

[Back](#)

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growth in polk

Building Permits Stay Hot in February

Lakeland is the only city to buck the area trend in record requests made by developers.

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The Ledger

LAKELAND -- Polk County's new home-building permits continue to break yearly records.

In February, 1,191 permits were pulled, a 40 percent increase from 2005's February total of 849.

And there is no sign that increased impact fees will slow down construction.

Polk County commissioners approved raising school impact fees by 435 percent in September. In December, the impact fee for a new single-family house rose from \$1,607 to \$8,596.

But developments such as Woodpointe, Millers Landing and another addition to the Lake Ashton Golf Community are bringing hundreds of new homes into the Winter Haven area and flooding the city's department with new building permit requests.

Winter Haven posted 20 permits in February 2005. But last month, builders pulled 92 permits -- a 360 percent increase.

"It has been busy, busy," said permit technician Alicia Hurley. "We will probably have more this month. There are a lot of new developments going in right now."

And Winter Haven is not alone. Lake Alfred, Winter Haven's neighbor to the north, is posting strong permit numbers as well.

Last February, the city did not have any building permits pulled by developers. But this year, 32 permits were pulled for new construction.

"We've got more coming," said Tim Wallace, the city's building official. "We have a lot of stuff going on here."

Haines City is feeling the impact of growth too, as developers pull between 35 and 70 permits a month. Last month, builders received 42 permits for new construction, a 35 percent increase from 31 a year ago.

Those new developments in Haines City include the second phases of Chandler Ridge and Calabay Parc at Tower Lake, along with Stonewood Crossing and Patterson Heights.

Unincorporated Polk County's issued permits rose from 661 in 2005 to

905 last month, a 37 percent increase. The only town bucking the trend was Lakeland: In February 2005, Lakeland posted 52 permits. But last month, builders pulled 39 permits, a 25 percent decrease.

National building starts did not soar like the growth in Polk's building permits.

Builders across the nation started 2,120,000 homes in February. This is a 4.9 percent decrease from last February's total of 2,230,000. Since January, construction starts on new homes and apartments decreased almost 8 percent nationwide.

The Ledger reports building permit totals because Polk County does not track housing starts.
