We continue with our series. . .

Best of Economic Development in the American South

We continue the “Best of Economic Development in the American South” with a final 60 regional and sub-regional categories. Since the spring 2015 issue, we have featured the best of economic development with three to five Southern states featured in each issue. You can use the results as a unique aid in your search for a suitable site for your business in the American South.

We polled the members of the Southern Economic Development Roundtable to come up with the best of 60 economic development categories in the South as a whole. SEDR is a group of economic developers, educators, economists, site consultants and CEOs in the South that meet once a year in January at WaterColor in Santa Rosa Beach, Fla. The meeting is an opportunity for 50 of the South’s best economic development minds to discuss issues relative to economic development in the American South. A group photo of the 2015 SEDR class is published on this page.

In this issue, there are 60 regional categories featured. The top three vote recipients for each category are recognized and listed in alphabetical order. In the case of a tie, a fourth or fifth “winner” is listed. The winners are then followed by other items or organizations that received votes. Therefore, the first listed under each category is no “better” than the second or third listed.

We think you will enjoy reading the results of the “Best of Economic Development in the American South.” Again, this unique forum can help guide you and your business to a profitable place in the South, the fourth largest economy in the world.

CONTINUED
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OPPOSITE PAGE: With three assembly plants and multiple engine plants, Toyota was voted by SEDR as one of the South's most important manufacturers. The groundbreaking in May 1986 in Georgetown, Ky., was the beginning of a facility that today (30 years later) employs 8,000 people, sprawls 169 football fields and represents a $6 billion investment. Pictured are (l to r) Eiji Toyoda, Kentucky Gov. Martha Layne Collins and Shoichiro Toyoda.

BELOW: Voted one of the South’s most important employers, the U.S. military has more bases in the South than any other region.

1. The South’s Best Economic Development Assets
   - Aggressive incentive programs
   - Low cost of living
   - Low operating costs
   - Large population

   Also receiving votes: Available land; Business climate; Favorable business regulations; Low energy costs; Low taxes; Mississippi River; Port system; Right to work; Navigable river system; Southern airports; U.S. military; Weather; Work ethic; Workforce; Workforce development programs.

2. The South’s Most Important Employers
   - FedEx
   - General Electric
   - United Parcel Service
   - U.S. military

   Also receiving votes: American Airlines; AT&T; Bank of America; Coca-Cola; Delta Airlines; Disney; ExxonMobil; HCA Healthcare; IBM; Lockheed Martin; Mercedes-Benz; Nissan; Publix Super Markets; The Home Depot; Toyota; Walmart.

3. The South’s Most Important Manufacturers
   - Boeing
   - General Electric
   - Nissan
   - Toyota

   Also receiving votes: Alcoa; BMW; Caterpillar; Chevron; Dow Chemical; Exxon Mobil; Ford Motor Company; General Motors; Huntington Ingalls; Hyundai/Kia; Mercedes-Benz; Northrop Grumman; Procter & Gamble; Lockheed Martin; Toyota; Tyson Foods.

4. The South’s Most Important Service Providers
   - FedEx
   - Southern Company
   - United Parcel Service

   Also receiving votes: American Airlines; AT&T; Bank of America; Delta Airlines; Disney; HCA Healthcare; IBM; Publix Super Markets; The Home Depot; Walmart.
Louisville, Ky. (pictured) was recognized as one of the best places in the South for the healthcare sector.

5. Best Mega Markets in the South to Relocate Your Headquarters
- Atlanta, Ga.
- Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
- Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
- Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.
- Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia
Also receiving votes: Houston, Texas.

6. Best Major Markets in the South to Relocate Your Headquarters
- Austin/San Marcos, Texas

7. Best Mid-Markets in the South to Relocate Your Headquarters
- Asheville, N.C.
- Cape Coral/Fort Myers, Fla.
- Sarasota/Bradenton, Fla.


8. Best Mega Markets in the South for Job Creation in the Healthcare Sector
- Atlanta, Ga.
- Houston, Texas
- Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Also receiving votes: Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.; Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia.

9. Best Major Markets in the South for Job Creation in the Healthcare Sector
- Birmingham, Ala.
- Kansas City, Mo.
- Louisville, Ky.
- Nashville, Tenn.

Also receiving votes: Austin/San Marcos, Texas; Charlotte, N.C.; Greenville, S.C.; Hampton Roads, Va.; Kansas City, Mo.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Orlando, Fla.; Raleigh/Cary, N.C.; Richmond, Va.; San Antonio, Texas; West Palm Beach, Fla.; Winston-Salem, N.C.
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Winston-Salem (pictured left) was voted one of the best emerging biotech clusters of any size market in the South.

