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SUMMER 2021



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the Labor
in the South?**

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2.5 million square feet

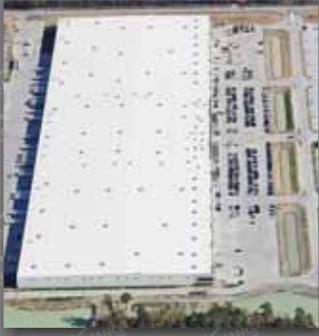



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2 million square feet




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1.2 million square feet

457,000 square feet

IFA

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400,000 square feet

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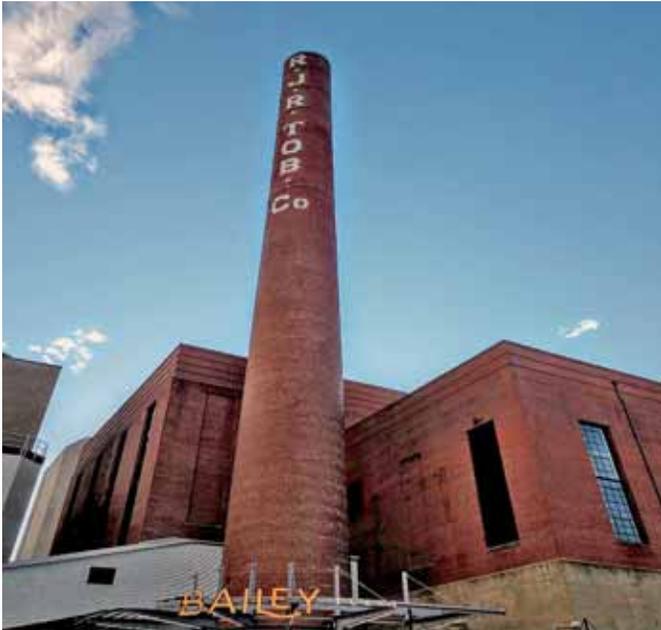
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TABLE OF CONTENTS



FEATURES

- 28 Where is the Labor in the South?**
Which places are seeing significant in-migration, birthrates and younger workforces in the South?
- 44 Make It in North Carolina**
SB&D takes a closer look at those that are "making it" in North Carolina

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 Southbound**
The editor's column
- 10 Around the South**
Top stories from the last quarter relative to business and economic development
- 18 Snapshots from the Road**
Photos of the people and places SB&D visited in the last quarter
- 20 Relocations & Expansions**
All of the significant new starts, expansions and relocations announced in the South in the last quarter
- 26 SouthernAutoCorridor.com**
News from the South's auto industry courtesy of SouthernAutoCorridor.com
- 56 Top Deals**
The ten largest employment deals announced in the last quarter

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SOUTHBOUND

By Michael Randle, EDITOR

If big buffalo deals are an indicator, 2022 is expected to be huge.



ONE OF SOUTHERN BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT'S FAVORITE READS on SB-D.com and here in the print product is our "Top 10 Deals" for the quarter. You can find those on the next to last page of this issue.

As you can see, in the summer 2021 quarter, every single top 10 deal topped 1,300 jobs or more. I have been putting that page together for 30 years, and I can tell you that is rare. In the summer quarter, the top job deals were two giant Ford Motor deals in Tennessee and Kentucky, both of 5,000 jobs or more. Next up were two 3,000 job deals. Again, these huge job deals are rare.

The spring quarter's top 10 deals didn't all create 1,000 jobs or more. However, the spring saw Oracle announce 8,500 jobs in a massive new project in Nashville and Apple announce 3,000 jobs in the Research Triangle in North Carolina. And like every quarter for several years now, the spring of this year saw Amazon announce another fulfillment center of 1,000 jobs.

So, we hear that small businesses — really any business — can't find labor. Some businesses have had manager level positions unfilled for more than a year. It's curious that it seems tougher now to find workers than it did before the pandemic when the unemployment rate was 3.5 percent. As of August, almost 9 million Americans were out of work and that does not count those that have stopped looking for jobs. So, on paper there's plenty of labor available.

What's going on? Well, we know of one impediment; there are 7.5 million people taking care of their children at home because of school and childcare facility closures. This pandemic brings to light the problems and the cost of child care. Many lower wage workers spend up to 60 percent of their pay on child care. Free child care is what we need to get this economy going. Imagine what 7 million new jobs could do for this economy.

So, what about these major projects of 8,500, 5,000, 3,000 and 2,000 jobs when labor is scarce in just two quarters? These are some of the largest job announcements in the region over the last three decades.

Are these big deals a sign that when COVID is nearly eradicated in the next year the executives of these companies believe the economy will grow quickly and those caring for children at home will hit the job market? Most large projects take about a year to start. If the future is encouraging, the timing is perfect for the large deals announced in the spring and summer of this year. ✪

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AROUND THE SOUTH

For real-time news on business, politics and economic development in the South, go to RandleReport.com. For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to SB-D.com. For more information on the automotive industry in the South, go to SouthernAutoCorridor.com.



China is now buying more of Louisiana's biggest crop, soybeans, compared with the depths of the trade war in 2018.

The top trading partner of every Southern state

The U.S. is highly dependent — perhaps unsurprisingly — on Canada and Mexico for trade.

The country's top trading partner is Mexico, making up 14.8 percent of total trade. However, the country's neighbors to the north and south are not the only trade partners that U.S. states rely heavily upon. Here are the top trading partners (exports) for each Southern state based on last year's totals.

TOP EXPORT LOCATIONS FOR EACH SOUTHERN STATE 2021

State	Destination	Value	Percent of state exports
Alabama	China	\$3.1 billion	18.1 percent
Arkansas	Canada	\$1.2 billion	22.1 percent
Florida	Brazil	\$3.5 billion	7.7 percent
Georgia	Canada	\$5.1 billion	13.3 percent
Kentucky	Canada	\$6.5 billion	26.5 percent
Louisiana	China	\$10.8 billion	18.1 percent
Mississippi	Canada	\$2.1 billion	20.3 percent
Missouri	Canada	\$4.4 billion	35.0 percent
North Carolina	Canada	\$5.8 billion	24.7 percent
Oklahoma	Canada	\$1.4 billion	27 percent
South Carolina	Germany	\$4.1 billion	13.5 percent
Tennessee	Canada	\$5.8 billion	20.7 percent
Texas	Mexico	\$8.9 billion	31.9 percent
Virginia	Canada	\$2.7 billion	16.5 percent
West Virginia	Canada	\$1.3 billion	28.3 percent

Source: Census Bureau



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AROUND THE SOUTH



This summer, Census data showed that 7.5 million Americans are not working because they are taking care of children who are schooling at home.

Seven million Americans not working because of need to take care of homebound children

This summer, Census data showed that 7.5 million Americans are not working because they are taking care of children who are schooling at home. This issue is the biggest impediment to filling over 9 million vacant jobs.

China is also having labor issues

The U.S. economy is not the only large economy that is having a tough time finding labor. China, the second largest economy in the world, is also going through labor pains. Labor shortages are across the board, but manufacturing is especially hard hit as factory owners struggle to fill jobs.

U.S. economy back to pre-COVID levels

Fueled by government aid of over \$5 trillion, the size of the U.S. economy has now surpassed its pre-pandemic level. The April-to-June quarter saw a 6.3 percent annual growth rate.

U.S. may be losing population soon

One of the economy's greatest threats is cuts in work visas for immigrants and a 10-year fertility slump. In half of all states last year, more people died than were born. The U.S. population grew for the year ending July 1, 2020, at 0.35 percent, the lowest in the nation's history. U.S. population could shrink, which would be the first time on record.

Study says fast internet nationwide could add \$160 billion to U.S. economy

A new study released by the Aspen Economic Strategy Group attempted to estimate what nationwide high-speed internet could do to boost labor productivity, especially in rural areas. The expansion of internet services is part of President Joe Biden's infrastructure plan.

Millions more square feet of space planned for North Carolina's Research Triangle

This has been a great year for biotech project activity in the Research Triangle. The Triangle currently has about 10 million square feet of biotech space, however, real estate analyst Newmark said this summer that there is up to 10 million square feet of new space under development. This summer, Amgen reported it will invest \$550 million in a new facility in the Triangle that will create 355 jobs.

Texas beating all states for California corporate relocations

According to Spectrum Location Solutions and Stanford University's Hoover Institution, Texas is beating all other states for relocating headquarters coming from California. Texas captured 114 California corporate relocations from January 1, 2018, to June 30 of this year. That was 89 more than Tennessee captured, which had the second-most wins in that period. The Austin MSA won 57 during that

time, the most of any Texas market.

Incentives approved to bring Samsung's \$17 billion plant to Taylor, Texas

Officials in the town of Taylor and Williamson County have approved incentives for a new Samsung Electronics \$17 billion chip plant. The plant represents one of the largest foreign investments in U.S. history. Taylor is located just northeast of Austin where Samsung operates another chip plant.

Missouri cannabis industry adds more than 4,000 jobs in less than a year

According to a report this week from the Missouri Medical Cannabis Trade Association, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has to date issued some 4,584 state agent ID cards, which are required for those who want to work at medical marijuana facilities.

Missouri's poorest region getting a boost with \$75 million in investments

Missouri's poorest region is getting an economic boost, with a \$50 million peanut processing plant being built in southeast Missouri's Kennett. Delta Peanut, based in Jonesboro, held a late May groundbreaking ceremony for the facility, which will create at least 50 new full-time jobs. Construction is also set to begin soon on a new \$25 million hospital in Kennett. The new hospital will have 49 beds and a 24-hour emergency room. The

former Twin Rivers Medical Center in Kennett closed in 2018.

Ascend West Virginia flooded with applications

Earlier this year, the state of West Virginia offered remote workers \$12,000 in cash if they relocated there for two years. The state was flooded with applications. Called Ascend West Virginia, the talent attraction and retention program chose 53 people for its first class of remote workers moving to West Virginia. Those people chosen came from 21 states and other countries such as Germany. The first batch

will receive \$12,000 in cash, plus free outdoor recreation, the option to earn certifications through West Virginia University, and access to co-working space and networking opportunities.

VEDP "Supply Chain Optimization Program"

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership launched its Supply Chain Optimization Program, Gov. Ralph Northam announced in the summer quarter. The one-year program is designed to help Virginia businesses streamline their supply chain management. The participating companies

could receive a maximum of \$10,000 in reimbursements for supply chain-related expenses, including consulting services, connections with experts and training sessions.

North Carolina governor signs executive order on offshore wind

In the summer quarter, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper issued an executive order announcing a goal of developing 2.8 gigawatts of offshore wind energy resources by 2030, and eight gigawatts by 2040. The governor also reported that the development of offshore



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AROUND THE SOUTH



Officials in the town of Taylor and Williamson County, Texas, have approved incentives for a new Samsung Electronics \$17 billion chip plant. The plant represents one of the largest foreign investments in U.S. history.

wind energy in North Carolina could create 85,000 new jobs and \$140 billion in capital expenditures along the Atlantic Coast by 2035.

Nucor cancels Louisiana expansion of steel mill
Charlotte-based Nucor has abandoned its plan to invest \$120 million in its steel manufacturing complex in Convent, La. The new facility would have made iron pellets.

Over 100 Goldman Sachs bankers migrating to Florida

Working from home is no longer an option at Goldman Sachs. So, more than 100 key Goldman Sachs employees are reportedly poised to migrate from the firm's New

York headquarters to a new office in Palm Beach, Fla.

