

[<< Back](#) | [Print](#)

Semico: Structured ASICs set for future explosive growth

By Colleen Taylor, Contributing Editor -- 4/24/2007

Electronic News

Structured ASICs are still strong, some analysts say, and have potential for even more "explosive" growth in the coming years.

Since the **Semiconductor Industry Association** (SIA) does not currently have a category labeled "structured ASIC," market research firm **Semico Research Corp.** announced this week that it has created a definition that it said "captures most of the important features" that can be used to define a structured ASIC.

These features are: use of movable (re-usable) IP; use of internal on-chip buses; use of real-world interfaces such as IEEE 1394, USB, etc.; design of greater than 500,000 gates; embedded memory of 1Mbit or greater; an embedded CPU core with a clock speed of 100Mhz or greater; silicon fabricated starting at 0.25mm and moving downward; software drivers or APIs on-chip; and medium performance mixed-signal blocks are part of the solution.

According to the firm, revenue for the structured ASIC category under those definitions grew 20 percent in 2006 and is projected to increase 13 percent in 2007. Unit growth of the worldwide structured ASIC market is forecasted at a compound annual growth rate of 28.2 percent in the years 2007 through 2011.



And despite **the exit last year of former structured ASIC player LSI Logic** from the market, as well as **skepticism about the ASIC model** in the industry, the category is open to the possibility for even stronger growth in the coming years, according to Semico's analysts.

"Depending on outside factors such as worldwide economic conditions and market demand, growth could be explosive," Rich Wawrzyniak, Semico's senior analyst of ASICs and SoC, said in a statement. "This depends on how quickly older, existing designs are converted to structured ASIC and how well costs are contained."

"However, it must be pointed out that structured ASIC operates best in a rather narrow volume band between where FPGAs leave off and standard cells begin," Wawrzyniak added.

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