

FILE PHOTO

Year-to-date new home construction permits in Oconee County valued at almost $41 million have eclipsed 2010 totals.

New home activity up in Oconee

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Despite a shaky economy across the board this year, new home construction permits in Oconee County have already surpassed 2010 totals.

Oconee County Planning Department data made available to The Journal on Monday shows 122 new home building permits with a value of almost $41 million have been issued through Nov. 15.

Additionally, 133 mobile home set up permits were issued valued at $1.4 million.

SEE HOME, PAGE A8

FROM PAGE A1

Together, the 255 permits issued for the stick-built homes (constructed on site) and mobile homes eclipsed the 181 residential permits pulled last year in Oconee.

By comparison, 846 residential building permits were pulled in 2006.

Planning Director Art Holbrooks recently told a County Council committee panel that the surge in mobile home permits is a new trend. He said the number of stick-built permits had been neck and neck with mobile home permits for several years.

Holbrooks attributed the surge in mobile home permits to the tightening of credit by home lenders.

"We haven't seen this trend in a while," Holbrooks said. "That has changed up in the economy."

The 122 stick-built home permits average approximately $335,000 in value.

Included among the stick-built home permits is one valued at $1.8 million in The Cliffs at Keowee Falls South.

Also bringing the average value of stick-built homes up is another Lake Keowee home valued at $1.5 million.

The median value of the 122 new home construction permits is $228,000.

Holbrooks said most of the mobile homes being permitted are used, which would explain why the average value is $11,000.

Another trend picked up by Holbrooks is the apparent interest shown by some developers to work on multi-family projects.

Holbrooks said that while there is nothing to indicate that someone is ready to turn in an application for multi-family units, the buzz is there.

"We do continue to see signs of increasing activity in the near future," Holbrooks said. "We are still being contacted about potential projects."

Holbrooks indicated that information would be brought to the Planning Commission about having codes in place to address multi-family projects.

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HOME: 'We haven't seen this trend in a while,' Holbrooks said