

5.1 Development Activity

The Importance

Development activity can be seen as an indicator of a community's growth and prosperity. As populations grow, households get smaller, and some older housing units are abandoned or demolished, the construction industry meets the residential demands of changing communities. This occurs, of course, if the community has the wealth to support residential and commercial changes. In addition to being a barometer for community growth and wealth, building activity is a measure of a significant sector of the local economy.

About this Indicator

This indicator measures the number of annual housing unit approvals and the per capita number of housing unit approvals for the Capital District, the peer regions, and the United States. Time series are used for the Capital District and the United States while the 2001 statistics are used to compare the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA with the peer MSA's. This Indicator also uses CDRPC orthophotography land use analysis to measure the scale and location of new development.

Sources for this Indicator

- United States Census Bureau Manufacturing, Mining, and Construction Statistics.
- CDRPC report to the Quality Region Taskforce: [Suburban Growth in the Capital Region](#).

Development Activity in the Capital District

After a building boom during the late 1980's the annual number of new housing units in the Capital District has remained between 2,000 and 3,000 units. In recent years, between 67% (1998) and 86% (1993) of the new housing units were single-family homes. The current level of construction is about twice the level seen during the early 1980's.

Capital District Residential Building Permits



5.1 COMMUNITY LIFE

When compared with the national per capita building rate, the Capital Region has been between 1/2 and 2/3 of the United States building rate. It should be noted that the population of the United States grew by 13% during the 1990's and that the Capital District grew by 2%. In 2000, the United States experienced a 1.0% increase in the number of housing units while the Capital District saw a 0.7% increase. It appears that residential development in the Capital District is outpacing its population growth while the nation has been producing housing at close to the same rate as population growth.

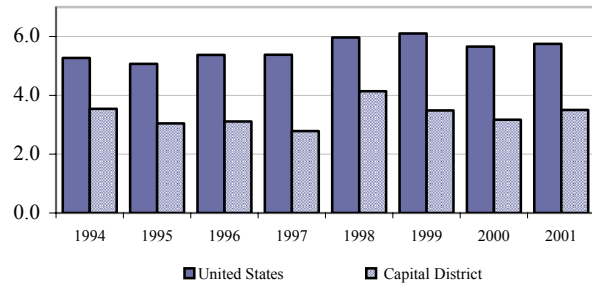
When compared to the peer regions, the Capital District's level of residential development is comparable to the other Northeastern regions while lagging behind the Southern regions, particularly Raleigh-Durham.

There were approximately 10,000 acres of new development in the Capital District between 1986 and 1997 (excluding lawns and re-development). By comparison, the Greater Atlanta Region developed approximately 20,000 new acres each year during the 1990's. In 1986, there were approximately 93,000 acres of developed land in the Capital District. By 1997, that total had increased to 103,000 acres, a 10.8% increase. During the same period, the population of the Capital District increased by approximately 4.2%.

The majority of the Region's residential growth has been spread through the outlying suburban towns adjacent to the central cities and along the Northway corridor. In many cases developments are considerably separated from existing developed areas and employment centers. A number of apartment complexes and townhouses, including senior citizen housing, have also been built in outlying areas. Most of the Region's new retail development has been built for large retail chains and located outside of the central cities. Most of the Region's new industrial and warehouse facilities have occurred in suburban business parks.

There have been some significant urban developments in the Capital District. The downtown areas of the central cities have benefited from the construction of several New York State Government office buildings as well as the MVP building in Downtown Schenectady. Urban property values are on the rise and there have been some significant revitalization efforts in central Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. At the same time, the demand for urban, mixed-use properties in Saratoga Springs continues to exceed the supply. This is evident by the growing city population and the number of new downtown condominium and retail projects.

Annual Housing Units Approved
per 1,000 People



2001 Annual Housing Unit Approvals
per 1,000 people by MSA

