

Lee County



Lee County

Fort Myers • Bonita Springs • Estero • Cape Coral
Sanibel & Captiva Islands • Fort Myers Beach
Pine Island • North Fort Myers • Lehigh Acres
Boca Grande & Outer Islands

By Beth Luberecki

Lee County is Growing Up

Lee County is experiencing some major growth, which means many potential opportunities for businesses already located in the county or considering a move here. It is home to a number of companies on the rise, a bustling airport with room for further expansion, and a burgeoning state university and other well-regarded educational options. Keep reading to learn more about what's going on in Lee County, from notable developments in the works to local manufacturers producing everything from high-end boats to gourmet chocolates.







Growth Opportunities



“We want you to find the site you love, and then we want to make it work for you.”

— John Talmage,
Director of the Lee
County Economic
Development Office

(l to r) Fort Myers
Downtown River District
rendering; Lee Health
Coconut Point; Babcock
Ranch solar trees;
Bimini Basin; Fort Myers
Beach Times Square

Growth is a popular conversation topic almost everywhere in Florida. But in Lee County, it's not just something to talk about. It's something taking place in almost every corner of the county.

U.S. Census Bureau estimates released in April 2019 ranked the county's Cape Coral-Fort Myers metro area No. 7 in the nation for top metropolitan areas in percentage growth from 2010 to 2018. Over that period of time, the metro area grew 22%, increasing from a population of 618,754 in 2010 to 754,610 in 2018.

Fort Myers was also named the fastest-growing city in the United States by WalletHub in 2018, and the Cape Coral-Fort Myers metro area topped Forbes' list of fastest-growing U.S. cities in 2017. And there's no slowdown in sight: Lee County is projected to hit 1 million people in the next eight to 15 years.

What's driving that growth? In Fort Myers, it's things like the well-planned revitalization of the city's historic River District, which is causing a ripple effect in other sections of the city like Midtown that are earmarked as community redevelopment districts.

“We're excited about Midtown and what can happen there,” says Michele Hylton-Terry, executive director of the Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency. An official vision plan for Midtown adopted in 2018 includes goals like the development of attainable housing and Class A office space and a reimagining of the City of Palms Park (the onetime spring training home of the Boston Red Sox).

With a population of about 200,000, Cape Coral ranks as the eighth-largest city in Florida and still has a lot of room for growth. “Cape Coral has huge potential,” says Dan Creighton, founder of Creighton Construction & Development, which works throughout Florida and in several other states and is in the midst of a project that will bring a Lucky's Market to the city. “Lee County is a good place for companies to be based, and for waterfront property it offers some of the best values in the state of Florida. We've recruited a lot of workers here because it's a nice place to live and an affordable place. It's an amazing lifestyle.”

Infill development opportunities abound throughout Cape Coral's 120 square miles. Class A office space is needed in the city, which hopes to recruit tech firms and

professional or back-office types of companies. Corporate campuses and other clustered developments are the ideal in this geographically large city, and sites in varying stages of planning and development include Bimini Basin and Seven Islands, both of which are earmarked for mixed-use projects.

North Fort Myers is another area of Lee County prime for development. “There are some underperforming commercial properties there that we're working with the owners to activate,” says John Talmage, director of the Lee County Economic Development Office. “And once that happens, we will really have the ability to grow there. It will spur a lot of new types of investments, including workforce housing that will support the growth we're seeing in the cities of Fort Myers and Cape Coral.”

Dubbed America's first solar-powered town, the environmentally focused Babcock Ranch development is partially located in Lee County. Six million square feet of office and commercial space is planned for the new community located about 15 miles northeast of downtown Fort Myers, and developers expect that like-minded businesses interested in sustainability will be attracted to that available space.



“We’re working with several companies looking to move their headquarters into Babcock Ranch,” says Syd Kitson, CEO/chairman of Kitson & Partners, the developer of Babcock Ranch. “What companies are realizing is this is a great location right in between two airports [Lee County’s Southwest Florida International Airport and Punta Gorda Airport in Charlotte County]. And within Babcock Ranch we have a full stratification of pricing and products for their employees, who can buy a home for under \$200,000 or over \$1 million and everything in between.”

In southern Lee County, the communities of Estero and Bonita Springs are seeing both residential and commercial activity. “We have some really exciting things happening in the Alico Corridor [along Alico Road], with lots of new projects going up to support Southwest Florida International Airport and a lot of available land for future projects,” says Tiffany Esposito, executive director of the South Lee Economic Development Council.

Medical development has also been hot in Estero, where Lee Health Coconut Point, a 163,000-square-foot medical facility and health and wellness

village, opened in 2018. HCA Healthcare and its subsidiary Fawcett Memorial Hospital Inc. have also purchased 100 acres of vacant land in Estero for a future hospital location.

The unincorporated area of Lehigh Acres in the eastern part of Lee County continues to see strong residential growth, especially related to affordable housing options. And Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel and Captiva remain popular tourist and retirement destinations.

There are incentives available to encourage business growth and relocation in Lee County, such as incentives for companies creating high-wage employment in targeted industries. But Talmage feels the detailed data and other resources the Lee County Economic Development Office can provide are just as important.

“We don’t want a business to just find the site you like,” he says. “We want you to find the site you love, and then we want to make it work for you. We’re really focusing on the concierge side of business growth and attraction by holding your hand throughout the site selection process and the development process with the county, so that you’re reducing your transaction cost by getting through it all efficiently.”

