

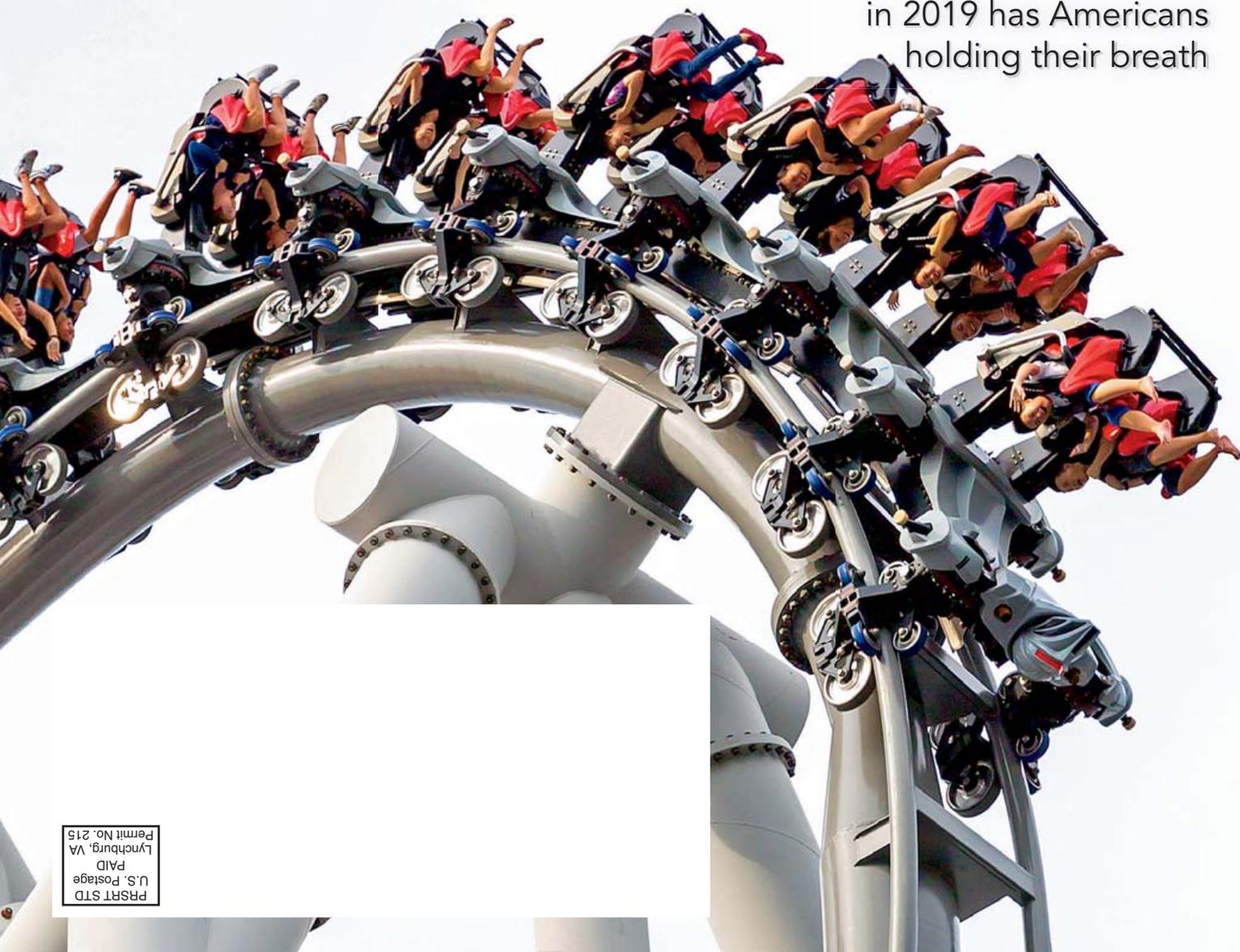
# SOUTHERN BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development in the World's Third Largest Economy

FALL 2019

## A Wild Ride

A roller coaster economy in 2019 has Americans holding their breath



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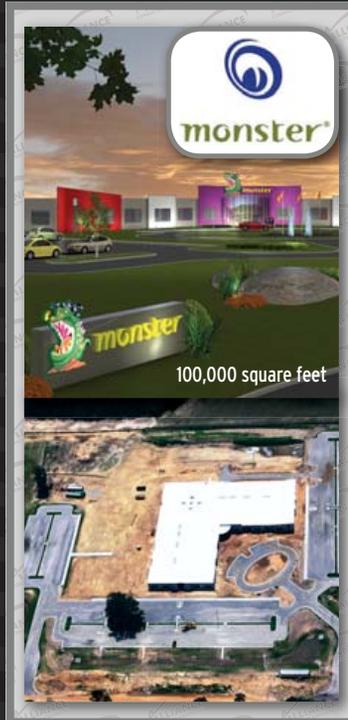
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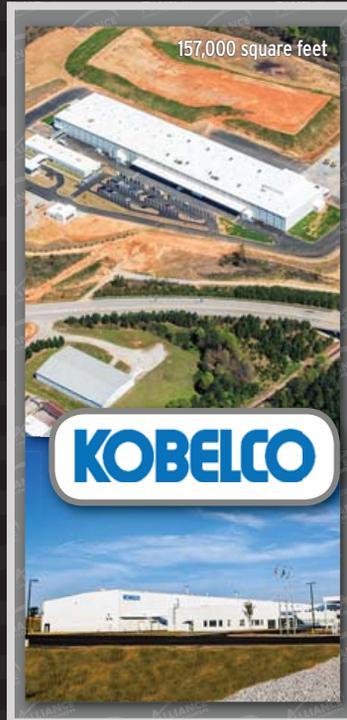
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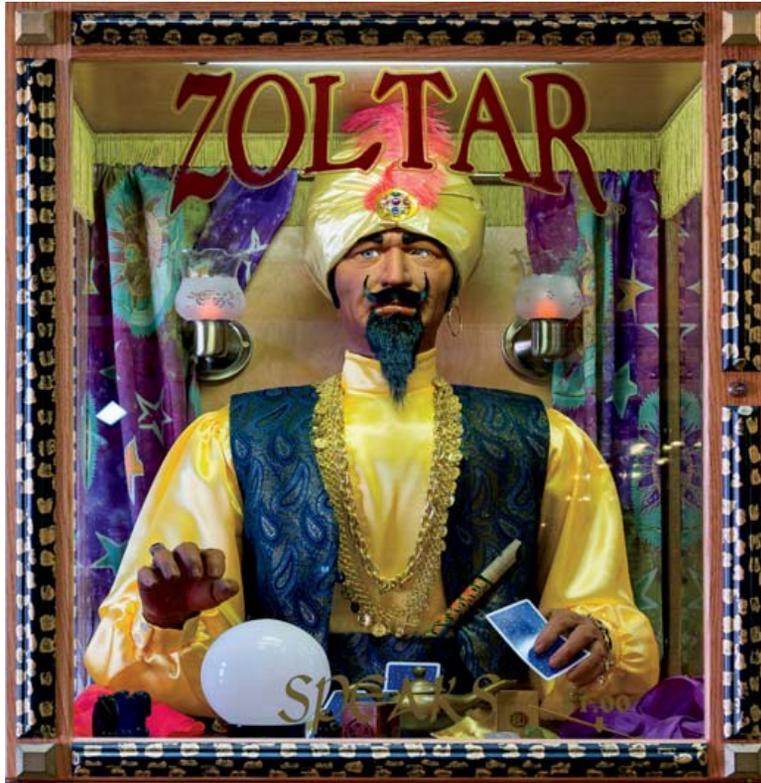
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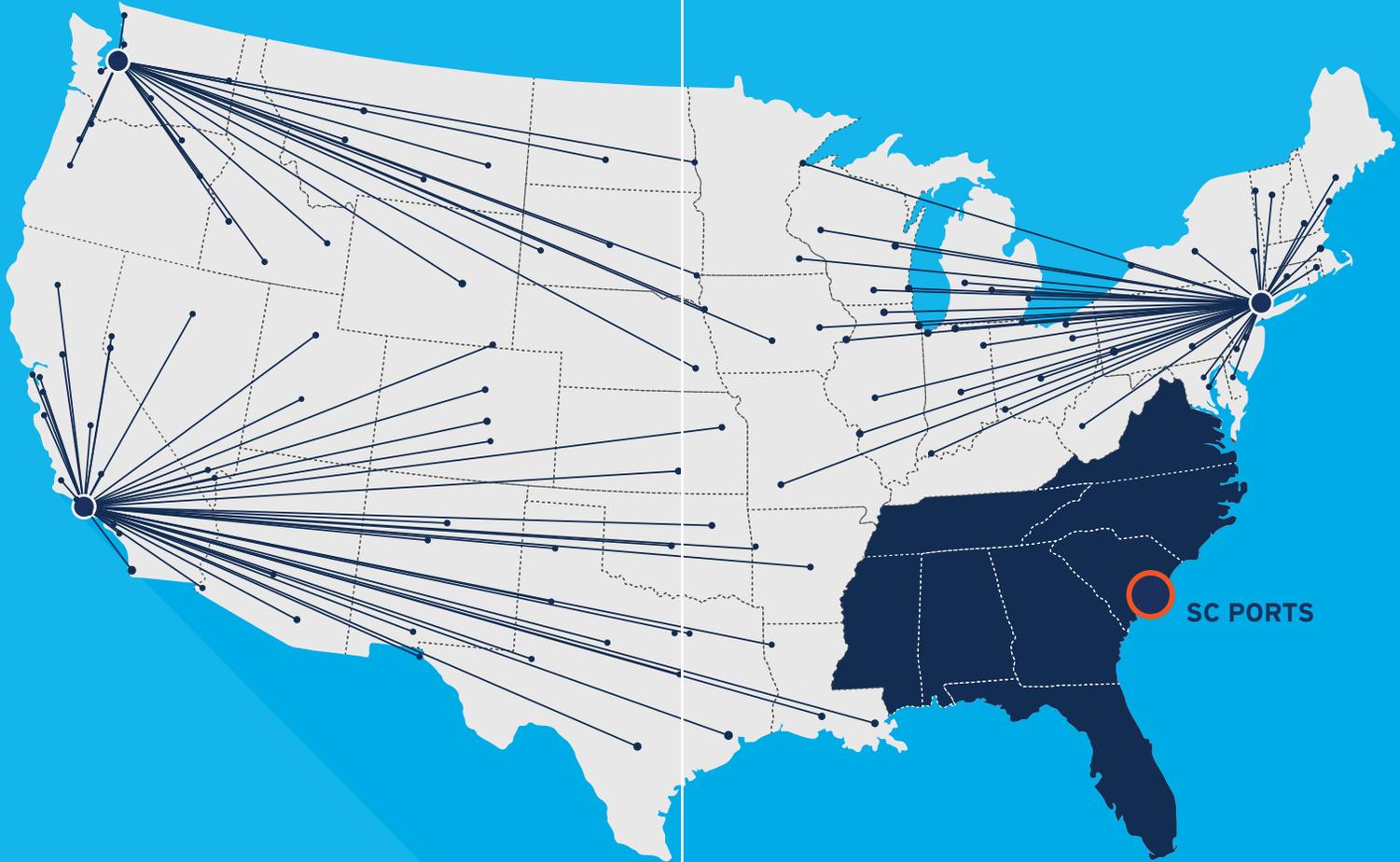
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**SOME SEE**

The need to expand.

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# SOUTHBOUND

By Michael Randle, EDITOR

## The reduction of immigrants and H-1B visas will cause the U.S. to lose to other nations.

I REALIZE I HAVE MADE THIS POINT MANY TIMES over the last three years. Yet, it bears repeating because no one seems to be reacting to the point. So, here is another look at the argument that this nation's economy is in need of many more people who want to work.

This country is experiencing its lowest fertility rate in decades. Think about that! The largest generation in American history — Baby Boomers like me — are not being replaced as they age out of the workforce.

The facts: In 2018, on average, 10,200 people retired each day in this country, while 2,230 people turned working age (16) each day. From what I have read, hardly anyone realizes this “silver tsunami” is upon us. What's a silver tsunami? It's when workers age out of the workforce, try and sell their homes, yet a smaller replacement group cannot fill their jobs or buy their homes.

On top of the silver tsunami is another tidal wave. U.S. policy is currently curbing immigration by the hundreds of thousands. In 2018, only 200,000 legal immigrants entered this country, when over the past 10 years that number was on average over a million. This means that a tight labor force of American-born workers is not bolstered by a workforce that is foreign-born.

A recent study by Britta Glennon, a professor at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, showed that the reduction of H-1B visas per current U.S. policy will lead to global firms offshoring more jobs. The report showed that countries that will benefit the most from a reduced number of U.S. H-1B visas are Canada, India and China. The report also stated that restricting high-skilled H-1B workers and sending those workers back home will not only send jobs offshore, but will reduce innovation and growth. Denial rates for H-1B petitions have increased from 6 percent in fiscal year 2015 to 32 percent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2019, according to the National Foundation for American Policy.

So, at a time when the U.S. cannot replace workers at a rate of almost 8,000 people a day — almost 250,000 people a month



or 2.88 million a year — we are reducing legal immigration in this country at a rate of 80 percent, if not more. It's not politics, it is math.

In the report from Knowledge@Wharton, Glennon says this: "What I look at in my paper is that there is this unforeseen additional consequence that has been completely left out of the debate, which is that U.S. multinational firms have this alternative choice. If they can't get the skilled immigrants that they want in the U.S., they can just hire them abroad at one of their foreign affiliates. If it's true that they are just going to hire skilled immigrants elsewhere, then those policies restricting them can backfire."

If we cannot add more people to the workforce, the world that we live in now, the world that we know, will be jeopardized. Your Social Security and other benefits will not be available or will be reduced if we cannot find more people to join the workforce in the U.S. Regardless of what you may have heard or believe, this is a global economy. If the U.S. does not have the talent or the numbers in the labor force for growing companies, the multinationals will simply pick some other country to expand their business. ☘

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## The U.S. is now a net exporter of oil

For the first time in decades, the U.S. is a net exporter of oil. As the world's top oil producer and consumer, the U.S. *exported* 89,000 more barrels of crude and other petroleum products a day than it *imported* in September. September represented the first full month of the U.S. being a net exporter of oil since the 1940s, according to the Energy Information Administration. The U.S. ended the crude export ban that was implemented in the 1970s in 2015.

## Natural gas — a cyclical business — currently at the bottom of the cycle

Plentiful natural gas has changed the manufacturing industry in this country like nothing else in the last decade. It has made the U.S. so competitive in the manufacturing arena that the sector added over 1 million jobs over the last 10 years for the first time in decades. While natural gas continues to take market share from coal to supply electric power plants, the gas industry is going bust. There is currently a glut of the fuel. Miners are shutting down rigs and Chevron, the nation's second largest oil and gas player, announced in December it is writing off \$10 billion to \$11 billion in shale gas holdings and a planned LNG export facility in Canada.

The number of gas rigs nationwide has slipped from 184 last year to 132 in December 2019.

### Major cuts in immigration threaten U.S. economy

According to new data, legal immigration to the United States fell 70 percent last year to only 200,000 people — the lowest level in over a decade. H-1B visas have been held up by the tens of thousands, and the White House announced in October it will accept only 18,000 refugees in the coming year, down from the 110,000 people that President Obama said should be allowed into the U.S. in 2016. The U.S. has averaged about 1 million legal immigrants each year over the last 10 years. So, why do cuts in legal immigration threaten the national economy? In 2018, on average per day, 10,200 people retired in the U.S. However, only 2,230 people turned working age (16) per day, meaning we are potentially losing 8,000 people a day in the workforce.

Furniture makers like Crate & Barrel, Ashley Furniture and Williams-Sonoma are expanding manufacturing capacity in the U.S. We have recently seen more furniture projects than at any time since the 1990s, which is good news for many of the historical furniture manufacturing states such as Mississippi, North Carolina and Virginia.

### The furniture industry is coming back in the South, but there are not enough workers

In December, *The Wall Street Journal* published an article which stated that furniture makers like Crate & Barrel, Ashley Furniture and Williams-Sonoma are expanding manufacturing capacity in the U.S., and that factories of furniture manufacturers are “humming.” That is true in many of the historical furniture manufacturing states such as Mississippi, North Carolina and Virginia. We have recently seen more furniture projects than at any time since the 1990s, when many of them beelined to China. But the article also said that there are not enough skilled workers to support the “renaissance.” Upholsterers and sewers lost thousands of jobs, meaning there were few who trained for the furniture industry since it col-

lapsed, leaving it reliant on an “aging workforce.”

### It's never been done before in this country

For the first time in the nation's history, the U.S. will go more than 10 years without a recession. Records kept before the Civil War show that a recession has occurred at least once every 10 years. The last one was particularly difficult as the U.S. economy fell into recession from December 2007 to June of 2009.

### Five Southern states make ranking for “Best Positioned States for a Recession”

Five Southern states made FitSmallBusiness' top 10 states best positioned for a possible recession. They were Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia. Other states making the ranking were Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska and North Dakota. States with a wide variety of businesses,

diverse global trade partners and a robust debt-to-income ratio were in the best position to withstand a recession.

### Singapore replaces U.S. as world's most competitive economy

The economy of Singapore has overtaken the U.S. economy as the world's most competitive according the World Economic Forum's annual competitiveness report. The index, published in the fall quarter, takes stock of an economy's competitive landscape, measuring factors such as macroeconomic stability, infrastructure, the labor market and innovation capability. The United States fell to No. 2.

