



Permits, by contrast, have been much more even-keeled—showing none of the sharp swings seen in housing starts. The steady decline in total permits—now at a five-year low—suggests builders remain cautious despite the recent rebound in activity. Single-family permits edged up 0.5% to 870k, but that gain was not enough to offset weakness in multifamily approvals.



While July's data highlights both the volatility of housing starts and the outsized role of multifamily construction, the deeper story is the widening divergence between starts and permits—pointing to persistent affordability issues, elevated mortgage rates, and lingering builder uncertainty about demand ahead.