Lee County Ranked No. 7 in the nation for top metropolitan areas in percentage growth from 2010 to 2018

Lee County Projected to reach 1 million people in the next eight to 15 years

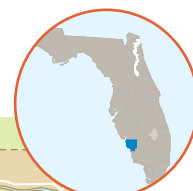
338,706 Workforce members

37% Residents with A.S. degree or higher

48 Median age

\$53,967 Median household income

\$212,652 Median home price (2018)





(t to b) Southwest Florida International Airport; Skyplex rendering; Seminole Gulf Railway

Getting Around

Whether a company wants to ship products in and out of Southwest Florida or simply move its employees between work and home, Lee County makes it easy to do that.

Lee County's Southwest Florida International Airport offers flights to more than 50 destinations in the United States, Canada, and Germany and is expected to serve 10 million passengers in 2019. Opened in 1983, it's still a relatively young airport with room for expansion, which could include a second runway down the road.

In 2020 the airport will begin a \$200-million project to expand checkpoint capacity to better serve its passenger volume. Once that is completed, the airport will likely add to its existing 28 gates. (It has the capability to grow up to 50-plus gates.)

"We have room to grow here, which I think is an asset and makes us a little unique," says Jeff Mulder, Lee County Port Authority airport director. The airport also thought strategically when it built a new terminal about a decade ago. So it's redeveloped the north side of its property (where the original terminal was) into Skyplex, which offers 1,100 acres of real estate zoned for multi-use commercial, light industrial, and aviation development.

The site is already home to a Publix-anchored shopping center and an office complex for global research and the advisory firm Gartner. Alta Resources, a global customer service outsourcing company, also has plans for a \$21 million, 90,000-square-foot office building at Skyplex that will have capacity for more than 1,000 employees.

"We love that it's close to where our workforce is coming from and has easy access to Interstate 75," says Alta Resources CEO Jim Beré. But the airport isn't the only thing taking off in these parts. Seminole Gulf Railway works with businesses on transportation and logistical needs ranging from warehousing to final-mile delivery.

With more than 100 miles of rail, it can help companies and their products get wherever they want to go in North America.

"We can accommodate anywhere from a multibillion-dollar, international company to a mom-and-pop shop," says W. Bradley Hurst, vice president of marketing and sales for Seminole Gulf Railway.

The railway has available land on which a company could build a warehouse or other facility, a trucking fleet for transporting goods between businesses and the rail line, and both dry warehousing and cold storage capabilities.

Interstate 75 runs north-south through the county and connects the area to other major Florida cities and the deep-water ports in Tampa, Manatee County, Miami, and Fort Lauderdale. Road improvement projects currently underway in Lee County include the widening of major thoroughfares like Burnt Store Road, Alico Road, S.R. 82, and S.R. 80 that will make it easier for people and goods to move around.

Utility providers in the area include Lee County Electric Cooperative, which has been serving Southwest Florida for 80 years and boasts 8,000 miles of line and 23 electric substations. "In addition to providing reliable and cost-competitive electricity, we know LCEC can play a key role in supporting a sustainable future," says Dennie Hamilton, CEO of LCEC.

There's a lot of action along the Alico Road Corridor in Fort Myers. The 240-acre Alico ITEC Park — whose name stands for innovation, technology, enterprise, and commerce — offers 1.2 million square feet of industrial and commercial space available for businesses, which will be grouped by intensity to ensure compatibility in the park. Premier Airport Park is a more than 225-acre industrial planned development entitled for 1.875 million square feet of industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, high-cube warehousing, and office park use.

Lee County Transportation & Infrastructure

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100+ Miles of Rail

23 Electric Substations

225 Acre Industrial Planned Development

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FutureMakers Coalition helps meet the need for certified nursing assistants and much more.

Working Together

Many hands make light work. It's an old saying but one that also rings true today in Lee County, where organizations and individuals come together to make the area a better place to work and live.

Take the FutureMakers Coalition, a partnership of representatives from the business, education, government, and nonprofit communities in Lee County and four other neighboring counties. Its goal: to increase the percentage of working-age adults with college degrees, industry certifications, and other high-quality credentials to 55% and transform Southwest Florida's workforce.

"The FutureMakers Coalition provides the opportunity for the entire region to get involved in supporting the development of a vibrant, productive workforce in Southwest Florida," says Sarah Owen, president and CEO of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, the anchor organization for the coalition.

FutureMakers success stories include a joint effort to meet the community's need for certified nursing assistants. It brought employers and educators together and helped find funding sources to fill vacant seats in CNA programs at local tech colleges.

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation is now taking these kinds of efforts to the next level with the opening of its Collaboratory site at its new headquarters space in the Midtown section of Fort Myers. Shared working and meeting space allows for collective discussions.

In that same kind of spirit, several local chambers of commerce have come together to form the Southwest Florida Alliance of Chambers. Originally established to advocate for water quality in the region, the group plans to continue watching the water as well as take up topics like education and workforce housing.

"When you think about how many thousands of businesses we represent, working together gives us a very strong voice," says Colleen DePasquale, president and CEO of the Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce. The chamber alliance is following in the footsteps of local organizations like the Horizon Council, a public-private board formed in 1991 to advise the Lee County Board of Commissioners on economic development. Members come from the local business, government, and education sectors and work to make Lee County attractive to businesses looking to grow or locate in the area.

