

Property tax assessments decline modestly in El Dorado, Placer counties

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

If you want to understand why local governments have laid off workers and struggled to maintain services, just look at property taxes.

In the past four years, Sacramento County real estate has lost \$19 billion in assessed value, data from the Sacramento County assessor's office show.

That means that the county's secured tax roll now stands at \$113.7 billion, down from \$132.7 billion – the peak recorded in January 2008. And it translates to sharply reduced tax revenue for local governments, schools and special districts.

No place in the Sacramento region has been immune from the combined effects of the down economy and the loss in property values, though the story is less severe these days in El Dorado, Yolo and Placer counties.

In Sacramento County, Natomas and Rio Linda are recording a disproportionate share of the ongoing decline in property values.

However, east Sacramento, Fair Oaks and Rancho Murieta are doing better, said Sacramento County Assessor Kathleen Kelleher, who described those areas as stable.

Kelleher said she doubts broad recovery can take hold until the unemployment rate shows significant improvement – it's now at 10.4 percent in the region – and the supply of foreclosed homes diminishes.

Foreclosures and other distressed sales have been driving property values down in much of Sacramento County.

This year, the volume of homes foreclosed is averaging about 600 a month in Sacramento County, Kelleher said. "Last year, we were averaging about 1,000 foreclosures a month," she said.

Placer, Yolo and El Dorado counties are seeing more modest declines in property values. In each of those counties, the secured tax roll fell this year by less than a half-percent.

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