

# The Naked City Blog

Looking at urban topics in the Charlotte region and beyond.

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## Has Charlotte single-family home market revived?



Tree down at site of old Charlotte Coliseum, once slated for mixed-use development. Photo: Nancy Pierce

Mecklenburg Times reporter Tony Brown pored through five years' worth of housing permit records and concluded that July 2012, with 283 single-family housing permits, was the best July for home construction in Mecklenburg County since 2008. Maybe, he suggests, the housing bust has ended.

Construction of single-family homes is almost back to 2008 levels, when 304 similar permits were issued, Brown reports.

His article, "[Residential revelry](#)," is behind a pay wall, so only Mecklenburg Times subscribers can read it.

It will be interesting to see how development in the county and nearby areas plays out in coming years. Plenty of academics and others have analyzed the housing market and concluded that the country is overbuilt with single-family housing, given demographic trends (aging boomers, for instance) and modern lifestyle preferences. Will Gen Y-ers opt for suburban tract houses as they move into their 30s and 40s and start to have children? Or will they decide they can still have the urban lifestyles they're seeking now and raise children in the city?

Will planners and elected officials allow an overbuilt single-family home market to get even more over-built, as they did for a couple of decades worth of commercial space, with the carcasses of failed stores hurting multiple thoroughfares and

neighborhoods in Charlotte? Or is Charlotte a healthy enough market that housing won't be overbuilt?

One note to consider: Unless Charlotte-Mecklenburg changes the land development rules, the question of overbuilding is mostly moot. Most subdivisions don't need a City Council rezoning to get built; they just have to get planners' administrative approvals for following the subdivision ordinance (and other permits, of course).

Another note to consider: [A recent study found the city's families more "asset-poor"](#) than the state average. In Charlotte, 36 percent of residents lack a basic financial cushion to survive for three months at the poverty line if they were to lose their primary source of income. That compares to 30 percent statewide and 29 percent nationally. What do trends such as that portend for the city's ability to absorb more single-family housing?

Final note: Remember that city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County are not exactly the same territory.

Media-watchers with good memories will recall Tony Brown's years as theater and arts reporter for the [Charlotte Observer](#). He has spent more than a decade at the Cleveland Plain Dealer but has recently moved back to Charlotte for family reasons. Follow him on Twitter at [@tonymecktimes](#).)