### Tax cuts make U.S. tax burden one of the lowest in the world

President Trump's 2017 tax cuts have reduced the U.S. tax burden to the lowest among major developed nations, according to the Organization





# AROUND THE SOUTH

Texas produces 20 percent of its power from wind energy, and almost 25,000 people work in the sector in the Lone Star State.

for Economic Cooperation and Development. The tax cuts have also contributed to the U.S. government's budget deficit of nearly \$1 trillion in 2019. The deficit rose by \$205 billion, or 26 percent in the last year. Only three of the major world economies currently have a lower tax burden than the U.S.

## Houston's economy is contracting

Houston's economy contracted in November, according to the Houston Purchasing Manager's index. It's the first time the area economy has contracted since Hurricane Harvey struck the region in August of 2017 causing \$130 billion in damage.

## Houston MSA leads the nation in residential building permits

The MSA that includes Houston-Sugar Land-The Woodlands continues to lead the nation in both multifamily

and single-family residential unit permits. The Houston region saw 36,073 permits issued from July 2018 to July 2019, the largest number in the country and nearly 20 times the 1,843 permits issued in the average metro area. Dallas-Fort Worth came in second with 34,523 residential building permits.

## Houston home to more than 30 wind energy companies

The Houston MSA is involved in a big way in the wind energy industry. Companies include wind farm development firms, blade inspection and maintenance, lubricant manufacturers and other sectors that support wind energy. Texas produces 20 percent of its power from wind energy and almost 25,000 people work in the sector in the Lone Star State.

## Wind energy milestone

Wind energy in the U.S.

reached a milestone in the fall quarter. Installed wind energy capacity passed 100 gigawatts in November. One gigawatt provides enough power for 700,000 homes. Texas has the most wind energy capacity with 27 gigawatts, according to the Energy Department. It is expected that by the end of 2020, wind will provide 122 gigawatts of energy in the U.S.

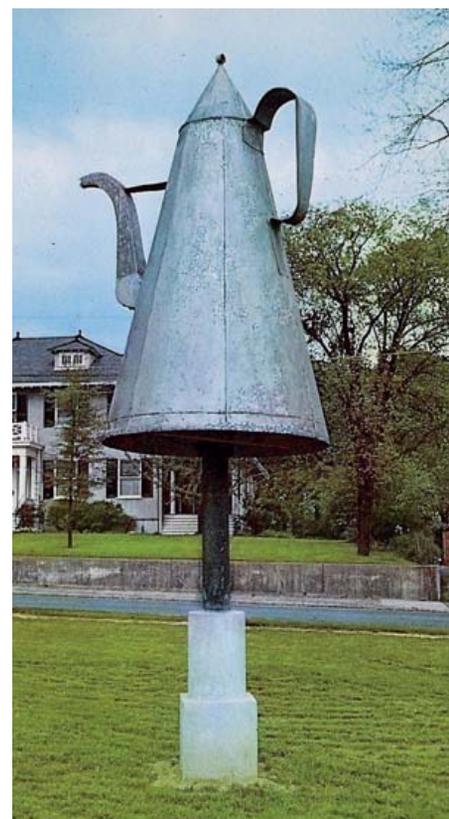
## Millions of job openings, not enough workers

Labor shortages are making it tough on employers in almost every state, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The shortage of workers is jeopardizing economic expansion nationwide. States are offering financial incentives to bring natives back to their state to work and raise families. States are also digging deep, trying to find those who have quit looking for job —

high school dropouts and those with criminal records.

## CNBC poll says 60 percent of CFOs predict headcount reductions

The fourth quarter 2019 CNBC Global CFO Council survey came out in the fall and 60 percent of CFOs polled said they will be cutting jobs and slowing hiring in 2020, even with the blow-out report of 266,000 new jobs created in November.



Over the last two years, the city of Winston-Salem has seen a 3.9 percent gain in jobs. Mayor Allen Joines said that the city goal is to create 5,400 new jobs a year.

New data shows that they've created 10,500 new jobs in the past two years.

**Tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs lost in political battleground states so far this year**

NBC News reported in October that Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin lost a total of 27,000 manufacturing jobs from January through September of 2019. The job losses come in states Trump narrowly won in 2016 and are widely seen as battleground states in the 2020 election.

**City revenues see signs of recession**

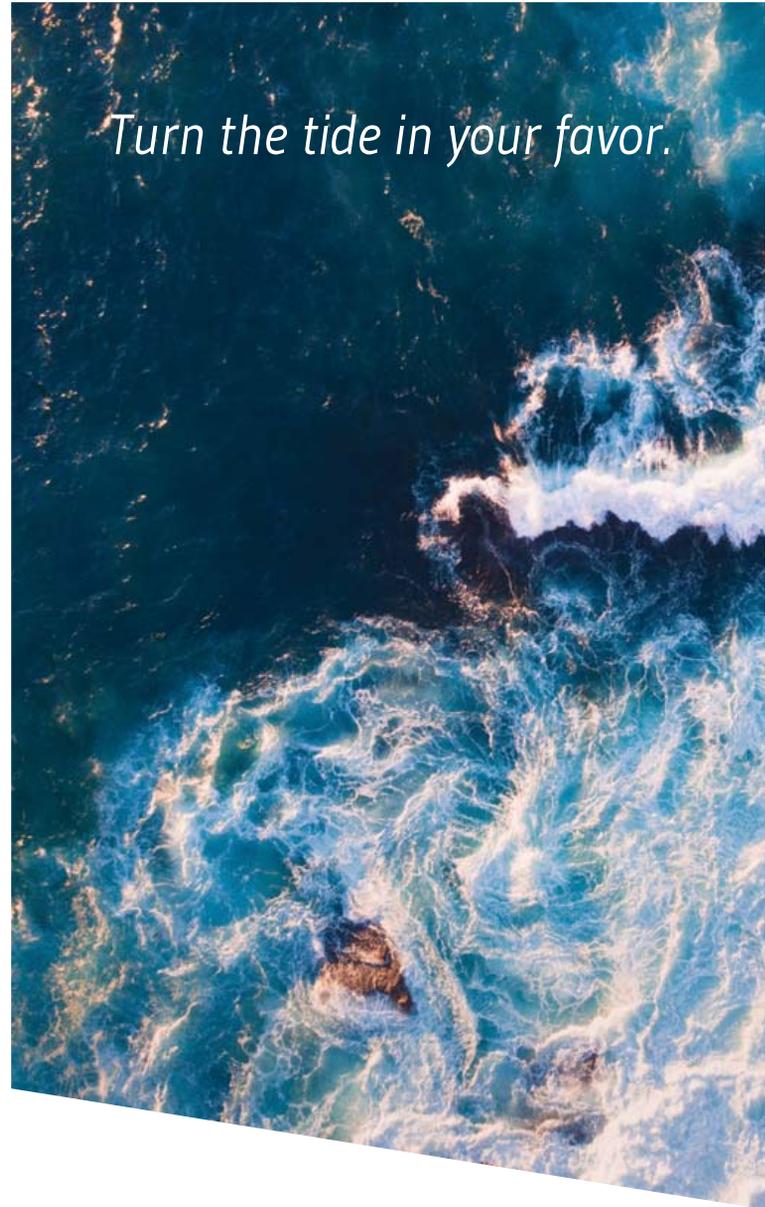
According to the National League of Cities, shrinking revenue sources are putting pressure on municipal budgets. The report also stated that almost two in three finance officers in large cities are predicting a recession as soon as 2020. One of the first signs of changing economic conditions can be seen in city revenue collections. For the first time in seven years, cities expect revenues to decline as they close the books on the 2019 fiscal year. Changing economic conditions are felt by cities sooner than at the state or national level.

**Winston-Salem, N.C., creating more jobs than its peers**

Over the last two years, Winston-Salem is creating jobs at a pace that is besting its peers. From August 2017 to August 2019, the city of Winston-Salem has seen a 3.9 percent gain in jobs. That's a higher percentage than Greenville, S.C., and Savannah, Ga. Winston-Salem's Mayor Allen Joines said this fall that the city goal is to create 5,400 new jobs a year. The new data shows that they've created 10,500 new jobs in the past two years. "We want to continue to hit that 5,400 new jobs for the next three years, and in doing so we will become one of the top 50 metro areas in the country in the terms of job growth," Joines said in a story published by WFMY.

**Florida still cranking out the jobs**

Florida's three largest metro areas saw strong job growth from October 2018 to October 2019. Orlando, with 48,400 new jobs, ranked first in year-over-year job gains. Miami saw 29,100 new



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# AROUND THE SOUTH

jobs and Tampa Bay created 27,000 new jobs. Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and Gainesville saw the lowest metro unemployment rates in the state in October.

## SmartAsset publishes "boomtown" ranking

Several Southern cities made SmartAsset's boomtown ranking that came out in December. Longmont, Colo., was named No. 1, but Denton, Texas; Mount Pleasant, S.C.; Miami; New Braunfels, Texas; Charleston, S.C.; North Charleston, S.C.; and Round Rock, Texas all made the top 10 in the South. The other two were in Colorado.

## Northern Alabama could see 25,000 new jobs

The Northern Alabama counties of Limestone, Madison and Morgan could see 25,000 new jobs at the same time the Huntsville region is seeing record unemployment rates. Mazda Toyota will open its \$1.6 billion joint assembly plant in Huntsville in 2021.

## Montgomery, Ala., sees record breaking numbers

Montgomery saw \$1 billion in industrial capital investments in 2019, the second largest total ever for Montgomery County. It was surpassed only in 2002, when Hyundai announced its plant

there. A total of 31 companies announced projects in Montgomery in 2019, which created 1,214 new jobs and retained 7,784 jobs.

## Alabama unemployment rate at all-time low of 2.8 percent

Alabama's unemployment rate in October was at 2.8 percent, an all-time low. The unemployment rate in August was 3.1 percent. The civilian labor force also grew to 2,261,077, which is a new high. It's the ninth consecutive month in which Alabama's job growth percentage either sustained or exceeded the national job growth percentage.

## Wind farms being built for Walmart

France-based Engie SA is building two giant wind farms in Texas and Oklaho-

ma under an agreement with Arkansas-based Walmart. The deal has Engie providing 366 megawatts of power generation capacity to the retail giant from two new wind farms, one in Texas and the other in Oklahoma. The Texas project — the 300 megawatt Prairie Hill Wind Project — will build a \$307 million wind farm near Mart, Texas, in Limestone County.

## Lehigh Acres, Fla., and Mount Pleasant, S.C., named fastest growing U.S. cities

According to an analysis by personal finance website WalletHub, Lehigh Acres, Fla., ranked as the fastest growing city in the U.S., and Mount Pleasant, S.C., was named the second fastest

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# AROUND THE SOUTH

growing U.S. city. The analysis compared 515 cities of varying population sizes based on “sociodemographics,” and the local economy, using 17 metrics that include population growth, job growth, income growth, poverty rate decrease and building permit activity growth, among others. Bend, Ore.; Enterprise, Nev.; and Frisco, Texas, rounded out the top five. Shreveport, La., the study showed, is the nation’s slowest-growing city.

## Austin’s unstoppable tech job sector

A report from commercial real estate services company CBRE that was published in the fall showed that Aus-

tin’s tech workforce created over 10,000 new jobs in 2017 and 2018. That was an increase of 22.5 percent for the two years, or 60.4 percent of all new office jobs in Austin. Only San Francisco (24.7 percent) and Seattle (23.7 percent) bested Austin for growth of tech jobs over those two years.

## Tampa is the most likely U.S. city to be hit by “silver tsunami”

According to Zillow research, Tampa has more senior citizens that own homes and is the most susceptible city in the U.S. for the “silver tsunami.” The “silver tsunami” occurs when people age out of home ownership, die

or find other living accommodations. About 34 percent of owner-occupied U.S. homes are owned by people aged 60 or older, but that percentage is much higher in Tampa.

## Facebook opens new Austin office

The social media company’s newest offices in the Third + Shoal tower in downtown Austin have room for more than 1,550 employees. Facebook already has about 1,200 employees in the capital city across multiple offices, said Katherine Shappley, head of the Austin office and vice president of Facebook’s North American Global Business Group. “As you look at Silicon Valley, all companies I think are looking to other prime locations like

Austin — center of the country, vibrant community and great talent pool,” she said.

## Apple breaks ground on \$1 billion Austin campus

Apple Inc. has broken ground on its \$1 billion North Austin campus. The new location is expected to house 5,000 workers when it opens in 2022, and as many as 15,000 in a few years. Apple manufactures MAC computers in Austin as well. The current employee count for Apple in Austin is over 6,000.

## Austin and Raleigh are tops in Tech Town Index

CompTIA came out with its Tech Town Index in the fall, with Austin ranking first and Raleigh second. To compile the list, CompTIA considered six factors, including number of IT jobs, cost of



living index rank and location quotient (number of IT job advertisements by number of people employed).

**Austin and Durham cited by Inc. Magazine**

Durham, N.C.'s affordable rent and educated workforce has earned the city a ranking in *Inc. Magazine's* "Surge Cities" ranking as one of the 50 best cities for startups in 2020. Durham is No. 3, while Austin is No. 1. Salt Lake City placed second. Charleston, S.C., and Miami made the top 10, while Nashville and Raleigh ranked just outside the top 10.

**President Trump attends opening of Louis Vuitton's new plant in rural Texas**

President Trump visited the new Louis Vuitton plant



According to Zillow, Tampa, Fla., is the most susceptible city in the U.S. for the "silver tsunami," which occurs when people age out of home ownership, die or find other living accommodations. About 34 percent of owner-occupied U.S. homes are owned by people aged 60 or older, but that percentage is much higher in Tampa.

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# AROUND THE SOUTH

In December, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam announced that his proposed budget for 2020 would include money to provide tuition-free community college for in-need students that are studying for certain job fields.



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opening in Keene, Texas, in October. It's the first U.S. plant for the France-based maker of luxury purses and handbags. The plant had 150 employees when it opened.

### Dallas-Fort Worth leads nation in law office leases

From third quarter 2018 to second quarter 2019, Dallas-Fort Worth led the nation in law office lease expansions, according to a new report from CBRE Group Inc. Over 700,000 square feet of office space was leased during that time, and 428,000 square feet was leased by expanding law firms, the highest in the country. Following Dallas-Fort Worth were Los Angeles and New York City.

### Houston-based LNG companies get approval from FERC for terminals

Three Houston-based companies received federal approval on November 21 for liquefied natural gas terminals proposed at the Port of Brownsville in South Texas. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved LNG export facilities worth billions to Annova LNG, Texas LNG and NextDecade Corp. to build their plants at the Port of Brownsville in South Texas.

### Virginia governor announces tuition-free community college

In December, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam announced that his proposed budget for 2020 would include money to provide tuition-free community college

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# AROUND THE SOUTH



## Airport Property Leasing and Development Opportunity Augusta Regional Airport - AGS Augusta, GA

The Augusta Aviation Commission (AAC) is issuing this Notice of Availability seeking qualified parties to undertake the leasing and development of available AAC property located at Augusta Regional Airport, General Perry Smith Parkway, Augusta, GA. This opportunity consists of the undertaking of a long-term ground lease available for development of aeronautical or non-aeronautical use facilities and operations. Interested parties shall be responsible for designing and constructing all facets of the infrastructure of any improvements or facilities to be operated by the proposer or a third party, which operation shall be determined by proposer or third party, subject to AAC approval. The solicitation will be released and available for viewing on November 8, 2019 at

<https://www.flyags.com/Business-Development-Information>.



The second of three planned units at a Cheniere Energy facility at the Port of Corpus Christi is ready to begin liquefying natural gas.

for in-need students that are studying for certain job fields. His proposed "Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back" program includes \$145 million over two years to pay for the tuition.

### Kentucky's bourbon industry has set two records

Last year, Kentucky distilleries filled more than 2.1 million barrels of bourbon. The Kentucky Distillers' Association says it's the highest inventory in the 52 years they've kept records. It's also the first and only time since 1967 that distillers have filled more than 2 million barrels of bourbon. Kentucky now boasts two barrels of bourbon and aging spirits for every person living in the Commonwealth.

### New Kentucky governor restores voting rights to nonviolent felons

New Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear signed an executive order in December to restore the voting rights of 140,000 nonviolent offenders who have completed their sentences. Beshear signed the order on his third day in office.

### The Appalachian Regional Commission announces \$44.4 million investment package

In the fall quarter, the Appalachian Regional Commission announced a \$44.4 million investment to diver-

sify the coal region of the organization's territory. There were over 54 awards given to retain almost 6,000 jobs. The money will also help secure \$39 million in private investment, create or retain almost 3,000 businesses and train thousands of workers and students within the broadband and entrepreneurship sectors. Money is also being set aside for substance abuse recovery. The downturn in the coal market has been devastating to the economies of nine Appalachian states.

### Cheniere puts Corpus Christi LNG train into service

The second of three planned units at a Cheniere Energy facility at the Port of Corpus Christi is ready to begin liquefying natural gas. The facility, known in the industry as a train, will liquefy natural gas piped in from oil fields in Texas and other parts of the continental U.S. so that it can be shipped abroad. Shipments from train 2 will begin next year. The first delivery is expected to arrive at an unnamed location in May 2020. Cheniere has agreed to ship LNG to several foreign-owned companies, including French utility Électricité de France S.A., Spanish utility Iberdrola S.A., and Indonesian state-owned oil and gas company PT Pertamina. Train 2 was on time and within budget, the company said.



