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Some contractors seeing a spike in work

By Jason Soifer

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Jo. L. Keener/The Daily Courier
Renovations Remodeling employees Doug Giles, left, and Richard Sabin get ready to hang doors on a remodel project Wednesday morning in Prescott.

PRESCOTT VALLEY - Cindy Tobin and her family began working on enlarging their living space in early 2007.

Getting the plans, permits and financing together took the expansion of their Danita Street home into mid-July of this year.

A crew is rapidly finishing a roughly 650-square-foot guest home in the back of the property for Tobin's mother-in-law to move into.

Once that is finished, work begins to roughly double the size of the main home for her husband and their four children to live in.

"We're very excited and a little overwhelmed," she said. "We're feeling like we're going to be happy and pleased with the results when it's all done."

The remodeling project comes at a good time for Tom Reilly. Reilly, owner of Renovations remodeling business, is overseeing Tobin's remodeling projects.

"It's not an extreme makeover, but it's dang close," he said.

January through March was a slow time for Reilly, who says he received just a few calls from people wanting to get an idea of remodeling costs.

Reilly says he began seeing a spike in leads and calls in late July and he is now doing two to three proposals a week instead of one a month.

"I know that the jobs are out there; I know that the work is out there - I just have to go out and get it," he said.

Recognizing the spike, Reilly admits that business can still improve and he is looking to return to the days when he had six leads a week.

A local contractors association is experiencing a positive increase of its own.

Memberships are up at the Yavapai County Contractors Association.

Executive director Sandy Griffis said she has 310 members and 62 of those are new businesses joining the association since January.

Griffis attributes the growth to trades professionals looking for referrals as well as support.

"It's good because times are slow and they are taking the time to get involved with an association that is working for them," she said.

Although some homeowners are unable to buy a new home, Griffis said she is hearing about people who are initiating remodeling projects.

"I think some of them are electing to stay in and put value back into their homes to replace what was lost due to the economy," she said.

That bodes well for people like Jim Aldrich.

Aldrich is co-owner of Burton Painting & Wallpapering in Prescott, and he thought business would fall about 10 percent this year.

To the contrary, Aldrich said business is up about 7 percent because of some unexpected commercial work, and residential jobs are a little steadier.

However, Aldrich points out business is a bit like riding a roller coaster, with the shaky economy, job concerns, monsoon season and election-year jitters leaving many people feeling uneasy and unwilling to commit to costly projects.

"It's been a hard year to figure out," he said.

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