High-speed Dallas-to-Houston train moves forward with \$16 billion contract

Texas Central, the private development company for the bullet train that would connect North Texas with Houston, signed a \$16 billion contract recently with Webuild, the engineering and construction company based in Milan, Italy. Construction supplies are projected to cost \$7.3 billion and the project's construction will last six years. The total infrastructure cost of the rail is estimated to be \$20 billion, according to Texas Central. The 240-mile high-speed rail

would run from Dallas to Houston in 90 minutes, with a stop in the Brazos Valley, between College Station and Huntsville.

Amazon pledges \$75 million to develop 800 affordable housing units in Nashville

Amazon recently announced a commitment of \$75 million for developers to create affordable homes in Nashville. Eight hundred homes will be built on private land, and the investment is part of Amazon's \$2 billion Housing Equity Fund to preserve and create over 20,000 affordable homes through below-market loans to housing partners, traditional and non-traditional public agen-

cies, and minority-led organizations. Music City is one of three cities hosting the company's new headquarters, where Amazon hopes to infuse communities with cash and support over the next five years.

Gov. Edwards announces final decision on ExxonMobil refinery in Baton Rouge

Gov. John Bel Edwards recently announced ExxonMobil's final investment decision for more than \$240 million in capital improvements at the ExxonMobil Baton Rouge Refinery. The projects will help retain 1,300 existing jobs at the refinery, create more than 600 construction jobs and ultimately provide more than 20 full-time jobs for graduates of the North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative, a program spearheaded by ExxonMobil in 2012 to provide no-cost, fast-tracked industrial training for community residents.

Facebook spending tops \$1 billion in Huntsville, Ala.

Facebook announced recently that its ongoing expansion in Huntsville will top \$1 billion in capital investment. The social media giant also said that once the expansion is complete, it will employ more than 200 at the 2.5 million-square-foot campus.

Duke Energy begins construction on largest solar plant in Surry County, N.C.

Duke Energy continues to expand solar power in North Carolina with construction

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American companies want to hire lots more immigrants

With labor tough to find, American companies and foreign companies operating in the U.S. want to hire many more immigrants. But work visas, such as H-1Bs, H-2As and H-2Bs, were artificially reduced in the Trump administration and there are just not enough to go around. The visas are so much in demand that the government has been using a lottery to award H-1Bs and H-2Bs. The only visa not capped is the H-2A visa for farm workers, which has grown 60 percent in the past four years.

For fiscal 2022, the government received 308,613 petitions for the treasured H-1Bs in the capped program. H-1Bs fill in gaps mostly for technology companies in science, technology and math. Of the 308,613 petitions received, only 28 percent were awarded the visa. By comparison, two-thirds of petitions got a visa in 2014.

Companies need an expansion of the visa program now. There are about 9.5 million unemployed Americans and there were 9.2 million job openings in May, the most in one month ever. We are getting to the point where labor is nonexistent. More people retired than were born in half the states in the U.S. last year. The aging population will need more healthcare workers and personal aides, and immigrants have historically filled those roles. Plus, as workers age out and are not replaced, the burden is placed on Social Security and Medicare funds.

starting on its 22.6-megawatt Stony Knoll Solar power plant. Once completed, it will be the largest solar plant in Surry County. . . the facility will power the equivalent of 5,000 homes. The plant will be located on 195 acres in Dobson, N.C.

Amazon opens its \$1.5 billion air hub in Kentucky

After more than four years of planning and construction, the Amazon Air Hub in northern Kentucky will serve as the central hub for Amazon Air's U.S. cargo network. The \$1.5 billion air hub is a major milestone for Amazon Air, which launched in 2016.

Mississippi centralizes workforce training

Mississippi spends \$350 million a year in state and federal funds on workforce and job training. But those efforts are done through a dozen agencies. Mississippi has never had a single main source for training its workforce. . . until now. Gov. Tate Reeves has formed Accelerate Mississippi to be its primary workforce training agency.

Commission approves millions for South Alabama Mega Site

The Growing Alabama Commission recently approved improvements at the South Alabama Mega Site in Baldwin County. The \$5.5 million is for rail improvements, including a rail spur to a CSX mainline.

Oklahoma airpark becoming logistics hub

Under a \$124 million development plan, a significant

portion of the Ardmore Industrial Airpark in Ardmore, Okla., will become an international, state-of-the-art multimodal logistics facility. The newly developed Global Transportation & Industrial Park of Oklahoma (GTIP) includes more than 200 acres of shovel-ready and build-to-suit land.

Dallas is the nation's top commercial investment market for first half of 2021

Through the first six months of this year, Dallas saw almost \$13.4 billion in commercial property deals. That's 43 percent more than in the same period a year ago. Dallas retained the top real estate spot it gained last year during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report by Real Capital Analytics.

Virginia named CNBC's top state for business for the second straight year

CNBC Top State for Business this year is Virginia for the second consecutive year. Virginia beat out North Carolina and Texas.

Virginia begins aggressive \$700 million plan for universal broadband by 2024

The Virginia Commonwealth will invest \$700 million of federal funds to provide universal broadband to its residents by 2024. It is the most aggressive and comprehensive universal broadband plan by any state.

Tonnage record set at Port of Corpus Christi

The Port of Corpus Christi

ended June 2021 with a new record quarter and a record first half of the year, moving nearly 80.5 million tons of cargo in the first six months of 2021. The Port's first-half 2021 total tonnage yielded a 4.7 percent increase over the same period in 2020, largely due to a 72 percent year-over-year increase in liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports, a 42 percent year-over-year increase in agriculture commodities, and a 3.6 percent increase in crude oil exports.

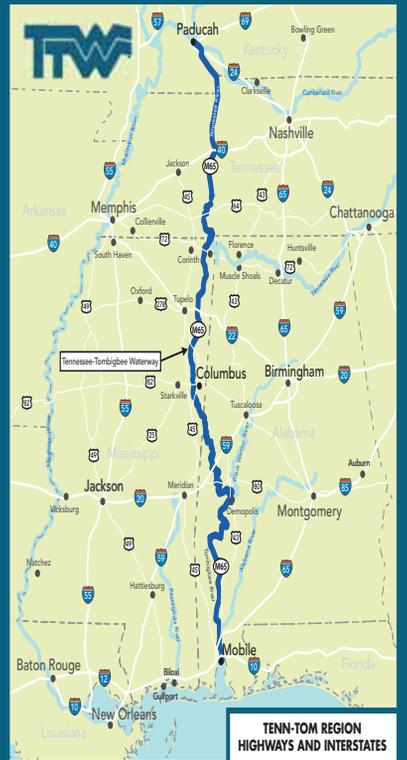
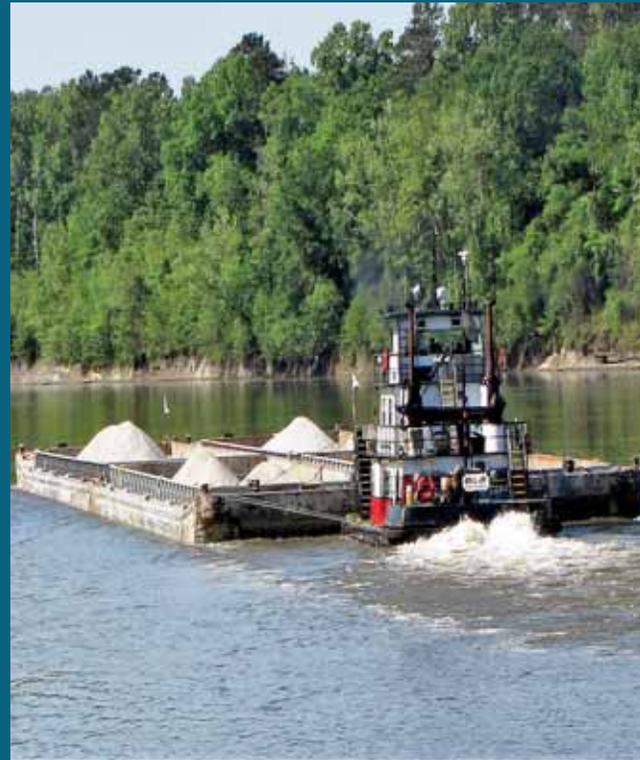
Kentucky has built the largest budget surplus in its history

In the summer quarter, Gov. Andy Beshear announced that the Kentucky economy has grown hot and that the Commonwealth is ending the 2021 fiscal year with a general fund surplus of over \$1.1 billion. The figure is the highest in Kentucky history. General fund receipts saw a 10.9 percent increase to \$12.8 billion.

Tornado-damaged lumber mill being rebuilt in Northwest Florida

Creighton Sounds will restore a lumber mill facility that was damaged by a tornado in Century, Fla., located just north of Pensacola. The \$15 million project is expected to create 80 new jobs, although the company has not yet released details on the nature of manufacturing that will take place in the facility. 📍

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SNAPSHOTS FROM THE ROAD

For the first time in 18 months, SB&D traveled in the summer quarter. Southern Business & Development attended the Southern Economic Development Council's 75th anniversary conference in Tampa. Also, publisher Michael Randle spoke at the annual Tenn-Tom Waterway conference in Alabama.



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1: Former SEDC president Nancy Windham and current SEDC president Gene Stinson. **2:** SEDC in Tampa. **3:** Gasparilla Day at SEDC in Tampa. **4:** Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and Matthew Randle at the Tenn-Tom Waterway conference. **5:** SEDR@WaterColor5, (l to r) Don Pierson, Glenn McCullough, David Thornell, J.D. Lowery and Jane Fryer. **6:** Plans are currently underway for SB&D's 2022 Southern Economic Development Roundtable (SEDR@WaterColor). The invitation-only event that gathers the finest minds in economic development in the South will be held in Santa Rosa Beach, Fla., in January. Pictured is SEDR@WaterColor2. **7:** SEDR@WaterColor5, Chris Masingill, Michael Randle, Cliff Chitwood, Gray Swoope and Stephen Moret. **8:** Holly Sears Sullivan, head of worldwide economic development at Amazon, will be attending SEDR 2022. **9:** Mark Vitner, senior economist at Wells Fargo, will be returning to SEDR in 2022. ✪



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Montgomery, Ala., breaks ground on \$50 million whitewater park

Announced in 2019, the 120-acre park will employ about 640 people during construction and eventually create 125 jobs. An economic impact study estimated the attraction should draw about 300,000 visitors to Montgomery each year, with ongoing operations expected to generate more than \$35 million.



ALABAMA

Facebook spending tops \$1 billion in Huntsville

Facebook announced recently that its ongoing expansion in Huntsville will top \$1 billion in capital investment. The social media giant also said that once the expansion is complete, it will employ more than 200 at the 2.5 million-square-foot campus.

Headquarters relocating from California to Alabama, bringing 816 jobs

Shipt founder Bill Smith's newest creation is coming to Alabama. Landing, which is his nationwide membership network of fully-furnished apartments, is relocating its headquarters from San Francisco to Birmingham. The company also plans to create 816 new full-time jobs.

One-hundred-million-dollar manufacturing facility coming to Opelika

An investment of \$130 million is coming to Opelika by way of a new manufacturing facility for Hanwha Cimarron, a producer of filament-wound carbon fiber tanks and pressure vessels

relating to the aerospace, marine, drone, rail, and gas transport industries. The investment will create 261 jobs for the Lee County city.

