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## Things looking up as business fixes up

BY GRETA GUEST  
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Bernie Gliberman has been in the real estate [business](#) since he was a teenager.

Now 70, he knew after the housing bust pushed his Crosswinds Communities home-building [company](#) into the ground, it was time to do something else. The company was the state's leading builder of condominium projects just four years ago.

Glieberman started Home Renewal Systems, a Farmington Hills-based company led by his daughter Tracey Katzen. The company specializes in buying and fixing abandoned, foreclosed homes and reselling them to low- and moderate-income home buyers through the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

"The only opportunity in the real estate industry today is buying homes and doing them under this NSP program. That is about the only game in town, unless you are fixing them up to rent," Gliberman said.

The company, which started in 2008 before the government program rolled out last year, recorded revenue of \$1.5 million in 2009. It ~~expects that to grow to \$7 million this year as it~~

sells the houses it has repaired, said Cathy Doig, the company's marketing director.

Doig said the company was formed to help solve problems created by the rise in foreclosures -- abandoned homes that caused property values to drop. It expects to fix and sell 100 homes this year.

"The risk if you don't get these homes fixed and sold is too many become bought by investors and rented," she said. "And that causes neighborhood destabilization."

Glieberman serves as the company's president, but daily operations are handled by the company's 14 employees -- all with a background in home building, historic rehabilitation, demolition and land development. He spends a lot of time on charity work and working with lenders to salvage developments started, but not finished, by Crosswinds Communities.

That includes one subdivision in Inkster where 33 homes were built in a development that had planned 160 homes before the market crashed. He said the goal is to get 80 homes built there, but plans are hung up on [financing](#).

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"It is extremely difficult to make [money](#) in new home-building right now," Gliberman said.

But there is a great opportunity to rebuild

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communities with crumbling existing housing stock. Home Renewal Systems is handling programs in Ferndale, Oak Park, Hazel Park, Westland, River Rouge, Ecorse, Inkster and Toledo, Doig said.

Home Renewal handles getting potential buyers qualified, finding homes, rehabilitating the properties, and closing on the mortgage.

Michigan communities are spending the \$253 million allocated in late 2008 through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program to help low- and moderate-income home buyers, investors and nonprofit groups breathe new life into thousands of vacant, foreclosed homes. Michigan is to get an additional \$223.9 million in federal money this year to help deal with the housing crisis.

And the first round of the program has to be completed by fall, so many cities are scrambling to find developers if they are behind on their own programs, meaning more business for Home Renewal Systems, Doig said. The company is preparing proposals for five other communities.

The second phase of NSP runs through 2013.

"The real estate industry will continue to change over that time," she said. "I see our **business model** changing as the market changes."

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