

Chrysler's sharp turn

Automaker swerves away from trucks, SUVs.

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Tom LaSorda



Home-building rebounds in area

► The 382 houses that were started in August was 22 percent above the 313 logged in July.

By ROBERT EVATT
World Staff Writer

Home construction in Tulsa quickened in August after an unusually slow July, boosting year-to-date totals ahead of the 2005 pace once again.

The 382 homes that were started in August was 22 percent above the 313 logged in July, according to data released Monday by New Orders Weekly, a construction tracking service.

For the year through Aug. 31, 3,488 starts were logged, compared with

3,381 through the first eight months of 2005. Soft July construction this year had put year-to-date housing starts at 2 percent below the 2005 total, the first such drop in more than two years.

David Blackburn, president of the Home Builders Association of Greater Tulsa, said the recovery shows the area's home market remains strong.

"The overall news is still good, since a single slow month doesn't necessarily indicate a trend," he said.

Tulsa's home construction fared much better than the industry nationally, as numbers released last week showed that home-building dropped 6 percent in August. Builder confidence also dropped in September for the eighth consecutive month and now stands at the lowest point in more than 16 years.

Blackburn said he's still confident in the Tulsa market because the local economy, including employment figures, remains healthy.

The area has also avoided most of the effects of the national housing slowdown so far.

"Tulsa's the last one to go into these slowdowns, and they're the last

ones to come out," he said.

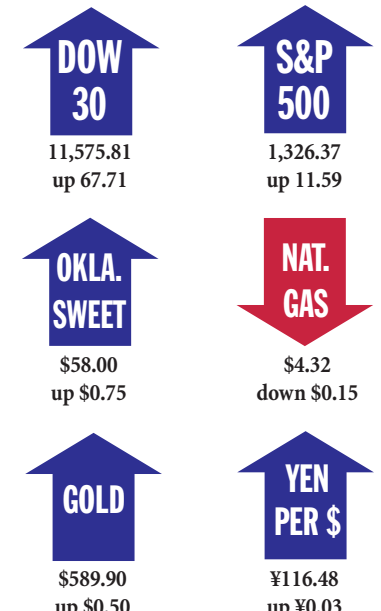
The unexpected decline in interest rates may also keep the market strong. Last week, mortgage giant Freddie Mac reported that the nation's average 30-year, fixed-rate home loan was going for 6.40 percent, a six-month low.

Blackburn said the only real negative factor that could affect the market is nervousness by potential homebuyers who fear the national slowdown could spread here.

"It's like the stock market," he said. "Often, people speculate based on emotions."

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MARKET WATCH



BIZ QUICKS

Fed official's comments help boost stock prices

Stocks rose smartly Monday after Dallas Federal Reserve President Richard Fisher suggested inflation will be dampened by a slowing economy and said that while the housing and auto sectors are economic weak points, the rest of the U.S. economy is doing "extremely well."

"The recent tempering of U.S. economic growth to a more sustainable rate . . . should act to lower the inflation rate over time," Fisher told reporters after a speech in Monterrey, Mexico.

The Dow Jones industrial average gained 67.71, or 0.59 percent, to 11,575.81.

Broader stock indicators also advanced. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 11.59, or 0.88, to 1,326.37, and the Nasdaq composite index rose 30.14, or 1.36 percent, to 2,249.07.

Turner pushes biofuels on global scale

Ted Turner, the founder of Cable News Network Inc., considers biofuels the answer to restart stalled world trade talks, reduce poverty and tackle global warming.

By investing in alternative fuels such as ethanol from sugar or biodiesel from corn and soybeans, poor nations would spend less on energy, rich nations would become less dependent on foreign oil and the world would consume fewer polluting fossil fuels that contribute to global warming, Turner told journalists Monday in Geneva, Switzerland, after pressing World Trade Organization negotiators to renew efforts to forge a global trade agreement.

"It's absolutely essential to phase out fossil fuels," Turner said. Cutting farm subsidies and tariffs and promoting demand for biofuels will "reduce greenhouse gas emissions, revive the agriculture industry and help eliminate the conflict over subsidies that's stalling crucial advances in world trade."

By encouraging farmers to supply as much as 20 percent of global fuel demand through biofuel crops over the next decade, the market for agricultural products could "double or triple" in value, said Turner, who established the United Nations Foundation with a \$1 billion grant.

