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## A Labor of Love

Bear Creek Lumber cedar inside and out compliments Joe Augustine's project.

I am an architect that has a fond appreciation for honest construction. I enjoy studying the details of builders who practice the craftsmen tradition. I also enjoy building craftsmen inspired furniture for our home. When the opportunity arose to design and construct a work shop for our home, I realized the chance to execute some of the details I have admired. While undertaking my first construction project, the main lesson that I learned was that it is much faster to draw a project than it is to construct! Given the benefit of the computer, issues of level, plumb, and square are rarely a concern.

As we live in an older home that lacks an appropriate area for a work shop, the only alternative was to build the new space. Actually, the new work shop and garden shed was constructed on the site of a former shed. The size and configuration of the buildings were limited by property lines and existing site features. As the available footprint for the buildings was a narrow ten feet wide by thirty feet long piece of land, the proportions were awkward for a single building of that size. Therefore it seemed to make design sense to construct two buildings, side by the side, each dedicated to their function.

As the design process began, my wife Mirka and I were also preparing for the arrival of our first child. As I looked at the images for the work shop and garden shed, I often saw a parallel to a parent and child standing at the edge of the woods sharing a view of the stream below.

The plan of the work shop is relatively straightforward. To facilitate the maneuvering of long pieces of lumber, the building has sliding barn doors on both sides. As a bonus, the doors on the rear of the work shop allow the views and sounds of the stream to enter the space. It just seems natural to have a woodworking shop located in the woods itself.

The choice of materials, and colors, were selected to compliment the site and surroundings. The foundation wall is split-face CMU, (concrete masonry unit) and the exterior walls are cedar board & batt siding. The roof is a standing seam metal shingle over plywood sheathing, rigid insulation and cedar decking. The roof framing system was designed with wood scissor trusses and exposed tails. The majority of the buildings are constructed from western red cedar. The trusses are expressed on the exterior of the gable walls as well. The profile of the eaves was designed to reflect the placement of the doors below. Accent lighting is located in the cedar roof decking above the doors.



The doors were built by hand without metal fasteners, and following a stile and rail design which utilizes mortise & tenon joinery. While the windows were provided by Marvin Windows, the window trim and sill was milled, planed and profiled by hand as well.

What turned out to be a serendipitous design moment, the exterior walls do not extend to the underside of the roof but actually stop at the top of the cap plate. In addition to providing natural ventilation, sunlight illuminates the wood decking in the daytime and the eaves present a gentle glow in the evening. All in all, I am grateful for the lessons I have learned and the assistance I have received towards the project.

**Story and pictures by Joe Augustine, Architect, Wyncote, PA**

## Bear Creek Holiday Schedule

We will be closed November 27 and 28 for Thanksgiving. In December, we will be on limited hours and staffing from December 15 until January 5.

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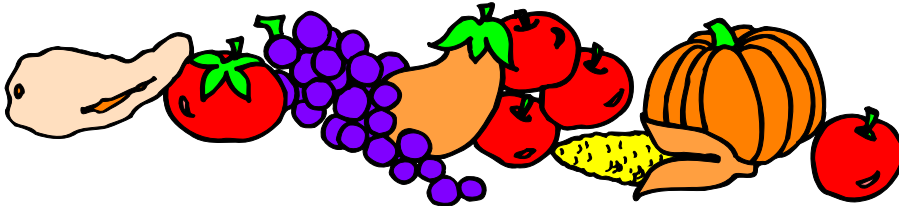


## Construction Industry Behind Tech Trend

A recent survey conducted with more than 2,000 construction company managers suggested that staying on the cutting edge of technology is not a priority. Most companies are scrambling to catch up with computerization, and are content doing the minimum to stay even with their competitors and customers. Older company owners hope to retire before they have to learn the computer. While more than 75 percent use e-mail to correspond with customers, and 66 percent use it to communicate with architects and engineers, only 50 percent use the Internet for job correspondence with other contractors, subcontractors or suppliers. Contractors reluctantly follow their customers wishes, but don't embrace technology for their own business and project management practices.

Only 10 percent use the Internet to submit invoices or progress payment to customers. The building industry is considerably behind the times compared to others. In the world of retail business, products are ordered, produced, shipped, paid for and re-ordered without a single piece of paper. Construction still requires paper invoices, original and notarized signatures, conditional and final lien releases, joint checks, architect and bank inspector approvals, and copies for everyone involved.

Computers are becoming more of a required tool, as 50 percent of project managers carry laptops, while only 25 percent of field supervisors have or use a computer. Maybe the old mind set that field people work with their hands instead of their head still prevails. Of the companies surveyed, 50 percent now use some type of scheduling software. The survey shows only 20 percent of subcontractors and 33 percent of general contractors use a comprehensive project management software package.



## Prequalifying Your Remodeling Customers:

Know What A Customer Really Wants Before You Commit To A Project

All kinds of things happen when people spend money. One of our biggest challenges going into a remodeling project is actually choosing the right client to work for. So do your homework, and get good at reading between the lines. Show clients it is in their best interest, for both a quality project and budget reasons, to have completely open and honest communications with their contractor throughout every stage of the job. *Here are some questions to ask potential customers:*

1. How long have you been planning your project? This question gives you an idea of whether they are just starting budget considerations, or have gone full circle based on solid research.

2. Do you have sketches, drawings or complete plans? Do you have an architect? This is a chance to get some key clues about where the perspective client has been getting budget information.