The Applied Research Center (ARC pictured below) located in Aiken, S.C., is devoted to the Department of Energy’s Savannah River National Laboratory, focused for more than six decades on handling, storing and using hydrogen as a fuel. It was voted best-kept secret in the South for innovation and research.

Knoxville, Tenn. was recognized several times, including best large market in the Midsouth for the auto and aerospace industries. Pictured at right is Denso’s plant near Knoxville.

Montgomery, Ala., (pictured below) was voted one of the best places in the Midsouth for data centers and the auto industry.

10. Best Locations in the South for Medical Device Manufacturing
• Memphis, Tenn.
• Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
• Orlando, Fla.
• Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, N.C.
Also receiving votes: Austin/San Marcos, Texas; Houston, Texas; Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.; Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia.

11. Best Large Market Biotech Clusters in the South
• Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, N.C.
• South Florida
• St. Louis, Mo.
• Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia
Also receiving votes: Atlanta, Ga.; Austin/San Marcos, Texas; Houston, Texas; Kansas City, Mo.; Nashville, Tenn.; Orlando, Fla.

12. Best Emerging Biotech Clusters of Any Size Market in the South
• Birmingham, Ala.
• Houston, Texas
• Huntsville, Ala.
• Nashville, Tenn.
• Winston-Salem, N.C.
Also receiving votes: Atlanta, Ga.; Austin/San Marcos, Texas; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Memphis, Tenn.; Northern Kentucky; Orlando, Fla.; Richmond, Va.; St. Louis, Mo.; Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.

13. Best Mega Markets in the South for the Financial Services Sector
• Atlanta, Ga.
• Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
• Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.
• Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia
Also receiving votes:
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14. Best Major Markets in the South for the Financial Services Sector

- Birmingham, Ala.
- Charlotte, N.C.
- Jacksonville, Fla.
- Richmond, Va.
- San Antonio, Texas

Also receiving votes: Austin/San Marcos, Texas; Green-ville, S.C.; Kansas City, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; Nashville, Tenn.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Raleigh, N.C.; Tulsa, Okla.

15. Best Mid-Markets in the South for the Financial Services Sector

- Columbus, Ga.
- Fayetteville/Springdale/ Rogers, Ark.
- Lafayette, La.
- Winston-Salem, N.C.

Also receiving votes: Augusta, Ga.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Jackson, Miss.; Lexington, Ky.; Little Rock, Ark.; Midland/Odessa, Texas.

16. Best Small Markets in the South for the Financial Services Sector

- Gulfport, Miss.
- Lawton, Okla.
- Tupelo, Miss.

Also receiving votes: Columbia, Mo.

17. Best Cities in the South for the Software Design Sector

- Austin/San Marcos, Texas
- Baton Rouge, La.
- New Orleans, La.
- Raleigh/Cary, N.C.

Also receiving votes: Atlanta, Ga.; Charlotte, N.C.; Dallas, Texas; Lafayette, La.; Orlando, Fla.; Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.

18. Best Markets in the South for Tech Job Growth

- Atlanta, Ga.
- Austin/San Marcos, Texas
- Huntsville, Ala.
- Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, N.C.
- Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia.

Also receiving votes: Charlotte, N.C.; Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Houston, Texas; Miami/Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; New Orleans, La.; Orlando, Fla.; San Antonio, Texas; Tampa/St. Pete, Fla.


- Knoxville, Tenn.

20. Best Under the Radar Tech Hubs in the South

- Baton Rouge, La.
- Chattanooga, Tenn.
- Gainesville, Fla.
- Lafayette, La.
- Little Rock, Ark.

Also receiving votes: Green-ville, S.C.; Kansas City, Mo.; Lexington, Ky.; Louisville, Ky.

21. Best Under the Radar Locations in the South for Startups

- Charlottesville, Va.
- Chattanooga, Tenn.
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• Franklin, Tenn.
• Winston-Salem, N.C.

Also receiving votes:
Asheville, N.C.; Boca Raton, Fla.; College Station, Texas; Gainesville, Fla.; Greenville, S.C.; Kansas City, Mo.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Lexington, Ky.; Northern Kentucky; Richmond, Va.

22. Best Research Parks in the South

• Cummings Research Park – Huntsville, Ala.
• Medical City at Lake Nona – Orlando, Fla.
• North Carolina Research Campus – Kannapolis, N.C.
• Research Triangle Park – Triangle Park, N.C.