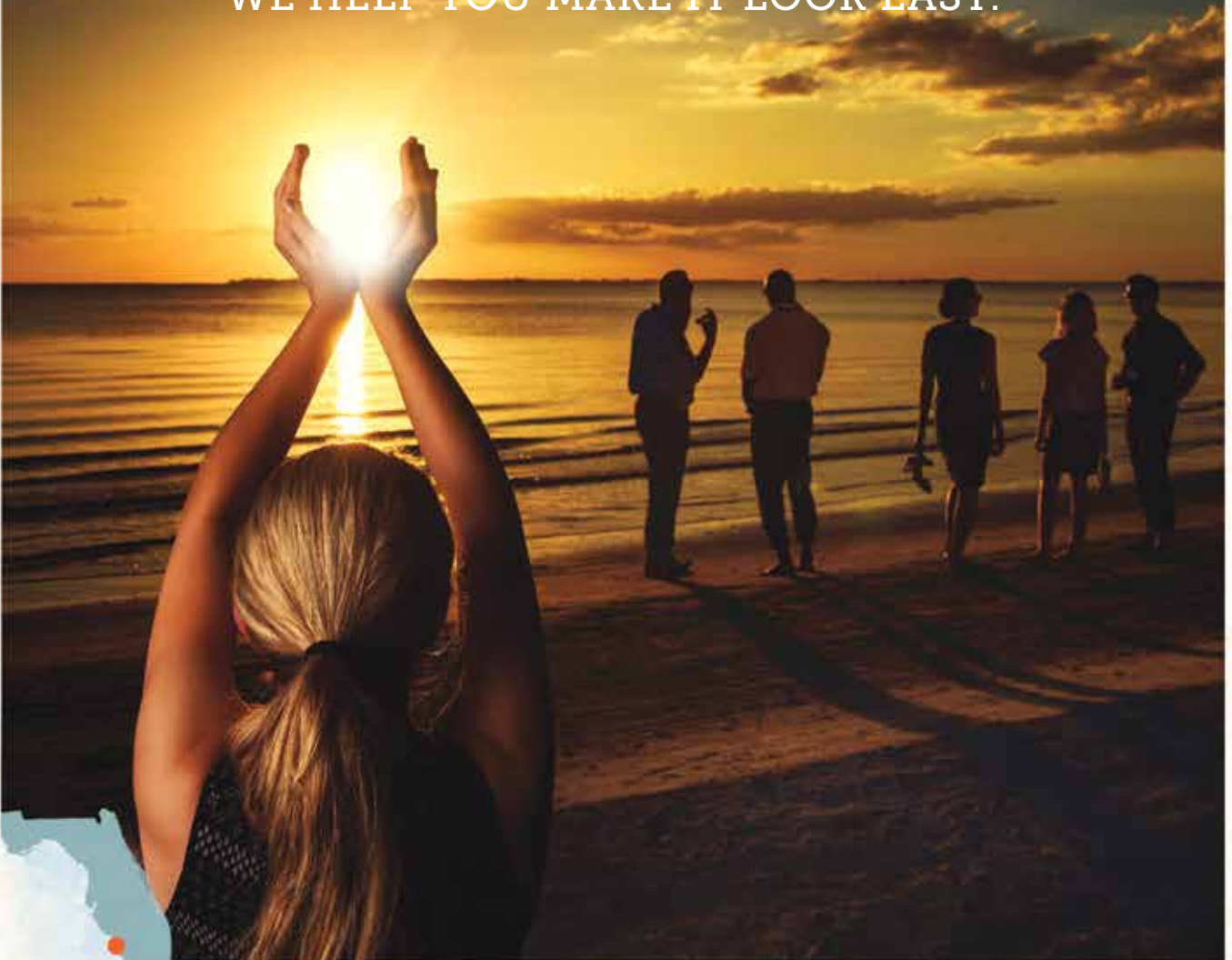
A new three-year partnership forged by the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, Florida Gulf Coast University, Community Foundation of Collier County, and Conservancy of Southwest Florida will be working to build awareness about the region's changing climate and encourage community members to take action to minimize or address its impacts.

"We see some really good momentum building, and we're excited about the opportunities to engage the community," says Rob Moher, president and CEO of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.



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(t to b) Florida Gulf Coast University; Bonita Springs High School Aerospace Academy; Dunbar High School technology class; Florida SouthWestern State College Corporate Training Center

Learning Opportunities

When students graduate from a high school in the School District of Lee County, they should be ready for either college or a career. That's why the district is continuing to expand its career and technical academies at its 14 high schools, which focus on fields like aviation, automotive technology, culinary arts, digital and media arts, plumbing, and cybersecurity.

More than 5,000 students earned industry certifications through these programs during the 2018-19 school year. "We're hoping this next school year that number will go up even higher," says Gregory K. Adkins, Ed.D., superintendent of the School District of Lee County.

The district's Dunbar High School in Fort Myers holds the distinction of being the first Microsoft-certified high school in the world, and students can earn more than 26 industry-standard IT certifications. The district is also home to two technical colleges in Fort Myers and Cape Coral offering employer-driven career education.

Part of the State University System of Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University opened in Fort Myers in 1997 and today boasts enrollment of more than 15,000 students. "All of our degrees are attuned to address the projected growth in workforce demand," says FGCU President Mike Martin.

Suffolk Construction has hired about a dozen FGCU graduates from a variety of academic programs to work in its Estero office.

