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1 message

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Which suburbs have the most, fewest vacant homes

By Anna Marie Kukec Daily Herald
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[PHOTO] An empty house in Arlington Heights contributes to the town's vacancy rate of 5.7 houses out of 100.
Bob Chwedyk | Staff Photographer

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[PHOTO] Empty homes in unfinished subdivisions, like the center home at Tall Grass Ridge in Mundelein, aren't counted in the U.S. Census and drive the overall vacancy rate even higher than the census shows.
Gilbert R. Boucher II | Staff Photographer

[PHOTO] Empty homes in unfinished subdivisions, like this one at Tall Grass Ridge Mundelein, are over and above the vacancy rates given in the U.S. Census.
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When Fox Lake Mayor Ed Bender looks around his village, he sees the scourge of foreclosure — vacant homes.

Those empty shells aren't just in one neighborhood or another. They're spread across the town, across the region and across the nation. But this is his hometown, so it's more worrisome.

"Even the banks have walked away from them," Bender said.

Fox Lake has 15.2 vacant homes per every 100 housing units, the highest rate in the region. Others at the top include North Chicago with 14.5, Wonder Lake and Oakbrook Terrace each with 12.7, Mettawa with 11.8, Zion with 11.3 and Barrington Hills with 10.4 vacant homes per 100 housing units, according to the 2010 U.S. Census data released this week.

The more homes that are vacant, the more a town loses in revenue from property taxes and from water, sewer and other fees, not to mention lost customers for local businesses. Upkeep of vacant property, including cutting overgrown grass and policing vandalism, graffiti, squatters and other problems, ultimately costs the village even more, Bender said.

"But this is not a unique problem here. It's all over," Bender said.

Overall, the vacancy rate roughly doubled compared to the last census in 2000.

While Fox Lake is at the high end, Green Oaks is at the bottom of the list locally with 2.8 vacant homes per every 100 housing units. Bartlett had 3 vacant homes per 100, and Kaneville, Spring Grove and Sugar Grove had 3.1.

In comparison, Chicago's vacancy rate was 12.5, while the state had 8.7, the census data showed.

A housing unit can be a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as a separate living quarters.

All of these empty homes are in addition to the untold number of unfinished houses in the suburbs that were left behind by bankrupt or struggling builders. Those partially built houses generally aren't included in the census, said Stephen R. Laue, information specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau in Oak Brook.

While there are many reasons a house could be vacant — such as the death of an owner, a job transfer to another city, or empty nesters who've downsized — foreclosure remains the No. 1 cause for the dramatic increase in vacancies, experts said.

The sluggish real estate market means many of those homes are empty for the long haul.

Short sales, where homeowners seek to sell a home before the final foreclosure judgment, along with final foreclosures, force many financially strapped owners out of their homes. Other people just walk away, abandoning their homes, said Connie Hofherr, regional vice president and broker manager of Prudential Starck Realtors in Arlington Heights. She's been a Realtor in the Northwest suburbs for about 35 years.

"It's sad when you look at these," Hofherr said, flipping through a growing list of bank-owned homes, townhouses and condominiums. "This is what affects real estate prices and it's very difficult for appraisers to appraise a home. There are so many short sales and foreclosures that no neighborhood is immune."

The recession, along with its ensuing high rate of unemployment and other economic problems, forced many people out of their homes. But these hardships probably are temporary, said Phil Ashton, assistant professor of urban planning and policy, at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

He sees the foreclosure crisis coming to an end in the next three to five years, and those who lost their homes could have a chance at ownership again in the next five to seven years, he said.

"Once people are back on their feet, they'll be back owning or renting," said Ashton.

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U.S. Census Bureau

Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Definitions and Explanations

Vacant Housing Units. A housing unit is vacant if no one is living in it at the time of the interview, unless its occupants are only temporarily absent. In addition, a vacant unit may be one which is entirely occupied by persons who have a usual residence elsewhere. New units not yet occupied are classified as vacant housing units if construction has reached a point where all exterior windows and doors are installed and final usable floors are in place. Vacant units are excluded if they are exposed to the elements, that is, if the roof, walls, windows, or doors no longer protect the interior from the elements, or if there is positive evidence (such as a sign on the house or block) that the unit is to be demolished or is condemned. Also excluded are quarters being used entirely for nonresidential purposes, such as a store or an office, or quarters used for the storage of business supplies or inventory, machinery, or agricultural products. Vacant sleeping rooms in lodging houses, transient accommodations, barracks, and other quarters not defined as housing units are not included in the statistics in this report. (See section on "Housing Unit.")

