



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

The first phase of The Pier student cottages is picking up speed across from the Highpointe apartments off Cherry Road. The project has fueled new construction over the past seven weeks in Oconee County and is valued at almost \$11 million.

# Housing starts pick up

## The Pier student cottages fuel activity

BY CARLOS GALARZA  
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WALHALLA — New housing activity is picking up in Oconee County and has generated more than \$10 million in estimated value over the past seven weeks.

The surge is being fueled, in part, by a project called The Pier — a cluster of student cottages expected to be completed in the fall to serve Clemson University undergraduates. The cottages are located across the Highpointe apartments off Cherry Road less than three miles from Clemson University.

Planning Department Director Art Holbrooks recently told county officials that more activity could be coming down the pike.

“We still do continue to see signs of it increasing in the near future ...” Holbrooks told council members who sit on the Planning and Economic

Development Committee. “We’ve had one small subdivision contact us within the last week or so. That’s the first one in months. “It’s small, eight or 10 units, but we haven’t had that in months.”

Building permit reports provided to The Journal by the Building Codes Department reflect a flurry of activity in recent weeks.

Contractors have pulled 43 new housing permits with a total value that tops \$10.6 million.

Holbrooks said the first phase of The Pier project is planned for 30 cottages. He said they have the permits for all except about six.

“They’re making good progress,” Holbrooks said.

The spike in new housing starts coincides with improved home-sale numbers in the area and throughout the state, which bodes well for the economy.

SEE HOUSING, PAGE A5

# HOUSING: Cottages less than three miles from Clemson Univ.

FROM PAGE A1

According to the most recent housing industry report from the South Carolina Realtors, 222 homes sold last month in the Western Upstate that includes Oconee. The number reflects an increase of almost 13 percent from the 197 homes sold in February 2011.

SCR Executive Director Nick Kremydas said he thinks there might be more good news ahead.

“With sales and prices on an upward trend and inventory and supply on a downward trend, the report reflects what should be a very positive first quarter,” Kremydas said.

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