

Headline: Shopping in Tangi! Sales tax revenue up
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Retail sales are up in Hammond, according to the latest sales tax report, and officials hope it's the start of an upward trend.

Hammond's sales tax collections in April totaled \$1,415,872, which is \$44,278 or 3.17 percent more than in April last year.

"Honestly I do not know why. I'm just glad it is!" Mayor Mayson Foster said.

The detailed reports that taxing agencies receive have not yet been sent.

This is the first time in months that the city's monthly figure was ahead of last year. The fiscal year-to-date total is still down 5.24 percent or \$724,610 compared to last year.

Donna Drude, who heads the sales tax collection department for the parish school board, said she hasn't had a chance to examine the reports yet and cannot pinpoint an exact cause for upswing.

"It could be **Hammond Square**," she said. "It really could be that some of those new stores and restaurants have caught on. Hopefully people are realizing they can stay here and shop and eat," Drude said.

Hammond Chamber of Commerce President

Michelle Gallo guessed the same and so did **Grady Brame**, executive vice president and partner at **Sterling Properties**.

"I think you've got some retailers such as Target, such as TJ Max, such as Best Buy, who were previously not in the market who are there now. We believe that the sales those tenants are now getting in Tangipahoa Parish and in Hammond were previously being purchased outside of the parish," Brame said. "I think there's no question Hammond Square has had a positive impact and one reason the city kind of partnered with us is just that — getting the people in Tangipahoa Parish and Hammond to shop locally. We think over the long haul we will see a lot more people shop locally."

A preliminary check showed automobile sales are still relatively flat compared to last year's figures, Drude said.

Climbing sales tax collections is good news, but Foster said it won't change his mind about a conservative approach to budgeting for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

"No, it does not change my mind about budget projections. We plan to budget the same sales tax income and I think that is appropriate," Foster said.

His proposed budget will be presented to the council by May 15.

"We are working on it every day," Foster said.