

## Hawthorne plywood mill to stay closed, officials say

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After three years of waiting for a possible reopening, Georgia-Pacific has decided that its plywood mill outside Hawthorne will stay shut down.

"The plant had been in an idle status, and it has now been determined that we will not be able to reopen that facility," GP spokesman Terry Hadaway told The Sun this week.

"These facilities stay in a near constant state of analysis ... in its competitive position with other mills similar to it, other plants similar to it. They held on hoping that we would be able to reopen it ... but have now determined that the economics of it just don't make it viable."

GP plans to sell the operation sometime in 2015, with no specific date or asking price yet decided, Hadaway said.

The five employees still there handling unloading and reloading product shipments will then be transferred, he added.

About 400 workers were let go in late 2011 when the plywood mill went dark. The loss of the cornerstone business caused a trickle-down shockwave that forced other shops to also close their doors in Hawthorne, the 1,600-person town on the eastern border of Alachua County.

The full closure, though, had never become official until this month.

"Originally when they shut down, they weren't interested in selling the plant at all, which gave us hope and optimism that they would look to be opening back up," Hawthorne Mayor Matthew Surrency said.

The operation has a Hawthorne address but sits just across the line on Gordon Chapel Road in Putnam County. Outside of state jobs, including the University of Florida, the GP mill had been "a close second" for Hawthorne employment, Surrency said.

The mayor said he's keeping a positive outlook, turning his focus now to who might purchase the plant.

"I'm optimistic that if it does sell, we might have something open and running



*Erica Brough/The Gainesville Sun*

The closed Georgia-Pacific plywood mill is shown in this Aug. 15, 2012 file photo.

sooner than what Georgia-Pacific had planned on,” Surrency said.

Hadaway said GP will look to buyers that would utilize the plant for something other than plywood production.

“We certainly would want to consider someone other than another competitor who would be using the facility in competition against us,” he said.

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