Blue Origin announces a hiring blitz at Alabama rocket engine plant

Blue Origin has announced a hiring blitz seeking more than 80 skilled machinists and welders to begin building the reusable rocket engines it will produce at its giant \$200 million plant in Huntsville, Ala. The company wants to hire those "who are passionate about the company's mission to lower the cost of access to space," a company news release said.

ARKANSAS

Steel processor to build in Blytheville

Majestic Steel plans to build a service center and processing facility on the Nucor Hickman steel production campus in Blytheville. The 515,000-square-foot facility will create about 225 jobs.

FLORIDA

Disney moving 2,000 jobs from California to Florida

Walt Disney Company an-

Arkansas company expanding to provide rural internet

Bekaert, a steel wire production facility in Van Buren, Ark., is expanding its operations to help with the Federal Communication Commission's plans for getting internet to rural areas. Bekaert Van Buren will grow its production with a 50,000-square-foot expansion estimated to cost the company around \$8.4 million, creating 35 new jobs.

nounced plans to move approximately 2,000 jobs from California to Florida and will reap a nearly \$580 million tax break in the process. The company plans to build a campus near the Lake Nona community in Orlando, Fla., to house employees currently located near the studio's main Southern California campus.

Amazon selects Tallahassee for robotics fulfillment center

Amazon has announced plans to bring a new 630,000-square-foot robotic fulfillment center to Leon County to open in 2022. The project will generate 1,346 full-time jobs and 2,256 construction jobs, and represents a \$200 million investment by Amazon.

Amazon announces first fulfillment center in St. Lucie County

Amazon has announced plans to open a fulfillment center in Port St. Lucie. The site, which is anticipated to launch in 2022, will create

more than 500 full-time jobs that pay at least \$15 per hour.

GEORGIA

New fintech center bringing 700 jobs to Sandy Springs

Deluxe Corp. has opened its FinTech and Customer Innovation Center in Sandy Springs, where it will eventually employ more than 700 workers with an average salary of \$91,000. The company is investing more than \$12 million in the project.

Henry County continues its run of deals

After earning recognition in the spring issue's SB&D 100, Henry County, Ga., has continued its run of deals in 2021. Pregis, a leading manufacturer of protective packaging, is investing \$14 million to open a plant in Henry County. The project will create about 230 jobs.

Mattress maker expanding in Georgia

Purple Innovation ("Purple"), will expand its facilities in



Medical tech company expanding in Gwinnett County, Ga., adding 1,200 jobs

Intuitive, a pioneer in robotic-assisted surgery and a global leader in minimally invasive care, will invest more than \$500 million in its current campus in Gwinnett County, creating approximately 1,200 jobs in Peachtree Corners. Headquartered in Sunnyvale, Calif., Intuitive is the manufacturer of the da Vinci robotic-assisted surgical systems and Ion bronchoscopy system.

Henry County, Ga. The project will create 500 jobs.

KENTUCKY

Amazon opens its \$1.5 billion air hub

After more than four years of planning and construction, the Amazon Air Hub in northern Kentucky will serve as the central hub for Amazon Air's U.S. cargo network. The \$1.5 billion air hub is a major milestone for Amazon Air, which launched in 2016.

DHL delivers jobs in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky

DHL eCommerce Solutions will fill more than 200 new positions at its Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky (CVG) distribution center. In addition, at the beginning of 2021, the company raised its hourly wages at CVG by approximately 30 percent, with start-

ing pay ranging from \$20.50 to \$22.00 per hour.

AppHarvest breaks ground on two massive indoor farms in Kentucky

AppHarvest has begun construction on two massive greenhouses in Central Appalachia in Eastern Kentucky. The Somerset farm (30 acres) will grow strawberries. The Morehead farm (15 acres) will grow leafy greens. AppHarvest, which is building huge, high-tech greenhouses in Kentucky to grow vegetables and fruits, wants to have 12 sites by the end of 2025, and the new locations near Somerset and Morehead will put the company nearly halfway there.

LOUISIANA

New Amazon robotics facility for Baton Rouge

Amazon recently announced



Huge deal for Henderson County, Ky.

Pratt Paper will build two new facilities in Henderson County. The \$400 million investment will result in 321 new jobs. "It is so great to be here in Henderson for what I can verify is the largest single investment and economic development announcement in the last 25 years," said Gov. Beshear.

RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS



Gov. Edwards announces decision on ExxonMobil refinery in Baton Rouge, La.

Gov. John Bel Edwards recently announced ExxonMobil's final investment decision for more than \$240 million in capital improvements at the ExxonMobil Baton Rouge Refinery. The projects will help retain 1,300 existing jobs at the refinery, create more than 600 construction jobs and ultimately provide more than 20 full-time jobs for graduates of the North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative, a program spearheaded by ExxonMobil in 2012 to provide no-cost, fast-tracked industrial training for community residents.

its latest robotics fulfillment center in Louisiana, with over 1,000 jobs and a \$200 million capital investment coming to Baton Rouge. The development will also generate 800 construction jobs.

New sugarcane biofuel plant commits to Iberia Parish

Hundreds of jobs are now officially heading to Iberia Parish. Delta Biofuel has committed to a \$70 million fuel plant following final approval of a significant tax exemption. The company is purchasing leftover dry

pulp, known as bagasse, from four Acadiana sugarcane mills that will be processed into fuel pellets for energy production. The facility will create around 162 direct jobs.

Company to rebuild Louisiana chlorine plant

KIK Consumer Products' BioLab division will rebuild its chlorine plant in Westlake, La., near Lake Charles. The plant was damaged in 2020 by Hurricane Laura. The company will invest \$170 million in the deal that will create 82 jobs.

Ocean Aero moving to Gulfport, Miss.

Ocean Aero, a manufacturer ocean-going autonomous underwater and surface vehicles (drones), is relocating its manufacturing operations and headquarters from San Diego, Calif., to Gulfport. The project is a \$4.65 million corporate investment and will create 45 jobs.

manufacturer of heavy-duty power tools will invest more than \$7 million with the expansion. The announcement is part of the company's commitment to create 1,200 jobs in the state.

Ingalls to add 3,000 jobs in Mississippi

A day after announcing it had secured a Navy contract worth more than \$700 million, Pascagoula's Ingalls Shipbuilding announced it would be adding 3,000 full-time jobs.

AeroSafe Global bringing 100 jobs to Olive Branch

AeroSafe Global will be adding a branch to Olive Branch in the I-22 Logistics Park. The \$2.5 million corporate investment will create 100 jobs. In Olive Branch, the company will produce components used to protect critical cold chain medical and clinical shipments.

MISSISSIPPI

Milwaukee Tool adding another Mississippi facility

Wisconsin-based Milwaukee Tool is expanding its presence in Mississippi once again by leasing a facility in Clinton to grow its operations. The

MISSOURI

Missouri cannabis industry adds more than 4,000 jobs in a year

According to a report from the Missouri Medical Cannabis Trade Association, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services





has to date issued some 4,584 state agent ID cards required to work at medical marijuana facilities.

Life science company expanding and adding jobs

Pantheon Biologics, which is a subsidiary of Massachusetts-based Thermo Fisher Scientific, is hoping to fund a 58,000-square-foot expansion at its Berkeley, Mo., facility with \$85 million in Chapter 100 bonds. The development will include two more manufacturing suites and will expand site capacity and manufacturing capabilities. It also expects to create 169 new full-time jobs by 2025.

Deli Star HQ coming to St. Louis

Deli Star Corporation, a family-owned manufacturer of prepared meal proteins and deli solutions, will locate its new headquarters in St. Louis, Mo. The new facility represents more than \$99 million in capital investment and will bring 475 jobs to Missouri. This new 104,080-square-foot space will replace the

previous plant in Fayetteville, Ill., that was damaged in a fire in January.

Semiconductor wafer jobs coming to Missouri

Semiconductor manufacturer GlobalFoundries and silicon wafer manufacturer GlobalWafers have signed an agreement to expand production in O'Fallon, Mo. The long-term agreement includes \$210 million in capital expenditures to expand GWC's facility, creating more than 75 new jobs.

NORTH CAROLINA

California company moving HQ to Durham

Smart Wires, a power technology startup from San Francisco, is moving its headquarters to Durham and bringing 250 jobs to the city. The decision comes after the company was approved for a Job Development Investment Grant worth \$2.8 million and \$125,000 worth of incentives

High-tech sawmill operation slated for North Carolina

Roseburg Forest Products will invest \$200 million in a new sawmill operation in

Duke Energy begins construction on largest solar plant in Surry County, N.C.

Duke Energy continues to expand solar power in North Carolina with construction starting on its 22.6-megawatt Stony Knoll Solar power plant. Once completed, it will be the largest solar plant in Surry County. . . the facility will power the equivalent of 5,000 homes. The plant will be located on 195 acres in Dobson, N.C.

Halifax County, N.C. The deal will create 137 new jobs.

Biopharma will hire 300 in Raleigh

Gilead Sciences, which focuses primarily on antiviral drugs, will open new office spaces in Raleigh. The company, headquartered in California, will hire 300 positions.

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma airport becoming logistics hub

Under a \$124 million development plan, a significant portion of the Ardmore Industrial Airport in Ardmore, Okla., will become an international, state-of-the-art multimodal logistics facility. The newly developed Global Transportation & Industrial Park of Oklahoma (GTIP) includes more than 200 acres of shovel-ready and build-to-suit land.

Cimarron Trailers adding 40 new jobs in Chickasha

Cimarron Trailers, a manufacturer of aluminum trailers and stock boxes, announced plans to add 40 employees to its facility in Chickasha. The company, which primarily serves the equine industry, currently employs 132.

SOUTH CAROLINA

TELUS creating 1,200 jobs in Charleston County

TELUS, a company that provides multilingual IT solutions, is opening a new facil-

ity in North Charleston. The initial investment of \$3.4 million will create approximately 1,200 new jobs by 2022.

Generac expanding in Edgefield County

Generac Power Systems, a power and technology company, is expanding its plans for operations in Edgefield County. As a result, 300 more jobs will be created.

Door manufacturer to locate new facility in South Carolina

Masonite International, a manufacturer of interior and exterior doors, will locate a new operation in York County, S.C. The project is expected to generate 220 jobs.

Sterlite Technologies creating 120 jobs in Kershaw County

Sterlite Technologies has announced plans to establish operations in Kershaw County. The \$23 million investment is expected to create 120 new jobs. The company specializes in network software.

Distribution company bringing 200 jobs to Laurens County

Malouf Companies, which warehouses and distributes home furnishings and other consumer products, plans to establish operations in Laurens County. The \$47.2 million investment will create 240 new jobs.

CONTINUED

RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS



Biometric tech company moving to Franklin, Tenn.

Integrated Biometric Technology, a fingerprinting technology company, is moving its headquarters to Franklin. The company is investing \$2.3 million in Williamson County and will create more than 140 jobs. Headquartered in Spartanburg, S.C., Integrated Biometrics was founded in 2002 as an alternative to the commonly used optical and silicon fingerprint technologies.

TENNESSEE

Thermo Fischer Scientific to establish new manufacturing facility in Wilson County

Thermo Fisher Scientific officials announced that the Massachusetts-based life sciences company will establish a new manufacturing facility in Wilson County that will lead to 1,400 new jobs. To date, Thermo Fisher has committed more than \$100 million to build a new facility to produce containers and assemblies used by biopharma companies to develop and produce therapeutics and vaccines.

