

May 17, 2010

Signs the Apocalypse is Over GILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Over the past few weeks our in-box has contained more and more news items citing positive trends in the economy and the housing market. Here are a few:

- According to Builder magazine, "the big public (housing) companies have begun amassing land again at a frenzied pace." Lennar spent \$154 million to acquire 3,300 homesites; Standard Pacific just spent \$154 million on land vs. \$3.7 million in the same quarter of '09; StanPac has just purchased 63 lakefront lots, and expects to spend up to \$400 million on land this year; Toll Brothers has picked up 171 homesites and, since November, has spent over \$100 million for 3,000 homesites.
- According to Dustin Bogue, a partner with Union Community Partners, a real estate development firm in San Jose, California, D.R. Horton "has been buying land like a drunken Russian sailor." As of March 31, the value of lots it had under development, held for development or controlled was at \$3.76 billion, which is about three percent higher than the value as of Sept. 30, 2009.
- At the Housing Leadership Summit held in Chicago in early May, Moody's economist Mark Zandi said he expects new housing starts to reach about 700,000 total this year, according to Big Builder Online. He also expects the market to clear the vast number of housing foreclosures in the next 18 months.
- Zandi is staying with one of his previous predictions, that normalized demand for total housing starts in the next few years will be 1.8 million, which includes single-family, multifamily and manufactured homes.
- "I am actually declaring the market has bottomed, and it happened in (the first quarter of 2010)," said Tim Eller, former CEO of Centex and currently vice chairman of PulteGroup.
- According to the American Society of Landscape Architects Business Quarterly survey, 56 percent of firm leaders reported stable or above levels of billable hours, hiring and inquiries for new work. Hiring is at the highest level since the third quarter of 2008.

Sign the Apocalypse is Near HOPKINTON, MASSACHUSETTS

According to an IDC study entitled "The Digital Universe Decade," the amount of digital information increased to 800 billion gigabytes in 2009, an increase of 62 percent compared with 2008.

Pause and try to absorb *that* fact.

The amount of digital information is equal to what would be produced by every person on earth "tweeting" continuously for a century, according to the study. It anticipates the amount of digital information will increase by a factor of 44 between 2009 and 2020.