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# AROUND THE SOUTH



Florida Power & Light Company is close to breaking ground on the world's largest solar battery plant in Parrish, Fla. The company has a goal of installing 30 million solar panels by 2030.

### Charles Schwab CEO said operating expenses not a "big driver" in HQ move to North Texas

In a story in the *Dallas Business Journal* in December, Charles Schwab CEO Peter Crawford said that reducing operating expenses in moving its headquarters to Westlake, Texas, from San Francisco was not a "big driver" in the company's decision. Charles Schwab acquired TD Ameritrade, and both companies have more than 4,000 employees in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro.

### FP&L's plans for building the world's largest solar battery plant are underway

Florida Power & Light Company is close to breaking ground on the world's largest solar battery plant in Parrish, Fla. The company has a goal of installing 30 million solar panels by 2030. The new battery plant is replacing an aging fossil fuel plant for the utility, one of the nation's cleanest companies. The battery storage plant is being built next to one of FP&L's largest solar farms.

### Arlington, Va., Raleigh and Austin make top 10 cities for young professionals

Arlington, Va., Raleigh and Austin made GoBankingRates.com's top 10 in its ranking titled, "30 Best Cities for Young Professionals." Madison, Wisc., was the site's choice for No. 1. The city of Arlington is where Amazon is building its HQ2 and hiring 25,000 workers. Raleigh and Austin are home to high-tech companies such as Apple, Facebook and Microsoft.

### American Airlines opens new Fort Worth headquarters

In the fall quarter, American Airlines opened its new headquarters in Fort Worth. Employees bike from building to building on 8.3 miles of trails within the car-free campus interior. Celebrity chefs are guests at the cafeteria and there are no offices. The CEO has the same size desk as a new hire.

### Metro Atlanta's jobless rate in September was lowest since 2000

As a whole, Georgia lost jobs in September. However, that same month, Atlanta gained 1,500 jobs and its unemployment rate dropped to 2.9 percent, the lowest

in almost 20 years. While unemployment may be reaching new lows in Atlanta, that doesn't mean workers are seeing an increase in wages. In fact, Atlanta ranks among the worst in the nation for wage growth. According to a report released by PayScale, Atlanta is No. 7 nationally for cities with the lowest wage growth.

**South Carolina Ports Authority has \$63 billion annual economic effect on Palmetto State**

The South Carolina Ports Authority and the Port of Charleston had a \$63.4 billion annual economic impact on the state of South Carolina according to a study done by the University of South Carolina. The port supports one in ten jobs in the state.

**Central Florida's Port Canaveral responsible for \$3.85 billion economic impact.**

Port Canaveral generated an economic impact of \$3.85 billion to Florida's economy in 2018, a just-released study indicates. Most of that economic impact from the world's second-busiest cruise port was felt on the Space Coast and in the Orlando area. The port also supports 32,650 jobs.

**Alabama plant wins "Plant of the Year"**

GE Appliances in Decatur, Ala., was named *Assembly Magazine's* "Manufacturing Plant of the Year" in the fall quarter. The GE plant is owned by Chinese company Haier and makes refrigera-

tors. The 42-year-old facility recently saw \$115 million in investments to earn the company's Manufacturing Center of Excellence for its top-freezer refrigerators. The investment also created 255 new jobs for a total of 1,300 at the plant.

**Four Southern markets make "America's Youngest Cities" list**

Realtor.com came out with its top 10 list of "America's Youngest Cities," and four cities from the South made the top 10. They are Stillwater, Okla. (2); Jacksonville, N.C. (3); College Station, Texas (6) and Statesboro, Ga. (9). Provo, Utah, was named the youngest city in American in the study.

**Arizona State University study shows Oklahoma City is tops for "ease of doing business"**

Arizona State's "Doing Business North America" ranking has Oklahoma City as the No. 1 U.S. city for "ease of doing business" for small and medium-size cities. Arlington, Va., was No. 2 in the ranking and Atlanta was No. 5. Also making the top 10 in the South were Charlotte (6); Houston (7); Virginia Beach (9) and Charleston, S.C. (10).

**Amazon's HQ2 focusing on affordable housing**

Amazon will give Arlington, Va., \$20 million for affordable housing efforts in the first round of community benefits it will provide for its development in Pentagon

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# AROUND THE SOUTH



Oklahoma recently expanded a rebate program for the film industry, and film production there has tripled. Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon," starring Robert DeNiro and Leonardo DiCaprio, is in the works now.

City. Amazon envisions a pair of towers totaling about 2.1 million square feet, with building heights of up to 22 stories.

## Virginia port will be East Coast's deepest harbor

The Port of Virginia has begun dredging its harbor to 56 feet, which would make it the deepest channel on the East Coast. The dredging began in December and when it is completed in 2024, the commercial channels serving the Norfolk Harbor will be able to simultaneously accommodate two ultra-large container vessels. The investment in the project exceeds \$350 million.

## Film industry is booming in Oklahoma

Oklahoma recently expanded a rebate program for the film industry, and it is working. Film production there has tripled since the rebate program was enacted. Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" (starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert DeNiro) and "Stillwater" (starring Matt Damon) are in the works right now.

## 757 is now the branding name for Hampton Roads, Va.

Hampton Roads, Va., which includes Virginia Beach, Norfolk and Newport News among other cities, is now called 757 (the entire area's area code) in a rebranding



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# AROUND THE SOUTH



(ABOVE) Benton County, Ark., the home of Walmart's world headquarters, had the largest wage gain among the nation's 355 largest counties. (RIGHT) Apple will continue to build its desktop computer, the Mac Pro, in Austin, Texas, in order to duck Chinese tariffs.



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effort by several of the economic development agencies in the area. The region is home to 1.7 million people.

### Old mall transformed in Louisiana?

North Shore Square, a mall in Slidell, La., that has struggled to find new life, is one of three sites being considered to house the National Finance Center, an agency that handles payroll for the Navy. The move could bring 800 to 1,200 jobs to the site, according to Chris Masingill, CEO of the St. Tammany Development District, and would breathe new life into an area that has seen an exodus of retailers and restaurants.

### Arkansas county had the largest wage gain in nation this year

Data from the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Benton County, Ark., had the largest

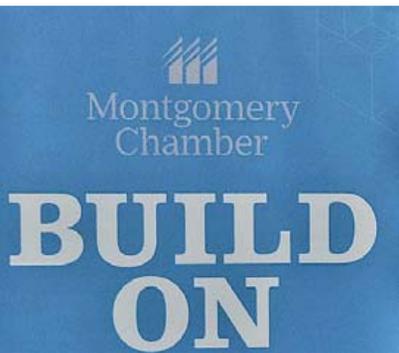
wage gain among the nation's 355 largest counties — 16.3 percent in the second quarter of 2019. In Benton County, average weekly wages rose by 35 percent. Benton County is the home of Walmart's world headquarters.

### Apple ducks Chinese tariffs by building Mac Pro in Texas

With the U.S. and China still locking horns in a tariff battle, consumer technology giant Apple is finding ways to duck Chinese tariffs and will continue to build its desktop computer, the Mac Pro, in Austin, Texas. This shift to building the new Mac Pro domestically comes as tariffs on China are hurting the bottom line, particularly for Apple's bread-and-butter product, the iPhone. ✦



# SNAPSHOTS FROM THE ROAD



In the fall quarter, SB&D publisher Michael Randle spoke at the River Region Economic Summit in Montgomery, Ala. **1:** Pictured are (l to r) Sallie Hines, Project Coordinator, Corporate Development, Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce; Randle; Heath Jordan, Chief Investment Officer, Trustmark Investment Advisors; Ellen McNair, Senior Vice President, Corporate Development, Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce and Anoop Mishra, VP Regional Executive, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. **2:** Dr. Keivan Deravi, President, ERS (Economic Research Services). **3:** Jonathan Golub, Chief Equity Strategist, Credit Suisse. **4:** Other speakers at the Summit included newly elected Mayor Steven Reed, City of Montgomery.

**5-8:** Randle spoke at the fall meeting of the North Carolina Economic Development Association. Pictured are NCEDA members attending the meeting in Asheville.

CONTINUED



# SNAPSHOTS FROM THE ROAD



**9-18:** The North Carolina Economic Development Association meeting in Asheville. 📍

# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS

For real-time news on business, politics and economic development in the South, go to [RandleReport.com](http://RandleReport.com). For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to [SB-D.com](http://SB-D.com). For information on automotive in the South, go to [SouthernAutoCorridor.com](http://SouthernAutoCorridor.com).



## Alabama beats out Japan and China for \$195 million expansion project

Daikin America plans to invest up to \$195 million to expand its plant in Decatur, Ala. The expansion will result in 50 new full-time jobs for the fluorochemical supplier. The announcement was made at the company's 25th anniversary celebration by Commerce Sec. Greg Canfield (right), Daikin Chairman Noriyuki Inoue (center) and Fred Denton (left), who headed up the Alabama Development Office when Daikin arrived in Decatur.

## ALABAMA

**FBI says more than 4,000 jobs coming to Huntsville**  
For the first time amid its build-up at Redstone Arsenal, the FBI said more than 4,000 jobs will be coming to Huntsville over the next eight to 10 years. That echoes reporting over the past two years about the growth of the nation's top domestic crime enforcement agency in the Rocket City.

## Wood manufacturer announces new plant in Montgomery

In October, Texas-based wood products manufacturer Conner Industries announced it will build a new plant in Montgomery. Conner produces lumber, pallets, crates and other packaging products. The

company currently operates 12 facilities in the U.S., and is headquartered in Fort Worth. The deal will create 100 new jobs.

**Plastics company to locate facility in Alabama**  
Germany-based ID Plastics, a manufacturer of a variety



of technical plastic products, is opening its first U.S. plant in Auburn, Ala. The company is investing \$9.8 million in the deal.

## ARKANSAS

## Company's expansion bringing 1,200 new jobs to Arkansas

An IT outsourcing firm is bringing 1,200 new jobs to Conway, Ark. DXC Technology announced in October that the Fortune 500 company would establish a global Center of Excellence in Conway, where it currently operates a call center, to serve the Medicaid business in 30 states.

**Nucor opens Mississippi County, Ark., steel plant**  
Charlotte-based Nucor Steel opened its new specialty cold steel mill at its massive complex in Mississippi County,

## Simmons' \$300 million poultry plant opens

Simmons Prepared Foods has begun operations at its \$300 million facility in Benton County, Ark. Production will start in January with 1,200 workers. Employment could reach over 2,000 by 2022. Shown here is a young Bill Simmons who, in 1949, founded a small poultry company in Decatur, Ark.

# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS



## Spirit Airlines to spend \$250 million on new South Florida headquarters

Spirit Airlines announced in the fall it will build a new headquarters in Dania Beach, Fla., near the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. The airline's new headquarters will encompass 500,000 square feet.

Ark., in the fall quarter. Most of the new capacity will be used for the automotive industry. The company invested \$230 million in the project that will create 100 new jobs.

### Flack Global Metals eyes Osceola, Ark.

Flack Global Metals (FGM) is moving forward with plans to build and operate a state-of-the-art coating and processing facility adjacent to Big River Steel's Flex Mill located in Osceola. FGM plans to invest \$150 million and create more than 150 new jobs to add production capability to the Big River Steel campus for pre-painted steel and aluminum coils.

### Manufacturer to open facility at Little Rock Port

Michigan-based HMS Manufacturing plans to start production at a Port of Little Rock facility in the summer of 2020. The company, which provides injecting molding and makes housewares, will create about 90 new jobs.

### Permit approved for \$1.5 billion Sun Paper project in Arkansas

Nearly four years after an-

nouncing the state's first blockbuster deal with China, Gov. Asa Hutchinson said the state Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) has finally approved an air permit to begin construction on the much-awaited \$1.5 billion Sun Paper pulp mill in Arkadelphia.

### Seventy-million-dollar expansion at Arkansas Georgia-Pacific plant

Georgia-Pacific will invest \$70 million in its plywood and lumber operations in Gurdon, Ark., and donate \$100,000 to area schools. No jobs will be created with the expansion of the plant that has about 700 employees.

## FLORIDA

### FIS to build world HQ in Jacksonville, Fla.

Fidelity National Information Services (FIS), a global leader in financial services technology, announced that it will stay in Jacksonville "for decades to come," and will construct a \$145 million, 300,000-square-foot headquarters to house 1,700 jobs. The move will consolidate FIS's three locations and allow it to hire 500 new positions over 10 years.

### Insurance company to hire 750 in Jacksonville

GuideWell Inc., the parent company of Florida Blue, announced in October it will add 750 employees at its downtown office. The new hires will bring employment there to 1,750.

### Green Rhino moving global HQ to Apopka

Green Rhino Energy Solutions announced it has moved its global headquarters to a new facility in Central Florida, which will house its global offices as well as an assembly and distribution plant. Here the company will assemble its energy storage systems and distribute them worldwide. The Apopka facility will provide employment for up to 300 people.

### Aerospace manufacturer lands in Lynn Haven

Connecticut-based Advanced Composites & Metalforming Technologies (ACMT) is creating its second home in Lynn Haven. ACMT pledged to create 105 jobs within five years. Its Bay County capital investment will be about \$22 million. ACMT performs both military and commer-

cial jobs for Pratt & Whitney, some work for Rolls Royce, and anticipates doing an increasing amount of work for GE and GKN.

### Amazon announces another fulfillment center

Amazon plans to locate a 1 million-square-foot fulfillment center in Auburndale, Fla. The project will add 500 jobs to the 13,500 full-time jobs the company has in the state.

### California company to add almost 1,000 jobs in Orlando

Concentrix CVG is adding 960 jobs at its customer service and tech support facility in Lake Mary, Fla. The company added a new client after it scheduled layoffs for the first of next year.

## GEORGIA

### Brazilian manufacturer to create 455 jobs in Georgia

Brazil-based Guidoni Group, a producer of ornamental stones, is investing \$96 million to locate a manufacturing plant in McRae-Helena, Ga. The deal will create 455 jobs.



### Ball Corp. to build new plant in Rome, Ga.

Colorado-based Ball Corp. will build a plant in Rome to make aluminum cups. The company said its new plant is meant to serve a growing market for more environmentally friendly beverage packaging. The company already has operations in Northwest Georgia. The \$200 million deal will add 180 jobs.

### Goodyear to consolidate Atlanta facilities to Coweta County

In June 2016, the former Orchard Hills Golf Course property on Georgia Highway 16 in Newnan's southeast side was rezoned as a major industrial and commercial site. In November, Goodyear Tire and Rubber announced it would build a 1.5 million-square-foot facility that will consolidate its Atlanta area distribution centers. The \$140 million project will create 250 jobs in Coweta County.

### Cyber security firm expands in Georgia

Parsons Corporation, a cyber security technology provider, is expanding its operations at the Georgia Cyber Center in Augusta, Ga. The company is adding 80 jobs.

### Nestlé Purina opens \$320 million pet food plant in rural Georgia

Nestlé Purina has opened its newest pet food plant in Hartwell, Ga. The plant is located in an abandoned textile factory. The \$320 million deal will create 240 jobs.

### Paper manufacturer to invest \$400 million to expand in Macon

Irving Tissue is investing \$400 million in a new manufacturing plant in Macon, Ga. The company just completed a \$470 million project in Macon that created 200 jobs. The newest project will create 150 jobs.

### Georgia solar manufacturing plant will be North America's largest

The Hanwha Q Cells factory in Dalton, Ga., represents a boost to domestic manufacturing and a positive result of the tariffs. Hanwha Q Cells USA marked the completion recently of the largest solar module manufacturing plant in North America, which will produce enough solar panels to generate as much peak power as the Hoover Dam every year. The company's initial plans for a \$150 million plant with 500 employees grew since its announcement last year into a \$200 million investment with 650 employees.

air conditioning systems announced a large expansion in Louisville. Kentuckiana Curb Co., which does business as KCC Manufacturing, is investing \$50 million to build a second facility in Louisville. The deal will create 400 new jobs.

### Atlanta-based UPS creating 1,000 jobs in Kentucky

UPS plans to add 1,000 jobs in Louisville over the next 15 years by growing its Worldport global air hub, including adding a hangar that can accommodate two 747-8F aircraft, the largest in the UPS Airlines fleet.

### Senture bringing 400 new jobs to Kentucky

Senture, one of Southern and Eastern Kentucky's largest technology-based employers, is adding 400 new jobs at its facilities in London, Annville and Williamsburg, thanks to a new contract with Humana. The majority of the jobs will be call center agents and work-from-home positions. The company expects to fill at least 150 positions by the end of the year.

### KENTUCKY

### Big HVAC deal in Kentucky

A Kentucky manufacturer of heating, ventilation and

### Intuit and SYKES announce 300 new jobs in Perry County, Ky.

State and local officials gath-

### Apple awards Kentucky's Corning \$250 million

Apple recently said it would award Gorilla Glass maker Corning \$250 million from a \$5 billion fund dedicated to U.S. advanced manufacturing. Corning supplies glass to Apple for products such as the iPhone and Apple Watch. Since the first iPhones hit the market in 2007, the glass on every iPhone sold has been produced at Corning's plant in Harrodsburg, Ky.



# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS



## New Orleans biotech companies to create 275 jobs

Expansions by three New Orleans biotech firms — AxoSim, Cadex Genomics and Obatala Sciences — will create 135 new jobs at the University of New Orleans (UNO) and the New Orleans BioInnovation Center, a biotech incubator where all three companies launched local startup operations. AxoSim will expand its existing facilities at the BioInnovation Center, and plans to add 75 jobs at an average annual salary of \$60,000. On the UNO campus, Cadex Genomics has opened a molecular diagnostic laboratory focused on improving cancer treatment. The company will create 50 new jobs with an average annual salary of \$70,000. Obatala Sciences will expand at the same UNO institute and create 10 new jobs with an average annual salary of \$80,000. Obatala produces biotech tools for improving the speed and effectiveness of pharmaceutical development.

ered at the Perry County Public Library recently to celebrate the announcement of a partnership between Intuit and SYKES (a call center company), which is expected to bring a minimum of 300 full-time customer service jobs to Perry County's Coal Fields Regional Industrial Park.

## Meggitt adding 83 jobs in Danville, Ky., with \$82 million investment

Meggitt, an international company specializing in components for the aerospace, defense and energy markets, plans to increase its aircraft brake manufacturing capacity in Boyle County, creating up to 83 full-time jobs with an \$82.7 million

investment. The Danville plant currently produces brakes for Airbus, Bombardier, Dassault, Embraer and Gulfstream.

## LOUISIANA

### SNF to invest \$375 million in Louisiana facility

Over 150 jobs are being created as part of an expansion of the SNF Holding Company water polymer plant in Plaquemine. The \$375 million investment by the French company will retain 390 existing jobs.

### Accruent opens Center of Excellence in New Orleans

Austin, Texas-based Accruent, a global software com-

pany, has opened its new technology center of excellence that ultimately will house up to 350 new employees in New Orleans.

### Air Liquide funding big expansion at Geismar methanol plant

A \$270 million expansion of a methanol plant in Geismar, La., is coming, Air Liquide announced recently. The company will construct two air separation units at the Methanex methanol plant there. The units will produce up to 5,000 tons of oxygen per day.

## MISSISSIPPI

### Australia-based crop protection company opens operations in Mississippi

Australia-based Nufarm, a crop protection and seeds company, opened its new

facility in Greenville, Miss. The company is investing \$20 million and will create 68 jobs.

### Spectra kidney services lab planned in Southaven, Miss.

Kidney dialysis specialist Spectra Laboratories will open a 300-employee plant in the Memphis suburb of Southaven. Spectra is a subsidiary of Germany-based Fresenius.

### Continental AG opens Mississippi tire plant

Germany-based Continental AG has opened its tire plant in Central Mississippi. The \$1.45 billion facility on 900 acres is one of the largest projects ever announced in the Jackson, Miss., region. The plant is expected to house 2,500 workers within the next nine years.



## Microsoft creating 430 new jobs in Charlotte, N.C.

Microsoft is expanding its existing Charlotte campus and creating 430 new jobs. Microsoft will spend an estimated \$23 million to expand its campus in South Charlotte.



### **Nail manufacturer to restore 200 jobs in Missouri**

The nation's largest producer of nails, located in Poplar Bluff, reportedly added 120 workers in recent months and plans to add about 80 more by the end of the year. Mid Continent Steel and Wire appears to be recovering after receiving a waiver from tariffs on the steel it imports from Mexico.

### **Ashley Furniture is expanding in Northeast Mississippi**

Ashley Furniture is expanding its upholstery manufacturing and regional distribution center in Ecu, Miss. The \$25 million project will create 100 jobs. Ashley employs 3,290 workers in Mississippi and about 2,300 workers at its Ecu plant in Pontotoc County.

### **MISSOURI**

### **Nestlé Purina investing \$115 million in Southeast Missouri plant**

One of the largest employers in southeast Missouri recently received a visit from the governor, highlighting a major multi-million-dollar expansion. Governor Mike Parson traveled to Bloomfield to tour a Nestlé Purina plant that's undergoing a \$115 million investment. Nestlé is the world's largest food and beverage company.

### **Boeing announces plant expansion in Missouri**

Boeing recently delivered its 400,000th JDAM, which is a

guided weapons system, and announced the expansion of its St. Charles plant. Boeing has committed to building a new 35,000-square-foot plant for harpoon production. For now, Boeing says the addition doesn't include any more jobs, just reassigning other employees, but that could change.

### **NORTH CAROLINA**

### **Epic Games announces "epic" expansion in North Carolina**

Epic Games is expanding its headquarters campus in Cary, N.C., in a big way. The company announced the expansion in October and said construction on a new building could start in 2020, potentially making room for thousands of employees in Cary. The official announcement said 2,000 would be hired, however, it could be more. Epic Games is the maker of video games, including "Fortnite." The company also created "Gears of War" and the "Infinity Blade" series.

### **Clinical trials firm to expand in North Carolina**

Q2 Solutions, a joint venture between IQVIA (formerly known as Quintiles) and Quest Diagnostics, announced it will create 749 jobs in Durham County, N.C. The company, whose global headquarters is currently in Morrisville, N.C., performs clinical trials for biotechnology firms.

### **Georgia company to open Charlotte call center, hiring 1,000**

An Atlanta-based company will bring 1,000 jobs to Charlotte by the end of next year. Customer service company Chime Solutions, a minori-

ty-owned family business, plans to hire 400 employees in Charlotte by early October.

### **Digital mortgage lender to hire 1,000 in Charlotte**

Better.com has chosen Charlotte for its new office and expects to hire 1,000 new employees within the next five years. The startup is a digital mortgage lender and is opening an office at We Work's co-working space at the RailYard in South End. One hundred employees will be hired by the end of the year and 1,000 by 2024. The bulk of the jobs to be filled will be in sales, software engineering, partnerships and operations.

CONTINUED

### **Amazon to build second fulfillment center in North Mississippi**

Amazon announced in November it is building a new fulfillment center to handle larger items, such as furniture, fishing rods and bicycles, in DeSoto County, Miss. The new fulfillment center, which will be the second in Mississippi, will be more than 1 million square feet. The deal will create 500 new jobs.



# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS

## New hangar at Oklahoma's Tinker Air Force Base expected to attract 1,300 new jobs

Tinker Air Force Base has completed the first hangar built specifically for the U.S. Air Force's new KC-46 Pegasus mid-flight refueling tanker. The tankers, which are based at McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas, will be maintained, repaired and overhauled at Tinker's new hangar. As many as 1,300 jobs are expected to be created.



## Policygenius to hire hundreds in North Carolina

Policygenius, a fast-growing online insurance platform, will locate a new technical and operations center in Durham County, creating at least 377 jobs over the next five years. The company will invest nearly \$6 million in Durham.

## Call center to locate in Tarboro

Officials of the Town of Tarboro and Carolinas Gateway

Partnership recently gathered to announce the opening of NBSF Consulting and the creation of 225 jobs. The company will operate a call center in downtown Tarboro.

## ABB's \$40 million bringing 400 jobs to North Carolina

ABB plans an expansion in Mebane that will bring 400 new jobs to Orange County. The Swiss industrial company manufactures robotics, automation and electrical equipment.

## Tech firm locates in North Carolina instead of Boston

Health care IT firm Well Dot Inc. has chosen Chapel Hill, N.C., over Boston for a 400-employee operation. The company's new \$3.1 million operation will function as a research and development hub.

## OKLAHOMA

## American Airlines adding jobs at Oklahoma maintenance facility

There are over 5,000 people working at American Airlines fleet and maintenance facility in Tulsa. As of the fall, the company is adding 400 more for its Tech Ops team to work on Boeing 787 Dreamliners operated by the Texas-based airline.

## Oklahoma call center adding hundreds of jobs

Alorica will add 675 jobs at its call center in Tulsa, Okla. The California-based company currently employs 900 employees at the call center.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

## GE Appliances investing \$60 million in South Carolina

GE Appliances, a Haier company, has announced it will create a new Manufacturing Center of Excellence for production of water heaters at its plant in Camden, S.C. The company is investing \$60 million in the Kershaw County project.

## Zeus is nearing completion of Aiken expansion

Zeus Industrial Products is

## McCall Farms investing \$50 million in its Florence, S.C., operations

McCall Farms, the manufacturer of Glory Foods, Margaret Holmes, Bruce's Yams, Allens and other food brands, plans to expand its existing operations in Florence County, S.C. The company will invest \$50 million and create 140 new jobs.





expanding in South Carolina. In February 2018, the polymer extrusion manufacturer announced a \$15.7 million investment in Aiken, S.C. The funds were earmarked to convert a warehouse into usable manufacturing space to increase production. Zeus manufactures custom tubing and extrusions used in the medical industry, among others.

#### [New technology center to locate in Manning, S.C.](#)

Alabama-based Provalus, an information technology support firm, has chosen Clarendon County, S.C., for a new innovation center. The company will hire 105 jobs in the deal. According to George Kosinski, executive director of the Clarendon County Development Board, Provalus' mission is to develop technology support jobs in rural areas for its numerous clients, some of which are Fortune 500 or Fortune 1000 companies.

#### [SKF expands in Sumter](#)

SKF, a manufacturer of bearings of all sizes for use by the military, semiconductor and

medical industries, is investing \$26 million in its plant in Sumter, S.C. The project will create 10 jobs.

#### **TENNESSEE**

#### [One of the largest current projects going up in Tennessee](#)

Amazon has begun work in Mt. Juliet, Tenn., on one of the South's largest current projects. Amazon is building a new 3.6 million-square-foot warehouse in the city located east of Nashville. The deal is expected to create 1,200 jobs.

#### [Global manufacturer of transformers to locate in Memphis](#)

South Korea-based Hyosung will locate a new transformer plant at the former Mitsubishi facility in Memphis. The project will create 400 jobs.

#### [Agero adding 275 jobs at call center in Tennessee](#)

Agero, a provider of driver assistance software and services, is increasing its employee count in Clarksville, Tenn. The company is filling 275 open positions.

#### [Apparel firm to make \\$7.5 million Tennessee expansion with 220 jobs](#)

VF Corporation plans to invest \$7.5 million and expand its current work-wear operations in Henning and locate a new facility in Covington, Tenn. The projects are expected to create over 220 new jobs in West Tennessee. VF will be expanding its manufacturing facility in Henning, where it will create 162 new jobs, and locating a new distribution facility in Covington, where it will create 66 new jobs. VF Corporation's brands include The North Face, Timberland and Dickies.

#### [Booz Allen Hamilton chooses Knoxville for R&D campus](#)

Booz Allen Hamilton plans to locate its new Research and Development Center in Knoxville. The technology consulting firm expects to invest more than \$3.6 million and create 52 new jobs in Knox County over the next five years. The facility will include engineering, prototyping and testing for a variety of technical systems.

#### [ERMCO creating 150 jobs in Tennessee](#)

A company that produces transformers is planning to invest \$12 million in an expansion in Tennessee that is expected to create 150 jobs. ERMCO will grow its operations in Dyersburg, where the company currently has its headquarters. ERMCO plans to expand to a third building and will add 8,000 more square feet to the facility, which formerly housed Caterpillar.

#### **TEXAS**

#### [Microsoft Corp. bringing 575 jobs to North Texas](#)

Microsoft will expand its

operations in Los Colinas in Irving, Texas. The \$31 million project will create 575 jobs.

#### [Amazon to hire 300 for air hub in DFW](#)

Amazon has opened its regional air hub at Fort Worth Alliance Airport, and expects to hire 300 new full-time jobs as it reaches capacity. The air hub was designed to support the larger-scale regional needs of Amazon Air.

#### [New business for Wichita Falls, Texas](#)

The old Stanley Tools building will soon house a new company. Rise Capital has purchased the building with a \$2.4 million price tag. They'll be leasing it out to Pamlico Air, a manufacturer of air filters, that plans to hire 200 workers within the first year.

#### [Texas lures Uber and 3,000 jobs](#)

Gov. Greg Abbott and Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi were in Dallas recently for the groundbreaking ceremony of the company's new major hub in Deep Ellum. The San Francisco-based

# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS

## Amazon expanding Austin presence with 600 new tech jobs

Online retail giant Amazon is again expanding its Central Texas presence, with plans to add more than 600 tech-focused jobs at its hub in North Austin. The latest expansion comes after Amazon said in March that it planned to add 800 tech jobs to the space in the Domain. In total, the hub will add 1,400 tech jobs between the two expansions, according to the company.

ride-sharing and food delivery company's new hub is expected to bring about 3,000 jobs to North Texas as the company will hire for new positions and relocate current employees. By the end of this year, Uber is expected to either hire or relocate 400 employees in Dallas.

## Charles Schwab relocating headquarters from California to DFW

California-based companies move their headquarters to Texas every day. Massive brokerage firm Charles Schwab announced in the fall it will relocate its headquarters from San Francisco to its new campus in Westlake, Texas, which is in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro.

The company said in a news release that it's acquiring rival TD Ameritrade Holding Corp., and the move is part of that process. Charles Schwab already employs thousands at its campus in Westlake.

## Cheniere puts Corpus Christi LNG train into service

The second of three planned units at a Cheniere Energy facility at the Port of Corpus Christi is ready to begin liquefying natural gas. The facility, known in the industry as a train, will liquefy natural gas piped in from oil fields in Texas and other parts of the continental U.S. so that it can be shipped abroad. Shipments from train 2 will begin next year. The first



delivery is expected to arrive at an unnamed location in May 2020. Cheniere has agreed to ship LNG to several foreign-owned companies, including French utility Électricité de France S.A., Spanish utility Iberdrola S.A., and Indonesian state-owned oil and gas company PT Pertamina. Train 2 was on time and within budget, the company said.

## Orange County, Texas, working for Chevron Phillips expansion

Orange County saw another win in the bid to get a \$5 billion Chevron Phillips expansion in the area. The Orange County Commissioners Court voted to approve a request to survey airport

property for a proposed pipeline route. The expansion could bring thousands of construction jobs and at least 100 permanent jobs.

## Ericsson to locate smart phone factory in Lewisville, Texas

Swedish telecom company Ericsson plans to open its first U.S. factory in North Texas, and it will be a smart factory that makes equipment for 5G technology. Ericsson will open the 300,000-square-foot factory in Lewisville in early 2020 to manufacture advanced antenna system radios for the next-generation wireless network. The factory will be "smart" because of its many digitized and connected



## Teal-Jones Group to invest \$31 million in Virginia

British Columbia-based Teal-Jones Group will invest \$31.75 million at two locations in Virginia. The company plans to expand sawmill and dry kiln operations at two recently acquired lumber mills in Martinsville and Kinsale. At Pine Products in Henry County, the company will invest \$21 million and create 67 new jobs, and at Potomac Supply in Westmoreland County, the company will invest \$10.75 million and create 59 new jobs. Teal-Jones will source 100 percent of new timber purchases from the Commonwealth. Shown here, Harvest Foundation Board President David Stone, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, Teal-Jones Group CEO and President Dick Jones, and Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry Bettina Ring pose with a \$600,000 incentive check offered to the company by Harvest for its expansion in Henry County.



### Intuit launches Prosperity Hub in West Virginia

The California-based makers of TurboTax and QuickBooks are bringing 200 to 500 jobs to West Virginia. Intuit has officially launched a Prosperity Hub in Bluefield, W.Va., under the company's Mission Hope project. Intuit's goal is to create jobs in the downtown areas of distressed communities. Intuit Executive Board Chairman Brad Smith (shown here), a native of Kenova W.Va., said Bluefield was chosen from 900 communities across the country.

features, and will have automated warehouses and assembly and use of autonomous carts. Ericsson will initially employ 100 people at the facility and will invest \$100 million.

### MEGlobal cuts ribbon on Gulf Coast site

MEGlobal Americas has inaugurated its new ethylene glycol (EG) manufacturing facility in Oyster Creek, Texas, according to parent company EQUATE Group. The \$2 billion project employed nearly 2,000 construction workers at its peak and has created 55 new full-time, long-term jobs and 25 to 35 contract jobs. The project represents the first time a Kuwait-based petrochemical company has invested in the U.S. Gulf Coast.

### Raytheon to expand Texas assembly plant

Raytheon will build a massive 200,000-square-foot assembly plant in McKinney, Texas, supporting 500 new high-tech jobs at its Space and Airborne Systems headquarters. Raytheon's facility in McKinney specializes in assembling intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems.

## VIRGINIA

### Mexican packaging company building new plant in Virginia

A packaging company based in Mexico is planning to open a plant in Chesterfield County that will employ 63 people. Cartograf will invest \$65.3 million to open a folding and microcorrugated package printing facility in the Meadowville Technology Park.

### Pharmaceutical Product Development creating 200 jobs in Virginia

Pharmaceutical Product Development (PPD) will invest \$63.7 million to expand its bioanalytical lab in Henrico County and will ultimately create 200 jobs. PPD provides drug development, laboratory and lifecycle management services.

### U.K.-based metal recycling company to establish plant in Henry County, Va.

More jobs are coming to Henry County, Va. Advanced Revert of the United Kingdom is investing \$5 million and plans to hire over 30 employees within the next few years.

### Block.one expanding to Virginia, bringing 200 jobs

Blockchain software developer Block.one plans to open a \$10 million headquarters in Arlington, adding 170 jobs over the next three years.

### Company working to fill more than 200 positions in Martinsville, Va.

More than \$43 million in investment and 212 jobs are on the horizon in Martinsville and Henry County. Press Glass is in recruitment mode after announcing plans to set up shop there last summer — the first six employees have already been hired and now it's time to fill the rest of the positions. Construction crews are putting the finishing touches on the first business to build in Henry County's Commonwealth Crossing Industrial Park.