Gap to hire 1,000 more at Nashville area distribution center

Gap continues to grow its 25-year-old distribution center in Gallatin, Tenn. The company is adding 1,000 jobs at the facility.

Chewy creating 1,200 jobs in Wilson County

The pet products company will establish a new regional e-commerce fulfillment center in Mt. Juliet that will create 1,200 jobs. The fulfillment center will be Chewy's first in Tennessee.

Kairos Power establishes Tennessee reactor

Kairos Power, a nuclear engineering company, will invest \$100 million to establish a low-power demonstration reactor called Hermes at the East Tennessee Technology Park in Oak Ridge, Tenn. The company plans to create 55 jobs.

East Tennessee manufacturer adds 200 jobs

A manufacturing plant in Alcoa is increasing its production. Arconic, a manufacturer of aluminum products, says it has added 100 people to its

workforce and is hiring an additional 100 to fulfill contracts to make beverage cans.

Housewares company opening new distribution facility in Fayette County

Helen of Troy Limited announced a new distribution operation in Fayette County, expecting to create 350 jobs. Helen of Troy — a designer of brand-name housewares, health and beauty products — plans to develop a 2 million-square-foot facility in Gallaway.

TEXAS

SpaceX to build rocket engine factory near Waco

Detailing the plan in a series of posts on social media, Elon Musk says that SpaceX will break ground soon on a rocket engine factory near Waco. The facility, which will be in McGregor, will be the aerospace company's second rocket engine manufactur-

ing facility and will produce Raptor 2 engines for use in Starship launch vehicles. The new facility will produce roughly 800 to 1,000 rocket engines per year, or about two to four engines per day, making it the highest output and most advanced rocket engine factory in the world.

Firefly Aerospace adding 680 jobs in Cedar Park, Texas

Firefly Aerospace, a Cedar Park-based rocket maker, is expanding its operations in the suburb north of Austin and adding more than 600 jobs, with the help of \$4.3 million in taxpayer-funded incentives. Firefly is among an emerging group of launch providers that serves the small satellite market.

Australian manufacturer opens first U.S. plant in Texas

Based in Australia, Wagners

Port of South Carolina's Leatherman Terminal earns "project of the year"

South Carolina Ports' Hugh K. Leatherman Terminal has earned the 2021 South Carolina Project of the Year by the South Carolina Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). The Leatherman Terminal's Phase One project represented a \$1 billion investment and can work the biggest ships calling on East Coast ports. The terminal saw its first customer in the spring of this year.

Photo by Walter Lagarenne





Composite Fibre Technologies will establish a new manufacturing facility in Parker County, Texas. The project is expected to create 304 new jobs. Wagners CFT makes fiberglass sections for use in bridges, boardwalks and marine infrastructure.

Frito-Lay is bringing 160 new jobs to Rosenberg, Texas

Frito-Lay has announced a \$200 million investment at its Rosenberg site. The project will provide 160 new jobs. The facility currently employs more than 750 full-time associates.

Spectrum begins hiring 900 for El Paso call centers

The 929 jobs Charter Communications plans to add in El Paso, Texas, by the end of 2023 for its Spectrum arm will offer good wages — \$20 per hour — and chances to advance in a nationwide company, El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser said after a news conference announcing Spectrum's expansion.

Financial services firm hiring more than 1,000

Charles Schwab is hiring more than 1,000 after moving its headquarters to Westlake, Texas, earlier this year. Schwab and TD Ameritrade merged earlier this year and now the company

has hired thousands in the Dallas area.

Goldman plans new Dallas campus

Goldman Sachs is on the hunt for a new office campus in Dallas that could become the Wall Street bank's largest presence in the U.S., outside of its Manhattan headquarters. Executives are in advanced talks with developers as the firm scouts for expanded space in North Texas.

Hispanic foods maker hiring 200 jobs at new Texas plant

A Los Angeles-area maker of Hispanic cheeses, dairy beverages and chorizo has broken ground on a Texas factory that is expected to add 200 jobs when it opens next year. Cacique has begun construction on a new 200,000-square-foot facility in Amarillo that will produce dairy products for nationwide distribution. The \$88 million factory is expected to open in the fall of 2022.

VIRGINIA

United Airlines expected to expand in Northern Virginia

United Airlines is expected to grow its workforce in the Washington, D.C., region by up to 3,000 workers. Nearly all of those workers

Tyson Foods chooses Virginia for \$300 million operation

Tyson Foods will invest \$300 million to establish a manufacturing facility in Cane Creek Centre, an industrial park jointly owned by the City of Danville and Pittsylvania County, Va. The project is expected to create 376 new jobs.

are expected to be hired at United's hub at Virginia's Dulles Airport.

Nestlé Purina PetCare announced large expansion

Nestlé Purina PetCare will invest \$182 million to expand its plant facilities in King William County, Va.

F-22 fighter jet training division to relocate to Virginia

The U.S. Air Force is relocating its F-22 Raptor training unit from Florida's Eglin Air Force Base to Virginia's Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Hampton. The unit was displaced by Hurricane Michael at its former home at Tyndall Air Force Base near Panama City. The relocation will bring about 2,300 people to the Hampton Roads region.

Fairfax County, Va., lands StarKist headquarters

StarKist, a well-known provider of seafood and chicken in the United States, will invest \$3.6 million to relocate its headquarters operations from Pittsburgh to Fairfax County. Virginia successfully competed with Maryland for the project, which will create 83 new jobs.

WEST VIRGINIA

MHIRJ to expand in Bridgeport, W.Va

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries

Regional Jets (MHIRJ) will soon expand its presence at North Central West Virginia Airport with the construction of two new hangars totaling more than 100,000 square feet. The \$19.1 million project could bring as many as 800 jobs to the area, including 300 positions during the construction phase.

North Carolina-based ESC Brands is investing in Bluefield, W.Va.

The company is beginning Phase 1 of a three-phase plan that will eventually include a new 200,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and the creation of 300 jobs. ESC Brands specializes in the development of antiviral and antimicrobial products

Ammunition maker breaks ground on two West Virginia facilities

Five years after plans were first unveiled, a major rifle ammunition manufacturing complex is officially under construction in West Virginia. Ranger Scientific has broken ground on two different production facility projects. One will overhaul former high school grounds in Montgomery, W.Va., while the other will establish a new facility in nearby Dickinson, W.Va. 🌟

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For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to SB-D.com. For more information on the
automotive industry in the South, go to SouthernAutoCorridor.com.



California EV startup Canoo says it will build a factory outside Tulsa, Okla., that will open in 2023.

ALABAMA

Graphite products plant to be built in Alabama

Westwater Resources, doing business as Alabama Graphite Products, will build a graphite processing plant in Coosa County, Ala., the company announced this summer. The graphite is used in the making of batteries for electric vehicles. The \$80 million project will create 100 new jobs, and the mining of the mineral will result in a \$124 million investment in its second phase.

KC Logistics invests \$12 million in Athens, Ala.

KC Logistics is set to invest \$12 million in a new project that will bring around 100 jobs to Athens. The company will transport seats from TBAKI to Mazda Toyota Manufacturing.

German auto parts supplier expanding again in Cullman

German auto supplier REHAU plans to invest \$50 million in expanding its plant in Cullman. The company is a major supplier to the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Ala. REHAU will hire 150 workers in the deal.

KENTUCKY

Martinrea expansion means more than \$31 million investment in Kentucky

Martinrea Hopkinsville, a Tier 1 automotive supplier of lightweight structures and propulsion systems, will expand its presence in Christian County, Ky., with an investment of more than \$31 million that will create 33 jobs.

Auto supplier adding 150 jobs in Elizabethtown

Metalsa is hiring to fill at least 150 new positions after expanding its Elizabethtown

plant to handle new products for electric vehicles. The Tier 1 auto supplier currently produces frames and other parts for the Ford Expedition, Navigator and F-150. Now, the facility is also going to make frames and battery trays for Ford and Rivian electric vehicles.

Firestone to add 250 jobs in Whitley County

Firestone Industrial Products plans to create 250 full-time jobs in Williamsburg with a \$50 million expansion of its automotive air springs manufacturing plant.

MISSISSIPPI

Manufacturer to locate HQ in Olive Branch

Edelbrock, a manufacturer of specialty auto parts for the aftermarket, will soon be locating its headquarters in Olive Branch, creating 200 new jobs in the process.

OKLAHOMA

Big EV automotive deal in rural Oklahoma

It has been reported that a site in Oklahoma came in second for the massive Tesla truck plant that Elon Musk is locating in Austin near its airport. The second-place prize may be electric car manufacturer Canoo. The startup EV maker announced plans to build a \$400 million plant at the MidAmerica Industrial Park in Pryor, just east of Tulsa. The deal, as announced, will create 2,000 jobs. The site, a former military base, is unique in that it is over 9,000 acres. Canoo execs cited Oklahoma's "energy-forward initiatives" as a major factor in its decision to locate the "mega microfactory."

SOUTH CAROLINA

New United States Postal Service vehicle plant in Spartanburg to house over 1,000 jobs

Oshkosh Defense will invest \$155 million to locate a plant that will produce the next generation USPS delivery vehicle. The company will assemble zero-emission battery electric vehicles and fuel-efficient, low-emission internal combustion engine vehicles that will replace existing USPS delivery trucks. The plant will be built in Spartanburg and create more than 1,000 jobs

Volvo invests \$118 million to build EVs in South Carolina

Volvo Cars says it will invest \$118 million in its plant in Ridgeville to build the fully electric Polestar 3 vehicles. The Polestar 3 is the third vehicle scheduled to be built at the South Carolina plant. This expansion brings the total Volvo Cars investment in South Carolina to more than \$1.2 billion.

South Carolina Ports breaks another record

South Carolina Ports celebrates its strongest fiscal year on record for containers handled at the Port of Charleston. SC Ports handled 2.55 million 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) at Wando Welch Terminal, North Charleston Terminal and Hugh K. Leatherman Terminal in fiscal year 2021 (which ended June 30th). Vehicles remained a strong business segment, up 27 percent compared to the prior year.

New automotive supplier coming to Greenville County

A Michigan-based auto supply company, Gissing North America, will bring 116 new jobs and an \$18 million dollar investment to Greenville County. The company will produce overhead, interior,

exterior and cargo management components.

Frauenthal Gnotec announces 82 new jobs for Laurens County

Frauenthal Gnotec announced in June it will invest \$8.2 million to establish operations in Fountain Inn and expects to create 82 jobs. The Swedish manufacturer of metal components for the automotive industry will expand production into an existing 68,500-square-foot facility there.

Rolls-Royce's MTU in Aiken County is expanding

Rolls-Royce's MTU has announced it will make a \$17 million investment in its plant at its MTU Aiken manufacturing facility in Graniteville, S.C. The deal will add 20 new jobs at the plant to remanufacture and overhaul used engines.

TENNESSEE

Could Audi build electric vehicles at VW plant in Tennessee?

German automaker Audi builds its EVs in Germany and Belgium. At some point it will need to build electric vehicles in the U.S. like everyone else, but it is unlikely for Audi to build a whole

new plant with a facility in Mexico and its parent company VW already preparing for EV manufacturing. One clue suggests that Audi, if it builds EVs in the U.S., would do it at parent company VW's plant in Chattanooga, Tenn. Audi shares the same all-electric architecture as the ID.4 — VW Group's MEB platform — which would make production of the Audi Q4 e-tron quite possible in Tennessee.

