

Remodeling At The High End: Happy Results For Those Who Can Afford The

Margaret Morton
Staff Writer

Even with the down economy, there's still a fair amount of available money out there for extensive remodeling jobs—if you know where to look.

BOWA Builders, with a Middleburg office, is a full-service residential construction firm specializing in upscale additions, renovations and custom homes and recently took the top ranking on *Remodeling* magazine's Remodeling 550 Full-Service Remodelers list.

The McLean-based company raked in more than \$26 million in revenues from its residential remodeling projects last year.

Bucking the downward economic trends, the company predicts its total revenues will be well up this year—to the tune of more than \$36 million for 2009. The company has won more than 100 awards for excellence, including being named national Remodeler of the Year by *Professional Remodeler* magazine.

The company has been in business for

more than 20 years, and BOWA Builders CEO Larry Weinberg attributed the positive revenues to its track record and ability to offer considerable resources through the partnerships afforded by a large company. That breadth of service combined with the personal attention and long-term relationship provided by its small, community-focused teams, gives clients the feeling they are receiving luxurious one-on-one attention.

Joe Bürke, BOWA vice president, heads the Middleburg office, whose team has been focused on serving clients in the Middleburg area and in Fauquier County for four years.

What eventually induced a broadening of the company's reach to Loudoun and Fauquier was the increasing number of requests BOWA was getting to do work in those areas.

Initially, "we were not well structured to serve them." But, as a resident of Warrenton, "my location made sense and we were looking to expand," Bürke said.

"Clients were asking for projects out

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BOWA Builders took this house in Vienna and remodeled it for its owners who wanted a fresh look. Here the "before" version shows a low, one-story building with recessed windows under an overhanging roof. BOWA staff undertook a serious project in reconstructing the home, doing a major overhaul of the façade and adding windows to increase the natural light.

BOWA

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this way," Burke said, calling the move west a natural fit and progression.

Those clients included some individual customers who "knew us, or for whom we've worked before," as well as interior designers and architects, Burke said. "We thought, 'hey, this is an opportunity,'" he recalled.

It coincided with a realignment in the organization to have Burke and some colleagues focus on smaller markets, to provide a more hands-on, more intimate experience for clients. It wasn't just one large company serving clients, but one team focusing on


this particular area and knowledgeable about it, Burke said.

So far, the four-year-old experiment is "going great guns," Burke said. Over the years, the company has developed a "fantastic" client base and receives constant referrals from it. "We're focused on customer service and on giving clients a positive experience," he said.

That one-on-one design advice is backed by great resources, Burke said, noting the company's broad network of partners, vendors, clients and suppliers. "That way we can control the experience well," he said.

But even in the well heeled confines of Middleburg and Fauquier County, "folks are being more deliberate in their choices and more thoughtful," Burke said. They also take more time to see the project through, from concept to the end.

A lot of the team's clients that do have the means to spend realize the great oppor-

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“
We're focused on customer service and on giving clients a positive experience.
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**— Joe Burke,
 BOWA Vice President**

tunity afforded by the turndown. Because of the slowdown in the industry, "we can do more for the same price over a year or two ago," Burke said. Many of the company's suppliers are really aggressive in their pricing, and his team also aims to reduce costs while delivering the best value.

"There really is a heightened focus on doing more for a smaller bottom line ... a lot of people are sharpening the pencil," Burke said, noting "gone are the days of 'supersize it.'"

It's an evolution that does not displease him. Burke's background is in architecture, and from a design point of view, he is finding—and appreciating—people are being more thoughtful, whether they are remodeling or building a new home.

Burke says he's also noticed lifestyle changes. "Clients are more concerned about energy conservation, how their house performs," he said.

BOWA tries to be a leader in that arena to attract people to high-performing homes, he said, adding the company encourages cli-

ents to do even more. So far, that approach is getting a good reception. "Many want to make those choices and be more energy efficient, as well as use sustainable materials," he said.

The company has a good blend of work, usually two-thirds renovation and one-third building new homes.

It ebbs and flows, Burke said. One change he's noticed is the size of homes is trending smaller, and that's a challenge to provide the amount of amenities that previously would have fit into a larger house.

Another choice to which homeowners are increasingly turning is a higher demand for automation. With technology,

emphasis on green building practices, clients are looking to centralize audio-video, ability to interface with docking stations, iPhones, computers and in-home networking systems.

"They're taking more time to pre-wire their homes, with a lot more thought and care, and taking more time before we dry-wall it all in," Burke commented.

Another new trend is "folks definitely recently have been enjoying the outdoor experience, giving a more resort-like feeling. Fun stuff like an outdoor theater, fire pits and more interesting pool environments," he said.



The remodeled Vienna house now features a more open, light-filled look and more diversity and movement in the façade, with four columns dominating the central aspect. BOWA took care to preserve the rustic integrity of the original structure, while updating its look to reflect the