"I can't think of anybody we've gotten from FGCU who has not been a great team member and very high performing very early on in their careers," says Josh Christensen, chief operating officer for the Southeast Gulf Coast at Suffolk Construction.

FGCU is also home to a Florida Small Business Development Center that provided counseling and training to more than 1,300 business owners in 2018.

Private, nonprofit school Hodges University has a campus in Fort Myers and focuses on workforce education, offering associate, bachelor's, and master's degree programs in

subjects like nursing, health care administration, computer science, and marketing. "We make sure that every degree, every certification, everything we offer has that workforce focus at its heart," says John D. Meyer, Hodges' president.

Hodges has done custom training for employers in the region and also developed a Professional Effectiveness Certificate program to teach students soft skills like organization and communication, something that employers had told Hodges was missing among the local workforce.

Serving a five-county area, Florida SouthWestern State College has four regional locations, including its original campus in Fort Myers. It has an annual enrollment of more than 20,000 students. "From the classroom to the emergency room, from your IT department to your insurance agent's office, Florida SouthWestern State College graduates are everywhere across Southwest Florida," says Jeffery S. Allbritten, Ph.D., president of Florida SouthWestern State College. One of the school's newest efforts is its Corporate Training Center in Bonita Springs, which helps local businesses take advantage of the FloridaFlex grant program. It's worked with local companies like Hertz, Gartner, and Arthrex and has trained some 7,000 new hires in the area.

Web design and digital marketing firm Atilus was born in Lee County while its founders were still students at FGCU. Today, the Bonita Springs-based firm works with clients all over the United States. "We plan on continuing to acquire more clients and increase our head count," says Harry Casimir, president and CEO of Atilus.

Formed about a decade ago, the Southwest Florida Regional Technology Partnership (SWFRTP) has been working to grow the tech industry sector through networking opportunities and workforce development efforts. Its annual TECHmatch event held in partnership with CareerSource Southwest Florida connects local high school and college students with area companies needing employees with tech skills.

Growing Workforce Talent

30,000+ University and College Students

5,000+ Industry Certified High School Students, 2018-19 School Year

Technology Takes Hold

Lee County is home to tech companies like Testimonial Tree, a customer-review management platform, and Flightdocs, which offers maintenance tracking, inventory management, and flight operations software for the aviation industry. Fort Myers-based iGPS has created a wearable, GPS-enabled smartwatch for kids that's currently sold online and will soon be available at a yet-to-be-announced U.S. retailer, and is beta testing a product for the senior market. Other local resources that have assisted growth include the entrepreneur mentoring organization Fusion Pointe and Bonita Springs coworking space Two39 Work. "It's a good place to meet with investors, mentors,

and other industry-related entrepreneurs," says iGPS co-founder Dallas Vasquez.

New cybersecurity company Cigent chose Fort Myers as its home partly due to its relationship with longtime local data recovery firm CPR Tools.

"Cigent has found Lee County to be an excellent location for a high-growth cybersecurity start-up," says Cigent CEO Brad Rowe.

Cigent recently won SWFRTP's 2019 Innovention Award, which is presented to companies developing innovative and creative technology solutions. The two other finalists for that award, Vectra Digital and VeraData, are also making a name for themselves in Lee County and beyond. Fort Myers-based Vectra Digital uses artificial intelligence to provide clients with data-driven digital

marketing services. It's a new arm of Stickboy Creative, which was founded in Fort Myers more than a decade ago and creates custom software and mobile apps for companies in Southwest Florida and outside the area.

VeraData uses AI and machine learning to help nonprofits and companies improve their fundraising and marketing efforts. The Fort Myers firm, founded in 2007, works with more than 300 large charities plus a number of commercial organizations in multiple countries.

It's opened a satellite office in the Ukraine. But VeraData is also looking to lure more highly educated talent to Lee County, which founder and CEO Michael Peterman considers a great place for a tech-based business like his. "What you see emerging in Lee County is kind of unique," he says.



(t to b) Two39 Work; iGPS

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Made in Lee County

Neil Kagan sees a lot of variety in his role as executive director of the Southwest Regional Manufacturers Association. Lee County is home to companies that make everything from hurricane shutters and garage storage systems to marine air-conditioning units, speaker coils, and medical devices. "When I tell people what's

here they always say, 'I didn't know we did that here.'"

But the companies' customers sure do, evidenced by the fact that local manufacturers are on the lookout for both more employees and bigger spaces.

Boat manufacturer Nor-Tech recently added a 55,000-square-foot production facility in Cape Coral and has a staff of 155. One of the fastest-growing boat manufacturers in the United States, it custom makes high-performance center console boats and day yachts.

Founded in a garage in the Buckingham area of Lee County, Golden Boat Lifts now employs more than 80 people and operates out of 80,000 square feet of manufacturing space in North Fort Myers. It recently introduced its new free-standing, adjustable hydraulic Tornado Lift and sells its products through dealers all over the world. "Lower median housing costs along with lower property taxes and a good workforce base to draw from, coupled with the hundreds of miles of waterfront property, is a perfect location for

(l to r) Nor-Tech; D3 Glass; Golden Boat Lifts

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“The modern fabrication warehouse is not a bunch of people with hammers and screwdrivers.”

— Matthew Johnson,
Executive Director of IMAG

.....

a boat lift manufacturer,” says Bill Golden, owner of Golden Boat Lifts.