Volkswagen Chattanooga ending sedan assembly to concentrate only on SUVs

Volkswagen is dumping the Passat sedan production at its Tennessee plant. The plant is readying for all SUV production and beginning a massive effort at electrifying all its vehicles in Chattanooga.

Electric car battery expands big plant in Chattanooga

NOVONIX, a maker of materials for the batteries used in electric vehicles, announced a nice deal in Chattanooga this summer. The company is investing \$160 million and adding almost 300 jobs in the expansion, which will for the most part support Volkswagen's manufacturing of electric vehicles at its plant in Chattanooga.

Sungwoo Hitech locating first U.S. manufacturing operations in Washington County, Tenn.

Sungwoo Hitech will invest \$40 million to locate its first U.S. manufacturing operations in Telford, Tenn. The Korean automotive supplier will create 117 new jobs to

manufacture metal stamped components — bumpers, rear components and side framing — for customers including General Motors, Hyundai, Kia, Volkswagen and BMW.

Big auto parts company expands in Tennessee

Martinrea announced in the summer quarter that it will expand its facilities in Robertson County, Tenn. The auto parts manufacturer will invest \$40 million and hire 97 in the deal.

Flex-N-Gate expansion to create 91 jobs in Rockford

Flex-N-Gate in Rockford will grow its workforce by 91 new jobs. The automotive parts supplier is investing \$5.5 million to upgrade and expand its manufacturing facility and increase production of its lighting materials.

Seating manufacturer bringing 100 jobs to Franklin, Tenn.

A South Korean manufacturer plans to bring 100 jobs to a new Franklin stamping plant. Daechang Seat Company manufactures metal seat components for Subaru, Hyundai and Kia.

TEXAS

Amazon-backed Rivian in talks for \$5 billion Texas plant

Rivian Automotive, the electric-vehicle startup backed by Amazon, is in talks to invest at least \$5 billion to build a factory near Fort Worth. The facility would be able to produce 200,000 vehicles a year and would create at least 7,500 jobs by 2027. 🌟



Oshkosh Defense will invest \$155 million to locate a plant that will produce the next generation USPS delivery vehicle in Spartanburg, S.C., and create more than 1,000 jobs.





WHERE IS THE LABOR IN THE SOUTH?

Southern Business & Development has written many times about the issue of a lack of labor and job creation in the U.S., and specifically in the South. SB&D was one of the first media outlets in the nation to sound the alarm that the labor shed in the South was dissipating at rates no one — not even the experts — could predict. We explained that demographics were front and center and responsible for the tight labor market. In short, too many people are aging out of the workforce and too few are being born. It's that simple. It's not politics. You could make it political, but really, it is just math.

CONTINUED

BY MICHAEL RANDLE

As we have written numerous times, the U.S. and Southern employers are finding themselves in a “skills gap,” yet more than that, they are finding themselves in a “body gap.” There are simply not enough workers to fill available jobs, which are at a record high of almost 10 million today in the U.S.

In June, a report by the National Federation of Independent Businesses showed that 46 percent of small business owners reported having job openings they could not fill. That figure is more than double the typical average of 22 percent. Seven million fewer people were employed than before the pandemic.

Now, many of those workers are finding jobs. Almost one million unemployed were then hired in July of this year. That is an enormous total for one month.

Then again, that figure dropped to 235,000 in August.

Yet, at the height of the pandemic in the

spring of 2020, the nation lost about 23 million jobs almost overnight, mostly in the services sector. Even in the depression of the 1930s, the nation had never before seen jobs lost that quickly. So, as the nation begins to recover, simple math would suggest that there would be months like July with large job creation.

A confusing labor force dichotomy exists in this recovery. For example, the unemployment rate is currently about 5.5 percent. The unemployment rate prior to COVID was hovering around 3.5 percent, which essentially is full employment. So, there is plenty of available labor out there, at least on paper. Or is there?

Some Chick-fil-A stores in Alabama reported this summer that they were closing their dining rooms due to lack of staff. The restaurants that closed their dining rooms also cited “exhaustion caused by a staffing crisis,” according to AL.com. Alabama’s unemployment rate of 3.2 per-

cent in July was well below the nation’s unemployment rate of 5.5 percent.

There are numerous reasons why labor is tight even when there are so many unemployed. The most striking demographic is the fact that every single day last year about 10,000 people on average retired in the U.S., and only 2,230 people turned working age (16) per day. That is a net loss of nearly 8,000 people a day in the workforce, or three million a year. Year after year, that, of course, is not even close to being sustainable.

Retirements are currently probably the biggest single factor explaining labor shortages. During the early part of the pandemic, close to half of the 3.5 million drop in the total workforce can be attributed to retirements. COVID appears to have driven a surge in retirements according to the Dallas Fed.

The Fed said in August that retirees account for an additional 0.6 percent of

20,000-TEU vessels welcome

The Hugh K. Leatherman Terminal will soon be operational, significantly enhancing the port’s big ship and cargo capacity.

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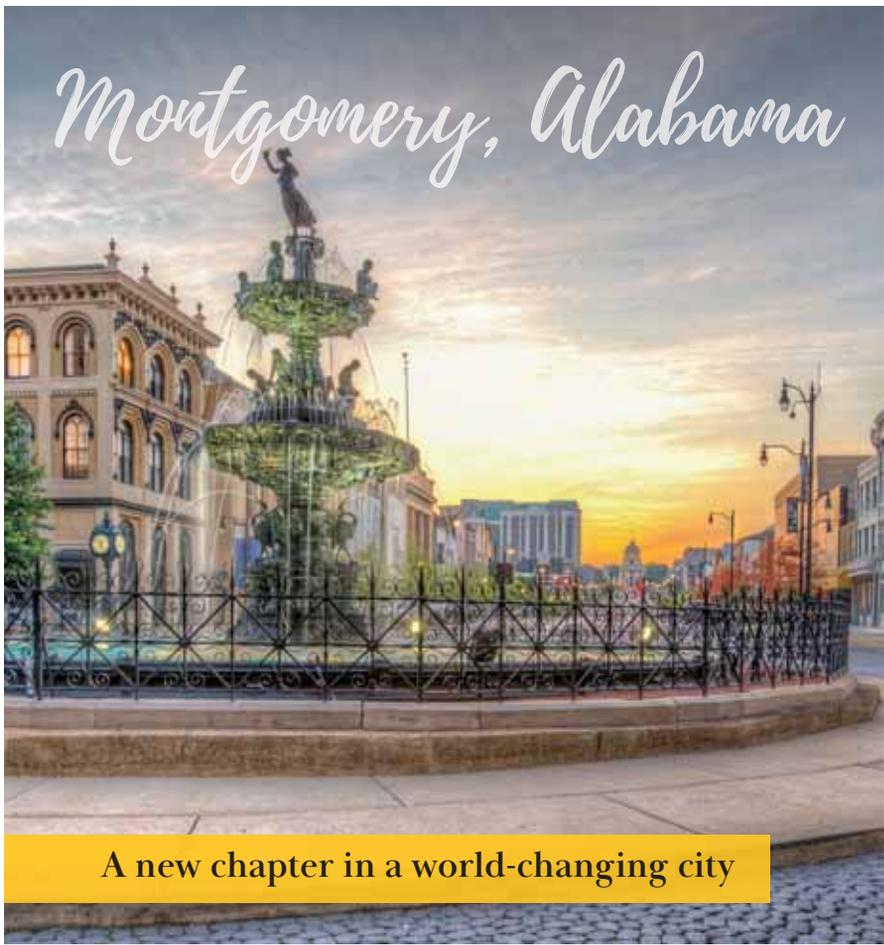
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Sign of the times

The hospitality industry is facing a severe labor shortage. Fast food outlets and others are forced to compete with unemployment benefits to recruit workers. In response, McDonald's is offering a \$500 bonus to new staff, Wendy's gives them \$100 and Chipotle increased pay to \$15 an hour. One McDonald's in Arlington, Va., is offering a \$500 sign-on bonus. Wendy's is offering \$100 signing and referral bonuses to some new hires, in addition to same-day pay.



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Walmart is raising the pay for more than 565,000 store employees. The world's largest retailer announced that U.S. store workers in its front-end, food and consumable, and general merchandise work groups will receive at least a \$1-an-hour raise effective September 25th.

the drop in the workforce since the beginning of the pandemic, or two million workers that were not counted as retired in just the last 18 months. According to the Dallas Fed, the total size of the civilian labor force prior to the virus was 164.5 million. As of May 2021, the total had dropped to 160.9 million.

But there are other reasons why some companies cannot find labor, even though technically speaking we are not in a labor shortage. Sure, there are over 9 million jobs available, but there is almost an equal amount of those that are unemployed right now. So, where is the labor shortage?

The federal government counts an unemployed American as anyone age 16 to 64 who is actively looking for work. As for those who are “outside the workforce,” President Trump kept pointing out in 2018 that there were “95 million people ‘outside the workforce’ ” when asked about a tight labor market that could slow the economy.

Of course, those “outside the workforce” include students — high school and college — the disabled, the drug addicted, retirees under age 65 and, of course, family caretakers. Ah, the family caretakers!

In addition to millions aging out of the workforce and retiring, there were almost 9 million women who were unemployed at the height of the pandemic. Census data show that 7.5 million Americans are not working primarily because they need to care for homebound children because so many schools and daycare centers were closed due to COVID.

Obviously, if there were more childcare options, our economy could chop into that massive 9 million available job total at a much faster rate. President Biden's American Families Plan is focused on tax credits to offset childcare expenses, which could bring people who are caring for children back into the workforce.

It should be noted that the vast majority of those 7.5 million people caring for family are women, and those numbers are not calculated in the overall unemployment rate because they are not ac-

tively looking for work. That obviously artificially lowers the unemployment rate. If you factored in those family caretakers, the unemployment rate would be close to 7.5 percent.

Since February 2020, more than 2.3 million women have left the labor force and the worker participation rate for women as of this summer was at 57 percent. That is the lowest worker participation rate for women since 1988. By comparison, 1.8 million men have left the labor force since February 2020, many of which are also caring for family members at home.

The current demography is not on our side

Job creation is not back to normal mode yet. Nearly a million jobs were created in June, but at some point, that number will settle into what has been the average of 180,000 to 200,000 a month over the last decade. If August's total of 235,000 jobs created is any indication, that will be fairly soon. And once full employment is achieved, job creation will certainly slow.

Let's repeat this demographic: On average, about 10,000 American are aging out of the workforce (retiring), and 2,230 are entering the workforce each day. That's currently about 70,000 a month entering the workforce and over 300,000 leaving it.

For decades, the U.S. could count on about 200,000 people on average entering the workforce per month, or turning age 16. In just a few years, that will drop to 50,000 people entering the workforce per month, meaning the creation of 200,000 jobs on average per month will eventually not be needed.

Who has the labor?

Which places are seeing significant in-migration, birthrates and younger workforces in the South? Only Texas (35 years), Oklahoma (37 years) and Louisiana (37 years) are in the top 10 of the lowest median ages in the South. Utah, at 31 years, is the lowest median age of working age folks in the nation mainly because it also has the highest pregnancy rate in the country.

