

Winter work



HEIDI HEILBRUNN / Staff

Despite the economy, housing construction continues on Haynie Street in Greenville.

Marketer sees better days ahead for local builders

Economic turnaround could start in spring, if no new problems arise

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Upstate homebuilders may begin seeing a turnaround in their fortunes in the second quarter of the year, predicts Columbia-based consultant Hal Von Nessen.

But that all the depends, in part, "on whether nothing else adverse happens that's outside of our control," said Von Nessen, who this week gave members of the Home Builders Association of Greenville his 2009

housing forecast.

Von Nessen, founder of Resh Marketing Consultants Inc., said South Carolina and the Upstate are not suffering as bad as a lot of other areas due to the economic downturn and should see better days before many.

But for all of the positives the local economy has going for it — housing price stability, reasonable inventories, low subprime exposure — it does have problems,

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Von Nessen said.

One is the state's high unemployment rate, which for December increased to 9.5 percent, the third-highest rate in the nation. The other problem is public confidence.

The Consumer Confi-

dence Index, which decreased in December, dropped to another historic low in January, according to the Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index. The index this week stands at 37.7, down from 38.6 in December.

Von Nessen said the housing industry, for the most part, has taken care of all of the problems it can address.

"Right now it's a little bit out of our control as to what can be done. It's a problem that transcends the nature of the housing industry," he said.

He said homebuilders can "influence consumer attitudes and consumer perceptions in our market. If we're not doing that then we're relying on everybody else to do our business for us."