## WEST VIRGINIA

### Software company opens in West Virginia

Software company Infor held a grand opening ceremony in Charleston in October. Infor is a company that runs cloud applications

for both local and federal government organizations. The project has created 100 jobs.

### Coal-to-liquid facility coming to Mason County

Domestic Synthetic Fuels (DSF) now has the construction permit to build a state-of-the-art coal-to-liquids facility in Mason County, creating more than 250 jobs. DSF officials said it will take thousands of workers to build the facility. After construction, the plant will create 130 jobs on-site and 130 coal-mining jobs to supply the raw materials.

### Hungarian companies bringing jobs to West Virginia

Hundreds of jobs are expected to come to West Virginia following a meeting between West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice and a delegation of leaders from Hungary. It's all part of an effort to increase energy and defense security led by Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó. 🇳🇵

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*For real-time news on business, politics and economic development in the South, go to [RandleReport.com](http://RandleReport.com).  
For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to [SB-D.com](http://SB-D.com). For more information on the  
automotive industry in the South, go to [SouthernAutoCorridor.com](http://SouthernAutoCorridor.com).*

## The future of car buying?

The Arizona-based online auto sales platform, noted for its “car vending machines,” plans to invest more than \$45 million to construct a distribution and fulfillment center and create more than 300 jobs in Bessemer, Ala. Carvana is also planning to invest \$40 million in a 400-employee inspection and distribution center in West Memphis, Ark. North Carolina is offering \$1.2 million in tax incentives to Carvana, a move that the Cooper Administration says will result in nearly \$512 million for the state’s economy as the e-commerce car sales platform plans to open a new inspection and reconditioning facility in Cabarrus County. Shown here is a new “vending machine” in Kansas. City, Mo.





(LEFT) Mercedes-Benz will build its new super luxury Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 at its plant in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Optional features include folding tables and a refrigerator with space for champagne bottles.



(RIGHT) Hyundai is investing \$410 million to add its new pickup truck, the Santa Cruz, to the lineup at its plant in Montgomery, Ala. The project also means the addition of 200 jobs.

## ALABAMA

### Hyundai to build pickup at Montgomery plant

Korean automaker Hyundai is entering the U.S. pickup truck market by building the vehicle at its plant in Montgomery, Ala. The company will invest \$410 million to add the line and create 200 jobs. Expected to go into production in 2021, Hyundai has billed the model, called Santa Cruz, a “compact utility vehicle,” but it features an open truck bed.

### Hyundai to invest another \$292 million in Alabama plant

Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama (HMMA) recently announced that it’s preparing to invest nearly \$300 million more in new machinery and equipment for its factory in Montgomery. The money will help with production of the redesigned Elantra and Santa Fe vehicles as well

as the company’s new, more fuel-efficient Theta engine. Back in June, HMMA celebrated the opening of its new cylinder head manufacturing plant. The 260,000-square-foot facility represents a \$388 million investment and 50 new jobs.

### Megasite in Montgomery receives certification

The Montgomery Mega Site has received an Alabama AdvantageSite designation. The AdvantageSite program requires that community economic development organizations provide documentation specific to a proposed industrial site, including a set of standard data related to ownership/control, environmental and geotechnical conditions, and infrastructure status. Sites must also meet size, zoning and accessibility requirements. The Montgomery Mega Site is a 1,842-acre site located approximately 2.5 miles (5

minutes) from Interstate 65. The site can be accessed by Hyundai Boulevard or U.S. Highway 331. The eastern boundary of the main site and the western boundary of the out-parcel are served by rail. All utilities are at the site.

### Hyundai begins production of redesigned Sonata

Alabama’s Hyundai plant launched mass production of the redesigned Sonata sedan in November, another milestone for the \$1.8 billion, 3,000-worker Montgomery facility. The 2020 Sonata features improved safety, technology, performance and fuel efficiency, along with an all-new sporty design that is a departure from the brand’s traditional styling.

### Supplier base for Mazda Toyota growing in Northern Alabama

The joint-venture auto plant project between Mazda and Toyota is seeing a large sup-

ply chain investment in the Huntsville area. Already, five suppliers to the plant have announced projects worth \$440 million, and that is expected to increase substantially before the assembly plant opens in 2021. Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA will open with the capacity for 150,000 vehicles to be built in the first year.

### Two auto suppliers creating over 500 jobs in Tuscaloosa County

The Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority approved tax abatements for projects by two automotive parts suppliers that are expected to create more than 500 jobs. International Automotive Components Group North will invest \$22.3 million and create 119 jobs. Lear Corp. plans to make a \$12.4 million investment in an expansion that is expected to create 442 jobs.

CONTINUED

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Fouts Brothers is moving its headquarters and manufacturing operations to Milledgeville, Ga. The company will invest \$15 million and create 300 jobs.



## **Mercedes to build luxury SUV at its Alabama plant**

Mercedes-Benz is introducing a vehicle that combines the luxury features of its flagship S-Class sedan with the GLS full-size SUV as part of a push to increase profits through sales of upscale cars. The Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 will hit showrooms in the second half of next year, the Daimler AG brand reported. The vehicle, which is powered by a V-8 engine including a 48-volt hybrid system, will be built at Daimler's factory in Tuscaloosa. Optional features include folding tables and a refrigerator with space for champagne bottles.

## **South Korea-based Shinhwa Group plans manufacturing complex in Auburn, Ala.**

The Shinhwa Group, a South Korean-based automotive parts manufacturer, plans to invest \$42 million to establish its first manufacturing operation in the U.S in

Auburn, Ala. The project is expected to create 95 jobs. Initially, Shinhwa will produce drive shafts for vehicles made by Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama and Kia Motor Manufacturing Georgia, just across the state line in West Point. Looking to the future, Shinhwa plans to expand its production in Auburn to also provide parts for other car manufacturers.

## **Carvana delivering 450 jobs in Alabama**

Carvana, an e-commerce platform for buying and selling used cars, plans to invest more than \$45 million to construct an Alabama distribution and fulfillment center, and create more than 300 jobs. Construction of a 200,000-square-foot distribution facility in Bessemer is expected to begin in April 2020 and open by December 2021. The total project is about \$47 million in capital investment.

## **ARKANSAS**

### **Nucor opens Mississippi County, Ark., steel plant**

Charlotte-based Nucor Steel opened its new specialty cold steel mill at its massive complex in Mississippi County, Ark., in the fall quarter. Most of the new capacity will be used for the automotive industry. The company invested \$230 million in the project that will create 100 jobs.

### **Carvana expected to bring 400 new jobs to West Memphis, Ark.**

Carvana plans to open an inspection and distribution center in West Memphis. The Arizona-based online auto sales platform, noted for its "car vending machines," will invest \$40 million in the West Memphis facility and plans to eventually employ more than 400 people. Automobiles will be inspected, reconditioned, photographed and stored at the facility.

## **GEORGIA**

### **Kia celebrates 10 years of production in West Georgia**

South Korea-based Kia Motors celebrated 10 years of vehicle production in West Point, Ga. The plant is the first for Kia in the U.S., and supports more than 15,000 jobs in West Georgia. It assembled the first vehicle in

November 2009, and currently has a capacity of building 340,000 vehicles per year.

### **Automotive supplier announces new plant for Georgia**

In the fall quarter, Nippon Light Metal Georgia announced it will create 110 jobs while investing \$50 million in building a new manufacturing facility in Adairsville. The plant is expected to be operational in 2022. Nippon Light Metal Georgia specializes in aluminum products for the automotive industry.

### **Goodyear to consolidate Atlanta facilities to Coweta County, Ga.**

In June 2016, the former Orchard Hills Golf Course property on Georgia Highway 16 in Newnan's southeast side was rezoned as a major industrial and commercial site. In November, Goodyear Tire and Rubber announced it would build a 1.5 million-square-foot facility that will consolidate its Atlanta area distribution centers. The \$140 million project will create 250 jobs in Coweta County.

### **Firetruck company bringing 300 jobs to Georgia**

Fouts Brothers is moving its headquarters and man-



Ford is investing \$1 billion at its Kentucky Truck Plant to support an all-new Super Duty F-Series truck (shown here) as well as new Ford Expedition and Lincoln Navigator vehicles.



ufacturing operations to Milledgeville, Ga. The company will invest \$15 million and create 300 jobs.

**Company expanding its aluminum recycling operation in Georgia**

Novelis, a maker of aluminum for the automotive industry, is investing \$36 million in its recycling plant in Greensboro, Ga. The recycled aluminum will then be used by auto assembly companies.

**KENTUCKY**

**Ford planning \$1 billion investment in Louisville operations**

Ford Motor Co. agrees to invest more than \$1 billion in its Louisville operations in a proposed contract with United Auto Workers. The agreement includes a commitment from Ford to create 8,500 new or secured jobs as well as invest \$6 billion in products across its operations. One billion of that investment will come at the Kentucky Truck Plant to support an all-new Super Duty F-Series truck as well as all-new Ford Expedition and Lincoln Navigator vehicles. Another \$100 million in new investment

is planned at the Louisville plant to support continued production of the Ford Escape and Lincoln Corsair.

**Toyota expanding Kentucky plant, again**

Japanese automaker Toyota is expanding its Georgetown, Ky., plant once again. Toyota is adding 400 workers as soon as possible at the plant, which is the automaker's largest in the world. All workers hired will receive a \$500 signing bonus if they remain on the job for at least six months. . .the first time Toyota has offered a signing bonus for new hires. This is the latest announcement in what has been a busy year for Toyota's Kentucky plant. In March, the automaker announced it would invest \$238 million to launch assembly of two hybrid vehicles in Kentucky, its RAV4 and the luxury Lexus ES 300.

**GM Bowling Green plant to add 400 jobs**

Automaker GM plans to add a second shift and more than 400 new employees at the Bowling Green Assembly Plant in preparation to build the next-generation Chevrolet Corvette later this year.

In November, Germany-based Continental AG opened its tire plant in Central Mississippi. The \$1.45 billion facility on 900 acres is one of the largest projects ever announced in the Jackson, Miss., region. The plant is expected to house 2,500 workers within the next nine years.

**Kobelco expands plant in Bowling Green**

Japan-based automotive parts manufacturer Kobelco Aluminum Products & Extrusions has reached full capacity at its new facility in Bowling Green. The company will undergo a \$42 million, 90-job expansion that will push total employment at the plant to 220 and total investment to \$95 million.

**Bendix investing \$65 million in Kentucky plant expansion**

Bendix Spicer Foundation Brake is investing \$65 million to expand its facility in Bowling Green, and plans to add 100 new jobs. Bendix makes air disc brakes for commercial vehicles.

**MISSISSIPPI**

**Continental AG opens Mississippi tire plant**

Germany-based Continental AG opened its tire plant

in Central Mississippi in November. The \$1.45 billion facility on 900 acres is one of the largest projects ever announced in the Jackson, Miss., region. The plant is expected to house 2,500 workers within the next nine years.

**NORTH CAROLINA**

**India-based Bharat Forge to open in Sanford, N.C.**

Bharat Forge America will invest \$127.3 million to build an aluminum forging plant to manufacture automobile components in Sanford. The company plans to create 304 jobs there. The new facility in Sanford will be part of a larger manufacturing center that will bring as many as 460 jobs to Lee County.

**Dump truck builder expands into North Carolina Triad**

Dump Truck body manufacturer Ox Bodies is set to open



India-based Bharat Forge will invest \$127.3 million to build an aluminum forging plant to manufacture automobile components in Sanford, N.C.

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In the fall quarter, BMW celebrated 25 years of its plant in Spartanburg County, S.C. To date, BMW has assembled 4.75 million vehicles and has exported 3 million of those through the Port of Charleston.



an operation in High Point, creating at least 40 jobs. The company will paint dump truck bodies, install those bodies on client-provided chassis, and provide parts, service and installation of other commercial truck accessories in the former Hatteras Yachts building.

### North Carolina wins Carvana

North Carolina is offering \$1.2 million in tax incentives to Carvana, a move that the Cooper Administration says will result in nearly \$512 million for the state's economy. The e-commerce car sales platform plans to open a new inspection and reconditioning facility in Cabarrus County. The Concord facility's staff will inspect, refurbish and process vehicles for online sales.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### BMW celebrates 25 years in South Carolina

In the fall quarter, BMW workers and officials celebrated 25 years of its plant in Spartanburg County, S.C. To date, BMW has assembled 4.75 million vehicles and has exported 3 million of those

through the Port of Charleston. BMW is the nation's No. 1 exporter of vehicles from just one plant that houses 11,000 workers.

### Truck manufacturer will establish operations in South Carolina

Spartan Motors, assembler of fleet, work truck and specialty service vehicle manufacturing, is establishing operations in Charleston County. The \$1.15 million investment will create 308 jobs.

### MM Technics expands factory in Newberry County

MM Technics, an American subsidiary of automotive supplier Muhr Metalltechnik, will invest \$6 million to expand its production plant in Newberry County. MM Technics has added another metal stamping press and high-speed robotic welding systems to supply automotive companies throughout the United States and Europe.

## TENNESSEE

### Volkswagen will build its first electric vehicle in Tennessee

German automaker Volkswagen announced in the fall

it will build its first electric vehicle at its plant in Chattanooga. The \$800 million project to build another line will create 1,000 jobs. The expansion also includes a 564,000-square-foot addition to the body shop and a battery pack assembly facility.

### Nokian Tyres opens \$360 million plant in Dayton, Tenn.

Finland-based Nokian Tyres' \$360 million factory was unveiled before several hundred people during a ceremony in October. By year's end, the 830,000-square-foot plant — its first plant in the United States — aims to have as many as 150 employees, and 400 when the plant is at full production, making 4 million tires annually.

### Topre America plans \$63 million expansion in Smyrna, Tenn.

Topre America will add 51 advanced manufacturing jobs to its automotive stamping operation near the Nissan manufacturing plant. The new jobs are part of a \$63 million capital investment and the fourth expansion

by the Japanese-based company in five years.

### Nippon Paint investing \$60 million in Tennessee

Nippon Paint will invest approximately \$60 million to establish a facility in Chattanooga. The company will create 150 jobs in Hamilton County as it expands its paint and coating products for automotive customers in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

### Airtech announces \$13 million expansion

A manufacturer in Robertson County, Tenn., will soon invest \$13 million in its plant and add about 30 new jobs. Airtech, a vacuum bagging and composite tooling materials manufacturer, serves many sectors, including aerospace and automotive.

### Chinese company to establish first U.S. facility in Tennessee

Global Track Manufacturing, a maker of rubber tracks and undercarriage parts for industrial and agricultural equipment, is reopening the old Tower Automotive plant in Milan, Tenn. The deal, which will open next summer, will create 250 jobs.

Volkswagen announced in the fall it will build its first electric vehicle at its plant in Chattanooga, Tenn. The \$800 million project to build another line will create 1,000 jobs.





**Henderson Stamping and Production expands Tennessee plant**

Henderson Stamping and Production, a metal stamping manufacturer for the appliance and automotive industries, will invest \$13.5 million to expand its operations center in Henderson, Tenn. The deal will create 52 jobs.

**TEXAS**

**Toyota's \$391 million expansion is first major renovation of San Antonio plant since 2006**

Toyota announced it will spend \$391 million to expand its San Antonio truck factory — the biggest capital infusion at the facility since production began in 2006. Once completed, the automaker said its total investment in the plant will exceed \$3 billion.

**Navistar plans to build \$250 million facility San Antonio**  
 Navistar, the Illinois based company that makes commercial trucks, plans to spend more than \$250 million to build a new manufacturing facility in San Antonio, delivering 600 new jobs to the area. The investment is contingent on finalization of various incentive packages.

**Ford's new Texas call center to generate 500 jobs**

The Ford Motor Company recently announced it would be opening a new customer contact center in Houston, where company officials expect it to generate as many as 500 jobs.

**Metals startup announces new Houston factory**

Toyota Tsusho America, the Japanese automaker's supply chain arm, announced a joint venture with Modu-metal, which will be named ModuTAI. They will establish a new production facility in Houston. The new company will make specialized alloy products for the oil and gas industry, and plans to expand into construction, marine and transportation markets.

**DENSO opens R&D center in Plano**

Japan-based DENSO, the world's second largest automotive supplier, will invest \$1.3 million to open its Texas Innovation and Connected Service Center in Plano.

**New manufacturing facility to create 200 jobs in Seguin**

A Michigan-based company is set to build a manufacturing facility that will create 200 new jobs for the city of Seguin. Continental

Illinois-based Navistar, which makes commercial trucks, plans to spend more than \$250 million to build a new manufacturing facility in San Antonio, delivering 600 new jobs to the area.

Structural Plastics is making a capital investment of \$70 million to construct the 200,000-square-foot facility that will produce lightweight composite solutions for the automotive, heavy truck, HVAC and construction industries.

**Supercar manufacturer moving its U.S. base to North Texas**

British supercar manufacturer McLaren Automotive is moving its North American base of operations from New York to Coppell, Texas. McLaren Automotive's luxury sports cars are manufactured at the company's plant in Surrey, England, and shipped to the U.S. Since entering the U.S. market eight years ago, McLaren has sold more than 7,000 of its cars, which start at \$200,000.

**Goodyear expands tire testing facility in Texas**

Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company has plans for two new expansion projects at its vehicle dynamics proving ground in San Angelo, Texas. The San Angelo facility covers 7,250 acres and includes 58 miles of roads and track, 14 miles of fence and more than 200 test vehicles.