23. Best University Research Parks in the South

• Technology Square at the Georgia Institute of Technology – Atlanta, Ga.
• Texas A&M University Research Park – College Station, Texas
• University of Oklahoma Research Campus – Norman, Okla.
• Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center – Blacksburg, Va.

Also receiving votes: Centennial Campus at North Carolina State University – Raleigh, N.C.; Georgia Tech Research Institute – Atlanta, Ga.; University of Kentucky’s Coldstream Research Campus – Lexington, Ky.; University of New Orleans Research & Technology Park; University of South Florida Research Foundation – Tampa, Fla.; University of Virginia Research Park – Charlottesville, Va.; Wake Forest Innovation Quarter – Winston-Salem, N.C.

24. Best-Kept Secrets in the South for Innovation and Research

• Applied Research Center – Aiken, S.C.
• Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research – Greenville, S.C.
• North Carolina Research Campus – Kannapolis, N.C.
• Southwest Research Institute – San Antonio, Texas

Also receiving votes: Baylor College of Medicine – Houston, Texas; Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience – Jupiter, Fla.; Southern Research – Birmingham, Ala.

25. The Biggest and the Best Centers in the South for Research and Development

• National Science Foundation – Arlington, Va.
• Oak Ridge National Laboratory – Oak Ridge, Tenn.
• Research Triangle Park – Research Triangle Park, N.C.
• Savannah River National Laboratory – Aiken, S.C.

26. Best-Kept Secrets for Great Quality of Life in the South: Major Markets

• Birmingham, Ala.
• Greenville, S.C.
• Louisville, Ky.

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27. Best-Kept Secrets for Great Quality of Life in the South: Mid-Markets

- Augusta, Ga.
- Columbia, S.C.
- Little Rock, Ark.
- Roanoke, Va.

Also receiving votes: Gainesville, Fla.; Fayetteville/Springdale/Rogers, Ark.; Lafayette, La.; Lexington, Ky.; Winston-Salem, N.C.

28. Best-Kept Secrets for Great Quality of Life in the South: Small Markets

- Aiken, S.C.
- Denton, Texas
- Gainesville, Ga.

Also receiving votes: Athens, Ga.; Charlottesville, Va.; College Station, Texas; Columbia, Mo.; Fairhope, Ala.; St. Peters, Mo.

29. Best Large Markets for Millennials in the South

- Alexandria, Va.
- Atlanta, Ga.
- Austin/San Marcos, Texas
- Raleigh/Cary, N.C.

Also receiving votes: Charlotte, N.C.; Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas; Orlando, Fla.; Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia.

30. Best-Kept Secrets: Unique Places to Retire in the South

- Beaufort, S.C.
- Fairhope, Ala.
- South Walton County, Fla.
- Stuart, Fla.


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The Best of Economic Development in the Sub-Regional South

Many companies searching for sites in the South pinpoint a sub-region such as the Southeast, Mid-South or Southwest. Sometimes those choices are based on time zones, location to market or location to a particular company or companies to supply. To assist in those sub-regional site searches in the South, we have broken out three sub-regions in our Best of Economic Development in the South series. The Southeast includes the states of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. The Mid-South includes the states of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee. The Southwest sub-region includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.

Florida Power & Light was named one of the best utilities in the Southeast. Pictured is FP&Ls DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center.

31. Best Data Center Locations in the Southeast
- Catawba County, N.C.
- Loudoun County, Va.
- Mecklenburg County, Va.
Also receiving votes: Cleveland County, N.C.; Eden, N.C.; Harrisonburg, Va.; Henrico County, Va.; Roanoke County, Va.

32. Best Data Center Locations in the Mid-South
- Bristol, Tenn.
- Jackson, Tenn.
- Kansas City, Mo.
- Montgomery, Ala.
Also receiving votes: Adairville, Ky.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Clarksville, Tenn.; Hopkinsville, Ky.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Platte County, Mo.

33. Best Data Center Locations in the Southwest
- Conway, Ark.
- Fort Worth, Texas
- Monroe, La.
- San Antonio, Texas
Also receiving votes: Bentonville, Ark.; Houston, Texas; Little Rock, Ark.; Shreveport, La.

34. Best Cities and Counties in the Southeast for the Creative Class
- Asheville, N.C.
- Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, N.C.
- Roanoke, Va.
- Washington, D.C./Northern Virginia

35. Best Cities and Counties in the Mid-South for the Creative Class
- Birmingham, Ala.
- Chattanooga, Tenn.
- Lexington, Ky.
- Louisville, Ky.
- Nashville, Tenn.
Also receiving votes: Columbia, Mo.; Kansas City, Mo. Knoxville, Tenn.; Oxford, Miss.