3. Have any other remodeling companies previewed this project? If so, they probably have some idea of a semi-realistic cost.

4. May I ask who else is on your list of building contractors? This gives you information on your competition and previously quoted price ranges, such as pick up and handy man type verses a professional remodeler.

5. What criteria will you use in making your building contractors choice? Obviously at this point, if they say cost or budget, the problems will start early, and probably never end.

6. Typically, when purchasing product, which is more important; quality or the lowest price? This will give you an idea of the client's spending habits, which can become ingrained and hard to break.

7. Have you considered a budget range for your project? This is the big question and hopefully the final piece of the puzzle, if they are open and honest with you.

## New Forest Thinning Plan Reviewed

The Bush administration has released a plan to clear overgrown forest, and prevent catastrophic wildfires. Critics say it's a blatant giveaway to timber companies. The plan, approved last month as part of a giant spending bill, allows logging companies to cut large, commercially valuable trees in national forest in exchange for clearing smaller, more fire-prone trees and brush. Known as stewardship contracting, the approach allows the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to issue 10-year contracts to private contractors for clearance work with no limits on size of tree to be cut or the number of acres cleared.

By allowing long-term contracts, the program gives companies incentive to invest needed equipment while saving the government much of the cost of wildfire prevention - in effect paying them with trees, said Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey, the plan's chief architect.

The Bush administration and the timber industry say stewardship contracts are the right remedy for the 190 million acres of public land considered at high risk of wildfires. Rey, who oversees the Forest Service, said apprehension about the stewardship contracts is misplaced.

"There is nothing new or sinister or unknown to the body politic here," he said, noting that 84 stewardship contracts have been allowed in national forest on a pilot basis since 1999.

# Industry News

**American households spent one-third of their 2001 income on housing**, twice the portion spent in 1972, Urban Land Institute analyst Robert Dunphy reported. That gain represents a higher homeownership rate and a penchant for larger, more lavish homes. His study of federal consumer spending data in 28 urban areas for the Washington D.C. education group showed metro Milwaukee paid a little more than average -- 33.5% -- for housing. Los Angeles spent the most, 37.8%, and St. Louis spent the least, 29.1%. Survey findings are posted at [www.smartgrowth.net](http://www.smartgrowth.net).

**Evidence is growing that the housing market nationally has peaked.** The average interest rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage is up by more than a full percentage point since June, and recently stood at 6.44 percent. As a result, applications for purchase mortgages have softened. Industry forecasters generally agree that by the end of the year, the rate of sales will decline from its record, and home price growth, which has been running at 7 percent plus, will slow by half.

## Growing Scarcity of Land Alters Building Boom, Adds Volatility to Prices

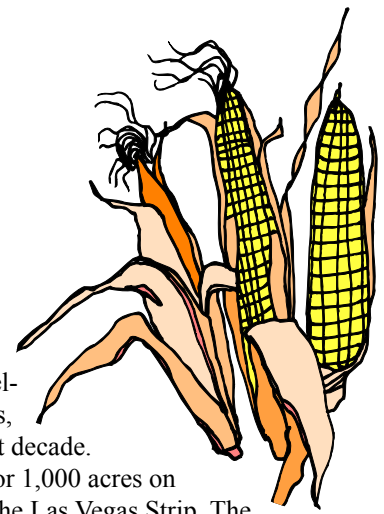
Nowhere is the contrast of open land to developable land more startling than in Las Vegas, the country's fastest growing city for the past decade.

One developer recently paid \$ 160 million for 1,000 acres on the fringe of the town and eight miles from the Las Vegas Strip. The land, which today features little more than weeds and discarded tires, will someday include a master planned community with a Tuscan theme. It sold at auction for nearly double its appraised value, and the buyer was happy to pay for it.

Finding land in Vegas used to be as easy as 'throwing darts at a map.' said the developer, Tom Ritter. Now, he says, private land for large housing developments is 'virtually non existent.' One of the fastest -growing cities in America, Las Vegas embodies a problem cropping up across the country. The nation has seen rapid increase in demand for new housing in recent years, fed by fast population growth, new immigration and easier credit. But the land available for home building has grown increasingly scarce. Builders eager to capitalize on to historic building boom have already gobbled up many of the most desirable parcels and bid up the prices of remaining land close to urban areas, adding to recent fears of painful housing-marked correction. This has spawned a backlash against builders by city councils and neighborhood groups, fed by worries about the effects of rapid development further restricting builders options.

While it remains relatively easy to find cheap land in some Southern and Midwestern cities for a growing number of metropolitan areas, builders say they're reaching the end of the road. In some cases, such as Southern California, and parts of the Northeast, they say there just aren't many large undeveloped plots left in areas where people want to live.

Elsewhere, environmental regulators, city planning boards, and land trusts have put up new roadblocks. They are setting aside land for conservation or wildlife protection or extending the amount of time it takes to get permits, especially in places such as northern Virginia, southern Florida and North Carolina. Dozens of cities including suburbs of Columbus Ohio; Hartford, Conn.; Orlando and even Dallas have enacted or considered moratoriums on residential construction in recent years.



### Screech Owls Rule!

We built our house from your lumber, and are enjoying it very much. Here's a picture of the underside of the soffit on one of our buildings, and an owl house I build out of some of the leftovers from Bear Creek WRC. This Western Screech Owl has used that birdhouse for the past 6 years, fledging 5 young a season.

Helen Snyder, Portal Arizona



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