

Northern St. Johns County: A favorable locale to establish a business

By Gary Shivers
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Nine years ago, I decided it was time to launch a new business and though I had done this before, the decision never gets any easier. Once I was ready to move forward, my next challenge was selecting the best location. My wife and I had spent years going back and forth from our home in New Jersey to what we used to call our vacation home in Ponte Vedra Beach. We loved the area, so when it came time to make the decision on where to open the business, I started by researching St. Johns County and was pleasantly surprised.

We always viewed this area as a beautiful place to escape to and live. How can you beat beautiful beaches, great fishing and incredible weather? The more I researched the area from a business perspective the more excited I got.

The region combines many important factors that support business success, including access to a young, educated workforce, relatively low taxes and utility rates, as well as a sound infrastructure. The active lifestyle and positive business environment created a compelling case to both start our business here and make this area our permanent home.

We started the company in 2008, when the great recession was upon us. Despite the economic downturn, both St. Johns County and the business prospered. Today, St. Johns County continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in the region and according to the U.S. Census Bureau in July 2016, the county enjoyed a population growth rate of 3.7 percent — making it a contender for one of the highest growth rate counties in the country.

A growing population supported by ample housing, top-ranked schools, low unemployment and progressive economic development combine to create a positive, stable business environment. These factors supported our decision to relocate a significant number of our resources to the area. Our commitment to the area is reflected in our future plans to focus the majority of our expansion within the county.

Our company operates throughout the United States, but due to our local presence, more than 18 percent of our business is in the state of Florida. Several key relationships are with companies located in St. Johns County. Roy Farr, owner and operator of a local trucking company, recently shared that his company is experiencing a significant increase in activity. He gave the example that over the next couple of months one his customers is expected to increase their weekly

shipping container pick-ups by 40 percent. We view this as positive news since the transportation sector is one that tends to follow economic trends.

When I look back, I can see that building my business here was the best decision I could have made. Our company will be celebrating its nine year anniversary this fall and St. Johns County has proven to be a rewarding environment in which to grow.

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