**VIRGINIA**

**Van assembly plant set for rural Virginia**

Morgan Olson will invest \$57.8 million to establish a new aluminum walk-in step van assembly plant in Danville-Pittsylvania County, Va. The vans are used by food distributors and other industries. The project will create 700 jobs.

**\$400 million expansion underway at Volvo Truck's Virginia plant**

Volvo Trucks North America will invest nearly \$400 million over the next six years to upgrade the New River Valley plant that produces all Volvo trucks sold in North America. Upgrades include expansion of the plant's footprint and installation of equipment.

**Injection molder investing \$3.7 million In Virginia**

Injection molder Blue Ridge Industries (BRI) will invest \$3.7 million and hire 13 more employees at its manufacturing plant in Winchester, Va., where the company is based. BRI manufactures a wide variety of plastic parts for the automotive, construction and electronic enclosures markets. ⚙️



Morgan Olson will invest \$57.8 million to establish a new aluminum walk-in step van assembly plant in Danville-Pittsylvania County, Va. The project will create 700 jobs.



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BY MICHAEL RANDLE

# A Wild Ride

This roller coaster economy has produced recession and expansion indicators all in one quarter.

This economy is taking us on a wild ride. In the fall of 2019, we saw data indicating a pending recession and data supporting what is unquestionably the largest surge of projects we have seen in a single quarter in the South (even stronger than the late 1990s). When November and December arrived, economic development project activity just took off, with the tech sector and services leading the way. Manufacturing also came back in December after four months of contraction.

CONTINUED



# The fall quarter of 2019

certainly took us on a wild ride, one that we have rarely seen. In 27 years of publishing this magazine on economic development in the South, I have never seen project activity as strong as what we saw in November and December. Typically we can publish nearly 80 percent of all significant projects on our eight- or nine-page Relocations and Expansions section found in this issue on page 29. In this issue, we couldn't come close to publishing half of them. (They are all on SB-D.com, the magazine's website.) We would have needed 20 pages to publish every significant project announced in the South in the fall of 2019.

As the fourth quarter started, the stock market was soaring, breaking all-time records on the Dow Jones Industrial Average. Unemployment at the end of the fall quarter was at a 50-year low, even though there's hardly any more labor left for employers to hire. Many Southern states are currently enjoying their lowest unemployment rates in history, including Alabama and Georgia. We hear all the time that companies cannot find enough labor, or at least skilled labor. Then, in November, the economy added a whopping 266,000 jobs. Conflicting data is all over this economy in the last quarter of 2019.

Then again, at the beginning of the fourth quarter, data from the manufacturing sector was disturbing. In November, for the fourth consecutive month, manufacturing contracted. The Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index rose to 48.3 in October, up from 47.8 in September. But in November, it dropped again to 48.1. Anything below 50 signals a contraction, and if it runs six consecutive months under 50, it technically signals a recession in that sector. Then December arrived and every sector went deal crazy, including manufacturing.

However, you cannot hide the fact that those four months beginning in August were the lowest from the U.S. manufacturing sector in 10 years. In the last 10 years, manufacturing has been one of the bright spots in the economy as the U.S. became incredibly competitive for plants of all types, mainly because of the low cost and bountiful supply of domestic

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natural gas. The manufacturing sector added over 1.2 million jobs during this 10-year expansion, the first decade of plus-employment in manufacturing in decades.

But that was then and this is now. The export orders index was only at 41 percent in the third quarter, the lowest level since March 2009, four months before the end of the Great Recession. It doesn't take an economist to see that in terms of manufacturing and overall exports, we have tariffed ourselves to not only a U.S. manufacturing downturn, but one that is also a global manufacturing downturn. Then November and December arrived and a rising tide lifted all boats.

I can't write with confidence that if the tariffs are in place for two more months, we will be in a manufacturing recession. Not with this ever-changing economy. When December arrived the number of new and expanded projects

just exploded. So, as if on cue, some sort of trade deal was struck by the U.S. and China in the middle of December that is still short on details. U.S. officials said it will reduce tariffs on \$120 billion in products to 7.5 percent, meaning plenty of tariffs still exist. As I have written many times, tariffs do one thing: less is sold and what is sold costs more.

It's not just the tariffs themselves that have slowed the manufacturing sector. The uncertainty is the real culprit. When will the tariffs end? Will they end? And which countries will the U.S. be able to begin free trade? Conflicting news reports that the tariffs will end, expand, or be reduced has manufacturers scratching their heads. Because of that, they are reducing inventory and new investments. Why wouldn't they if they have no idea what the economic, import and export rules are, or how they will change in coming months or years?

Then again, we are seeing some movement by foreign manufacturers to build plants in the U.S. to bypass the tariffs. I believe President Trump's original intent, regarding tariffs, was to compel foreign manufacturers to make a beeline to the U.S. But that hasn't happened. Not yet, anyway.

The problem with that strategy is that foreign manufacturers have always regarded the U.S. as a manufacturing beachhead, especially for North American consumption. In some years, more than 65 percent of foreign manufacturers chose the South over the three other U.S. regions. Two-thirds of all manufacturing job gains in the U.S. since the end of the Great Recession have come from foreign-owned companies. So, there is no need to juice foreign manufacturing recruiting to the U.S. The U.S. economy is the largest in the world, and the South is the third largest economy in the world. Foreign

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## TOP INDUSTRIES

### Number of Projects

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
1. Distribution	65	74	66	54	51	26
2. Food & Beverage	51	73	51	63	45	50
3. Automotive	51	72	85	111	81	83
4. Petrochemicals	40	27	41	70	47	37
5. Aviation/Aerospace	39	35	55	26	28	30
6. Metals	37	16	18	14	15	22
7. Financial Services	33	38	47	69	42	31
8. Oil & Gas	31	33	25	37	51	53
9. Headquarters	30	33	32	36	42	14
10. Electronics	27	12	13	6	6	18
11. Paper & Packaging	21	24	10	12	5	4
12. IT	21	21	24	20	25	16
13. Building Materials	19	13	26	21	35	29
14. Renewable Energy	16	7	19	19	12	15
15. Data Centers	14	12	12	14	16	15
16. Software	13	12	6	11	8	4
17. Wood Products	13	8	11	7	12	10
18. Textiles	12	11	8	11	7	13
19. Call Centers	9	29	26	26	33	26
20. Healthcare	9	28	27	19	43	37
21. Communications	7	17	18	8	20	12
22. Life Sciences	7	6	11	5	2	4
23. Pharmaceuticals	5	5	22	7	6	6
24. Apparel	3	5	8	5	8	6
25. Fossil Energy	1	6	7	7	19	8

Totals are derived from all projects announced in the American South 2013-2018 calendar years meeting or exceeding 200 jobs and/or \$30 million in investment. Not every sector is included in the chart.

Source: SB&D

manufacturers will always be drawn to the South.

### AN ECONOMY BEING PROPPED UP BY CONSUMERISM

In the third and fourth quarters of 2019, consumers continued to prop up the economy. Consumer spending grew by 2.9 percent in the third quarter, even though GDP only grew by 2.1 percent, down from 3 percent growth at the start of the year.

Two-thirds of the U.S. economy is based on consumer spending, so that part of the economy is intact for now. The U.S. saw retail sales jump in July to the highest level in four months after retail sales grew for six straight months. Then in September, retail sales unexpectedly slumped and economists started to worry that the bright spot in the U.S. economy may be dimming.

Then news came out about the shopper's biggest weekend of the year. It's called "Black Friday" because that's when most retailers make it into the black for the year, or so we are told. According to Adobe Analytics, shoppers spent \$4.2 billion online on Thanksgiving Day, a 14.5 percent increase from last year and a record high. On Black Friday this year, shoppers spent \$7.4 billion online according to Adobe, also a record high and a 19.2 percent increase from last year.

Supporting solid consumer spending, the distribution sector — led by dozens of Amazon fulfillment centers — has topped all industries the past two years in project activity in the South. In fact, Amazon has created hundreds of thousands of jobs in the U.S. over the last five years, minus any disruption of jobs it cost in the storefront retail sector.

While retail spending is setting records, there are other signs that the economy is slowing. As mentioned, we began the year with 3 percent growth in GDP, after 3.2 percent and 3.5 percent growth for some quarters in late 2017 and in 2018. Yet, this time last year, GDP grew at just 1.1 percent and some Federal Reserve projections have GDP barely growing

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# After a slow summer of projects, November and December brought a blur of activity.

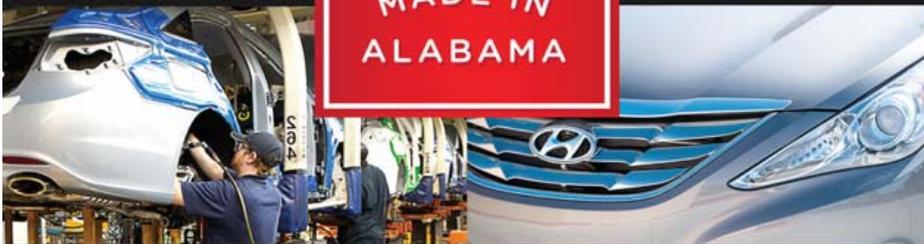


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at all (0.4 percent) in the fourth quarter of this year. Others predict the economy will grow at a high of 1.4 percent in the fourth quarter. But, with 266,000 jobs created in November, and literally hundreds of new projects announced in November and December, who knows what type growth we will have in the fourth quarter.

After a slow summer of projects, November and December brought a blur of activity. There were some outstanding projects announced, such as Q2 Solutions, a clinical trial company for biotech companies. That company announced a 749-job deal in Durham, N.C., in November. Also in November, Brazil-based Guidoni Group, a producer of ornamental stones, announced a \$96 million project to locate a manufacturing facility in McRae-Helena, Ga. The deal will create 455 jobs.

In December, Amazon announced work in Mt. Juliet, Tenn., on one of the South's largest current projects. Amazon is building a new 3.6-million-square-foot warehouse in the city located east of Nashville. The deal is expected to create 1,200 jobs. Microsoft added over 400 new jobs in Charlotte in November and Charles Schwab announced it was relocating its San Francisco headquarters to Dallas-Fort Worth. Nestlé Purina opened its newest pet food plant in Hartwell, Ga. The \$320 million deal will create 240 jobs. Finally, Apple Inc. broke ground on its \$1 billion North Austin campus in November. The new location is expected to house 5,000 workers when it opens in 2022 and as many as 15,000 in a few years. So, in November and December, frantic project activity in the South restarted in earnest after a slow go in the summer and the beginning of the fall quarter.

IS THE LARGEST INDUSTRY IN THE SOUTH IN RECESSION? HARD TO TELL.

There is no question that the automotive industry is essentially in recession when it comes to project activity in the Southern Auto Corridor. Or is it? Like every-



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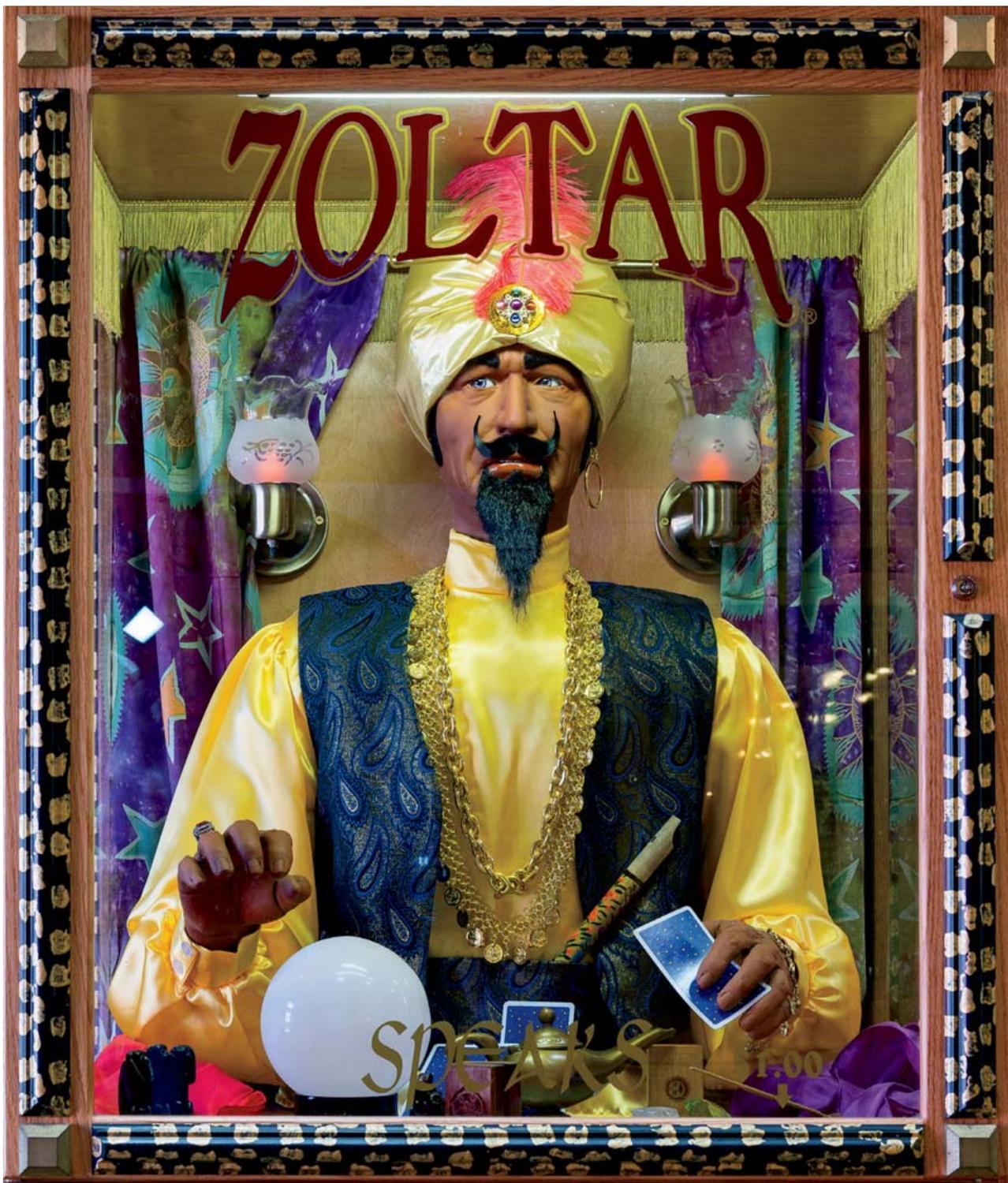
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**Ask Zoltar: Is the largest industry in the South — automotive — in recession? Like everything else regarding the economy in the second half of 2019, there is conflicting data.**

thing else regarding the economy in the second half of 2019, there is conflicting data. Dallas-Fort Worth-based Toyota North America posted its best November ever as vehicles sales jumped over 9 percent. But Toyota has had a down year overall in 2019 compared to last

year. Regardless, in the fall, Toyota announced it would invest \$238 million to launch assembly of two hybrid vehicles in Kentucky, adding 400 jobs.

Then, again, Nissan, which has two large assembly plants and a massive power-train plant in the Southern Auto Cor-

ridor, is cutting worldwide production capacity by 10 percent and 12,000 jobs. The Japanese automaker, which has its North American headquarters in Nashville, announced in November it is forcing its U.S. factory and office employees to take two days off without pay amid

slumping sales. Nissan's sales are down almost 8 percent through November.

Automotive is the South's largest industry. Volkswagen is adding a new vehicle to its lineup in Chattanooga, as is Hyundai in Montgomery, and those two projects will create 1,200 jobs. Ford is investing \$1 billion in its plants in Louisville. Of course, the Mazda Toyota assembly complex in Huntsville is well underway and is expected to open its first line in April 2021 and its second line in August 2021, sans recession. Both lines will produce Toyota and Mazda branded vehicles. The facility will house 4,000 workers.

In November and December, we saw lots of activity in the Southern Auto Corridor. Again, with manufacturing flirting with recession and exports down across the board, the sudden activity in the South for the automotive industry makes little sense. After all, other plants in the U.S. are slowing down production or are closing altogether. This time last year, GM announced it was closing five plants in North America and cutting 14,000 jobs.

Job losses in the manufacturing and automotive sectors are nearly double the number of losses in the first nine months of 2018. In the first three quarters of this year, manufacturers announced almost 61,000 layoffs or job cuts, up 194 percent from the 21,000 jobs lost in 2018 in the same period. Job losses in automotive have increased by 194 percent as well, from 14,000 last year to over 41,000 this year in the first three quarters. Then in December, Ford announced it was adding 3,000 jobs at two Michigan plants. Again, just a roller coaster of conflicting data regarding the current economy, not only in the South, but in the U.S. as a whole.

There is so much disruption in the automotive sector, especially in the South, that it is difficult to determine how the industry is faring. Currently, Mercedes-Benz (Alabama), Volkswagen (Tennessee) and other automakers are spending billions on new battery plants to secure the future of electric vehicles

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built in the Southern Auto Corridor (see SouthernAutoCorridor.com). This disruption in auto assembly and auto power is challenging all automakers.

In terms of total deals meeting or exceeding 200 jobs and/or \$30 million in investment, the automotive industry has topped all other industry sectors — manufacturing or services — in 23 of the last 26 years in the South. But that was not the case in 2018 when only 55 automotive projects were announced in the South. That figure was half of the sector’s peak of 111 deals in calendar year 2015. Automotive wasn’t at the top of 2017 either in terms of project activity.

