RLB CRANE INDEX®

North America - Q1 2020

OVERALL STATUS

LEGEND

- Increase in number of cranes
- Decrease in number of cranes
- Crane numbers steady

Toronto continues to make up the majority of cranes counted (27%), followed by Los Angeles (10%)

For the third-consecutive count, Seattle experience a decrease in its cranes. Seattle is down 27% from its previous count.

Residential and mixed-use projects continue to take the lead in sectors; combined, they make up 70% of all cranes.

WHAT IS THE RLB CRANE INDEX®?

Rider Levett Bucknall's Crane Index® for North America is published biannually. It tracks the number of operating tower cranes in 14 major cities across the U.S. and Canada.

Our index was the first of its kind, and unlike other industry barometers that track cost and other financial data, the Crane Index® tracks the number of fixed cranes on construction sites and gives a simplified measure of the current state of the construction industry's workload in each location.

Q1 2020 SUMMARY:

This survey marks the fifth consecutive increase in crane counts. Of the fourteen cities surveyed (including the addition of Las Vegas), five experienced an increase in their respective crane counts. Five had a decrease in counts while the remaining three hold steady.

Given the significant impact that COVID-19 and the governmental mitigation measures that have been applied to contain it are having on the economy as a whole, it is probable that this pandemic will drive a recession which will have an impact on future crane counts. Current construction projects may also be affected due to shut downs, or workers not reporting to job sites for a variety of reasons including illness, illness of family members, or even fear of taking public transport.

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-33%

Cranes dedicated to healthcare projects drop 33% from previous counts

+7

Civil projects experience a significant bump; increasing from 3 to 10 cranes across the country

-50%

Hospitality projects experience a nearly 50% decrease in cranes, nationwide.

KEY SECTORS
CIVIL
COMMERCIAL
CULTURAL
EDUCATION
FEDERAL GOVT.
HEALTHCARE
HOSPITALITY
INDUSTRIAL
MIXED USE
PUBLIC/CIVIC
PUBLIC ASSEMBLY
RESIDENTIAL
SPORT
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER

BOSTON

Crane counts remain steady in Boston. In addition to ongoing commercial projects, the market is also punctuated by high-rise residential developments in South Boston, the West End, and the Seaport District, which remains the largest and most active area of construction in the city. The Financial District has seen several new developments take off recently, and Southie (South Boston) continues to attract interest from developers who focus on the residential and mixed-use sectors.

CALGARY

In Calgary, ongoing infrastructure projects have added three new cranes to the city's latest count. Most of the current residential sector shows that projects are about 50% complete.

CHICAGO

Attributed to residential work on the Gold Coast and office projects in the Fulton Market neighborhoods, Chicago's latest crane numbers see a slight boost.

Despite increased construction costs and rising property taxes, activity is ongoing. Office buildings on LaSalle Street are being converted to residential and hotel use, Rush Hospital in Little Italy and the Steppenwolf Theater in Lincoln Park are expanding, and two new residential towers are underway at Lake Shore East.

Looking ahead, among the city's long-term, large-scale developments now breaking ground are the O'Hare Airport Expansion, Lincoln Yards (168 acres), 78 Development (62 acres), and One Chicago Square. With site prep completed, cranes are also coming to 1000M, a 74-story luxury condo on Michigan Avenue and the 700-foot-tall BMO office tower at Union Station.

DENVER

With a significant jump in the quantity of cranes in the Denver metro area, residential projects are showing signs of resurgence, with the number of cranes up more than 30% from previous counts for the sector.

HONOLULU

High-rise residential and mixed-use construction in Waikiki and the Ala Moana district account for the increase in Honolulu's crane count. Noteworthy projects include Azure Ala Moana, Lilia Waikiki, Sky Ala Moana, and Hilton Grand Vacations Club Ka Haku.

Upcoming developments include the Honolulu rail transit system and the redevelopment of Aloha Stadium and its 98 acres into the New Aloha Stadium Entertainment District. With the tourism industry pummeled by COVID-19, a slowdown in usually-strong hotel renovation work is anticipated.

LAS VEGAS

While the number of tower cranes has diminished over the last six months as projects are completed, and with a major development—Raiders Allegiant Stadium—slated to finish in late

July, future construction plans look shaky, with the erstwhile drivers of the local market—the hospitality and gaming sectors—being hard-hit by fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

LOS ANGELES

With several large projects like the new SoFi Stadium near completion, cranes are coming down, resulting in a modest decline the Los Angeles count. The construction industry's plan to add nearly 10,000 more jobs over the next five years may be jeopardized by COVID-19; the same is true for the 150 hotel projects now in the pipeline.

NEW YORK CITY

While losing a single crane from the last count, construction in New York City continues to be steady, with gains—possibly tempered in the future—in the commercial (up 38%) and hospitality (up 19%) sectors. For the near-term, an increase in construction is predicted, based on new building permits posted in Manhattan and the continuing work at the Hudson Yards development.

PHOENIX

Tripling its cranes since the last Index, Phoenix is experiencing a balanced expansion of building sectors, with mixed-use, educational, hospitality, and tech projects all currently under construction. Activity is centered in Downtown, with some work located in the Midtown/Uptown area.

PORTLAND

The Portland crane count has dipped slightly, with two fewer cranes on the skyline. Mixed-use projects are declining, while commercial construction is climbing; the highest concentration of development is found in downtown and in Beaverton, just outside the city limits. Locally strained resources for labor and sub-contractors is continuing to point towards a softening of the market in the future.

SEATTLE

While Seattle's crane count takes a hard dive, with 13 fewer towers over the city, it still ranks among the top four North American cities surveyed in total cranes. The recent drop in cranes can be attributed to a number of projects, which made up for many of the cranes in previous surveys, reaching completion. Despite this, there are a number of projects that remain in the pipeline for 2020 and 2021, which are anticipated to be a mix of commercial office and residential buildings.

Residential projects dominate the construction market, with civic, commercial, mixed-use, and healthcare sectors more modestly represented. Looking ahead, large-scale jobs are definitely not coming online at the rate seen in years past.

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco's gain in cranes—an impressive 43% increase since the last Index—reflects a focus on much-needed residential work, with new affordable housing developments located in the SOMA, Mission, and Downtown neighborhoods; of special note is a large-scale, long-term residential development on Treasure Island. While construction crews at housing projects are exempt from the regional shelter-in-place directive issued to combat coronavirus, those on commercial projects are not, with jobs in that sector facing shutdowns of indeterminate duration.

TORONTO

In Toronto, the city with the greatest number of cranes in North America, the count is holding steady. Most are servicing residential projects, followed by mixed-use towers that contain both residential and commercial office space. Although residential pre-construction sales have been strong, COVID-induced economic uncertainty precludes a positive market forecast.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The number of cranes in DC dropped a bit from the previous Index. Current construction in the city includes a new bridge over the Anacostia River, mixed-use developments around Nationals Park and Audi Field, and residential buildings in the Capitol Riverfront, Mount Vernon Triangle, and Northeast neighborhoods.

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LOCATIONS

NORTH AMERICA
Boston
Calgary
Chicago
Denver
Hilo
Honolulu
Kansas City
Las Vegas
Los Angeles
Maui
New York
Phoenix
Portland
San Francisco
San Jose
Seattle
Toronto
Tucson
Waikoloa
Washington, DC

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