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Bridgewater Building On Rebound?

Town Projects Pick Up, But Residential Housing Still Slow

Posted: September 1, 2011

By JEREMY HUNT

Construction in Bridgewater, like elsewhere throughout the Valley and U.S., came to a screeching halt a few years ago during the economic downturn.

But, unlike many communities, it seems to be on the resurgence in the town — for now, at least.

Bridgewater officials say about \$11 million worth of various projects were completed this year or are under way, including residential and transportation infrastructure work.



Parkside Village, one of two new subdivisions in Bridgewater, is just one project contributing to the town's recent construction boom. (Photo by Justin Falls / DN-R)

"For the most part, construction was just dead in this town, so I take this as a good sign. At least people are out there," Bridgewater Superintendent Bob Holton said. "Seeing any spark in the construction industry is good."

Holton said the \$11 million figure is comparable to construction activity prior to the recession, which technically began in late 2007 and ended in the middle of 2009.

But the type of construction, he added, has changed.

In the middle of the last decade, most of the activity was in the residential-housing sector, whereas this year's work is largely driven by local institutions, such as Bridgewater College.

"Things are being built but not what was being built back then," he said.

College Expands

About \$7.8 million can be chalked up to construction at Bridgewater College, which finished its Stone Village student-housing complex earlier this year in addition to other projects, according to a town staff report.

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A major addition to the Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Company headquarters on Main Street also is in the works, at an estimated cost of \$1.8 million, the report says.

And while residential housing has been weak, there are some signs of life.

Building permits for two new subdivisions have been issued to the tune of more than \$1 million.

While developers behind Millview Estates and Parkside Village say sales are moving slowly, they're optimistic about the future.

Millview Estates, a development of about 150 units, is located off Dry River Road on the northwest end of Bridgewater. The subdivision includes single-family and duplex homes.

Developer and Realtor Mike Pugh said six duplex lots have been sold in the past several months.

"We're encouraged," said Pugh, owner of Old Dominion Realty.

Pugh said Millview and Parkside are "different products" and appeal to different kinds of buyers. With its single-floor duplexes, Millview appeals to older adults looking to downsize, he said.

Parkside, meanwhile, features two-story units and backs up to Oakdale Park, making it a good fit for young families with children, Pugh said.

David Milstead, a partner in the subdivision, agrees.

"The location's the best in Bridgewater," he said. "You can't get better than that."

The design for Parkside Village, located off Main Street near the Martin Center, calls for 64 units consisting of single-family and duplex homes.

Two units have been built at Parkside but no sales have been made yet, Milstead said.

Milstead suspects potential buyers have been scared off because of rumors that the federal government is going to require a 20 percent down payment to obtain financing, "which isn't true," he said.

"It's just perception," he said. "With our [federal] government the way it is, they can't make decisions. They're scaring everybody. It's really hurting the market right now."

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