



EDC ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2023 – 2024

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development Council



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

FISCAL YEAR 2023–2024



CHAIR

Dirk Schroeder
Century 21 St. Augustine
Properties



VICE CHAIR

Jim Bush
Florida Power and Light



IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

Orville Dothage
Northrop Grumman Corp.



EX-OFFICIO

Berta Odom
Chair of St. Johns County
Chamber of Commerce



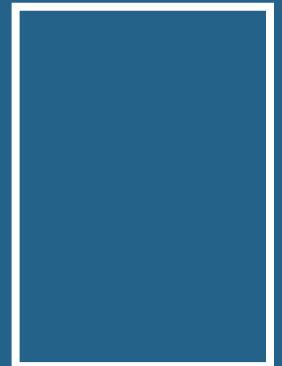
Brenan Asplen
St. Johns County
School District



Louis Noir-Jones
First Citizens Bank



Victor Raymos
St. Augustine & St.
Johns County Board
of Realtors & MLS



Kevin Sweeny
UF Health St. Johns

WORD FROM THE CHAIR

In 2023-2024, St. Johns County continued to welcome new businesses and watch existing ones expand. At the end of the fiscal year, we had a 3.2% unemployment rate and represented a big part of the 5,100 jobs added in Education and Health Services in Northeast Florida. As the fiscal year ended, there were 30 active prospects in the development pipeline, with 63% falling within the identified targeted industries. New inquiries were steady this year, and the county is still actively pursuing new opportunities.

Once again, a number of new healthcare facilities were announced or opened this year. These included announcing a 156-bed UF Health St. Johns hospital, a new Baptist Health/Wolfson Children's Dual Emergency Room and Imaging Center, and Acadia Healthcare's 104-bed behavioral health facility. Others included a new TyME Cancer Research and Treatment Center and AdventHealth's new emergency room in the southern part of the county.

The Chamber started an Attainable Workforce Housing Coalition to build support and educate the public on the vital need. Attracting and retaining a qualified workforce is critical to sustaining the local economy in St. Johns County. Unfortunately, many of these essential workers in our community cannot afford to live here due to the lack of available housing at attainable prices. The Workforce Housing Coalition encouraged local businesses to advocate for incorporating sustainable solutions into the St. Johns County Comprehensive Plan to ensure more opportunities for attainable workforce housing.

Entrepreneurship continued to be a significant focus of the EDC. The Pitch Factory program prepared entrepreneurs by providing a seven-session program taught by local experts. Participants developed a general understanding of starting a new business and how to identify available resources to help their business succeed. The program also allowed each participant to pitch their idea to a panel and receive feedback.

The Chamber and our business partners have a strong spirit of cooperation and collaboration. I want to thank everyone at the Chamber for all their hard work this past year. I look forward to my continued involvement as the Immediate Past Chair of the Economic Development Council and can confidently turn over leadership to Jim Bush as Chair.

Regards,

Dirk Schroeder

Chair, Executive Committee
Economic Development Council 2023-2024

MISSION & PARTNERSHIPS

MISSION

The mission of the Economic Development Council is multifaceted: to promote the economic growth of St. Johns County by attracting new business and industry into the community, enhancing the growth and expansion of existing business and industry, fostering entrepreneurialism and innovation, and supporting workforce development and business education programs.

The Economic Development Council (EDC) provides support to business owners, executives, and entrepreneurs who seek to start, expand or relocate enterprises in St. Johns County.

Our efforts are leveraged by collaboration and cooperation with federal, state, regional, and local partners. The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Council wishes to specifically recognize the following partners for their positive contributions to economic development in St. Johns County.

PARTNERSHIPS

Economic development is a purposeful and collaborative endeavor in which the St. Johns County Chamber is fortunate to count the following organizations as partners:

ST. JOHNS COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Economic Development is the number one priority of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners. Capitalizing on its global appeal, St. Johns County is poised for economic growth through its strategic location, favorable climate, local economic development incentives, and outstanding community services.

