

Custom-home honcho forecasts banner year

Custom-home builder Garen McCune is having his most productive year of the decade — a good fortune he shares with many of his colleagues in today's active high-end housing market.

McCune should know where the action is. He is the co-president of the Custom Homebuilders and Remodellers Council of the Building Industry Association of Superior California.

The council was formed last year to give custom builders a voice in the association, which has been dominated by large production-home builders, even though most members are custom builders, he said.

Local custom homebuilders, he said, "are at their busiest, no question about it — particularly in the Granite Bay area, where all the lots are selling and there's few left." Other especially active areas are Stanford Ranch, Folsom, the Pocket area and El Dorado Hills, he said.

McCune himself reports that he's doing twice the business he did last year, when he started seven homes. This year, he has begun six so far. He is ready to start another five and expects yet another five to be begun before year's end, he said.

He hasn't been this active since the late 1970s, when he was starting up to 15 homes a year, McCune said.

The unusually high demand for custom homes has also prompted him to begin a high-end subdivision in Carmichael. In April, he closed escrow on the acreage for nine lots on Quail Haven Lane near the American River.

He plans a community with homes averaging about \$440,000. He will sell most of the lots, at prices of about \$130,000 each. But he will also build several speculative homes, hoping that the unusually hot market will draw buyers.