

# Stimulus lull gives companies chance for marketing, research

## Money and public works projects expected to make appearances in fall

MICHAEL SHAW | STAFF WRITER

Sacramento is in a stimulus slump. A rush of road and housing projects hit the streets following the February signing of the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, but contractors haven't seen much action since and don't expect it until fall.

When additional stimulus projects finally arrive, they might not even be labeled as such or as highly touted as the road work this spring. So the work could go to companies who have used the down time to get pre-approval from government agencies or get the inside track.



### TRACKING THE STIMULUS

Almost four months after the stimulus bill was signed, contractors nationwide are reporting that they're still waiting to see substantial work arise from it.

"It has enabled a small number of contractors to place orders and hire workers or avoid layoffs," said Ken Simonson, chief economist at the Associated General Contractors of America, who surveys contractors across the country each week about the stimulus impact. "However, I will be disappointed if the number of contractors starting work does not pick up substantially in the next few weeks."

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**The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency is rehabbing these homes at 44 Ford Road, above, and 100 Fairbanks Ave., left, using stimulus funds. The project was announced shortly after the Recovery Act was signed in February. But since then, there have been few announcements of stimulus-backed projects in the region.**

DENNIS MCCOY  
SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

The lag is not surprising, Simonson said, given the steps between the president's signature and allocation of the funds to state and municipal governments. Then there are the requirements to advertise and verify projects before work begins. Simonson said even when the bulk of the Recovery Act funds is in the pipeline, the money is unlikely to offset the decline in private, state- or locally funded construction over the next two years.

In Sacramento, the experience has been much the same.

"I'm on several committees formed for when it happens," said Josh Wood, the new executive director at the Sacramento Builders' Exchange. "And I haven't seen anything yet."

Wood and the contractors he represents are predicting stimulus-related projects will be rolling out in the fall. But when they do, they won't necessarily be labeled as such and could appear like typical public works projects. The Builders' Exchange is currently tracking more than 200 projects, most of them public works.

Some companies are using the down time to prepare, marketing themselves as "stimulus-ready" or seeking projects that align with their strengths.

"We've been around 100 years and have done a lot of work with institutional clients," said Chuck Hack, business development director at the Sacramento office of design firm Lionakis. "That includes civic, government, health care and education."

Hack said the primary qualification for contracts will be experience working with a certain project type, so Lionakis is betting its experience designing health care

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# STIMULUS | Smaller projects might not be advertised as funded through the Recovery Act

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facilities for clients such as Kaiser Permanente and Sutter Health will translate well for projects proposed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hack was surprised to discover the amount of funding headed to the Department of Defense, the VA and the General Services Administration. The stimulus will provide \$240 million for child development centers, \$535 million for construction of new barracks and millions more in other fields, he said. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is using the stimulus for flood protection, General Services will renovate buildings and federal courthouses, the VA

will improve hospitals, and the department of defense will build housing.

And Hack expects each of those departments will put funds toward minor repairs and energy-efficiency retrofits. The company hasn't done much military work recently, so the company is researching the projects and trying to get a foot in the door before they are announced.

Hack said many of the smaller projects won't necessarily be advertised and could be awarded under the government's "indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity" contract system. Lionakis has already submitted to be approved for some of those contracts.

In its marketing brochures, Anova

Architects of Placerville is highlighting its experience constructing transportation-related projects, given that the stimulus has a large transportation component.

The company has designed fleet facilities and transit centers across Northern California.

"We felt it was a good idea to be prepared," said Alan Oshima, who directs the company's civic studio. "Not knowing what the projects are going to be, we are anticipating what's coming. It's a matter of getting some kind of track record."

Tracking the stimulus isn't always easy.

The government's own recovery Web site ([recovery.gov](http://recovery.gov)) directs companies interested in securing regular federal business

opportunities to its procurement site: [fbo.gov](http://fbo.gov). There, companies can search a massive list of "recovery opportunities" under the stimulus plan.

Private firm Onvia of Seattle has established its own site to track stimulus projects ([recovery.org](http://recovery.org)), which estimates that \$54 million in projects have been announced in Sacramento County so far. But not all the information there is accurate. Army Corps of Engineers projects that fall under the Corps' Sacramento region, such as bridge repairs in San Jose or the Napa Valley Wine Train relocation, are listed as located in Sacramento County.

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