In June 2019, D3 Glass and its sister company My Shower Door moved into a new 60,000-square-foot facility off of Alico Road in Fort Myers. My Shower Door opened its first Southwest Florida showroom for frameless shower doors in 2003. “But as business grew and we were buying enough glass, we did the math and said we could make our own glass,” says company President Bill Daubmann. They now have more than 100 employees and are expanding into impact-resistant

and other glass for exterior use.

Developing and maintaining a local manufacturing workforce is a priority. The School District of Lee County develops career and technical academies at its high schools that address local workforce needs. Students can graduate from South Fort Myers High School as an American Welding Society certified welder or from Ida S. Baker High School in Cape Coral certified in computer-aided design.

Many students are also looking for internship opportunities while still in school. “It’s a good way

for business leaders to get a student while they’re still learning and to really prepare them for a position upon graduation,” says Gregory K. Adkins, Ed.D., superintendent of the School District of Lee County.

The new Fab Lab at the IMAG History & Science Center in Fort Myers will help introduce local students to manufacturing career possibilities and serve as a place where entrepreneurs can learn how to create prototypes and eventually manufacture products. It is scheduled to open in 2019 and is supported by businesses like hurricane protection manufacturer Storm Smart.

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Gulf Coast Medical Center; EmCyte

Spreading the Health

Developments in medical care and technology, manufacturing and testing in Lee County are contributing to improvements in health and medicine. Lee Health is expanding its Gulf Coast Medical Center, which opened in Fort Myers in 2009, to keep up with the health care needs of the growing local population. Expected to be completed by the end of 2020, the \$315-million expansion will add 216 acute care beds and 52 ICU beds to bring the facility to a total of 624 beds. That will make it the largest hospital between Sarasota and Miami. An emergency department expansion will add about 30 treatment rooms, and a new parking garage offers 1,300 spots.

"The recent population explosion in Southwest Florida is an opportunity for Lee Health to further improve the health and wellness of our community," says Dr. Larry Antonucci, president and CEO of Lee Health.

Medical manufacturing company EmCyte produces devices for extracting platelet-rich plasma for sports medicine, orthopedics, and chronic wound care. Operating out of

a 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility, EmCyte introduced a product for collecting bone marrow for regenerative medical treatments. It launched the nonprofit Gulf Coast Biologics to offer professional training and community education.

EmCyte has found Lee County to be a good place to build a business. "From a real estate point of view, we have been able to secure properties over our history that have been very conducive and helpful to the growth of this business," says Chairman, President, and CEO Patrick Pennie.

NeoGenomics, a provider of cancer-focused genetic testing services based in Fort Myers for almost two decades, recently announced plans to build a 150,000-square-foot laboratory and headquarters facility on 14 acres of land in the hot Alico Road Corridor.

"We're growing so fast in Fort Myers," says Douglas VanOort, chairman and CEO of NeoGenomics, which also has labs in California, Texas, and several other U.S. and international locations. "We intend to about double our workforce over the next four years in Fort Myers, and this will allow all our people to be in one facility."

Analysts expect the company to bring in about \$400 million in revenue this year, says VanOort. "We've grown our revenue by about 20 times in 10 years, and we find ourselves now in the position of being able to say that we are the No. 1 cancer diagnostics company in the country," he says.

German company Pro Med Instruments has had its North American headquarters in Lee County since 2003. It was first based in Lehigh Acres, then moved to Cape Coral in 2008. The company makes cranial stabilization products for brain surgery used in more than 95 countries. A training and education facility was added to the Cape Coral site in 2018. Its warehouse, logistics, and service and repair center is currently undergoing an expansion to handle expected growth.

"As the company grew and expansion needed to be implemented, the decision was made to remain in Lee County due to its higher education institutions, an excellent health system, convenient airport, its quality of life, a supportive business environment, and an attractive place to attract talent," says Urs Brunner, vice president and general manager for Pro Med Instruments.

"We're growing so fast in Fort Myers."

— Douglas VanOort, Chairman and CEO of NeoGenomics

Corporate Headquarters & Regional Office Park Opportunities Available in Cape Coral



Cape Coral, the 8th largest city in Florida, ranks in the top 10 cities for commercial real estate investment. This city-owned site will soon become available through an RFP process for Corporate Office Parks. Located in northeast Cape Coral along the city's main north-south artery, the site is comprised of 135 acres of buildable space, ideally suited to support an exclusive office campus.

Advantages to consider include no state income tax, executive and workforce housing options and skilled labor, infrastructure to site (sewer, water and electrical power) and unbeatable quality of life with possible impact fee deferrals.

For both office developers and corporations interested in a Gulf Coast national or regional headquarters presence, this may be the site for you. For more information on the upcoming RFP, please email Ricardo Noguera, Cape Coral Economic Development Manager at RNoguera@capecoral.net or call (239) 242-3274.



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Three Benefits Developers Should Expect

How Choosing Design-Build Can Reduce Risk

By: Dan Helmick, PE

Design-build is quickly gaining traction in the United States as the preferred project delivery method in construction. In fact, according to Fails Management Institute (FMI), it will represent nearly half of construction spending by 2021. There are many benefits to the design-build approach over traditional design-bid-build methods. These benefits include faster construction and delivery, decreased cost overruns and schedule delays, and lower chance of litigation or other risks for the construction manager. In addition to considering these well-documented benefits, there are other deliverables you should expect from your design-builder.