CONTINUED



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Montgomery, Ala., businesses are feeling good about the months ahead. In fact, they're feeling better than any time since before the recession, according to a new study. A quarterly survey of business leaders by the University of Alabama's Center for Business and Economic Research found that Montgomery executives are the most confident in the state right now. Local companies are leveraging state and private partnerships to utilize new technologies to train workers. Central AlabamaWorks! serves as the regional resource for local training and recruiting assistance, tailored to industry needs. Since 1971, AIDT, Alabama's total workforce delivery system, has worked with 5,300 companies and trained 979,225 workers for the state's new and expanding industries.

SB&D has devised a formula to identify who has the labor in the region. Growing population is the No. 1 factor, but there are others, including the number of college towns, median age and birthrates.

Here are the counties and markets in the South we believe will provide your company with the best labor shed available. In this issue, we are highlighting Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia and Kentucky. We will cover the remaining Southern states in future issues.

ALABAMA

Alabama's unemployment rate is two points below the national rate, which is an outstanding achievement. But there are some standouts in the state when looking for an active labor shed.

Baldwin County

There is labor available in this South Alabama beach county because of its in-migration. The 2020 U.S. Census data ranks Baldwin County as the seventh fastest-growing metropolitan area in the country and the fastest-growing county in Alabama. The new numbers show a 27.2 percent population increase from 2010, with nearly 232,000 residents calling Baldwin County home.

Shelby County

Shelby County's estimated population is 221,940 with a growth rate of 0.96 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States census data. Shelby County is the sixth largest county in Alabama.

Auburn

Population in this major college town has grown by almost 25 percent in 10 years. Because of Auburn University and its population growth, there is labor availability in Auburn.

Tuscaloosa County

Like Auburn, Tuscaloosa benefits from the University of Alabama; however, since Nick Saban came to coach the Tide, there has been a massive increase in enrollment of out-of-state students from as far away as California and international markets such as Saudi Arabia. Few of those folks will settle in Tuscaloosa after they graduate.

Hoover

This is the Birmingham MSA's fastest growing city. The suburb is a major housing and retail center.

Huntsville/Madison County

Huntsville's military assets at the Red-



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stone Arsenal and other sites attract all kinds of potential labor every year. The Huntsville metro has added more than 64,000 people since 2010 — the largest increase of any metro in Alabama — and a growth rate of 15.3 percent, which ranked third over that time.

Limestone County

Limestone County is adjacent to Huntsville and is drawing a significant in-migration. The Mazda Toyota assembly plant is about to open in Limestone.

Cullman

This North Alabama city and county is an outstanding place to live. It has an outstanding economy as well.

Montgomery

Montgomery businesses are feeling good about the months ahead. In fact, they're feeling better than any time since before the recession, according to a new study. A quarterly survey of business

leaders by the University of Alabama's Center for Business and Economic Research found that Montgomery executives are now the most confident in the state. Their optimism level of 70.6 was the highest recorded in the history of the survey, which started in 2007. Pretty astounding. The Montgomery MSA, which has lost population for years, is turning that around.

ARKANSAS

The median age in Arkansas is just over 38 years. The fastest growing part of the state is in the northwest, where Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas is located.

Fayetteville

Fayetteville is now officially the second largest city in Arkansas. The city's population grew from 73,580 in 2010 to 93,949 in 2020, according to the latest U.S. census figures. The state university is located in Fayetteville.

Bentonville

Bentonville is currently growing at a rate of 6.48 percent annually and its population has increased by 77.11 percent since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 35,301 in 2010. Bentonville reached its highest population of 62,521 in 2021. Bentonville is also the world headquarters for Walmart.

Little Rock

Central Arkansas, including Little Rock, is currently leading the state in population growth with a growth rate estimated at 2 percent. The area is expected to grow slowly but steadily in the years to come with more young people looking for homes in the urban core of Little Rock. The area's fastest growing business sector is retail, and the city is developing an entrepreneurial culture that is expected to bring in more young college graduates.



Conway

Conway, a Little Rock suburb, is currently growing at a rate of 0.89 percent annually and its population has increased by 16.88 percent since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 58,908 in 2010. Conway reached its highest population of 68,850 in 2021.

Jonesboro

Jonesboro, home to Arkansas State University, is currently growing at a rate of 1.46 percent annually and its population has increased by 20 percent since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 67,263 in 2010. Jonesboro reached its highest population of 80,714 in 2021.

CONTINUED

Bentonville, Ark., is currently growing at a rate of 6.48 percent annually and its population has increased by 77.11 percent since the most recent census.



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In 2018, census data showed that Walton County, Fla., was the sixth fastest growing county in the entire United States. Pictured is WaterColor in Santa Rosa Beach.

FLORIDA

Florida's population grew by 2.7 million — or 14.6 percent — between 2010 and 2020, according to U.S. Census data. This is double the rate of overall U.S. population growth. The state for decades has been an in-migration monster with many from the Northeast relocating each year.

Walton County

There is more to Walton County than beautiful beaches. In 2018, census data showed that Walton County was the sixth fastest growing county in the entire United States. Walton County's estimated population is 80,749 with a growth rate of 4.31 percent in the past year according to the most recent U.S. Census data.

South Florida

Miami-Dade, Broward County and Palm Beach County are by far the state's most populous counties, with 6.6 million residents. That's an increase of 8.2 percent since the 2010 census.

Tallahassee

Home to Florida State University, Tallahassee is currently the 12th fastest growing metropolitan area in Florida with a growth rate of 12.4 percent, which is higher than Miami and Tampa.

Gainesville

The University of Florida, located in Gainesville, is a huge driver of the area's workforce. As of January 1, 2021, the population of the Gainesville metro-

politan area is estimated at 290,600, an average annual increase of 2,450, or 0.9 percent, since 2010.

Orlando

Orlando's median age is 37.7 years, which is, believe it or not, one of the youngest workforces in Florida. Florida's overall median age is the sixth oldest in the country at 42.5 years. Much of Central Florida's available labor originates internationally and migrates to the Central Florida region. Like other markets where deaths are out-pacing births, Orlando is a magnet for foreign-born workers. Just last year, the Orlando MSA's population cracked 2.5 million, catapulting it into Southern Business & Development's "mega-market" division. (Charlotte also recently joined that group which includes Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Northern Virginia and Atlanta along with other MSAs of 2.5 million or more, like Tampa Bay.)

Tampa Bay

Like Orlando, Tampa Bay's communities of Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Sarasota and Lakeland are in-migration magnets for people from all over the world. Tampa Bay is a no-brainer when it comes to available labor.

Lee County

Lee County, home to Cape Coral and Fort Myers, had a population of 54,000 in 1960. Lee County's population today is almost 803,000. You will find plenty of labor there.

Jacksonville

In recent years, more than half of new residents in the Jacksonville MSA were from international locations. Domestic in-migration data in the U.S. Census Report as detailed by Florida Politics shows that St. Johns County had the third highest rate of county growth in Florida at 4 percent. By percentage growth, St. Johns and Nassau were the third and fourth overall fastest growing counties at 4.2 percent and 3.6 percent.

Sumter County

We had to put this small county in Central Florida on this list even though much of the growth is from retirees. Sumter County's estimated population is 139,822 with a growth rate of 2.72 percent in the past year according to the most recent United States census data. Sumter County is the 35th largest county in Florida. The 2010 population was 94,278 and has seen a growth of 48.31 percent since then.

Flagler County

Located just south of Jacksonville, Flagler County is growing fast and has also become an in-migration magnet. A coastal community with pristine beaches and proximity to the Intracoastal Waterway, Flagler County has available land for new construction and business-ready sites for any size company relocation or expansion.

St. Lucie County

Labor availability in St. Lucie County flows from three distinct sources — reversal of a decades-long out-commute of workers to other counties, significant population growth, and a focused effort by both St. Lucie Public Schools and Indian River State College (IRSC) to provide career and technical training aligned with the employment opportunities growing out of 5 million-plus square feet of available industrial development. According to a March 2021 study by the Florida Department of Economic

Opportunity, there were 110,775 workers living in St. Lucie County. Of these, 69,011 workers (62.3 percent) were employed outside the county. The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County and its partners began a multimedia campaign this year to let these commuters know about the good-paying job opportunities at home. New census data shows St. Lucie County growing by 18.5 percent over the last decade, from nearly 278,000 to 329,000 residents, exceeding the state's population growth of 14.2 percent. Port St. Lucie is now the third most populous city in South Florida and the state's seventh most populous city.

Collier County

This is another growing county and economy that provides companies a variety of labor options. Anchored by Naples in Southwest Florida, Collier County's estimated population is 398,304 with a growth rate of 1.71 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United

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States Census data. Collier County is the 17th largest county in Florida. The 2010 population was 322,581 and has seen a growth of 23.47 percent since that time.

Indian River County

Indian River County's estimated population is 165,395 with a growth rate of 1.68 percent in the past year according to the most recent United States Census data. Indian River County is the 33rd largest county in Florida. The 2010 population was 138,270 and has seen a growth of 19.62 percent since that time.

Charlotte County

Once a sleepy part of Southwest Florida, Charlotte County is really growing and is one of the least expensive places to live in the entire state. Charlotte County's estimated population is 197,032 with a growth rate of 2.10 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. Charlotte County is the 29th largest county in Florida. The 2010 population was 159,875 and has

seen a growth of 23.24 percent since that time.

GEORGIA

Georgia remains one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. Its 10-year growth rate of 14.4 percent is more than 1.5 times that of the U.S. population growth rate. The state will add more people in the years to come. . .population projections forecast a 17.7 percent increase in Georgia's population by 2030.

Fulton County

This Atlanta county has an estimated population of 1,091,550 with a growth rate of 1.28 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. Fulton County is the second largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 925,632 and has seen a growth of 17.92 percent since that time.

Gwinnett County

This county's population has nearly tripled since 1990. Located northeast of

Atlanta, Gwinnett County's estimated population is 954,076 with a growth rate of 0.94 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. Gwinnett County is the third largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 808,007 and has seen a growth of 18.08 percent since that time. The county is a major draw for international migrants.

Cobb County

A major suburb of Atlanta, Cobb County's estimated population is 768,283 with a growth rate of 0.53 percent in the past year according to the most recent United States Census data. Cobb County is the fourth largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 689,495 and has seen a growth of 11.43 percent since that time.

DeKalb County

At the center of Atlanta, DeKalb County added 10,600 people in the past year, its largest single-year growth since



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2000-2001, or nearly two decades. The surge brings the county's total population to 744,530, according to estimates released today by the Atlanta Regional Commission.

Columbia County

Columbia County, located west of Augusta, is one of the fastest growing in Georgia. Columbia County's estimated population is 161,988 with a growth rate of 1.65 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census

data. Columbia County is the 16th largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 124,955 and has seen a growth of 29.64 percent since that time.

Augusta

Augusta is a city located in Columbia County and Richmond County, Ga. Augusta is currently growing at a rate of 0.43 percent annually and its population has increased by 1.93 percent since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 195,844 in

One of the largest projects announced in the last few years in the South (and the nation) was SK Innovation in Jackson County, Ga. Over 4,500 workers will make batteries for electric vehicles.

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The current metro area population of Louisville, Ky., in 2021 is 1,098,000, which is a 0.83 percent increase from 2020.

2010. Augusta reached its highest population of 199,614 in 2021.

Henry County

This county south of Atlanta has grown due to lots of economic development projects, especially as distribution has overtaken automotive in the South in the last few years. Henry County has for decades been the distribution center of the Atlanta MSA.