36. Best Cities and Counties in the Southwest for the Creative Class
- Austin, Texas
- Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
- New Orleans, La.
Also receiving votes: Baton Rouge, La.; Houston, Texas; Lafayette, La.; Little Rock, Ark.

37. Best Large Markets in the Southeast for the Aerospace Industry
- Atlanta, Ga.
- Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point, N.C.
- Greenville/Spartanburg, S.C.
- Orlando, Fla.

38. Best Mid-Markets in the Southeast for the Aerospace Industry
- Charleston/North Charleston, S.C.
- Palm Bay/Melbourne/Titusville, Fla.
- Pensacola, Fla.
- Savannah, Ga.
Also receiving votes: Asheville, N.C.; Daytona Beach, Fla.; Macon/Warner Robins, Ga.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.

39. Best Small Markets in the Southeast for the Aerospace Industry
- Kinston, N.C.
- Monroe, N.C.
- Panama City, Fla.
Also receiving votes: Goldsboro, N.C.; Sumter, S.C.
40. Best Large Markets in the Mid-South for the Aerospace Industry

- Knoxville, Tenn.
- Louisville, Ky.
- Memphis, Tenn.
- St. Louis, Mo.

Also receiving votes: Birmingham, Ala.; Kansas City, Mo.

41. Best Mid-Markets in the Mid-South for the Aerospace Industry

- Huntsville/Decatur, Ala.
- Mobile, Ala.
- Northern Kentucky

Also receiving votes: Gulfport-Biloxi, Miss.; Montgomery, Ala.; Springfield, Mo.; Tri-Cities, Tenn.

42. Best Small Markets in the Mid-South for the Aerospace Industry

- Auburn, Ala.
- Columbus, Miss.
- Madisonville/Hopkins County, Ky.
- Tullahoma, Tenn.

Also receiving votes: Andalusia, Ala.; Batesville, Miss.; Danville, Ky.; DeSoto County, Miss.; Dothan, Ala.; Enterprise, Ala.; Jones County, Miss.; Morehead, Ky.; Tishomingo County, Miss.; Troy, Ala.

43. Best Large Markets in the Southwest for the Aerospace Industry

- Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
- Oklahoma City, Okla.
- San Antonio, Texas
- Tulsa, Okla.

Also receiving votes: Houston, Texas; New Orleans, La.

44. Best Mid-Markets in the Southwest for the Aerospace Industry

- Brownsville/Harlingen, Texas
- Corpus Christi, Texas
- Little Rock, Arkansas
- Midland/Odessa, Texas

Also receiving votes: Amarillo, Texas; Lafayette, La.; Waco, Texas.
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45. Best Small Markets in the Southwest for the Aerospace Industry
- Camden, Ark.
- Chennault International Airport – Lake Charles, La.
- Stillwater, Okla.
Also receiving votes: Ardmore, Okla.; Lawton, Okla.; Lufkin, Texas.

46. Best Large Markets in the Southeast for the Automotive Industry
- Charlotte, N.C.
- Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point, N.C.
- Greenville/Spartanburg, S.C.
Also receiving votes: Atlanta, Ga.

47. Best Mid-Markets in the Southeast for the Automotive Industry
- Asheville, N.C.
- Charleston, S.C.
- Columbia, S.C.
- Roanoke, Va.
Also receiving votes: Columbus, Ga.; Durham, N.C.; Savannah, Ga.

48. Best Small Markets in the Southeast for the Automotive Industry
- Aiken, S.C.
- LaGrange, Ga.
- Laurens County, S.C.
- Sumter, S.C.
Also receiving votes: Camden, S.C.; Carroll County, Ga.; Fayette County, Ga.; Fountain Inn, S.C.; Gaffney, S.C.; Gaston County, N.C.; Hickory, N.C.; Iredell County, N.C.; Martinsville, Va.; Meriwether County, Ga.; Newberry, S.C.; Orange-
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burg, S.C.; Statesville, N.C.

49. Best Large Markets in the Mid-South for the Automotive Industry
- Birmingham, Ala.
- Knoxville, Tenn.
- Louisville, Ky.
- Nashville, Tenn.
Also receiving votes: Kansas City, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; St. Louis, Mo.

50. Best Mid-Markets in the Mid-South for the Automotive Industry
- Chattanooga, Tenn.
- Jackson, Miss.
- Montgomery, Ala.
- Tri-Cities, Tenn.
Also receiving votes: Huntsville/Decatur, Ala.; Lexington, Ky.

