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Northrop Grumman is adding 400 jobs at its St. Augustine aerospace facility.

# All Cylinders

St. Johns grows its base beyond tourism.

The historic sites of St. Augustine and the golf resorts of Ponte Vedra Beach make tourism a driving force in the St. Johns County economy. But other sectors are clicking as well: Along with leisure and hospitality and construction, “our manufacturers are also growing,” says Melissa Glasgow, director of economic development in St. Johns County.

Northrop Grumman, the county’s largest industrial employer, is expanding its St. Augustine aerospace facility, adding 400 jobs to the 1,100

already working there. The county also benefited from the move of Ideal Aluminum Products’ headquarters from DeLand to St. Augustine, bringing more than 100 jobs, Glasgow says.

“Our aim is to continue to diversify our economy so we’re not as dependent on single-industry sectors such as tourism and home building,” she says.

Outside of St. Augustine, northern St. Johns County serves as a bedroom community for Jacksonville, with largely upscale develop-



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— Melissa Glasgow

ments that have little unemployment, says University of North Florida economist Paul Mason.

For two years in a row, the county has had the second-lowest unemployment rate in the state, behind only Monroe County. St. Johns County’s average unemployment rate dropped from 4.7% in 2014 to 3.9% last year.

“While I see that as clearly positive, I also realize that for the rate to drop much lower could potentially impact the ability of businesses to find enough workers to sustain their growth,” Glasgow says.

Meanwhile, the county’s 4% population growth rate ranked St. Johns as the 11th fastest-growing county in the nation in 2014. “That influx of people will help add to our workforce and keep it balanced,” Glasgow says.