Jackson County

In-migration into this county from Atlanta has been strong recently as some of Georgia's largest economic development projects in recent years have landed in Jackson County. The county's estimated population is 78,281 with a growth rate of 3.51 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. Jackson County is the 34th largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 60,696 and has seen a growth of 28.97 percent since that time, which is really strong.

Fayette County

Fayette County's estimated population is 116,901 with a growth rate of 1.07 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. Fayette County is the 23rd largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 106,938 and has seen a growth of 9.32 percent since that time.

Cartersville-Bartow County

Bartow County's estimated population is 110,458 with a growth rate of 1.25 percent in the past year according to the most recent United States Census data. Bartow County is the 25th largest county in Georgia. The 2010 population was 100,050 and has seen a growth of 10.40 percent since that time.

KENTUCKY

New data is in from the U.S. Census Bureau, and it shows some changes for Kentucky. The state's population averaged nearly 4 percent growth. Also, more people moved to urban areas and left rural areas.

Louisville

Louisville has created a hip place for young people and the University of Louisville contributes to that vibe. The current metro area population of Louisville in 2021 is 1,098,000, a 0.83 percent increase from 2020. The metro area population of Louisville in 2019 was 1,081,000, a 0.75 percent increase from 2018.

Shelby County

Shelby County, located between Louisville and Frankfort, estimated population at 50,954 with a growth rate of 1.93 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. That is well above the nation's growth rate of 0.35 percent.

Fayette County

Home to Lexington and the University of Kentucky, the growth rate isn't very impressive, but it does have a large student population.

Warren County

Here is another growing college town. Warren County's estimated population is 137,188 with a growth rate of 1.59 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. It is the sixth largest county in Kentucky. The 2010 population was 114,341 and has seen a growth of 19.98 percent since that time.

Scott County

Located near Lexington, Scott County's

estimated population is 59,076 with a growth rate of 1.78 percent in the past year, according to the most recent United States Census data. Scott County is the 18th largest county in Kentucky. The 2010 population was 47,274 and has seen a growth of 24.97 percent since that time.

Richmond

Home to Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond is currently growing at a rate of 0.93 percent annually and its population has increased by 17.46 percent since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 31,364 in 2010. Richmond reached its highest population of 36,839 in 2021.

Hopkinsville-South Western Kentucky

Hopkinsville's labor is enhanced by nearby Fort Campbell. Soldiers and their families are reportedly happy at Fort Campbell, which makes them more likely to succeed at the mission at hand. Sixty-five percent of soldiers stationed at Fort Campbell want to remain there and over 70 percent of retiring soldiers remain in the region.

Owensboro-Daviess County

Along with retaining homegrown talent, Owensboro-Daviess County also works hard to attract new talent. The community is the fourth most populous city in the state of Kentucky with an overall cost-of-living index that is 7.4 percent lower than the national average. Every local school system has a 93 percent graduation rate or higher, housing cost is 30 percent lower than the national average, and the community prides itself on being a great place to live, work and play. All these attributes are attractive to new families and young professionals and will continue to help Owensboro-Daviess County's labor force to grow.

Eastern Kentucky

Virtually all of Eastern Kentucky's counties have available labor because of the contracting coal industry. 🗺

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BY SHELLY J. JACOBS

When it comes to collaboration, networking and a can-do attitude, the state of North Carolina deserves to be at the top of any “best at” lists. Perhaps that is why so many people wanting to relocate have been choosing the Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte areas for the past couple of decades. This has helped land them regularly in the top five or better of many “best” lists. In this piece, we’ll take a wider look around the state at some of the lesser known, yet highly attractive places for those seeking quality of life, sense of place, support systems for small and large businesses, and for workers seeking employment where they know they will be valued and appreciated. North Carolina is full of attractive features that can lure businesses and individuals to its various regions and then help ensure their success. Let’s take a look.

In the economic development world, industry sectors and workforce size are usually the first cards laid on the table when trying to entice. To further the poker metaphor, North Carolina has a full house.

Many states can say they have a strong labor force and broad diversity of industry. Few can say they are the top location for any particular sector, but rarer still is to hold the top position in more than one category. North Carolina is not only ranked as having the largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeast, it also holds claim to several top spots in industry rankings.

Even with historical roots in agriculture (and that still being their largest industry sector), the state has a wide range of business and holds the following national titles: Number one in both biotechnology and pharmaceutical manufacturing, largest furniture manufacturing, second most popular tech hub and second largest for food and beverage processing. The list continues into various levels of top spots for automotive, aerospace, logistics, agriculture and textiles.

So why is there so much success? Perhaps it is the focus on teamwork. Historically, North Carolina has been a place where collaboration in economic development at all levels has been valued and enacted for quite some time. There have been periods when they wobbled away from that, like during the previous governor’s term, but overall they have done an excellent job at maintaining cohesion and a sense of teamwork from the state level down to the small town chambers. The spirit of working together, instead of competing against each other, is alive and well across the state.

CONTINUED

High Point University plays an important role in the region’s success, not only by producing well-educated, well-rounded adults, but also as a leader of community involvement. Students, faculty and staff average 108,000 hours of volunteer service annually.





State programs like NC Works, One North Carolina Fund, Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) and building reuse grants are put to good use here, revitalizing old mills, repurposing various business campuses and finding good matches between workers and industry. There are also a wide variety of regional programs with various groups: The Golden Leaf Foundation, NC Carolina Core, Piedmont Triangle Partnership, ElectriCities of North Carolina and a host of others, along with local township, county and city, help ensure companies and people have what they need to succeed.

If you are looking for a sense of community and a place to belong, North Carolina is chock full of areas offering it, each with its unique twist.

Fayetteville/Cumberland County is one such place. With over 57,000 military personnel from Fort Bragg and as home to the first responder units who are deployed in all sorts of emergencies, both domestically and abroad, it is no surprise that there is a strong sense of service to others. After two years of extensive market research aimed at finding the strengths and common threads of their community, the area, branded “Can Do Carolina,” found these four pillars that describe their community: “We find a way, we care for one another, we protect the world and we always go further.”

This team-oriented mindset is pervasive not only in the military residents, but throughout their diverse population. . . a diversity that may be surprising to some. Robert Van Goens, president and CEO of the Fayetteville-Cumberland County Economic Development Corporation, summed it up well by saying, “There are 85 languages from 86 countries spoken in our schools.”

Contributing to this international variety in population is the fact that they are a Host Community of the Global Special Operations Forces Communities of Excellence (GSOF) in which they foster global collaboration and cooperation between international cities. These partnerships, along with a thriving downtown, a plan to build a 100 percent fiber optic network, thoughtful assistance programs and inordinately helpful residents have helped to increase economic and cultural growth.

Just this April, *Forbes* wrote a piece in which they called Fayetteville “a city on the rise” and “one of the most accessible American cities.” You can see the re-



Shown far left is downtown Fayetteville, N.C., which *Forbes* described as “a city on the rise” and “one of the most accessible American cities.” Author Shelly Jacobs and Beau take a walk along one of the many trails of North Carolina (inset photo).

Shown opposite, soldiers at Fayetteville’s Fort Bragg pack a parachute. *Photo courtesy of VisitNC.com*

sults of this rise to popularity reflected in some of the businesses that have chosen to locate, expand and invest there recently, including Amazon, Cargill, Metronet and Dansons, to name just a few.

Another area that understands the power of partnership is Guilford County. Six years ago a group of civic leaders realized the benefits of collaboration between High Point and Greensboro. Each city maintains autonomy with its separate economic development agencies — High Point Economic Development Corporation and Greensboro Chamber of Commerce — but, as of 2015, there is also the Guilford County Economic Development Alliance (GCEDA). The two Cities managers and mayors, along with the County manager and Board of Commissioners Chair, meet regularly to assure the alliance carries out its mission to facilitate exponential growth for both cities and the surrounding area. Their work is paying off. Since its inception, there have been 107 announcements: 17 new companies, 10,581 new jobs and over \$1.3 billion in overall investment.

High Point and Greensboro, like other cities and towns in North Carolina, have tak-



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en advantage of the state's building reuse grants and other funds to create renaissance waves in their respective downtowns.

High Point is nicknamed "North Carolina's International City™" because of its fame for hosting the state's biggest economic event that draws thousands of internationals. It is a twice-yearly trade show that generates an estimated \$6.73 billion and is the world's largest for home furnishings.

The changes to downtown have no doubt made visitors as well as High Point's current residents (many of which are higher education students in the regions 16 colleges and universities) happy. Over \$200 million has gone into rejuvenating High Point's downtown with some interesting new projects. Congdon Yards has transformed an old hosiery mill into a

At Greensboro's Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts, you'll be able to see "any Broadway play that you would be able to see in New York," according to Marvin Price of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce. Price and the Senior Leadership Team (center photo) take a seat at LeBauer Park. Nearby High Point University's Idea Incubator (Think Tank) is one of the many examples of the robust network of support for existing businesses and entrepreneurs. *Tanger photo by Joey Kirkman*

new gathering hub that provides “a new destination to work, gather, innovate and celebrate.” Barbour Spangle Design and Culp, long-time High Point companies, are making their business homes at Congdon Yards. Overall, the past six years have brought in a variety of new restaurants, shops and office space. Sandy Dunbeck, Director of High Point Economic Development Corporation states, “Key Risk, a Fortune 500 Berkeley company, has just announced the intention to move their headquarters operation to downtown High Point. They will be in 275 North Elm Street, a brand new office building in the Outfields of High Point’s Multipurpose Stadium.” To accommodate this growth on the housing side, the area is on track to build hundreds of new homes, which will sell in the mid \$200s, a range considered one of the most affordable for U.S. mid-sized metros. Developers are also planning apartment and condo units in the downtown.

High Point University also plays an important role in the region’s success, not only by producing well-educated, well-rounded adults, but also as a leader of community involvement. Students, faculty and staff average 108,000 hours of volunteer service annually. The university hosts more than 150 sports and cultural events.

High Point University’s Idea Incubator (Think Tank), which is focused on ensuring the city continues to thrive, is one of the

many examples of the robust network of support for existing businesses and entrepreneurs to find success and then use it to help the community. Other available support programs include CEOs for Cities, High Point Young Professionals Group and Leadership High Point.

Nearby Greensboro has found similar success and made profound changes to its downtown with investments in streetscapes, parks, a baseball stadium and renovations of many of its buildings, including the opening of both a new vegan restaurant and a wine bar. But Marvin Price of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce thinks the “crown jewel and the game-changer that will be the catalyst to drive continued growth” is the construction of what may become one of the state’s most attractive performing arts centers.

Located intentionally near adjacent parks (one of which is LeBauer Park, which Marvin Price says is “a great melting pot in the community, where people walk their dogs, attend different festivals including food truck festivals”), the Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts is in its final days of construction and slated to open September 2021. Price said, “Any Broadway play that you would be able to see in New York, you’re going to be able to see in Greensboro, N.C.” He thinks this has helped spur companies already located in



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The Rockingham County Center for Economic Development, Small Business and Tourism is led by Leigh Cockram, 2021 winner of the NCEDA Economic Developer of the Year Award. She believes a clean environment — especially surrounding the Dan River (shown below) — plays an important part in ensuring the health of residents, communities and economies.

