

# Survey of Market Absorption: First Quarter 2010

## First Quarter 2010 - Absorptions (Completions in Fourth Quarter 2009)

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### Introduction

The Survey of Market Absorption (SOMA) measures how soon privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished units in buildings with five or more units are rented or sold (absorbed) after completion. In addition, the survey collects data on characteristics such as number of bedrooms, asking rent, and asking price.

The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from actual values because of sampling variation or other factors. All comparisons made in this report have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level.

### Highlights <sup>1</sup>

- An estimated 60,800 apartments were completed in buildings with five units or more in the fourth quarter of 2009. This estimate was about 10,200 fewer than estimated apartment completions in the previous quarter, and about 16,400 less than similar completions in the same quarter of the previous year (Table 11).
- Of the 60,800 units completed in the fourth quarter of 2009, approximately 40,800 were privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished, rental apartments. This estimate was lower by about 6,700 than the estimate of unfurnished units completed in the previous quarter (47,500), however, it was not significantly different than completions in the same quarter of the previous year (Table 1).
- An estimated 51 percent (seasonally adjusted) of the newly completed, unfurnished apartments built in the fourth quarter were rented (absorbed) within 3 months of completion. This estimate is about the same as the estimate of the previous quarter, but was about 6 percentage points higher than the same quarter of the previous year (Table 1). The not-seasonally-adjusted 3-month absorption rate of 48 percent for the 40,800 apartments completed in the fourth quarter of 2009 was lower by 3 percentage points than that of the previous quarter, but was higher by about 4 percentage points than the rate in the same quarter of 2008 (Table 1).
- The median asking rent for all privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished rental units completed in buildings with five units or more in the fourth quarter of 2009 was \$1,034. This estimate did not differ statistically from the revised median asking rent (\$1,043) of the previous quarter. More new units built in the fourth quarter of 2009 contained two bedrooms (51 percent) than contained one bedroom (40 percent). Units with three bedrooms or more accounted for about 7 percent, while efficiencies (no bedroom) accounted for only 3 percent of the total (Tables 2 and 3).
- During the fourth quarter of 2009, the South had the majority (62 percent) of new unfurnished rental completions among the four regions of the U.S. followed by the West with 20 percent. The Midwest (11 percent) and the Northeast, with 7 percent of new unfurnished rental completions, did not differ statistically (Table 4).
- An estimated 7,000 condominium and cooperative apartments in buildings with five units or more were completed in the fourth quarter of 2009. This estimate is lower by about 1,900 than that of the revised estimate from the prior quarter, and was about 10,400 fewer than the same quarter of 2008 (Table 5). In the fourth quarter of 2009, condominiums and cooperatives accounted for about 12 percent of all completions in buildings with five units or more.
- About 36 percent of the 7,000 condominium apartments completed in the fourth quarter of 2009 were sold within 3 months of completion (Table 6). This rate is about ten percentage points lower than the revised rate from the previous quarter. The median asking price for new condominiums built in the fourth quarter of 2009 exceeded the upper limit of the price range. (Tables 6 and 7).
- Of the remaining apartments completed in all buildings with five units or more in the fourth quarter of 2009, 200 were furnished units, 11,000 units were federally subsidized or received a tax credit, and about 1,900 were not in the scope of the survey (Table 11).

### Characteristic of the Data

All statistics from the SOMA refer to apartments in newly constructed buildings with five units or more. Absorption rates reflect the first time an apartment is rented after completion or the first time a condominium or cooperative apartment is sold after completion. If apartments initially intended to be sold as condominium or cooperative units are, instead, offered by the builder or building owner for rent, they are counted as rental apartments. Units categorized as federally subsidized or receiving tax credits include the units subsidized under the following Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or Federal Housing Administration (FHA) programs --Sections 8, 202, 811, 221(d)(3) or 221 (d)(4). In addition, units receiving Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) through the Internal Revenue Service program are included in this category. The data on privately financed units include privately-owned housing subsidized by state and local governments. Time share units, continuing-care retirement units, and turnkey units (privately built for and sold to local public housing authorities after completion) are outside the scope of the survey.

Tables 1 through 4 and Table 9 provide information about privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished, rental apartments. Table 5 provides information about privately financed, nonsubsidized condominium and cooperative apartments, while Tables 6 through 8 and Table 10 provide information about condominium apartments only. Table 11 summarizes the totals for all types of newly constructed apartments in buildings with five units or more.

**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> *Details may not sum to totals because of rounding.*