

Builders Exchange cites overcrowding in homes; calls for growth rate hike

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One out of every 17 homes in Santa Cruz County is overcrowded, and the county Builders Exchange would like to see that problem addressed by increasing the 1983 growth rate for the unincorporated area.

Builders Exchange President Bruce Reed held a press conference this morning, stressing the overcrowding statistics locally that were derived from the 1980 census.

The press conference appropriately took place at a Santa Cruz construction site for 71 affordable housing units — the same such housing that must be built and encouraged, according to Reed, to address overcrowding.

Reed charged that the "statistical base" on overcrowding locally proves that the county's growth rate, set annually by the Board of Supervisors, is based on "false information." He maintained a minimum $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent rate be set for 1983.

Reed said this morning that a one-time annual growth rate equaling 2,922 building permits must be allowed in the county to address the overcrowding problem in addition to a 2 percent growth rate recommended by the county Planning Commission. That 2 percent rate in 1982 allowed only 968 building permits.

The county Planning Commission last week recommended that the county continue with the 2 percent growth rate that it set in 1982 because there was no compelling reason at this point to adjust it up or down. That recommendation for 1983 will come before supervisors next Tuesday.

Overcrowding throughout the county should be deemed a "compelling reason" to adjust the rate upward, said Reed.

According to the 1980 census, one out of every 17 homes or 22,318 persons in the county were living in overcrowded units. This

represented 12 percent of the household population.

In the county's four cities the problem is even worse, primarily due to one out of every six homes in Watsonville being overcrowded. Some 11,420 persons in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Capitola and Scotts Valley are living in overcrowded conditions, which represents 15 percent of the household population.

An occupied unit is classified as being overcrowded, according to the Census Bureau, when more than 1.01 persons per room live in a house, excluding the bathroom, kitchen and hall.