1. Lower Pursuit Costs

Pursuit costs can have a drastic impact on a project's return on investment. Worse yet, there is the risk of negative return on investment if the project fails to move forward. The best scenario is to make the go/no go decision as early and as inexpensively as possible. You should expect your design-builder to facilitate that decision-making process. Your design-builder should have enough experience and knowledge of costs in delivering your type of project to assist in proving your pro forma well before completion of the design. Waiting for construction costs to be known until after the design is complete should not be deemed an acceptable option. Paying for a full set of construction documents to determine that your pro forma numbers don't work, causing significant time and effort to then "value engineer", is not financially prudent.

2. Improved Delivery Process

You should expect a single point of contact and accountability, which reduces your risk of litigation. Look for a design-builder committed to process optimization. Bringing major subcontractors to the table early to assist with system designs and equipment choices reduces cost overruns and delays caused by long-lead items. Your building should function as you intended without receiving unexpected change orders, unless initiated by you. A technology-enabled design-builder can assist in making early, accurate decisions, better controlling cost and the schedule, with virtual reality walkthroughs and Building Information Technology (BIM). The ability to make changes during the design, rather than during construction, improves functionality, mitigates constructability challenges, and schedule delays.



3. Less Market Risk

Finishing your project on time, or even early, means increasing the odds that you open your building before adverse changes in market conditions occur. Shorter construction periods allow you to pay less construction finance interest, reducing overall project costs.

In addition, you should continue to receive benefits long after your contractual relationship ends. Be sure the designer's and builder's choices help reduce costs for as long as you own the asset. Choices for the structural system, such as concrete over wood, can help reduce life cycle, insurance, and maintenance costs and improve quality and livability, making it more sought after for renters or future buyers.

Realizing the Greater Benefits of Design-Build

When choosing a design-builder, be sure there are clear lines of responsibility amongst all parties. Ideally, in a design-build scenario, your contract is with the general contractor who is responsible for the performance of all other consultants, subcontractors, and suppliers. This completion guarantee is one of design-build's greatest benefits over the traditional design-bid-build process where, as the owner, you hire a designer and contractor under separate contracts.

In the typical design-bid-build scenario, the owner frequently receives no guarantee for the correctness and completeness of the design, yet warrants to the general contractor that the design is correct and complete. It also places the burden of responsibility for expenditures related to sub-optimization, scope creep, change orders, and schedule delays that result from incorrect or incomplete design squarely on the owner. So for your next building project, be sure to consider design-build as it properly places the risk in the appropriate parties' hands.



Dan Helmick is the Executive Vice President of Project Development for FINFROCK, a vertically-integrated, single-source design-build firm based in Apopka, Florida.

Dan oversees the conceptual design, design development, architectural design, sales, business development, and preconstruction process as well as acting as the owner's key point of contact. He has been instrumental in bringing in multi-million dollar projects for FINFROCK,

solidifying the company's reputation as a leading Design-Builder in Central Florida.

His expertise in understanding successful project delivery processes that convey an abundance of project owner benefits has instilled confidence in clients who look to him as a trusted advisor for their building projects.

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New and Noteworthy

A look at some of the projects popping up or planned for the area

Luminary Hotel

Downtown Fort Myers has long awaited a new hotel to bring more activity to its Harborside Event Center. The Luminary Hotel — which will be connected to the event center — opens in 2020. The 12-story property being developed by Mainsail Lodging & Development will be the area’s first hotel in Marriott’s Autograph Collection, offering 243 guestrooms and suites, restaurants, a rooftop bar, a pool overlooking the Caloosahatchee River, and 8,000 square feet of adaptable function space.

“It’s just so exciting to be able to have that caliber of hotel and be able to offer the convention experience in downtown Fort Myers,” says Michele Hylton-Terry, executive director of the Fort Myers Community Redevelopment Agency.

City Walk

Located on McGregor Boulevard west of downtown Fort Myers, the City Walk project will include a four-story, 318-unit apartment building. Also in the plans: 15,000 square feet of office space and a commercial parcel. The project also has approval for a 130-room hotel, and discussions with various brands are underway.

“We think this is a good time to get into downtown Fort Myers, because we see over the next 10 to 15 years the potential for growth down there,” says Joseph Bonora, president of Catalyst Asset Management, the developer of the project.

Bonora is also finishing up his Grand Central project on U.S. 41 near Page Field. The retail space is up and running and 280 Class A apartment units will be completed by the end of 2019.

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(l to r) Renderings of:
Luminary Hotel; City
Walk; Mosaic @ Oak
Creek; Margaritaville
Resort Fort Myers Beach

Downtown Bonita Springs

This city of more than 50,000 has invested some \$30 million over the last few years to transform its downtown area. That includes utility improvements, streetscaping, and increased parking. All of that work is paving the way for development activity in the downtown area, which includes a new \$14-million Lee County public library and projects like Mosaic @ Oak Creek, featuring 273 apartment homes and more than 7,000 square feet of commercial space. The city also plans to request proposals on five acres it owns along the Imperial River.

"We are on the cusp of the next phase for Bonita Springs," says Mayor Peter Simmons.

Margaritaville Resort Fort Myers Beach, Estero Island

Developer TPI Hospitality has a goal of starting construction in early 2020. It will take about 18 months to completely build out the Margaritaville Resort Fort Myers Beach. When finished, the V-shaped piece of property near the Matanzas Pass Bridge entryway onto Estero Island will be home to a 224-room hotel. That will connect via an elevated pedestrian overpass to another piece of resort property along the Gulf of Mexico, featuring a building with a bar, restaurant, and 30 additional hotel rooms plus a pool area that will be open to resort guests and local residents.

