

Is Hinesville the Fastest Growing Place in the Country?



Reported by: [Ashley Olmstead](#)
Email: AOLmstead@TheCoastalSource.com
Last Update: 5/18 7:02 pm



(Hinesville, GA) We headed to the oldest lumber yard in Hinesville, Georgia, to talk to the small business owner about the big changes around the corner.

Isaiah Downs opened Down's Lumber & Supply in 1959. He said, "I've seen the town grow from Fort Stewart, when they first moved the first troops in, I was here." Not only has he seen soldiers come and go in large numbers, he's seen dirt roads turn into paved ones and washboards get replaced with washers and driers.

He's also seen builders drive by his store and head to the big stores like Lowe's and Home Depot instead, "The big chain stores come in, and that's hurt us a bit," Down said. However, change is on the way, according to the latest reports from the National Association of Home Builders.

Nationwide, Building Permits for single family homes are down 46%; In Georgia, permits are down 61%. In Savannah, they're down 45%. But in Hinesville it's a different story: building permits are up 236%.

Almost all of the other 400 metropolitan areas are reporting double digit declines. The only area growing fast than Hinesville is a city in Ohio. Building permits in Lima, Ohio are up nearly 250%. Down's Lumber Manager Dan Crary said, "A year ago we didn't know if we was going to make it.... But lately, in the last 3 to 4 months, things are picking up."

Down's Lumber & Supply employee William Dasher has been working at the store for 40 years and said he loves working at a place where people can find virtually everything, "We sell about everything you need to build a house, anywhere from the front door to the backdoor, roofing and everything."

Through their laid back country style, the guys say they can offer something the bigger guys can't. Crary said, "They come in here, they tell the fellas out back what they want, by the time they pay for it, their trucks are loaded and they're gone."

Down's lumber may have lost business to the big guys, Home Depot and Lowe's, in the past. However, with all the builders coming to Hinesville, these guys may get the last laugh.

Copyright 2009 The Coastal Source