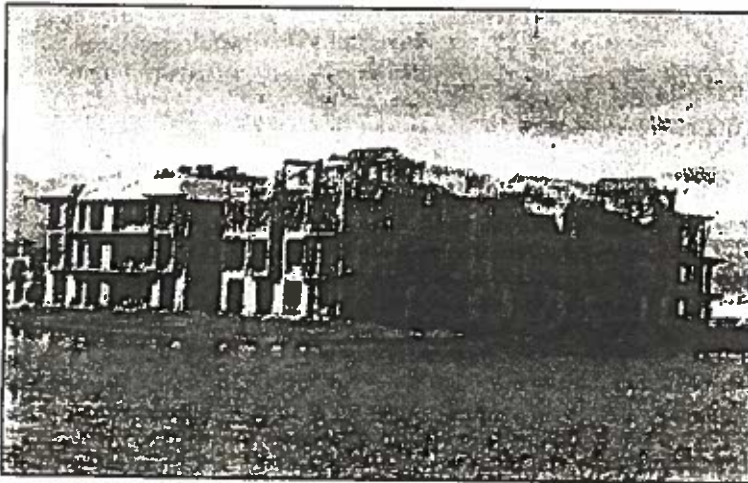


New Redwood Shores homes fuel building boom in Redwood City



MIKE RUSSELL/The Times

CONSTRUCTION: New buildings under construction in Redwood Shores.

HEIDI VAN ZANT
Times Staff Writer

REDWOOD CITY — Growth in the city of Redwood City really has been one for the books lately.

Construction activity in San Mateo County's third largest city is setting records for this decade and rivaling those of that last go-go year for growth, 1988.

"Redwood City new-dwelling unit activity exceeds every jurisdiction in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties except the city of San Jose," building official John LaTorra said.

"We even surpassed the city of Sacramento," he said, which has a population of 396,032 compared to Redwood City's 68,000.

GROWTH/ A7

"They have land available. The city has gotten very serious about economic vitality. And their location works in their favor, too," de Ville said.

De Ville said that a new home building boom in Redwood City, located at the northern edge of Silicon Valley, and midway between the regional job centers of San Francisco and San Jose, is no surprise to her.

"There is a lot of activity in Redwood City. It's probably due to a renewed confidence in the economy. Job growth is going to be very strong on the Peninsula," she said.

San Mateo County, which now has about 360,000 jobs, will create another 75,000 by the year

The city issued 483 permits for new dwelling units from January to September of 1995, compared to 362 for San Francisco and 294 for Sacramento.

Much of the growth is coming from Redwood Shores, the bay-front Redwood City community south of Foster City that is considered one of the premiere places in the Bay Area to live and work.

Over the past 25 years, the 1,485 acres of mud flats have been transformed into world-class office parks and exclusive waterfront homes -- with the population expected to jump from the current 9,000 to an estimated 14,000 by the year 2000.

"It's like a new city that's popping up overnight," said Tina Madej, 38, who spent Sunday

getting settled into the new four-bedroom home she and her fiancé moved into the day before.

The San Bruno pharmacist looked at older homes in western San Mateo and other well-established county communities before deciding on the \$380,000 home in the Stratford Bay development.

"It's quiet. You feel safe. And it's upscale," said Madej, noting that the homes just across Redwood Shores Parkway sell in the \$600,000 price range and up.

There certainly is an unmistakable "buzz" in development circles about Redwood City, said Denise de Ville, president of the San Mateo County Economic Development Association.

2010 because of an economic boom, de Ville said.

"And we need to build more than 50,000 housing units," she added.

The building pace in Redwood City has meant a total construction valuation of \$149 million for building permits issued in 1995, a 50 percent increase over the year before.

New construction accounted for about 75 percent of the activity, officials said.

Building permit and plan-checking fees exceeded \$1.35 million, and were second only to the record year of 1988, which had \$1.49 million.

In addition to Redwood Shores, building inspector LaTorra said there also has been

noticeable growth in Emerald Hills and other areas of Redwood City where land once used for greenhouses is being converted to residential use.

The Building Department has hired one new staff member to help keep up with the requests for permits.

Plans also are under way for the first elementary school, community center, shopping center and fire station in Redwood Shores.

Officials from Redwood City, Belmont and San Carlos also are studying how the new growth in Redwood Shores is affecting traffic and what improvements need to be made to relieve the congestion on Bayshore Freeway and the freeway access routes.