

## Calgary builds on \$4.7B boom

### Permits issued surge \$1B past Toronto mark

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A massive surge in construction permit approvals in Calgary during 2006 smashed the previous year's record and outpaced growth in Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, the city revealed Sunday.

Residential and commercial projects worth \$4.76 billion were approved, \$1 billion higher than Toronto and more than doubling Calgary's total from 2002.

"What the numbers show is no surprise, that Calgary is seeing an absolutely huge construction boom," said Mayor Dave Bronconnier. "We're talking about projects on the ground and in the ground and it goes to show the enormous might of Calgary's economy and that of Alberta in general."



CREDIT: Jenelle Schneider, Calgary Herald

"Calgary is seeing an absolutely huge construction boom," says Mayor Dave Bronconnier.

The total number refers to projects that have been green lighted by the city, but not necessarily built during 2006.

In 2005, the city set the previous record with \$3.6 billion in building permits.

In 2006, Toronto reached \$3.7 billion while Edmonton approved \$2.3 billion in construction and Vancouver OK'd \$2.04 billion.

Calgary's total included nearly 16,000 residential units, worth \$2.38 billion, and another \$2.38 billion in commercial development.

It did not include the EnCana office tower project which is estimated to be worth as much as \$1 billion, but has not yet received its building permit.

"There were 45 homes a day being built in Calgary in 2006," said Bronconnier. "And we grew by more than 36,000 people.

"This is also a good case for why the province needs to step up and invest in more infrastructure," Bronconnier said.

The rapid growth in the construction industry increased pressures on the city's development and building approval group said department head Gary Klassen.

To meet the demand, building inspectors have been moved closer to growing communities with wireless computers that allow them to work from their cars.

"We made significant changes to our field operations over the past year and a half," said Klassen. "This has allowed for real time inputting of data.

"We've also improved the approval process for better efficiency."

Last June, city council approved the hiring of 60 new staff for Klassen's department including about 20 new inspectors.

Kevin Clark, president of the Calgary Real Estate Board, said the city's numbers are in line with those of the board.

"This is consistent with all of our numbers," said Clark. "It was a very strong year.

"It's reasonable to assume that as long as the Calgary and Alberta economies stay strong the housing market will follow along likewise."

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