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Fewer tracts offered in overdue tax sales

By TIM FLACH

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Properties put up for sale due to delinquent property taxes declined in Lexington and Richland counties, which officials say is a sign of a slowly improving economy.

Richland County began its annual sale of tracts with overdue taxes Monday with 1,936 parcels available, down from 2,054 a year ago.

Taxes owed on those parcels total \$4.1 million, up slightly from \$3.8 million a year ago.

The total of homes, mobile homes, undeveloped parcels and commercial sites offered for sale is the first time that the number is below 2,000 since 2007.

"It's getting a little better out there," county treasurer David Adams said.

Recession-spawned home foreclosures pushed the total several hundred higher in recent years before starting to ebb, officials say.

The 1,329 homes and mobile homes with overdue taxes sold last month in Lexington County is down slightly from 1,349 a year ago.

Taxes owed on both types of residences total \$1.25 million, nearly \$180,000 less than last year.

"The trend we're seeing is encouraging," Lexington County treasurer Jim Eckstrom said. "Hopefully, it's a sign of a turnaround."

Not all property that's offered sells. Owners can redeem those sold in the next year by paying off taxes owed along with interest to the buyer.

Interested in buying?

The Richland County tax sale continues at 9 a.m. today at the Township Auditorium, 1703 Taylor St., Columbia. You must register and pay a \$10 fee to bid at the auction. For more information on other guidelines, go the treasurer's office at www.richlandonline.com.

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