St. Johns County sees business growth

By Sheldon Gardner
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When talking about growth, the St. Johns County's population and housing market usually get much of the attention.

But business investment has been growing, too.

From 2011 to early 2019, the county saw an increase of 1,846 businesses and 21,438 jobs just in the private sector, according to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

Over the past few years, St. Johns County saw business growth of 14.2%, according to a study by New York financial technology company SmartAsset. The statistic is from a study that looked in part at the change in the number of businesses established over three years.

One measure of commercial growth is total market valuation.

It's the value the developer or applicant puts on a commercial project as part of the permitting process, said Melissa Glasgow, director of economic development for St. Johns County.

The county saw a jump this fiscal year in the value of commercial projects coming in.

Total commercial market valuation was more than $369.8 million for this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30, according to a county building services report for August. That's already more than $118.9 million higher than the total for the previous fiscal year.

"It's a huge deal," Glasgow said.

It means the county will have a bigger tax base to look forward to when those projects are built, she said.

Large-scale developments such as Durbin Park are having an influence. The new growth is heavy on healthcare and professional offices in part of the county, Glasgow said.

St. Johns County is "enormously popular" and has seen growth for the last several years, she said.

"I'm so pleased with the progress we've made in terms of economic development and our ability to attract new businesses that are creating new jobs and increasing our average county wage," Glasgow wrote in an email to *The Record*. "The overall economic benefit of this activity spreads throughout the community in a number of positive ways."