

SUN GAZETTE



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Some Local Firms Find Outlook Outstanding

Just when the pictures painted of the nation's economy seem to be the darkest, some local firms are shining.

In late December, the Virginia Society of Certified

by Ted S. Martin

Public Accountants released its annual year-end status report on the Commonwealth's current economic health as well as its prognosis for the new year.

A representative sample of approximately 3,000 accountants statewide painted a gloomy picture of sinking consumer and business confidence in the economy fueled by both fear of national recession and the outcome of the Persian Gulf crisis.

While the survey might have captured some of the feelings of Northern Virginians, their temporary retreat from large scale spending has not prevented them from spending altogether. They still have

money and they still continue to spend it.

But just where are Northern Virginians spending their money, and just what businesses are and are not the recipients of their largesse. We can trace the beginnings of our answer to the suburban homes of Northern Virginia.

For those who work downtown, the suburbs of Washington offer a welcome escape. People seek to get away from the workday's troubles in their quiet living rooms and sun porches. The personal choices that many are now making for these places are reflective of the nation's economic caution.

The well-reported downturn in real estate sales appears to have prompted a new growth in smaller scale remodeling of existing homes. More people now appear to be holding onto their properties and making them more comfortable instead of simply buying a new home.

This trend toward improving what one already owns is reflected in the success of BOWA



BOWA remodelers Josh Baker, left, and Larry Weinberger built up business during tough times

typical sort of addition would be a small one or a two story project or renovating a kitchen or adding a master bedroom suite."

For some businesses job

dislocation and layoffs actually may mean increased productivity. Take for example McLean's Dominion Personnel Services. According to Paul Drummer, a certified personnel

consultant and Dominion Personnel's president, his business has been brisk over the past six months.

"There's definitely more people," Drummer said. "There is a large increase in the inquiries and resumes that are coming in from all over the

"The economy has had a couple of different effects on our business," Baker reports. "One is the fact that people can't move their homes and they have a tremendous amount of equity in them because of the appreciation over the last ten years, and interest rates are very low. They are turning to remodeling as a way of upgrading their quality of life or quality of living."

Baker also noted the reluctance to spend seems to be corresponding most often to the size of recent remodeling jobs.

"We've seen more relatively smaller additions and renovations getting started in the past," he commented. "A Builders, Inc. of Arlington, which specializes in home