

Is Washington County **Reawakening?**

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a bright pink long-sleeved top and matching pants, is climbing a wooden structure. She has her arms raised and is looking upwards with a determined expression. The structure appears to be the roof frame of a building under construction, with several wooden beams visible. The background is a clear blue sky.

Washington County (the St. George area) has been Utah's high flyer in the economic circus. But the recent recession even knocked Washington County off of its high wire, meaning even it has to re-gather itself and climb back up the ladder to lofty economic heights. For several years this seemed a far off task. Washington County was Utah's first county to slide into recession (a direct result of being Utah's most high-flying housing market), and the depths of its fall made it both dramatic and anticipated that it would stay down longer than other parts of Utah.

But anecdotal evidence may suggest Washington County's employment growth is just about ready to reawaken. The housing market was the number one casualty of this recession (actually it can be argued as the cause), and Washington County is probably Utah's most sensitive county when following housing as an economic indicator and signaler of future employment performance.

Washington County housing permits had fallen more than any other county, but through the first eight months of 2010, its housing permit approvals are up

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61 percent relative to the same period in 2009. Compare that to a nearly 10 percent decline statewide.

Here comes the antidotal evidence. Workforce Services economist Lecia Langston lives in Washington County. She has observed firsthand the recession's impact upon the Washington County new home market and undeveloped subdivisions. She observes that even though it is small, subdivisions that had no new home building in them for several years are now starting to see a few new homes built here and there. Sometimes anecdotal evidence can send telling signals. Its value is it does it sooner than the resulting statistics.

The wait for Washington County's economy to reawaken may be over. This would be both welcome and slightly ahead of previous forecasts. ●

FY For your information

Wind Power: Tapping a New Job Market

In 2009, wind energy made up 1.8 percent of U.S. power generation, an increase from 1.3 percent in 2008. However, wind power accounts for about 50 percent of renewable energy, which includes wind, solar, hydroelectric, and geothermal power, as well as energy from biomass and wood or wood-derived products.

According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) an estimated 85,000 Americans are employed in the wind power industry and its related fields.

According to AWEA, in 2000, installed wind energy capacity in the United States was under 3,000 megawatts. It is now over 35,000 megawatts, enough electricity to power approximately 9.7 million homes.

Resources:

•http://bls.gov/green/wind_energy/

BLS Definition of Green Jobs

Green jobs either produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources or make an establishment's production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources.

