

# Building permit rise hints at housing uptick

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The housing market shows signs of improvement, according to two housing reports released Wednesday.

Residential building permits issued last month in the Twin Cities area rose 53 percent over October 2008. The Builders Association of the Twin Cities reported 326 permits for 401 units were pulled in October, a level not seen since November 2007.

But that's still a far cry from the 853 permits pulled in October 2005 as the housing boom raged on. As in the existing home market, the first-time home buyer tax credit is helping to stimulate the market for new construction.

"The first-time home buyer credit has been a shot in the arm for the home building industry and the economy as a whole," association president Mike Swanson said in a statement. Congress is poised to extend the credit, which was set to expire at the end of the month.

Shakopee led the metro area in building activity with permits for 56 units in October, followed by Blaine with 47 units and Woodbury with 40 units.

## A drop in foreclosures

In a separate report, third-quarter foreclosure data compiled by HousingLink shows the number of foreclosures are declining in Minnesota. Foreclosures in the state were down 13.5 percent in the third quarter compared with the same period a year ago, with 5,890 houses in foreclosure from July through September of this year. Twin Cities foreclosures were down 15.4 percent during the same period.

Hennepin County had the highest number of foreclosures in the third quarter, with 1,447, although that's a 24 percent drop from the same period last year.

Ramsey County had 687 foreclosures, followed by 516 in Anoka County and 502 in Dakota County.

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