Jobs fuel Upstate homes permits

Residential building have risen 30 percent

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Residential building permits in the Upstate rose 30.3 percent in the first three quarters of this year, a boost that local housing experts attribute to job growth.

The Upstate had 2,611 building permits issued during the first nine months of this year, compared to the 2,004 issued during the same period last year, according to Knoxville-based The Market Edge, which tracks residential and commercial building trends in the Southeast.

"These trend numbers are all driven by jobs, and it clearly indicates that the Upstate area, as far as publicity and as far as recruitment and job growth, they've done some things right to get people there," said Dale Akins, president of The Market Edge.

The same also could be said about the state, which saw its single-family building permits rise 16 percent in August, compared to the same month last year, National Association of Home Builders figures show.

Nationwide, building permits were up 11.6 percent last month – the highest rise in four years, according to HUD and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Michael Dey, executive vice president of the Home Builders Association of Greenville, said the increase in permits locally is due to job creation - "bottom line."

"We've been very successful with economic development here. You've seen a lot of job announcements, but I also think local employers are adding as well," he said.

The September unemployment rate, which was released last week,

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Travis Chapman, of Yeary Electric, works on a wall unit. MYKAL MCELDOWNEY

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dropped in all eight counties that The Market Edge defines as the Upstate – Abbeville, Anderson, Greenville, Laurens, Pickens, Oconee, Spartanburg and Greenwood. The rate ranged from 6.6 percent in Greenville to 9.5 percent in Greenwood.

Greenville County's rate was the second best in South Carolina behind Lexington County's 6.3 percent, according to the state Department of Employment and Workforce.

Local home construction is adding to its own success by creating jobs, Dey said.

Greenville County had the most building permits issued year to date in The Market Edge report, with a total of 1,457, up from 954 the same time last year.

From the peak to the trough in home building in the Greenvillle-Laurens-Pickens metropolitan statistical area, the jobs went from 10,000 to 5,000, Dey said.

"We lost half of our jobs attributable to home building between the peak 2006 to 2008," he said.

"As home building picks back up, it's adding to these jobs as well."