Photo courtesy of VisitNC.com



Greensboro “to double down on their investment in the community.” Price used Syngenta, a Fortune 500 company with decades-old roots in Greensboro, as an example. Needing to expand and build a new headquarters, they conducted a site search. Price said, “They could have really moved anywhere in the world.” But they chose to invest \$68 million in their current campus and in doing so, retained 750 jobs where average wage is over \$100,000. Price believes this is a “tell tale sign for people looking at North Carolina. . .that we are on the precipice of something truly transformational.”

A key element in the success of this dynamic duo of cities, as well as the businesses located within and around them, is the logistics side of the picture. The area was noted as “punching above its weight” by logistics website Ajot.com, and went on to say, “Greensboro-High Point has developed an excess of modern transportation and logistics capacity, especially considering the decrepitude of much of the infrastructure in the United States. From an over-abundance of interstate highways to the proactive improvement of 1,000 acres at Piedmont Triad International Airport, the region is in the same class as logistics hubs like Indianapolis, Columbus and Louisville.”

North Carolina has 81,104 miles of state controlled roadways that were ranked 14th in the nation for overall State Highway Performance by Reason Foundation, a nonpartisan public policy research group. Over \$672 billion, yes that’s “b” for billion, worth of goods are trucked to and from sites in North Carolina, that’s 81 percent of its overall goods. According to a report from the NC Chamber Foundation published last year, “Locations within a mile of North Carolina highway improvements experienced a 35 percent increase in employment.” This forward-looking report goes on to say that additional funding is needed for North Carolina to keep its roads on par with the explosive growth throughout the state.

Rockingham County, located north of Greensboro near the border of Virginia, with a 232 percent economic growth from 2018 to 2019, is a good example of this explosion. Perhaps its most dynamic offering for business success may be the team running The Rockingham County Center for Economic Development, Small Business and Tourism. Led by Leigh Cockram, 2021 winner of the NCEDA Economic Developer of the Year Award, this small but mighty team provides some very hands-on help. Along with the usual support found from economic development organizations, Cockram and her associates are particularly adept at utilizing the resources available to business for development. Many programs have cumbersome demands asked of those who attain funds for development and expansion. These can be overwhelming and fraught with unknowns that can hamper success.

“I don’t like surprises, good or bad, and we try to make sure our companies don’t have surprises. I think it’s one of the major reasons why we won Pella [Windows],” said Cockram. No doubt she’s right. It’s also likely that the new workforce development training facility, currently under construction



in Rockingham, contributed to landing Pella and a handful of others in the last two years. Nestle Purina, Ontex Group, Farmina, and Sturm, Ruger & Company have all made announcements in Rockingham County. All told, 892 new jobs are heading to the area in the coming years.

Another special perspective widely held among leaders and residents of the Rockingham area is an acute awareness of the importance of clean water and good stewardship of the environment. Unfortunately, this insight was gained as a result of a 2014 disaster. A drainage pipe burst at a coal ash containment pond owned by Duke Energy in Eden, N.C., sending 39,000 tons of coal ash into the Dan River. The spill had horrendous effects on the river, poisoning and killing its inhabitants. Dead fish and crayfish could be seen floating in the ash-laden water. Luckily for the town, the drinking supply was unaffected because it came from above where the spill occurred.

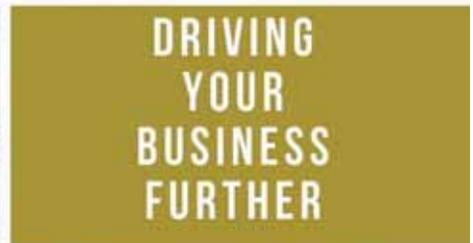
What was affected, though, was the economy in the area. In the months immediately following the spill, river-related businesses, restaurants, motels and others around Eden took a huge economic hit, as people concerned about contact with coal ash-contaminated water shied away.

Duke has since spent millions to mitigate the problem and there are many watchful eyes on the Dan to ensure its good

health. Good Stewards of Rockingham, a local grassroots group and member of the national Water Keeper Alliance, formed in June of 2014. The spill prompted new EPA oversight and rules concerning coal ash and ash pits. It also sparked a better understanding of the role water and the natural environment play in economies. During our discussion on what makes Rockingham County unique for ensuring business success, Leigh Cockram mentioned their strong awareness that a clean environment plays an important part in ensuring the health of residents, communities and economies. To that end, Rockingham has invested heavily in clean energy — \$104 million total, with \$99.6 million of that going towards solar photovoltaic.

Rockingham represents a state norm on clean energy. According to a new report conducted by RTI International, North Carolina has invested \$40.3 billion in renewables over the last 14 years. That investment has helped keep it in national top spots of clean energy rankings, but more importantly, it has supported jobs. As of 2019, nearly 113,000 North Carolinians worked in solar, wind, energy efficiency, grid modernization, energy storage, clean vehicles and other clean energy occupations. Duke Energy and Dominion Electric are the largest companies providing clean electrical energy, but they are not alone.

CONTINUED



ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NC AT A GLANCE

- Two Interstates flanking both sides of the County,
- Easily reach more than 2/3 of the U.S. population within a days truck drive,
- Regional workforce capable of meeting employment needs,
- Favorable cost-of-doing business environment.



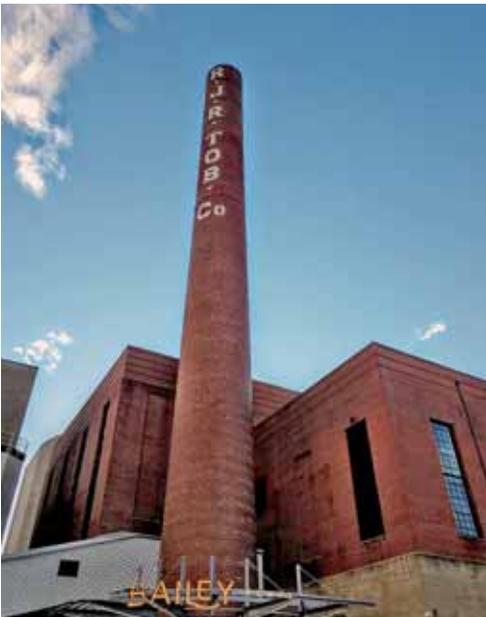


With Bob Leak (left), an experienced Winston-Salem economic developer of 33 years, acting as CEO, Whitaker Park has become a booming success. The former center for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company's manufacturing operations (center photo) consists of 13 buildings on 220 acres. Innovation Quarter (bottom photos), another R.J. Reynolds holding, has become a tony hub for food, music, retail and cultural gatherings. This 330-acre mixed-use development is home to 90 businesses.

NC Electric Cooperatives also provide power through 26 different non-profits in 93 counties. They can be an attractive alternative for businesses and residents to get their electricity as member-owner. Like their larger counterparts, these coops play active roles in their communities in a variety of ways and offer corporate assistance including zero interest loans.

Another interesting entity involved with utilities and economic development is ElectriCities of N.C., an organization that acts as an umbrella system for municipalities that own their own electric distribution systems. Of the 10.5 million people in North Carolina, 1.3 million get their power from municipally or locally owned utilities. ElectriCities works on their behalf as a buyers club providing collective strength for wholesale purchasing, as well as for other things including emergency recovery assistance, legislative and regulatory affairs and a wide range of economic development services.

Two of the many strong suits of this network are the ability to offer negotiated rates to industry customers and a far higher reliability rate than





other electric power suppliers. According to Drew Elliot, Manager, Government Affairs of Electricities NC, “We beat the pants off of the others when it comes to reliability and outage restoration. Our customers enjoy on average one outage per year and power is on 99.98 percent of the time.”

Throughout the state, utility providers can be powerful partners to new or expanding businesses. The turnaround of Whitaker Park located in Winston-Salem is a good example of another team effort in North Carolina that’s helping businesses realize success.

The former center for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company’s manufacturing operations consists of 13 buildings on 220 acres. The campus, built in 1961, was shut down and abandoned in mid-2012. Then in 2017, the property formally changed hands and the Whitaker Park Development Authority Inc., a non-profit corporation created in 2011, became the new owner. Duke Energy made the first large investment to change the electrical infrastructure so multiple tenants instead of just one could use the property.

The goal was to remake the campus and offer new tenants a range of uses from light manufacturing and R&D, to residential and retail. With Bob Leak, an experienced Winston-Salem economic developer of 33 years, acting as CEO, Whitaker Park has become a booming success. At the time of writing this article, the park has either sold or has sale pending on all but one building and one land parcel. As a matter of fact, just a few days ago, a new project was announced for Nature’s Value, a global vitamin and supplement manufacturer. The company plans to build state-of-the-art facilities, investing \$19 million and creating 183 new jobs.

CONTINUED

“I am going to work myself out of a job — we thought it would take three years and it looks like I’m going to do it in one and a half.”
Bob Leak, Whitaker Park

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The plans will be facilitated, in part, with a state Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) which will potentially reimburse the company as much as \$1,954,800 spread over 12 years. Additionally, because the company is locating in Forsyth County, classified by the state's economic tier system as a Tier 2, the JDIG agreement calls for as much as \$217,200 into the state's Industrial Development Fund's Utility Account. This account helps rural communities finance infrastructure upgrades to attract new business.

Nature's Value will have some great neighbors. Already announced or located there are: Cook Medical, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina, Forsyth County Education and developer Chris Harrison, who plans to renovate two historic plants into 164 residential units and build 25,000 square feet of new retail space along with a 125-room hotel.

Whitaker Park is not the only substantial piece of real estate in the Winston-Salem area being repurposed. Another R.J. Reynolds holding, the former tobacco campus now called Innovation Quarter, has become a tony hub for food, mu-

sic, retail and cultural gatherings. This 330-acre mixed-use development is home to 90 businesses, five academic institutions and over 1,000 apartments. You can meander along the pathways built over old railroad tracks, find a table in the welcoming lower courtyard, get a brick-oven slice, a house brewed beer and then sit back to enjoy the company of the community and live music.

There is a quote found on the Innovation Quarter's website: "Innovation Quarter is a place where diverse people, a unique mixed-use environment and a welcoming community spark the creativity and collaboration that drive innovation and growth."

This sentiment could be used to sum up the business climate of the entire state. If you are looking to make something, achieve success in business or simply make a good life in a welcoming, diverse community, this state offers it all. There are plenty of ways to find support for creativity and collaboration there and to become part of what drives both innovation and growth for North Carolina and beyond. ☺

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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 SUMMER 2021 QUARTER

Development	Jobs	Investment*	N/E/R**	Location	Description
1. Ford Motor	5,800	\$5,600	N	Haywood County, Tenn.	Electric vehicle batteries
2. Ford Motor	5,000	\$5,800	N	Hardin County, Ky.	Electric vehicles and batteries
3. Ingalls	3,000	N/A	E	Pascagoula, Miss.	Shipbuilding
4. United Airlines	3,000	N/A	E	Loudon County/Fairfax County, Va.	Airline
5. Disney	2,000	N/A	E	Orlando, Fla.	Entertainment
6. Thermo Fisher	1,400	\$100	N	Wilson County, Tenn.	Life sciences
7. Amazon	1,346	\$200	N	Tallahassee, Fla.	Fulfillment center
8. Intuitive	1,200	\$500	E	Gwinnett County, Ga.	Health care
9. Chewy	1,200	N/A	N	Wilson County, Tenn.	Fulfillment center
10. TELUS	1,300	\$3	N	North Charleston, S.C.	IT

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

Source: RandleReport.com



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