"It really is a catalyst to revitalize Estero Island," says Bill Upshaw, CEO of TPI Hospitality.

Bell Tower

This outdoor shopping and dining zone is in the midst of a redevelopment. It's got a new modern look (think contemporary lighting and redesigned storefronts) and dropped the word "Shops" from its name to reflect the fact that there's more to do there than just browsing and buying. Restaurant and arcade Dave & Buster's opened a new location at Bell Tower in spring 2019, and new restaurant tenants will be coming later in the year. "We want to offer visitors an 18-hour-a-day destination," says Samantha Lillard, senior general manager for Bell Tower.



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In Good Company

Large, nationally known companies including Hertz, Chico's FAS, and Gartner play a big role in the local economy, but there are lots of other Lee County companies you should know about.

Life is pretty sweet these days for Norman Love Confections, the Fort Myers chocolate maker employing more than 100 people. It continues to grow its relationship with Whole Foods, expanding its corporate sales team, and pursuing sites for additional brick-and-mortar stores throughout Florida to join four Southwest Florida "chocolate and dessert salons."

The company plans to move its fulfillment center. "It's a strategic move and a big step that will provide an enormous push for our e-commerce platform to become more competitive," says owner Norman Love. A larger manufacturing facility in Lee County is also a possibility.

Alta Resources, headquartered in Wisconsin, has had a Fort Myers location since 2013. The proximity to several colleges and universities and a well-served airport make it a natural fit for the company, offering call-center, e-commerce, and other outsourcing solutions for clients representing well-known brands in consumer-packaged goods, health insurance, automotive, and sports apparel.

Founded in 1996, Storm Smart is coming off its largest growth year ever. It is known for state-of-the-art Storm Catcher fabric screens that can decrease hurricane winds and rain by 95%. Hurricane Irma helped the company grow revenues by more than 80% year-over-year in 2018.

The company has grown to more than 200 employees supplying over 80,000 customers. "We're always looking at different things, whether it's looking at creating new products or entering new markets," says Jeff Koehn, chief brand officer.

SecondMuse, a global company



Norman Love Confections

focused on collaboration, chose Fort Myers as a new location, launching a community-centric incubator in partnership with the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and the city of Fort Myers. Operating out of the foundation's new Collaboratory space, it will work with entrepreneurs from a variety of industries, using local resources for mentoring and training. "We'll be working across all levels of entrepreneurship and really trying to build an economy that looks like Southwest Florida, instead of trying to build an economy that looks like someplace else," says Jonathan Romine, SecondMuse Fort Myers program director.

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EMCYTE CORPORATION



Unmatched Innovation in Regenerative Medicine

The EmCyte Corporation, founded in 2008 by Patrick Pennie after a decade of regenerative research and product development, recently launched the independent training and education center Gulf Coast Biologics in Fort Myers. The not-for-profit, state-of-the-art training center encourages learning, collaboration and fellowship in a vibrant and modern facility. Gulf Coast Biologics offers both regularly scheduled and personalized training courses covering a variety of regenerative medicine topics presented by renowned medical practitioners. The facility provides Educational CME-certified activities in concert with the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center and the Center for Continuing Medical Education.

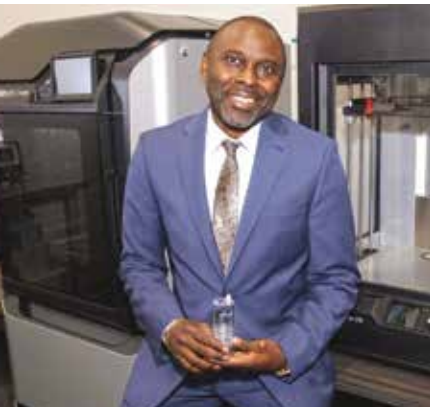
“Gulf Coast Biologics was established as a stand-alone entity that will serve the regenerative community with substantive courses,” said EmCyte Corporation and Gulf Coast Biologics President and CEO Patrick Pennie.

Pennie started his clinical career as a critical care open heart registered nurse, and became certified as a clinical perfusionist. He pioneered PRP regenerative medicine with the Secquire Platelet Concentrating System and spearheaded the Florida Platelet Gel Symposium, the first advanced training and education symposium for regenerative medicine.

Headquartered in Fort Myers in a 30,000-sq.-ft facility, EmCyte Corporation is a medical manufacturing company and world leader in platelet rich plasma and progenitor stem cell biologics.

EmCyte’s products include the PureBMC® SupraPhysiologic Concentrating System, the ASPIRE™ Bone Marrow Harvesting System, and the PurePRP® SupraPhysiologic Concentrating System. These products are the only PRP and BMC systems that provide clinical cellular concentrations with significantly reduced red blood cell content. EmCyte’s regenerative biologics, PurePRP® SupraPhysiologic and PureBMC® Supra-Physiologic, offer powerful regenerative cell recovery with protocol versatility, shorter processing times, reduced processing steps and single device closed system processing. The new ASPIRE™ Bone Marrow Harvesting System is a medical breakthrough in bone marrow aspiration, consistently collecting a powerful bone marrow aspirate without the levels of toxic substances normally collected in other harvesting systems. All EmCyte regenerative products are 510k cleared by the FDA. Its manufacturing facility is ISO 13485 certified and compliant with FDA regulatory standards for good manufacturing practices, and they have a certified cleanroom with state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment.

