Housing recovery is about timing and location

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NEW YORK — If you bought a home in San Francisco in the past year, it might feel like the housing slump is over. Bay area home prices have shot up 18 percent in the past year.

But someone next door who bought in 2006 has likely suffered a 35 percent loss in value. And if you're a Las Vegas homeowner, there's been no good news in four years.

The latest report on home prices confirms that real estate is all about timing and location.

Nationally, home values rose 1.3 percent in May from April, according to the Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller 20-city home price index released Tuesday. And 19 of 20 cities showed price gains month over month.

Yet conditions are hardly uniform across the country. Some cities, such as San Francisco and Washington, have less area to build out and better job markets, so they have suffered less or in some cases recovered more quickly. Even cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas, which endured some of the worst losses after the housing bubble burst, are seeing vastly different trends over the past year.

"Generally, in any recovery, there is always parts of the country that lead the way and certain parts that lag behind," said Jonathan Basile, vice president of economics at Credit Suisse. "To understand why, you have to look at the economies of those areas and how much building went on to help determine why one outperforms and others underperforms."