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• **Real Estate**

**Myrtle Beach metro leads US in new home construction permit growth**

**BY STEVE JONES**

[sjones@thesunnews.com](mailto:sjones@thesunnews.com) December 1, 2014 Updated 12 hours ago

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The Myrtle Beach metro area led the nation in the rate of increase in new home construction permits from 2013 to this year, according to [newhomesource.com](http://newhomesource.com), and the new residents moving into those new homes are helping fuel the area's reblooming jobs market, recently named sixth fastest growing in the U.S.

"It looks like you guys have been sitting back for so long, builders are getting property back on line and there's pent-up demand," said Blair Kuhnen, marketing director for the new homes listing website.

The 100 percent growth in the Myrtle Beach metro area -- from 201 permits a month in 2013 to 402 in September -- was more than double that in No. 2 Grand Rapids, Mich., which had a 49 percent growth, Kuhnen said.

Greenville came in third, with a 36 percent growth in new home construction permits.

The home construction ranking comes shortly after another national ranking for the area for job growth. The Myrtle Beach Metropolitan Area had the sixth highest rate of job growth in the U.S. between August 2013 and August this year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

While new home construction in The Market Common makes the city of Myrtle Beach a major contributor to the overall growth, new and expanding subdivisions are evident from the south end to Conway to North Myrtle Beach.

Horry County, which issues permits in unincorporated areas, saw a 74 percent increase in the number of home construction permits issued in August, 239, versus the 137 issued in August 2013.

The higher permit numbers are a significant boon to the county's bottom line as well. Permit revenue ran in the low to mid \$100,000 range a month for much of 2013. That figure now is routinely above \$200,000 each month.

"It feels good to see some stability in the market," said Grand Strand builder Berkley White of Classic Homes.

White, a former president of the Horry-Georgetown Home Builders Association and the 2013 S.C. Builder of the Year, said his business has increased 25 percent to 30 percent this year, and he's hearing that business has picked up noticeably in all price ranges.

Kuhnen said that it used to be that metro areas in Florida and California dominate the list of growth in home construction permits.

But emerging from the recession, those markets still are trying to clear out an overabundance of foreclosures, and the action has moved to smaller markets such as the Grand Strand and metropolitan Greenville.

The Myrtle Beach activity peaked in July, according to [newhomesource.com](http://newhomesource.com) when more than 500 new permits were issued.

White said the demand for new homes has slowed somewhat since then, and he's thinking that 2015 may look flat when compared to this year.

But compared to any of the few years before that, home construction next year should still have a healthy pace.

He said Classic Homes has added one employee to help with its growth, fewer than it may have put on staff to handle the pre-recession boom.

"I think people are working smarter (now) than in '05 and '06," he said.

The big numbers of hires, though, would be among subcontractors -- framers, roofers and the like -- who are responsible for the actual construction.

White said most of his new homes are going to buyers new to the area. Either they are retirees or near retirees who buy a second home where they'll retire in three to five years.

"We don't have a lot of trade-ups here," he said of the area's housing market.

But the new residents for those new homes stimulate the demand for more goods and services, which means more jobs that can create the need for more new homes.

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