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/qtr410/q410def.html>

InputDate	CaseNumber	DefendantAddress
3/20/2009	09CH663	300 SPRING CREEK RD
3/23/2009	08CH3439	33 OAK KNOLL RD
3/24/2009	08CH0035316	300 OTIS RD
4/20/2009	08CH0020866	252 OTIS RD
4/27/2009	08CH0015017	513 POND GATE DR
8/6/2009	08CH795	695 PLUMTREE RD
8/13/2009	09CH0025314	112 OLD DUNDEE RD
8/28/2009	09CH0027039	90 HAWLEY WOODS RD
9/25/2009	09CH0030531	164 SPRINGWOOD LN
9/30/2009	09CH1913	5 BARRINGTON BOURNE
10/8/2009	09CH2035	11840 HAEGERS BEND RD
10/16/2009	06CH1073	11890 HAEGERS BEND RD
10/20/2009	09CH2142	4 AUBURN LN
10/22/2009	09CH548	750 PLUMTREE RD
10/28/2009	09CH0037096	177 DUNDEE RD
10/30/2009	09CH0040430	179C TAMARACK LN
11/6/2009	09CH2293	19 BARRINGTON BOURNE
11/13/2009	09CH224	30 W SURREY LN
11/23/2009	09CH0043722	264 LEEDS DR
12/8/2009	09CH0045340	809 MAGNUSON CT
12/14/2009	08CH0030261	11 HAWTHORNE RD
12/21/2009	09CH2705	10111 BRAEBURN RD
12/29/2009	09CH0048456	132 OLD DUNDEE RD
12/29/2009	09CH2775	4 LITTLE BEND RD
1/6/2010	09CH0050347	48 HAWTHORNE LN
1/14/2010	09CH0019780	73 DUNDEE LN
1/19/2010	09CH2827	360 OAK KNOLL RD
1/20/2010	10CH97	10219 HAEGERS BEND RD
2/2/2010	10CH001200	95 HAWLEY WOODS RD
2/2/2010	08CH0047647	19 ROLLING HILLS DR
2/26/2010	10CH474	17 ROCK RIDGE LN
3/2/2010	10CH514	2 BOW LN
3/5/2010	10CH005910	146 OLD DUNDEE RD
3/24/2010	10CH1528	266 STEEPLECHASE RD
3/30/2010	10CH009172	326 DUNDEE RD
4/1/2010	10CH009532	71 BRINKER RD
4/29/2010	10CH0013801	93 BATEMAN RD
5/7/2010	10CH1278	40 E SURREY LN
5/14/2010	10CH1338	100 BRAEBURN RD
5/20/2010	08CH0044656	175 OLD SUTTON RD
6/11/2010	10CH0021766	222 OTIS RD
6/15/2010	10CH0022710	703 GOODMAN CT
6/17/2010	10CH1674	10553 BRAEBURN RD
7/16/2010	09CH1723	12 LITTLE BEND RD
7/19/2010	09CH0042564	23 ROLLING HILLS DR
8/2/2010	10CH4169	829 DORMY LN
8/5/2010	08CH0046037	177C DUNDEE RD
8/30/2010	09CH002942	505 POND GATE DR
9/1/2010	10CH0034289	195 BATEMAN RD

InputDate	CaseNumber	DefendantAddress
9/8/2010	10CH0035145	6 TRICIA LN
9/13/2010	10CH2550	10350 N RIVER RD
9/28/2010	10CH2770	14 SPRING LN
9/28/2010	10CH2777	13 MOATE LN
12/7/2010	10CH0047666	45 SANDLEWOOD LN
12/9/2010	09CH0042148	320 DUNDEE RD
12/21/2010	10CH3586	41 SPRING LN
12/23/2010	10CH0051822	42 BRINKER RD
1/10/2011	10CH00724	16N118 HEALY RD
1/12/2011	11CH00118	254 DONLEA RD