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Homebuilder Index Continues Slide

Confidence among new home builders cooled considerably this month. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) said its Housing Market Index (HMI), produced as a joint venture with Wells Fargo Bank **dropped three points** Confidence among new home builders cooled considerably this month. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) said its Housing Market Index (HMI), produced as a joint venture with Wells Fargo Bank dropped three points to 58 from an upwardly revised January number of 61 (from 60). The HMI, a measure of builder confidence in the new home market, has **declined 7 points** since reaching a **decade-long high** of 65 in October and the current reading is the lowest reading for the composite index since May 2015. Analysts surveyed by Econoday has expected a composite reading of 61.

The HMI is derived from a monthly survey NAHB conducts among its new home builder members. They are asked 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.

NAHB Chairman Ed Brady said, "Though builders report the dip in confidence this month is **partly attributable** to the high cost and lack of availability of lots and labor, they are still positive about the housing market. Of note, they expressed optimism that sales will pick up in the coming months."

The HMI component measuring sales expectations in the next six months did rise, by 1 point to 65. The index measuring **current sales conditions** was down three points to 65 and the component charting buyer traffic dropped sharply by five points to 39. That last number matched the 2015 traffic component as the most recent index low.

"Builders are reflecting consumers' concerns about recent negative economic trends," said NAHB Chief Economist David Crowe. "However, the **fundamentals are in place** for continued growth of the housing market. Historically low mortgage rates, steady job gains, improved household formations and significant pent up demand all point to a gradual upward trend for housing in the year ahead."

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%

Looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, all four regions registered slight declines. The **Midwest** fell one point to 57, the **West** registered a three-point drop to 72 and the **Northeast** and **South** each posted a two-point decline to 47 and 59, respectively.

Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%
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Update: Buyer Broker Agreement

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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