Then in November of 2019, a sure sign of a downturn was announced. Volvo Trucks North America announced it would lay off 700 production workers in January 2020 at the company’s New River Valley plant in Dublin, Va. Like many

things in today’s economy, that layoff is somewhat shocking. Volvo Trucks announced in September it would invest \$400 million in the plant, then in November announced the layoffs. Again, conflicting data.

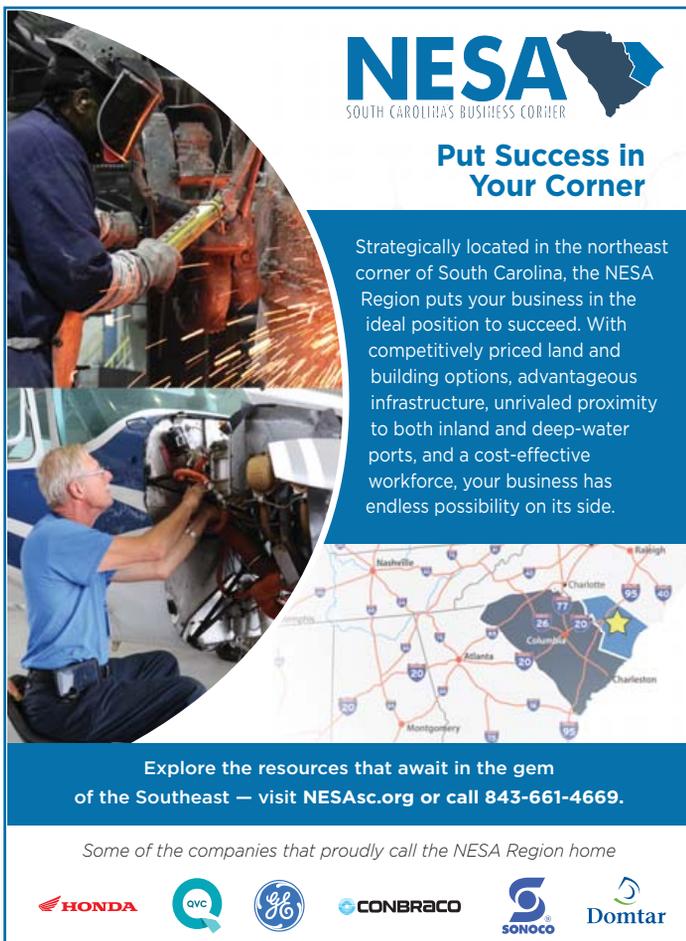
Volvo Trucks cited a decline in orders for the layoffs. Trucking industry publication Freightwaves expects the overall heavy-duty truck market to be down by some 100,000 units next year. Much of the trucking industry has slowed in the last two quarters when it was booming at the beginning of 2019. Yes, these are conflicting signs. The Volvo plant had nearly doubled employment at its New River Valley plant from 1,700 in January 2017 to 3,300 to meet demand in 2018. Then the bottom dropped out.

But what is so concerning about deal activity in the South is the fact that financial services projects have fallen more than 50 percent since they peaked in

2015. Financial services project activity is the canary in the coal mine. Big drops in financial deals occurred just before the Great Recession. In 2015, financial services announced 69 projects of 200 or more jobs in the South. Last year financial services announced 33 deals of 200 jobs or more. We also saw financial services deals fall in 2005 and 2006 before the Great Recession, until they completely collapsed in 2008 and 2009. The U.S. housing crisis began in Florida as early as 2004. We don’t see any signs of a housing crisis today. At the height of the recession, 2008 financial services deals totaled a mere eight and in 2009 only five.

### MANUFACTURING DOWNTURN DETAILED

Since coming out of the recession in the summer of 2009, the overall economy has contracted only twice; once in the first quarter of 2011 and again in the



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first quarter of 2014, periods not long enough to qualify for a recession. It takes at least two consecutive contracting quarters to qualify as a recession. That last contraction in 2014, however, was followed by a 5-plus percentage growth in GDP in quarters two and three of that year. We haven't seen anything close to 5 percent GDP growth since, no matter what you have heard or read. Then again, we haven't seen unemployment this low in 50 years.

Coming out of the recession, things looked very rosy for manufacturing. With the mass mining of natural gas, the cost of operating manufacturing plants in the U.S. dropped significantly. The U.S., especially the South, was suddenly again very competitive on the manufacturing front as wages increased dramatically in China at the same time that natural gas was taking over the energy industry in the U.S.

The report, "Made in America again; Why manufacturing will return to the U.S.," by the Boston Consulting Group came out in the summer of 2011. The report made the case that manufacturing in the U.S. would thrive post-recession and it did, but the report was about four years too late. We started seeing manufacturing project activity deals rise in the South as early as 2007.

In 2007, for the first time in 11 years, project activity in the manufacturing sector in the South increased dramatically. Considering the fact that manufacturing projects meeting or exceeding 200 jobs and/or \$30 million in investment overtook services after getting beat for 11 straight years was a remarkable event. After all, everyone believed manufacturing was gone for good in this country as company after company raced to China in a herd mentality.

Then something happened. We — especially the South — became incredibly competitive for the manufacturing sector. Thing is, manufacturing has beaten services using those job and investment thresholds every year since 2007. I will predict, though, if services is set up to beat manufacturing deals using those

thresholds, 2019 will be the year. We won't know until the spring of next year with the release of our annual SB&D 100 issue.

What clearly occurred in the Great Recession was this: manufacturing did not collapse, services did, as seen in the disintegration of deals like the aforementioned financial services sector. Financial services' lack of project activity has

returned to today's economy. However, today, it is obvious that manufacturing is close to recession and services — specifically retail — are keeping the overall economy afloat.

As mentioned, manufacturing created well over a million jobs from the depths of the recession to today after decades of job losses that totaled in the millions. So the Boston Consulting Group's report

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was accurate. Here is a quote from the report in 2011: “China’s overwhelming cost advantage over the U.S. is shrinking fast. Within five years, a Boston Consulting Group analysis concludes, rising Chinese wages, higher U.S. productivity, a weaker dollar, and other factors will virtually close the cost gap between the U.S. and China for many goods consumed in North America.” The quote was dead on, as manufacturing and output increased dramatically in the U.S. for more than a decade.

Those job gains in manufacturing now have leveled off. There is one thing that the Boston Consulting Group could not predict in its report — the trade war the U.S. has waged with China and Europe and vice versa. Since the tariffs took hold, the manufacturing sector in the U.S. has cut tens of thousands of jobs. NBC News reported in October that Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — incredibly important states in the 2020 presidential election — lost a total of 27,000 manufacturing jobs from January through September of 2019.

As for the tariffs, exports to China have fallen dramatically, and they are not exclusive to farming after retaliatory Chinese tariffs were put on U.S.-farmed soybeans and pork (those tariffs were waved by China in November). More than 30 U.S. states have seen their export totals to China drop by double digits according to the U.S. Commerce Department.

Alabama, which is the nation’s No. 3 auto exporting state, has seen a 49 percent drop in exports to China in the first nine months of this year. Oil exports from Texas have dropped by 39 percent to the world’s second largest economy. Overall, exports from the U.S. to China have fallen 15 percent nationwide.

But there are some bright spots in the trade war, giving us more conflicting data. South Carolina, where the Boeing 787 Dreamliner is made, has seen a 30 percent increase in Chinese exports in the first three quarters of 2019. Almost the entire increase was from Boeing air-

plane exports, where final assembly is done by the company in North Charleston, S.C. Also, since U.S. tariffs have targeted semiconductors that are made in China, U.S. companies have increased their purchases of U.S.-made chips from companies in states such as Texas, Oregon, California and Massachusetts.

## SERVICES: PROPPING UP TODAY’S ECONOMY

Manufacturing has slowed to levels not seen since the Great Recession and the tariffs are undoubtedly the self-inflicted reason. Yet, services for the most part are thriving because the sector is not subject to tariffs. We have already discussed the record-breaking retail industry. So, unlike the beginnings of the Great Recession, services are driving this economy while manufacturing is faltering.

Retail is not the only services sector driver. Tech continues to create jobs of jobs. Some of the South’s largest tech deals in history have been announced in the last 12 months. It started with Amazon’s HQ2 announcement in Arlington, Va., in November of 2018. That is the largest single job total announcement in the South’s history with 25,000 jobs.

As mentioned, Apple broke ground in November on its new \$1 billion campus in Austin. The project will create as many as 15,000 jobs. Here are some of the most notable tech and selected service deals announced in the South since Amazon’s HQ2 project. These are some of the largest service sector projects announced this year, many of which will create at least 1,000 jobs.

## WINTER 2019

- FBI is investing \$1 billion and 4,000 jobs in Huntsville, Ala.
- Ohio-based Progressive Insurance is hiring 1,500 workers in Tampa.
- Ohio-based Progressive Insurance is hiring 1,000 workers in Austin.
- Orthodontic services provider w area with 2,000 new jobs.

- BioIQ, a health IT company that provides health testing and immunization programs for health plans, is relocating its headquarters from California to Cobb County, Ga. The deal will create 500 jobs.

## SPRING 2019

- Google expanded again in Austin. The technology giant is leasing two new office buildings there, and is taking the entire 25-story, 723,000-square-foot tower known as Block 185, which is currently under construction. The space is large enough to accommodate nearly 6,000 workers.
- JPMorgan Chase moved thousands of employees into its new campus in Plano, Texas, in the spring quarter and now it has announced it will build a new tower there. The additional \$100 million project is expected to create 4,000 new jobs.
- Universal and parent company Comcast announced in the summer a new theme park called Universal’s Epic Universe. The major expansion will include hotels, restaurants and shops. The project is expected to create 14,000 jobs.
- Amazon broke ground on its air services hub at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport in May. The new air hub is expected to create 2,000 new jobs.

## SUMMER 2019

- Uber Technologies is establishing a new U.S. General and Administrative Hub in Dallas. The ride-sharing company will create 3,000 jobs and invest \$75 million in the project.
- Xerox announced in the summer it is building a Center of Excellence in Cary, N.C. The deal will create 600 jobs.
- Shipmonk, a startup that provides packing and shipping for e-commerce, announced in the summer it will create 400 new jobs at its new Fort Lauderdale headquarters and logistics operation.
- Caris Life Sciences announced it is developing a state-of-the-art corporate park in Irving, Texas, that will create 500 research and development jobs for the cancer-fighting company.

- The Quapaw Nation broke ground in the summer quarter on a \$350 million gaming complex in Pine Bluff, Ark., that will create 1,000 jobs.
- Medline Industries, which manufactures and distributes medical supplies, is investing \$46 million and creating 450 jobs to locate its distribution operations in Southaven, Miss.
- Amazon began accepting applications for more than 1,500 warehouse jobs at its new fulfillment center in Oklahoma City.

### FALL 2019

- In September, Amazon picked the Memphis area for a 2,000-employee fulfillment center.
- H-E-B announced it will build a five-story tech center at its San Antonio headquarters that will house 1,000 employees.

- UPS plans to add 1,000 jobs in Louisville by growing its Worldport global air hub, including adding a hangar that can accommodate two 747-8F aircraft.
- Atlanta-based Chime Solutions will bring 1,000 jobs to Charlotte by the end of next year.
- The Macy's fulfillment center in Martinsburg, W.Va., is hiring more than 6,000 people for full-time, part-time and seasonal positions.
- Online retail giant Amazon is again expanding its Central Texas presence, with plans to add more than 600 tech-focused jobs at its hub in North Austin.
- Microsoft announced it is expanding its existing Charlotte campus and creating 430 new jobs.
- Better.com chose Charlotte for its new office and expects to hire 1,000 new employees.

- Facebook's newest offices in the Third + Shoal tower in downtown Austin have room for more than 1,550 employees.
- Microsoft announced it will expand its operations in the Los Colinas community in Irving, Texas. The \$31 million project will create 575 jobs.
- Radial, a fulfillment center company, announced it will hire more than 1,200 workers for the holiday season in Martinsville, Va.
- DXC Technology announced in October that it will bring a global Center of Excellence and 1,200 jobs to Conway, Ark.
- In the fall quarter, Radial announced plans to bring on an additional 2,629 workers in Northern Kentucky to support increased demand during the upcoming holiday season.
- Equifax hired 1,000 more technology and security workers in Georgia to staff

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Austin, Texas

its new Global Fusion Center.

- Amazon announced in November it is building a new fulfillment center to handle larger items, such as furniture, fishing rods and bicycles, in DeSoto County, Miss. The deal will create 500 jobs.
- Apple Inc. broke ground on its \$1 billion North Austin campus. The new location is expected to house 5,000 workers when it opens in 2022, and as many as 15,000 in a few years.
- Concentrix CVG is adding 960 jobs at its customer service and tech support facility in Lake Mary, Fla.

As you can see, the service sector, specifically tech and distribution that serves the retail industry, just went nuts in the fall — many in November — in terms of job announcements. Those deals clearly support the Labor Department's announcement that 266,000 jobs were created that month, the second highest total this year.

The U.S. economy could expand to heights not seen in years, but it could also fall into recession within months after factoring in what has occurred from the summer to winter. The 266,000 jobs created in November is very encouraging.

## CONCLUSION

There is no question there are conflicting flags flying in the third and fourth quarter regarding the U.S. economy, and they continue as the year ends. Data from various sources now show that services are slowing and the manufacturing downturn is abating. Services are propping up the U.S. economy. If they slow or contract, this economy is in trouble.

However, if a significant trade deal can be carved out with China, Europe and others, we could see the economy continue what is now the longest economic expansion in U.S. history. I still believe that this more-than-10-year expansion peaked in 2015, but it's still got legs. 🍷

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# The Littlest Giants

*Small and medium-sized locations in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia and Kentucky with the best rated K-12 educational systems*

With this report, Southern Business & Development gives those looking for sites for manufacturing or service projects in the South the K-12 school systems that are graded by Pittsburgh-based research firm Niche as A+ to A-. All of these markets in the South are under 750,000 in city/county population.

Niche's 2020 Best School Districts ranking is based on rigorous analysis of academic and student life data from the U.S. Department of Education, along with test scores, college data and ratings collected from millions of Niche users.

Education, particularly K-12, is becoming increasingly important. Growing school districts in each state are vital to employers in order to back-fill labor years from now. And data shows that most excellent school systems, like the ones listed here, are growing while sub-par school systems are not.

In an age where available labor is virtually non-existent, this data of growing, A-rated K-12 schools are incredibly important to site searchers in the economic development process. In fact, last year, 10,000 people on average retired per day and only 2,230 people per day in the U.S. turned working age (16).

The schools listed here are local school systems in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia and Kentucky that were rated with an A score from Niche. They are ranked in order of their Niche score, however, they all received a score of A+, A, or A-.

CONTINUED



# ST. JOHNS COUNTY



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**Mountain Brook Schools**  
Mountain Brook, Ala.

## ALABAMA

### Mountain Brook Schools

Mountain Brook, Ala. (Jefferson County)

Mountain Brook Schools not only lead the state of Alabama on academic performance measures, they are near the top nationally. In the 2012 Alabama Reading and Math Test administered to all public school students from grades 3 through 8, Mountain Brook students led the state of Alabama at every grade level and in every subject area tested with 97–100 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards. The system would, of course, be expected to score well with the advantages of talented students, hard-working teachers and supportive parents.

A recent analysis of statewide scores on the Stanford Achievement Test indicated that Mountain Brook students' actual scores exceeded their predicted scores at a rate higher than that of any other system in the state. Additional evidence of success has been the large number of National Merit Scholarship Finalists who have attended Mountain Brook High School. Since the school's founding in 1966, 587 of its students have been recognized in this national scholarship competition. The number of National Merit Finalists continues to increase, with 29 achieving that status this year. Four Rhodes Scholars have also graduated from the high school.



**Madison City Schools**  
Madison, Ala.

### Enterprise City Schools

Enterprise, Ala. (Coffee County)

As the first public school system in Alabama to be fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Enterprise City Schools (ECS) holds a strong reputation for its commitment to providing students the highest quality education possible. ECS recently earned an "A" on the state issued report card while current students enjoy cutting edge learning opportunities, world class facilities, and many extra-curricular and athletic programs.

Importantly, the talented and dedicated staff members believe in building relationships upon strong foundations of trust, creating environments that are safe, clean and intellectually stimulating, and performing quality work. The vision of ECS is to develop principled students prepared for life after graduation. ECS feels strongly about its students becoming deeply rooted in the correct principles in life to include integrity, fidelity, courage, consideration, compassion, justice and responsibility. Further, the hope is that Enterprise High School graduates will have learned about living and how to live happier, healthier and more productive lives because of their experiences in school.

Other A-rated K-12 school systems in Alabama include: **Madison City Schools**, Madison, Ala. (Madison County); **Homewood City Schools**, Homewood, Ala. (Jefferson County); **Hoover City Schools**, Hoover, Ala. (Jefferson and Shelby Counties); **Auburn City Schools**, Auburn, Ala. (Lee County); **Vestavia Hills City Schools**, Vestavia Hills, Ala. (Jefferson County); **Trussville City Schools**, Trussville, Ala. (Jefferson County); **Muscle Shoals City Schools**, Muscle Shoals, Ala. (Colbert County); **Hartselle City Schools**, Hartselle, Ala. (Morgan County); **Cullman City Schools**, Cullman, Ala. (Cullman County); **Florence City Schools**, Florence, Ala. (Lauderdale County); **Saraland City Schools**, Saraland, Ala. (Mobile County); **Brewton City Schools**, Brewton, Ala. (Escambia County); **Winfield City Schools**, Winfield, Ala. (Marion County); **Satsuma School System**, Satsuma, Ala. (Mobile County).

