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**January 1, 2017**

Happy Holidays from Howard Lamcke! We wish for you and yours a peaceful holiday season and a very prosperous New Year. The pace of construction in the bay area just keeps steamrolling along. We have had a very busy year working on over 80 projects, and have quite a few on the books already for next year. The newspaper has been filled with stories about customers being disappointed by contractors who are unavailable for a year or more. That is not how we operate. We have a large crew and do most of the work “in house”. We do all sizes of jobs; from room additions to recessed light installation. Our entire business comes from regular clients and their referrals so it is important for us to be available. Thank you again to all for your patronage and your referrals, and especially your friendship. See you in 2017. Happy New Year!

**GRANNY UNITS**

You may have read the SJ Mercury news on November 23rd regarding the building of in-law units. In conjunction with new state legislation effective January 1st; the city of San Jose is changing some of the rules to make it easier to qualify. They are reducing required existing lot sizes, eliminating requirements for covered parking and easing some set back lines, among other changes. This has been long overdue; the city only approved 13 secondary units last year and the need is great for affordable housing as well as senior care. The estimate is that there are over 2700 unpermitted units in the city, and an amnesty program is being considered. I am not claiming credit for building any of those but I will admit having some expertise on the issue. This letter is too brief for a general discussion but I would like to point out some specific utility requirements to consider when planning a second unit. Access to these utilities can be expensive and a challenge when building a detached housing unit in the backyard.

First and foremost is a sewer line, which requires 1/4” per foot slope for ABS pipe. It’s a rare occurrence to be able to sink the sewer pipes low enough to meet code and still have enough slope to drain. We have addressed this successfully in the past with a grinder pump and some creative piping. Water lines are less of a problem, but hot water is an issue. Using the existing water heater in the house is not efficient for a long run. A tankless water heater works great with gas; less so with electrical. Extending a gas line will be useful for a range, or wall heating; but will require correct venting for safety. For electrical, it would be best to have a subpanel at the new unit. This may require an upgrade to your existing main service panel to carry the load, especially if you have electric heat, hot water and the kitchen stove. And finally, cable and phone lines may be desired. All these utilities must be buried at the proper depths in the ground or covered by concrete for safety.

A secondary unit at your home could be a great idea to care for the elderly or for extra income. The challenges remain great, but the cities are starting to come around to the great need. Give us a call and let’s explore the possibilities!

