

# County's housing outgrowing population, expert says

By Tom Harlan - Miami Today

Though Miami-Dade has a record 2.4 million residents and a boom may quickly add 100,000 housing units, county demographers predict population growth of only about 30,000 a year requiring 10,000 units.

Real estate observers, however, say all the planned housing can be absorbed.

The county forecasts a population of almost 2.6 million by 2010. Average yearly growth has ranged from 28,648 to 35,800 in every decade since 1970, according to the US Census Bureau.

Based on 2.9 persons per household, said Oliver Kerr of the county's planning department, the area needs to add about 10,000 housing units a year.

But that doesn't mean housing supply will outpace demand, said Jason M. Robertson, president of Urban Habitats, because population doesn't gauge demand. Foreigners, who aren't counted in population numbers, are buying real estate due to the weak dollar, he said.

"Even though county statistics project new residences to increase by 300,000 over a 10-year period," he said, "it does not address the millions of dollars in real estate that is sold to second-home buyers from the Northeast, Latin America and Europe."

Population can't be compared to planned units, said Brad Hunter, South Florida director of Metrostudy, because projects can be cancelled and it can take years to absorb condos.

Yearly growth of 30,000 may be the 10-year average, Mr. Hunter said, but county single-family housing starts leaped to 8,614 last year despite a trend of about 5,000 over the 10 years.

"That's a huge increase," he said, that coupled with thousands of rising condo units suggests population is growing faster than anticipated. "There's a lot of evidence that seems to point to a faster population growth than 10 years ago or than even a few years ago."