## ARKANSAS

### Bentonville School District

Bentonville, Ark.  
(Benton County)

Bentonville Schools began in 1841 as a subscription school. In 1872, the first public school was built. Encompassing 142 square miles, Bentonville Schools District has always experienced rapid growth. The rapid growth and increase in student population have challenged the district to meet facility needs. Bentonville Schools has successfully met these challenges of change throughout history.

### Conway School District

Conway, Ark.  
(Faulkner County)

As the home of three institutions of higher education, Conway, Ark., has earned the distinction as the “City of Colleges.” The University of Central Arkansas, Hendrix College and Central Baptist College consistently produce graduates who stay in the area and enter the workforce. This is part of the reason Conway surpasses the state and national averages when it comes to its educational attainment rate.

Conway is also known for its high-performing public and parochial schools. The educational opportunities for students in pre-K through 12th grades have been touted as one of the reasons newcomers are attracted to the city.

Other A-rated K-12 school systems in



St. Johns County School District  
St. Augustine, Fla.

Arkansas include: **Greenwood School District**, Greenville, Ark. (Sebastian County); **Fayetteville School District**, Fayetteville, Ark. (Washington County); **Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy**, Bentonville, Ark. (Benton County); **Lakeside School District**, Hot Springs, Ark. (Garland County); **Greenbrier School District**, Greenbrier, Ark. (Faulkner County); **Benton School District**, Bentonville, Ark. (Benton County); **Bryant School District**, Bryant, Ark. (Saline County); **Pottsville School District**, Pottsville, Ark. (Pope County); **eStem High Charter School District**, Little Rock, Ark. (Pulaski County); **Parker Chapel School District**, El Dorado, Ark. (Union County); **Cabot School District**, Cabot, Ark. (Lonoke County); **Prairie Grove School District**, Prairie Grove, Ark. (Washington County); **Salem School District**, Salem, Ark. (Fulton County).

## FLORIDA

### St. Johns County School District

St. Augustine, Fla.  
(St. Johns County)

Florida's St. Johns County has consistently been recognized as the state's top-ranked public school district. The St. Johns County School District has received a grade of "A" consecutively since 2010 from the Florida Department of Education. The district's success can be contributed to a focus on exceeding educational standards and utilizing best practices to prepare and inspire the county's youth and residents to follow successful career paths.

The school system prepares students to become highly skilled professionals in diverse and emerging industries such as information technology, advanced manufacturing, aviation/aerospace, financial services and more, supporting the county's local manufacturers and businesses. Notable companies that call St. Johns County home are Northrop Grumman, Carlisle Interconnect Technology, Rulon International, D.R. Horton and Flagler Health+. St. Johns County is also home to the corporate headquarters of the PGA TOUR, ATP Tour and THE PLAYERS Championship at TPC Sawgrass.

The school district provides career, technical and adult education through its career academies and technical college to adapt to the changing needs of the students, employers and workforce.

Benton School District  
Bentonville, Ark.



## Buford City School District

Buford, Ga.



The school district works closely with post-secondary educational institutions such as Flagler College, St. Johns River State College, First Coast Technical College and more to offer programming that creates a skilled workforce for the county's growing business population.

With talented, well-educated residents as well as a great quality of life, multi-modal transportation network, growing regional airport and Foreign Trade Zone designation linked to nearby JAXPORT, St. Johns County is an ideal location for businesses to call home.

### Okaloosa County School District

Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

(Okaloosa County)

The Okaloosa County School District is consistently ranked among the top in the state based on the number of "A" rated schools. The District boasts Florida's first public STEM middle school, the Okaloosa STEMM Academy. Consistently ranked No. 1 among Florida middle schools, the STEMM Academy enjoys considerable support from local employers including the U.S. Air Force Research Lab, Boeing and others. In addition, the Okaloosa County School District's Career & Technical Education (CTE) program provides students with nationally recognized industry

certifications in pre-engineering, IT, welding construction technology and aviation and aerospace (a program offered in partnership with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University).

Other A-rated K-12 school systems in Florida include: **Sarasota County Schools**; **Seminole County Public Schools**; **Collier County Public Schools**; **Martin County School District**; **Leon County Schools**; **Clay County School District**.

## GEORGIA

### Buford City School District

Buford, Ga. (Gwinnett County)

Buford City School District is a school district in Gwinnett County, Ga. Buford City Schools was named the No. 1 Best School District in Georgia. Buford Academy was named the No. 1 Best Public Elementary School in Georgia. The Georgia Department of Education announced Buford Academy as a 2014 Highest-Performing School.

### Decatur City Schools

Decatur, Ga. (DeKalb County)

City Schools of Decatur has a total enrollment of approximately 5,700 students and operates a total of nine schools: one Early Childhood Learning Center, five K-2 primary lower el-

ementary schools, two 3rd-5th grade upper elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Its teachers are among the finest professionals in the field. Over 70 percent of its teachers hold advanced degrees, most have multiple years of classroom experience, and a number of them hold multiple certifications. The average years of experience among teachers across the district is 13 years.

Decatur City Schools' students perform above the state and national averages on standardized tests at all grade levels. Each year, City Schools of Decatur has ranked in the top ten districts in Georgia for SAT performance. Decatur High School has been named an AP Challenge and AP Merit school in Georgia.

Other A-rated K-12 school systems in Georgia include: **Oconee County Schools**, Watkinsville, Ga. (Oconee County); **Forsyth County Schools**, Cumming, Ga. (Forsyth County); **Jefferson City Schools**, Jefferson, Ga. (Jackson County); **Fayette County Public Schools**, Fayetteville, Ga. (Fayette County); **Carrollton City Schools**, Carrollton, Ga. (Carroll County); **Bremen City Schools**, Bremen, Ga. (Haralson County); **Calhoun City Schools**, Calhoun, Ga. (Gordon County); **Cartersville City Schools**, Cartersville, Ga. (Bartow County); **Camden County Schools**, Kingsland, Ga. (Camden County); **Pierce County Schools**, Blackshear, Ga. (Pierce County); **Union County Schools**, Blairsville, Ga. (Union County); **Cherokee County Schools**, Canton, Ga. (Cherokee County); **Monroe County Schools**, Forsyth, Ga. (Monroe County).

CONTINUED



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**Boyle County Public Schools**  
Danville, Ky.

## KENTUCKY

### **Boyle County Public Schools** Danville, Ky. (Boyle County)

Boyle County Schools prepare students to enter the workforce or pursue higher education. Career pathways assist students seeking certifications and career readiness in partnership with Bluegrass Community and Technical College. The Work Ethics Seal recognizes students showing academic excellence, extracurricular participation, and college/career readiness within their pathway. The Young Entrepreneurs Academy, in partnership with the Danville-Boyle County Chamber of Commerce, groups students with local business mentors to develop business management skills. A banking course teaches students about the financial sector and allows them to operate a school bank. *Big Rebel News* partners with Danville's *Advocate-Messenger* to publish student-written articles.

### **Pikeville Independent Schools** Pikeville, Ky. (Pike County)

Located in the One East Kentucky region's largest community (Pikeville, Pike County), the Pikeville Independent School (PIS) district is ranked

as the fourth "Best School District" in Kentucky and has an enrollment of over 1,200 students. PIS' partnerships with area postsecondary centers like the University of Pikeville and Big Sandy Community and Technical College, part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, to ensure talent pipeline growth and development for employers. Pikeville is home to UPIKE's nationally ranked programs like the Kentucky Colleges of Optometry and Osteopathic Medicine, and Pikeville Medical Center — Kentucky's only Level II trauma center.

### **Hazard Independent Schools** Hazard, Ky. (Perry County)

Hazard Independent Schools (HIS) is ranked as the sixth "Best School District" in Kentucky and has an enrollment of over 1,000 students. HIS pro-actively works with the One East Kentucky region's postsecondary institutions like Hazard Community and Technical College, part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, the East Kentucky Advanced Manufacturing Institute and the Hazard Campus of the Galen College of Nursing to ensure that the needs of the community's high-growth, high-de-

mand industry sectors are met. The region's largest employer — Appalachian Regional Healthcare's Hazard ARH Medical Center — is centrally located in Hazard.

### **Paintsville Independent Schools** Paintsville, Ky. (Johnson County)

Paintsville Independent Schools is ranked first in Niche's "Safest School Districts in Kentucky" and is listed as the 16th "Best School District" in Kentucky with an enrollment of approximately 800. Paintsville Independent Schools is committed to ensuring students exceed the expectations of future employers through working relationships with postsecondary education partners such as the East Kentucky Advanced Manufacturing Institute, part of the Haas Technical Education Center network, and Big Sandy Community and Technical College, part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, to help ensure talent growth throughout the One East Kentucky region.

Other A-rated K-12 school systems in Kentucky include: **Fort Thomas Independent Schools**, Fort Thomas, Ky. (Kenton County); **Murray County Independent Schools**, Murray, Ky. (Calloway County); **Beechwood Independent Schools**, Fort Mitchell, Ky. (Campbell County); **Bowling Green Independent Schools**, Bowling Green, Ky. (Warren County); **Corbin Independent Schools**, Corbin, Ky. (Whitley County); **Oldham County Public Schools**, Buckner, Ky. (Oldham County); **Russell Independent Schools**, Russell, Ky. (Greenup County); **Campbell County Public Schools**, Alexandria, Ky.; **McCracken County Public Schools**, Paducah, Ky.; **Elizabethtown Independent Schools**, Elizabethtown, Ky. (Hardin County); **Glasgow Independent Schools**, Glasgow, Ky. (Barron County); **Woodford County Public Schools**, Versailles, Ky. (Woodford County). 📍



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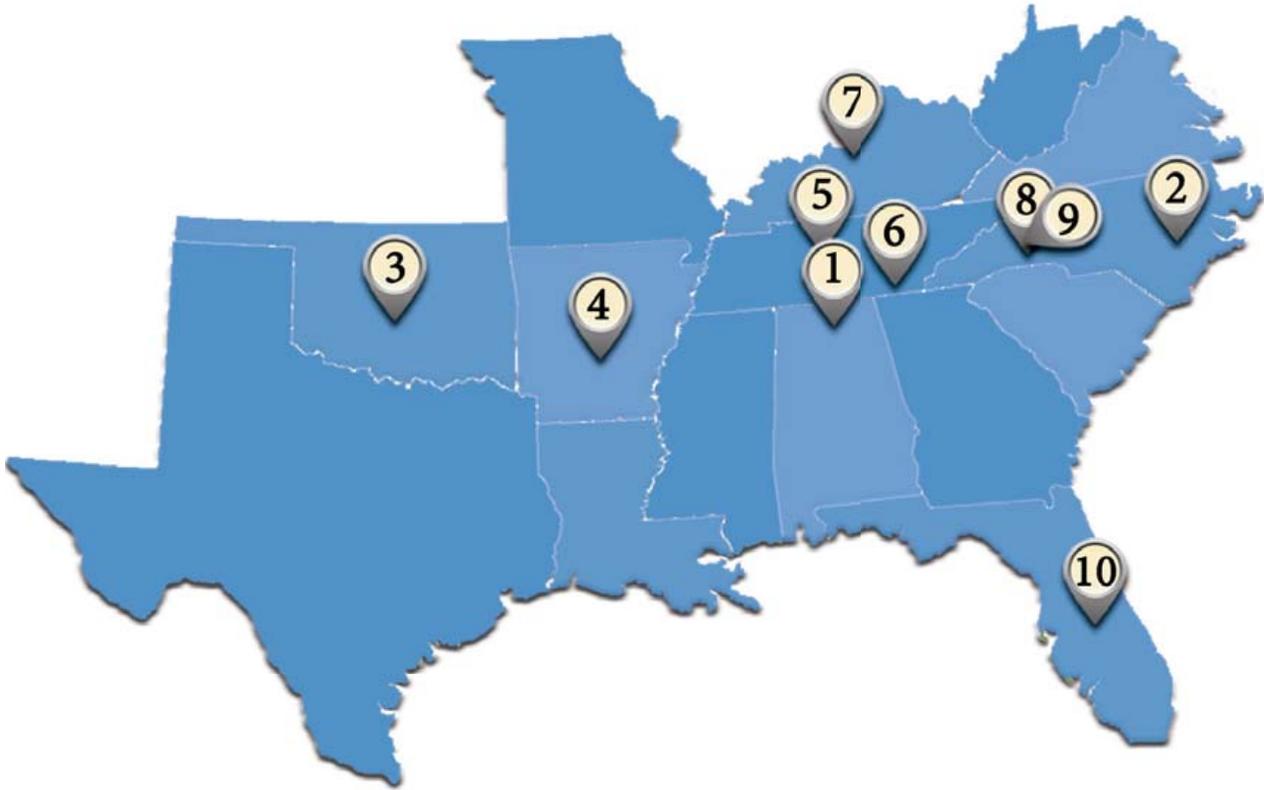
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# TOP DEALS

The American South's 10 largest new or expanded manufacturing and selected non-manufacturing job announcements



## ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE IN THE FALL 2019 QUARTER

Development	Jobs	Investment*	N/E/R**	Location	Description
1. FBI	4,000	N/A	N	Huntsville, Ala.	Enforcement
2. Epic Games	2,000	N/A	E	Cary, N.C.	Gaming
3. Tinker AF Base	1,300	N/A	E	Oklahoma City, Okla.	MRO
4. DXC Technology	1,200	N/A	E	Conway, Ark.	IT
5. Amazon	1,200	N/A	N	Mt. Juliet, Tenn.	Distribution
6. Volkswagen	1,000	\$800	E	Chattanooga, Tenn.	Auto assembly
7. UPS	1,000	N/A	E	Louisville, Ky.	Distribution
8. Chime Solutions	1,000	N/A	N	Charlotte, N.C.	Call center
9. Better.com	1,000	N/A	N	Charlotte, N.C.	Financial services
10. Concentrix CVG	960	N/A	E	Lake Mary, Fla.	Call center

\*Investment in millions \*\*N=New, E=Expansion, R=Relocation

Source: RandleReport.com



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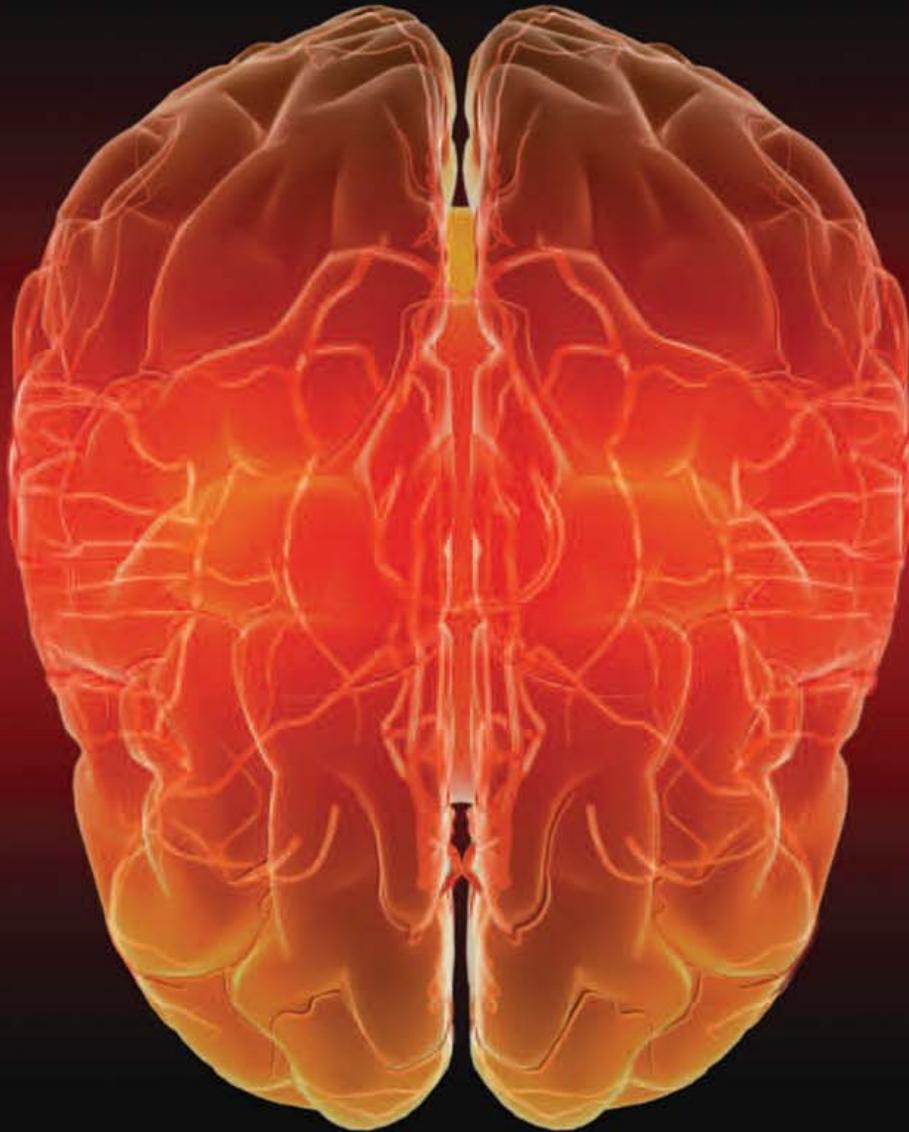


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