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Builders Upbeat on Buyer Traffic, but 6-Month Outlook Dims

After dropping three points in February to 58, the Housing Market Index, a measure of builder confidence in the single-family home market, remained **unchanged in March**. Analysts surveyed by Econoday had predicted a one-point gain. The level the past two months is the lowest for the index since May 2015.

The index is produced by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and Wells Fargo Bank from responses to a survey NAHB conducts monthly 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.

The component reflecting attitudes about current sales conditions was also unchanged from February at 65 while the index measuring sales expectations over the next six months – typically the most optimistic of the three components - **fell three points** to 61. The component charting buyer traffic **rose four points** to 43.

“Confidence levels are hovering above the 50-point mid-range, indicating that the single-family market continues to make **slow but steady progress**,” said NAHB Chairman Ed Brady. “However, builders continue to report problems regarding a shortage of lots and labor.”

“While builder sentiment has been relatively flat for the last few months, the March HMI reading correlates with NAHB’s forecast of a steady firming of the single-family sector in 2016,” said NAHB Chief Economist David Crowe. “Solid job growth, low mortgage rates and improving mortgage availability will help keep the housing market on a gradual upward trajectory in the coming months.

Regional HMI scores are reported as three-month moving averages and their directions were mixed. The HMI for the **Midwest** was the only one to increase, up one point to 58. The **South** was unchanged at 59 while both the **West** and the Northeast were down; the West by three points to 69 and the **Northeast** down one point to 46.

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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