

Buying locally, job retention, creation are key factors to Howard's economy

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Miner County residents are intentionally buying locally, he said, creating assets for people and bringing people into the area.

The buying locally campaign is one of the things MCCR has been emphasizing in Howard, Parry said, and the result is evident in sales tax receipts for the city, which are on their way to breaking an all-time record for the past 10 years.

Receipts as of the end of October show tax receipts for 2004 are already 20 percent higher than 2003 tax receipts. And, Parry said, the city is close to record receipts.

Since 1995, the highest sales tax receipts were in 2000, when the first-penny sales tax reached \$125,070.06 and second-penny receipts were \$100,910.04.

Through October 2004, first-penny tax receipts are \$119,509.21 and second-penny tax receipts are \$119,485.36. Parry said that so far, city officials have received only the first half of the taxes for November, and with those taxes, Howard is close to \$125,000 for the first-penny tax receipts.

"It proves that buying locally matters," he said.

One factor in the increased sales taxes is the sale of lumber. The local lumberyard had a great year, Parry said, due in part

to an increased number of houses constructed.

According to building permits issued for the city and the county, six permits were issued in 2004 for new homes, and 10 permits were issued in 2003 for new home construction. All but two are under construction outside the city limits.



Randy Parry

In 2004, the city issued 23 permits compared to 10 the year before. For Miner County, 45 permits were issued compared to 51 issued in 2003. Grain bins and pole buildings/sheds account for most of the other county permits issued. City permits include a number of utility sheds, as well as miscellaneous home construction.

The value of the construction, however, is unknown. Permits are issued for a flat fee, and no value for the construction is recorded.

Another key factor to the improving economy is the job retention and creation that has taken place. Loans issued with MCCR's revolving loan fund have allowed for business start-ups and expansions that have resulted in 30 new jobs and 12 jobs retained. Additional work with area businesses has led to the retention of 110 jobs and the creation of 28 new jobs.

"Job retention and creation has been key," Parry said. "It's the basic legs of the

foundation."

If county residents take the new jobs, he said, their previous jobs are available for others, bringing opportunities for families to move into Miner County. This leads to more students for the school district, more local purchases and more home purchases.

"It's extremely important to keep the businesses we have and create new ones," he said. "The increase in sales taxes says people are thinking locally and buying locally."