

Housing Crisis in County Seen by '87

Describing housing conditions in Los Angeles County as an "unrecognized crisis," Board of Supervisors Chairman Ed Edelman Friday warned that 3 million people here will be living in substandard units within 10 years.

He said these figures include 2 million county residents—those counted in the regular federal census—and another "one million of what we call the hidden poor, primarily illegal aliens. . . ."

This would represent a substantial percentage of the county's population, which is estimated now at about 7 million. The current growth rate is only a few thousand a year.

Speaking at a conference on housing needs, Edelman cited figures to show there are 2.7 million housing units in the county now but 250,000, he said, need substantial rehabilitation.

Another 85,000, he declared, should be replaced immediately while an additional 40,000 a year deteriorate to substandard conditions.

He noted that older persons, especially those on fixed incomes, are hard hit by the housing dilemma, adding that the county has a "disproportionately greater number of senior citizens—that is, 854,250 persons 62 years and older. . . ."

A major problem, he said, is the county's low housing vacancy factor, which is currently less than 2%.

"Six per cent is regarded as necessary to allow people to relocate with some flexibility," he explained. "Low vacancy means high rents because low supply drives up rents."

Edelman, who recently returned from Washington where he sought more federal help to meet the county's housing needs, sponsored the day-long session attended by banking, construction, labor and other industry representatives at the Hall of Administration.