Building permits rise in Upstate

Upswing comes amid drop in confidence

By Angella Davis
Staff writer
davisal@greenvilleonline.com

Residential building permits in the Upstate rose in the year's third quarter, just before builder confidence across the nation dipped.

Building permits in the Upstate were up 22 percent year-to-date, according to a quarterly report compiled by Knoxville-based The Market Edge.

A total of 3,207 permits were issued from January to September 2013, compared with 2,628 issued the same period of 2012, The Market Edge report shows.

The Upstate — defined by The Market Edge as Abbeville, Anderson, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg counties — had 3,491 permits in all of 2012 and 2,643 in 2011.

While Greenville County had a 3.1 percent gain from 1,475 third quarter 2012 to 1,521 the same period this year, the biggest increases were felt in neighboring counties. Building permits in Anderson, Pickens, Spartanburg and Laurens counties jumped year-to-date by 41.1, 45.9, 57.3, and 60 percent, respectively.

Greenville's big improvement year was 2012, "so we're just continuing a gradual improvement from there," said Michael Dey, executive vice president of the local home builders group.

Dey has said the region's strong construction activity is being driven by economic development, job creation, and strong demand.

Signs of pent-up demand are still being seen in many markets across the country, said Rick Judson, chairman of the National Association of Builders (NAHB).

But, he said, builder sentiment has dipped slightly as the result of "continuing challenges in the marketplace with regard to the cost and availability of labor and lots of uncertainty in Washington."

The NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index gauges builder perceptions of current single-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months, the association said.