

## Fairfax Co-Homeowners Passionate Still About Remodeling

*Local Permits Up 8% from Same Time Last Year*

By John Byrd

(Fairfax Co, VA)—While residential resale figures are still below last year's same-month totals, local home remodeling activity continues to rise.

"We've seen an 8% increase in home remodeling permits during the 12 month period ending last month," reports David Sharp, Chief of Residential Building Permits for Fairfax County, "Since we've noticed this obverse relationship between resales and improvement permits in the past, my thought is that more residents are choosing to improve their existing house rather than trying to sell and trade up"

Bob Gallagher, a former two-term president of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry's metro Washington DC chapter and vice president of Sun Design Remodeling in Burke, also sees vitality in the home improvement sector:

"We have a solid backlog of design and construction agreements going into mid-year, probably a better backlog than this time last year. I plan to add another designer to the five we already so we can stay on top of new work."

Asked about client concern for remodeling cost recovery, Gallagher points out those local returns are still among the highest in the country and that most homeowner's don't remodel for an instant re-sale:

"Our clients are usually planning to occupy for at least five years," he notes. "They are just looking for more enjoyment out of their existing home."

Nevertheless, the most recent "Cost Vs Value" report published annually by Remodeling Magazine shows that northern Virginians can typically expect an average 75%-80% return on most types of remodeling projects in a next day re-sale. <http://costvalue.remodelingmagazine.com/washington.html>

Other remodelers note that the cooling economy has resulted in some hesitation about signing remodeling agreements, and in projects being scaled-back. A slower market is toughest on less established companies with fewer references and less industry recognition.

"Firms that are undercapitalized may try to shorten the sales process by under pricing," Gallagher notes, "This can lead to a downward spiral that translates into a less than satisfactory performance."

Tim Burch, NARI/Metro DC's current president, points out that the association's "Contractor of the Year" (COTY) competition, now in its 17th year, has gained credibility with homeowners seeking to establish the job performance capabilities of competing firms.

"Members tell us a COTY makes a difference with homeowners," Burch says. "Which is why we have an increasing number of entries every year."