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Labor and Land Costs Cited for Dip in Builder Confidence

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) said on Tuesday that its NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) dropped one point in December adding to its three point loss in November. The HMI, a measure of home builder confidence in the new home market is **now at 61**. It had reached 65, its highest level in a decade, in October.

NAHB Chairman Tom Woods said, "Overall, builders are optimistic about the housing market, although they are **reporting concerns** with the high price of lots and labor."

The HMI is derived from a survey NAHB has conducted among its new home builder members since the early 1990s. The survey asks respondents to gauge the current market for new homes as "good," "fair" or "poor" and to do the same regarding their expectations over the next six months. They are also asked to rate traffic of prospective buyers as "high to very high," "average" or "low to very low." Scores for each component are then used to calculate a seasonally adjusted index where **any number over 50** indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor.

Each of the three HMI components also dipped modestly in December. The index measuring **expectations** over the next six months, usually the highest of the three, fell two points to 67 while the one gauging **current sales** lost one point to 66. The index assessing **buyer traffic** which has lagged the other two badly for years, also fell two points to 46.

"For the past seven months, builder confidence levels have averaged in the low 60s, which is in line with a **gradual, consistent recovery**," said NAHB Chief Economist David Crowe. "With job creation, economic growth and growing household formations, we anticipate the housing market to continue to pick up traction as we head into 2016."

The three-month moving average HMI scores for the four regions were mixed. The **West** increased three points to 76 while the **Northeast** rose a single point to 50. Meanwhile the **Midwest** dropped two points to 58 and the **South** fell one point to 64.

National Average Mortgage Rates



| | Rate | Change | Points |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Mortgage News Daily | | | |
| 30 Yr. Fixed | 6.89% | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 15 Yr. Fixed | 6.33% | +0.01 | 0.00 |
| 30 Yr. FHA | 6.33% | +0.01 | 0.00 |
| 30 Yr. Jumbo | 7.05% | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 5/1 ARM | 6.58% | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Freddie Mac | | | |
| 30 Yr. Fixed | 6.77% | -0.09 | 0.00 |
| 15 Yr. Fixed | 6.05% | -0.11 | 0.00 |
| Mortgage Bankers Assoc. | | | |
| 30 Yr. Fixed | 7.00% | -0.03 | 0.60 |
| 15 Yr. Fixed | 6.63% | +0.07 | 0.61 |
| 30 Yr. FHA | 6.87% | -0.03 | 0.92 |
| 30 Yr. Jumbo | 7.13% | +0.02 | 0.38 |
| 5/1 ARM | 6.22% | -0.16 | 0.60 |

Rates as of: 7/22

Recent Housing Data

| | | Value | Change |
|---------------------|--------|-------|---------|
| Mortgage Apps | Jul 10 | 206.1 | -0.19% |
| Building Permits | Mar | 1.46M | -3.95% |
| Housing Starts | Mar | 1.32M | -13.15% |
| New Home Sales | Mar | 693K | +4.68% |
| Pending Home Sales | Feb | 75.6 | +1.75% |
| Existing Home Sales | Feb | 3.97M | -0.75% |

Update: Buyer Broker Agreement

| | Value | Change |
|--------------------|--------|--------|
| Builder Confidence | Mar 51 | +6.25% |

After requests from real estate companies, a nonprofit consumer watchdog group the Consumer Federation of America has developed a list of factors to consider when creating a buyer contract in preparation for upcoming practice changes in the industry.

CFA released its "Proposed Criteria for Evaluating Home Buyer Contract Forms" on Tuesday. The 15 criteria focus on the contracts' form – whether the documents are readable and understandable – and content – whether they are fair to homebuyers.

- the document's expiration date (CFA recommends buyers asks for a three-month contract and never sign one longer than six months)
- the right to terminate the contract
- the disclosure that compensation is negotiable
- the broker's compensation clearly stated and that the buyer broker can't receive additional compensation for facilitating a sale
- that any additional fees, such as for showing a home, will be deducted from the broker's commission if there is a successful sale
- that the commission is due only if there is a successful closing
- that buyers have an obligation – for no longer than 60 days, CFA recommends – to pay a broker who earlier showed them a home they purchased after the contract ended
- seller concessions paid directly to buyers
- dual agency not pre-approved by the contract
- an explanation of how a broker treats different buyer clients interested in the same property
- that buyers should not be required to first go through mediation or arbitration if they have a complaint

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