

Building Boom May Mean Jobs Can't All Be Filled, Report Says

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Body

Amid one of the biggest **building booms** in New York City's history, the construction industry **may** soon have trouble finding enough young workers to **fill** all the **jobs**, a leading industry group **said** yesterday.

The group, the New York **Building** Congress, **said** that of the overall **building** industry's 275,000 employees in the city, a growing number of them are young immigrants. Just a few years after a post-9/11 slump in construction, the **building** industry is starting to worry that immigration laws **may** restrict future growth.

"One of the great implications here is the importance of immigration," **said** Richard T. Anderson, president of the **building** congress, whose members include large construction companies and design and real estate firms. "We have a big stake in reasonable immigration legislation."

Of the 275,000 workers, 123,000 are in construction, according to a **report** the group released yesterday. That number has risen almost 15 percent since 2004, which marked the end of a three-year downturn, and is higher than the previous peak reached in 2001, according to State Labor Department figures.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Mr. Anderson **said**, the typical construction worker in the city is not an older, white suburbanite who commutes, but a younger city resident who is almost as likely to have been born abroad as in America.

In the last 10 years, Mr. Anderson **said**, the average age of construction workers in the city has dropped to 40 from 51. Almost half of them, 47 percent, were born abroad, he **said**.

William C. Thompson Jr., the city comptroller, **said** the staying power of the city's housing **boom** had surprised everyone and was an important contributor to the "great shape" the city's finances are in. But he cautioned that the rapid development of expensive housing has been driving municipal workers and middle-class families out of the city.

"Right now we have an affordable-housing crisis," Mr. Thompson **said**.

According to the **report**, 72 percent of all of the city's construction workers live in the city, most in Brooklyn and Queens, while most real estate workers live in Manhattan and most **building** services workers live in Staten Island and Queens.

In the **building** industry, the highest average wages go to workers in heavy and civil construction (\$68,900), architectural and engineering services (\$68,000), real estate (\$47,600) and **building** services (\$32,800), the **report** **said**.

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