51. Best Small Markets
in the Mid-South for the Automotive Industry
- Auburn/Opelika, Ala.
- Bowling Green, Ky.
- Columbus, Miss.
- Tupelo, Miss.
- Tuscaloosa County, Ala.
Also receiving votes: Anderson County, Tenn.; Athens, Tenn.; Bardstown, Ky.; Cullman, Ala.; Blount County, Tenn.; Bradley County, Tenn.; Danville, Ky.; Dyer County, Tenn.; Elizabethtown, Ky.; Giles County, Tenn.; Georgetown, Ky.; Jackson, Tenn.; Limestone County, Ala.; Maury County, Tenn.; Morristown, Tenn.; Muhlenberg County, Ky.; Pontotoc County, Miss.; Simpson County, Ky.; St. Clair County, Ala.; Talladega County, Ala.; Walker County, Ala.

52. The Best Utilities in Economic Development in the Southeast
- Duke Energy
- Electricities
- Florida Power & Light
- Old Dominion Electric Cooperative
- Santee Cooper/SC Power Team
Also receiving votes: American Electric Power; Dominion Virginia Power; Georgia Power; Gulf Power; Oglethorpe Power; SCANA;

53. The Best Utilities in Economic Development in the Mid-South
- Alabama Power
- Entergy
- Mississippi Power
- TVA
Also receiving votes: American Electric Power; Dominion Virginia Power; Georgia Power; Gulf Power; Oglethorpe Power; SCANA;

54. The Best Utilities in Economic Development in the Southwest
- American Electric Power
- Arkansas Electric Cooperative
- Entergy
- Oklahoma Gas & Electric.
Also receiving votes: CenterPoint Energy; NRG Energy.

55. Best Megasites in the Southeast
- Central South Carolina Megasite – Kershaw County, S.C.
- Greensboro/Randolph County Megasite – Liberty, N.C.
- I-26 Megasite – Newberry
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County, S.C.
- Kingsboro Megasite – Edgecombe County, N.C.
- Mid-Atlantic Advanced Manufacturing Center – Emporia, Va.
Also receiving votes: Augusta Corporate Park – Augusta, Ga.; Chatham/Siler City Site – Chatham County, N.C.; Clarendon County I-95 Megasite – Clarendon County, S.C.; Crawford Diamond Industrial Park – Callahan, Fla.; Heart of Georgia Megasite – Dublin/Laurens County, Ga.; White Hawk Commerce Park – Florence, S.C.

56. Best Megasites in the Mid-South
- Glendale Megasite – Hardin County, Ky.
- Greenbrier Site – Limestone County, Ala.
- GTR Global Industrial

57. Best Megasites in the Southwest
- Cedar Crossing Industrial Park – Houston, Texas
- Hutto/Taylor Megasite – Taylor/Hutto, Texas
- MidAmerica Industrial Park – Pryor, Okla.
- Mississippi County Supersite 2 – Mississippi County, Ark.
Also receiving votes: Alliance, Texas – Fort Worth,
Texas; Ascension Megasite – Ascension Parish, La.; Franklin Farm Megasite – Holly Ridge, La.; Metro Little Rock Megasite – Saline County, Ark.; Port of Corpus Christi Industrial District 1 – Corpus Christi, Texas; West Memphis Site – West Memphis, Ark.

58. Best Large Riverfront Industrial Sites
- Ascension Megasite – Ascension Parish, La.
- Frank C. Pidgeon Industrial Park – Memphis, Tenn.
- Mississippi County Supersite 2 – Mississippi County, Ark.
Also receiving votes: Helena Harbor – Helena, Ark.; Ohio River Triple Rail Megasite – Paducah, Ky.

59. Best Locations in the South to Reshore a Furniture Manufacturing Facility
- Catawba County, N.C.
- Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point, N.C.
- Martinsville/Henry County, Va.
- Tri-Cities, Tenn.
- Tupelo, Miss.
Also receiving votes: Danville, Va.; Keysville, Va.; Roanoke, Va.

60. Best Locations in the South to Reshore Textile Manufacturing
- Chester, S.C.
- Lancaster, S.C.
- Martinsville/Henry County, Va.
- Spartanburg, S.C.
Also receiving votes: Fort Payne, Ala.; Hildebran, N.C.; Jeff Davis Parish, La.; Raleigh, N.C.

Also receiving votes: Danville, Va.; Keysville, Va.; Roanoke, Va.

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