

Barcelona family house trend eats up land

An economic study warns that land could be used up within 14 years

At the rate things are going, in little over a decade, Catalonia may have no more room to build new housing, *El Periodico* reported yesterday. The rapid shortages in building land have reached alarming levels especially in the Barcelona metropolitan area, where, since 1993, more than half of family homes in Catalonia have been built.

In 2003 alone 68,798 homes were built in Catalonia, of which 21,798 were single family homes, and 47,202, for multiple families. The Barcelona metropolitan area including Maresma, Bix Llobregat, Garraf, Alt Penedès and the two Vallès - will have exhausted its building land within the next 14 years.

This was the conclusion of the study *Habitatge i consum de sòl* by the economists Agustí Jover and Miquel Morell, and IT expert Àngel Gómez. The findings were reached by analysing data on all houses built in the last decade, available building land, including areas obtained by demolition, and the density by hectare (2.471 acres) with which housing is being planned.

The study emphasises the fact that in recent years more and more single family homes are going up. Between 1993 and 2003, over 530,000 houses were built in Catalonia, 10.41 per cent of which were designed as one family detached homes, 17.55 per cent as duplexes and the remaining 73.03 per cent for

multiple families. The researchers found another surprising development. These single family homes are being built predominantly in the most populated part of Catalonia, its urban capital, at more than twice the rate of other touristy municipalities. "The rampant consumption of land in the Barcelona metropolitan area is overwhelming," economist Miguel Morell told *El Periodico*. In addition, at least four out of 10 of houses built in 2003 in the province of Barcelona were constructed on top of sites that previously contained other buildings.

More than 16,000 cases were found where buildings were demolished in order to make way for the new ones.



The city is stepping away from high rises towards private homes

Aiguaviya
Bescanó
Bordils
Campllong
Canet d'Adri
Cassà de la Selva
Celrà
Cervià de Ter
Flassà
Fornells de la Selva
Girona
Julià
Llagostera
Llambilles

Madremanya
Quart
Salt
Sant Andreu Salou
Sant Gregori
Sant Joan de Mollet
Sant Jordi Desvalls
Sant Julià de Ramis
Sant Martí de Llémena
Sant Martí Vell
Sarrià de Ter
Vilablareix
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SCIENCE

Prehistoric eggs unearthed

Eight dinosaur eggs have been found during an excavation of a site in Fumanya near Fígols. The fossilised eggs are 70 million years old and measure 30 centimetres in diameter. They will be taken to the Fígols Museum for further study. "After three weeks work on the excavation workers found the eggs," says the Director of the Museum, Rosa Serra. In 2000 workers discovered more remains from dinosaurs in Fumanya, including bones in an area 34 kilometers square.

EDUCATION

Anger over nursery plan

Local people are furious that Barcelona Town Hall is changing the way it educates young children in its nursery schools. Opponents to the new system claim the quality of education is being put at risk because the number of teachers are being reduced to save cash. Already the new system has been introduced in 11 nursery's in the city. But Barcelona City Council said there was no intention to reduce the quality of education for youngsters and that they spent 6000 euros per place in a public nursery.

ECOLOGY

Ecotax to reduce damage

The Catalan Republican party ERC want an ecotax introduced in tourist zones across Europe. It says it would help pay for damaged caused to the environment in areas of intense tourist activity.

FINANCE

Funfair in the red

The Tibidabo amusement park as accumulated 8.2 million euros in losses since the city of Barcelona took over its management. The number of visitors also continues to fall. Just over 400,000 people visited the park in 2003. In 1993, the park had 777,500 visitors. Convergence and Union leader Xavier Trias has attributed the losses to bad management. In 2002, the managers of the municipal corporation Tibidabo Amusement Park (PATSA) acknowledged that the park had a deficit of 4.1 million euros, and last year the park lost 1.8 million. The rest of the accumulated loss comes from old debts and a reserve fund related to a legal proceeding which has yet to be finalised. CiU recommends turning over management of the park to a private company while retaining ownership of the site property. The party also recommends lowering the general admission price, which is currently 22 euros for adults.

FORUM

Visitor numbers falls short of target

The number of visitors to the Forum increased last week but still fall below the target set by the organisers. They were hoping to attract 150,000 visitors but only 121,000 people passed through the entrance gate. In total nearly 591,000 visitors have been to the Forum since it opened last month, which still falls short of the organisers expectations as they wanted to attract 650,000 people. "We are confident that are forecasts can be met and that over the summer more people will continue to visit the event," says Forum spokesman Oleguer Sarsanedas.