, the gap has narrowed to 13.5 percent.

Gary Soderstrom, 2010 president of the Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa, said federal tax credits for homebuyers have helped the market.

"Housing starts are remaining better than last year due to the renewed homebuyer stimulus and its expansion for those who already live in their own homes," he said.

Soderstrom said the move from just first-time buyers to current homeowners means the tax incentive is now starting to affect price ranges beyond starter homes.

"Some of the higher-priced homes are selling now that didn't have a market for a considerable time," he said.

As for the drop from October, Soderstrom cited the seasonal nature of home construction. Builders often won't take on projects during colder months, he said.

Home construction in November 2008 was the lowest level recorded in the area since 1997, according to New Orders Weekly. That month's performance was 18 percent below October 2008 and 54 percent off November 2007.

Local buyers a year ago were still reeling from the economic meltdown of September 2008 but have since regained some confidence, Soderstrom said.

He said national forecasts call for an increase in home construction of 3.5 percent to 4.5 percent next year, and that he expects the Tulsa area will follow suit.

Broken Arrow and Tulsa tied for the metro districts with the most construction in November, with 23 home starts each; however, Broken Arrow's number does not include homes started in rural Wagoner County but within its city limits. Following BA and Tulsa is Owasso and unincorporated parts of Rogers County at 22 apiece.