"We're not going to stop using energy, so we've got to start using a different kind of energy," he said.

"I haven't made a significant investment yet" in biofuels, he said, "but I'm hoping to if I can find the right point of entry."



Turner

Murphy Oil settles case over Katrina spill

Murphy Oil Corp. has agreed to a \$330 million settlement in a lawsuit over an oil spill that contaminated thousands of homes last year during Hurricane Katrina, a spokesman for the plaintiffs said Monday. A federal judge still must sign off on the deal.

Trial in the case was slated to begin next week in New Orleans.

El Dorado, Ark.-based Murphy said in a statement it had reached an agreement with the plaintiff attorneys over the spill from an oil storage tank at its Meraux refinery in St. Bernard Parish near New Orleans. One million gallons of oil coursed into canals and homes after storm surge moved the tank off its base.

"Obviously, the community is eager to move forward, and so are we," said Murphy spokeswoman Mindy West.

The proposed settlement includes \$80 million paid so far to settle roughly 2,700 household and business claims, said Sidney Torres, the court-appointed liaison for the committee. The class consists of a total of about 6,200 claims, he said.

Another \$160 million would go toward property buyouts and paying property owners in the area, while the remaining \$90 million would be for cleanup, he said.

From Bloomberg, AP and staff reports



SHERRY BROWN/Tulsa World

Trinity Restoration owner David Miller and his crew are customizing this 2006 Lamborghini for a car enthusiast.

Restoration shop gears for growth

Trinity constructs auto repair facility, awaits broadcast of reality TV show

By Debbie Blossom | World Staff Writer

A baby boomer-fueled love of classic cars and the popularity of reality television has revved up business at a Tulsa company that is expanding its space and adding jobs to meet the demand.

Trinity Restoration owner David Miller expects sales at his collision repair and restoration firm to approach \$6 million annually after he opens a new 25,611-square-foot automobile repair facility in south Tulsa next year.

An official ground-breaking on the multimillion-dollar building is set for mid-October on 2.5 acres at 8324 E. 97th St., just east of the intersection of Memorial Drive and 98th Street.

Construction on the \$3 million project actually began Sept. 11, and is expected to be complete by mid-March — in time to celebrate Trinity's 20th year in Tulsa.

"It will be the biggest free-standing shop in town," said Miller, who has quadrupled the business since he took over the company three years ago.

"I've been real aggressive about

SEE CARS E-3

AMERICAN AIRLINES TARGET: NEW REVENUE STREAMS

AA seeks China route, 787 shop work

► The airline says 96 members of Congress back its bid for Beijing flights.

By D.R. STEWART
World Staff Writer

American Airlines has received strong support from political and business leaders for its proposal to operate daily nonstop air service between Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and Beijing beginning March 25, airline executives said Monday.

American's proposal is one of four being considered by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which is expected to select one by year-end or early next year.

Twenty-eight U.S. senators, 68 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, nine governors, more than 100

mayors and other elected officials, and more than 400 companies have endorsed American's proposed Beijing service, said Will Ris, American's senior vice president of government affairs, in a telephone press conference.

"This new route will deepen the important cultural and economic ties between China and North Texas while providing convenient online connections for 95 airports in 32 states and the District of Columbia — approximately 80 percent of the total U.S. population," Ris said.

American began service to China in April when it inaugurated daily nonstop service between Chicago and Shanghai.

The carrier's competitors for the new China routes include Continental Airlines, which proposes to fly daily

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Sole maintenance contract for 'Dreamliner' users eyed

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

American Airlines said Monday it's bidding to become the sole provider of maintenance for North American companies that buy Boeing 787 aircraft with a service program.

Chicago-based Boeing Co. says an order backlog for 377 of the planes, valued at more than \$60 billion, has made the "Dreamliner" its most successful aircraft introduction. Carriers such as Continental Airlines, Northwest Airlines and Air Canada have

ordered 83 of the planes.

American, the world's largest airline, since late 2004 has focused on winning third-party maintenance contracts to boost revenue, help stem losses and preserve jobs. The approach differs from most other U.S. carriers, which in recent years have increased use of contractors outside the U.S. to cut costs.

"American has been trying to turn its maintenance facilities into a prof-

SEE 787 E-3