EmCyte also holds three patents, for the Centrifuge Tube for separating and aspirating biological components, and the Centrifuge Tube assembly, as well as several trademarks.



“Gulf Coast Biologics was established as a stand-alone entity that will serve the regenerative community with substantive courses.”

Patrick Pennie

To learn more, visit
EmCyte at emcyte.com
or Gulf Coast Biologics at
gulfcoastbiologics.com.





(l to r) sunset at Fort Myers Fishing Pier; Art Walk; kayaking; Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center; (t to b) Southwest Florida Symphony; fishing; Boston Red Sox spring training; Sanibel Shell Fair; Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival;

Love Where You Live

What often first attracts people to Lee County are its more than 50 miles of gorgeous beaches and pristine natural areas like the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. Or they might have come to Lee County to catch a spring training game for the Boston Red Sox or Minnesota Twins and realized there's a lot to love about the region.

The Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall hosts touring Broadway shows and other performances, while spaces like the Florida Repertory Theatre stage much-loved and up-and-coming comedies and dramas. The Southwest Florida Symphony features a full season of concerts, and the Sidney & Berne Davis Arts Center offers jazz, chamber music, and other concert series throughout the year.

There's always a festival or special event on the calendar in Lee County, including the annual Island Hopper Songwriter Fest, Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival, Sanibel Shell Fair & Show, and Fort Myers Film Festival. And the popular monthly Art Walk and Music Walk draw folks to the historic River District in downtown Fort Myers.

Thomas Edison once called Lee County home, and you can tour the prolific inventor's Florida residence (plus neighbor Henry Ford's pad) at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates. IMAG History & Science Center offers more insight about the area's past plus info on the local ecosystem via interactive, hands-on exhibits. "Southwest Florida is a unique place with wonderful natural things you can do, but now it also has more

of these urban conveniences that it didn't have 20 years ago, like places of gathering, events, and programs," says Matthew Johnson, IMAG's executive director.

Staying healthy is easy to do in Lee County with all the ways to enjoy the outdoors (Lee County is home to more than 90 golf courses and soon a Topgolf) combined with the area's robust medical offerings. Local stalwart Lee Health — the largest public health system in the state of Florida — serves more than 1 million patients a year at four acute care hospitals and two specialty hospitals. It also runs urgent care centers, physician locations, and health and wellness centers throughout the county.

With no state income tax, 262 sunny days a year, and an average high temperature of 84.8 degrees, Lee County makes for a pretty great spot to live whether you're a CEO, student, or something in between.

"We're growing, but we're also very conscious of preserving what we're known for, which is our environment and our quality of life," says Cecil Pendergrass, who represents District 2 on the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and sits on the executive committee for the Horizon Council. "In the last year, we've purchased more than 10,000 acres of conservation lands in Lee County. We will never look like the East Coast; we will have our green spaces and public access to our conservation lands. You can drive 20 minutes to the east and go horseback riding, and you can drive 20 minutes to the west and be on the beach."

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People to Know

Lee County leaders are found in industries including education, health and medicine, banking, technology, transportation, realty, tourism, and everything in between.

Gregory Adkins
Superintendent
School District
of Lee County



Jeffery Allbritten
President
Florida
SouthWestern
State College



Dr. Larry Antonucci
President/CEO
Lee Health

Brandon Box
EVP/Market President
Iberia Bank

Bonnie Brooks
CEO/President, Chico's FAS

Harry Casimir
President and CEO, Atilus

Joe Coviello
Mayor, City of Cape Coral

Dan Creighton
Founder
Creighton Construction
& Development

Bill Daubmann
President
D3 Glass, My Shower Door

Anthony DeBono
President/CEO
d3 creative studio



Colleen DePasquale
President/CEO
Greater Fort Myers
Chamber of
Commerce

Roger Desjarlais
County Manager, Lee County

Tiffany Esposito
Executive Director
South Lee Economic
Development Council

Dan Eveloff
Chair, Horizon Council

Michael Flanders
President/CEO
Edison & Ford Winter Estates



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School Board Chair,
District 5
Lee County
School District

Gene Hall
CEO, Gartner

Dennie Hamilton
CEO
Lee County Electric
Cooperative



Brian Hamman
Commissioner &
Vice Chairman,
District 4
Board of County
Commissioners,
Lee County

Randy Henderson Jr.
Mayor, Fort Myers

W. Bradley Hurst
Vice President of
Marketing and Sales
Seminole Gulf Railway

Michele Hylton-Terry
Executive Director
Fort Myers Community
Redevelopment Agency

Melinda Isley
Owner, MCreative PR

Mike Jackson
President
CareerSource Southwest
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Matthew Johnson
Executive Director
IMAG History &
Science Center

Neil Kagan
Executive Director
Southwest Regional
Manufacturers Association

Wayne Kirkwood
Owner, President
Kirkwood Electric
President, **Horizon Foundation**

Syd Kitson
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Bob Koenig
Vice President of Construction
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Chris-Tel Construction

John Lai
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Frank Mann
Commissioner,
District 5
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John Manning
Commissioner,
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Southwest Florida Community Foundation

Patrick Pennie
 Founder, President and CEO
EmCyte Corporation



Cecil Pendergrass
 Commissioner and Board Liaison, District 2,
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Chief Fundraising Consultant
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Bill Upshaw

CEO
TPI Hospitality

Douglas VanOort

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