OTHER PARTNERS

- | | |
|--|--|
| • CareerSource Northeast Florida | • Northeast Florida Regional Airport |
| • City of St. Augustine | • Northeast Florida Regional Council |
| • City of St. Augustine Beach | • SCORE |
| • Cooperative Education and Internship Association | • Small Business Development Center |
| • First Coast Manufacturers Association | • St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitor and Convention Bureau |
| • First Coast Technical College | • St. Johns County Industrial Development Authority |
| • Flagler College Innovation Center | • St. Johns County School District |
| • Florida Chamber of Commerce | • St. Johns County Tourist Development Council |
| • Florida Commerce | • St. Johns River State College |
| • Florida Department of Transportation | • UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) |
| • Florida Economic Development Council | • U.S. Chamber of Commerce |
| • Industrial Development Authority | • U.S. Department of Commerce |
| • Jacksonville Aviation Authority | • Vilano Beach Main Street, Inc. |
| • Jacksonville Transportation Authority | • VISIT FLORIDA |
| • JAXPORT | |
| • JAXUSA | |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third quarter brought more positive news for the County. The local legislative delegation championed through a number of funding bills that yielded over 108 million dollars for St. Johns County. This significant funding will not only provide much-needed support for various infrastructure and beach renourishment projects but also contribute to the overall development and well-being of our community. It also includes funding for a Regional Fire Training Center and a Unified Command Center, further enhancing our safety and preparedness.

This year's SJC Chamber Annual Legislative Update was a resounding success, with a strong turnout that underscored our community's commitment to progress. The Chamber welcomed esteemed guests such as Paul Renner, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives; Sarah Arnold, SJC Commission Chair; Mayor Nancy Sikes Kline, City of St. Augustine; Mayor Dylan Rumrell, City of St. Augustine Beach; Shorty Robbins, Legislative Aide to Representative Cyndi Stevenson; and Craft Talbot, Legislative Aide for Senator Travis Hutson. Each provided a detailed update on their accomplishments and challenges during this past year, inspiring us all with their dedication and achievements.

Unemployment continued to remain low in the region. FloridaCommerce announced that the unemployment rate for the Jacksonville region was 3.0 percent in May 2024, down slightly from 3.2 percent in April 2024 and 3.4 percent in March 2024. In May, St. Johns County continued to have the lowest unemployment rate in the region at 2.7 percent.

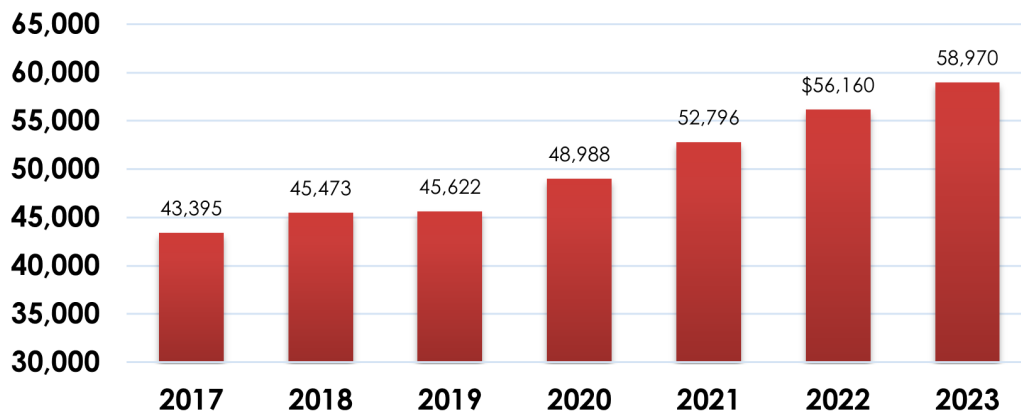
The Cooperative Education and Internship Association recently held its 61st annual conference in Tampa, Florida. Employers from St. Johns and Duval Counties served as the luncheon keynote panel. Doreen Lund, Apprenticeship Manager with CareerSource Northeast Florida, moderated the panel, which featured speakers from Miller Electric, UF Health St. Johns, and a representative for Northrop Grumman. The panel discussed apprenticeship programs at each facility, sharing their challenges and successes.

Also supporting our local workforce, the Sapna Foundation launched state-of-the-art software to revolutionize local employment opportunities by connecting community talent with local companies. [Hirelocal.org](https://hirelocal.org) will transform communities by bridging the gap between local talent and businesses. By leveraging behavioral science and advanced analytics, HireLocal.org's patented platform aligns the Skills, Interests, Talents, and Aspirations of students, veterans, and the unemployed with the needs of local small businesses. This innovative approach not only fosters economic growth but also strengthens community ties.

Finally, we successfully launched our new St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Foundation and began planning the celebration of our 120th year as a Chamber. The Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that aims to serve the community through leadership opportunities, workforce education, and economic development programs. The Foundation expands the Chamber's mission by offering additional programming and philanthropy beyond the traditional business sector.

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES & PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS

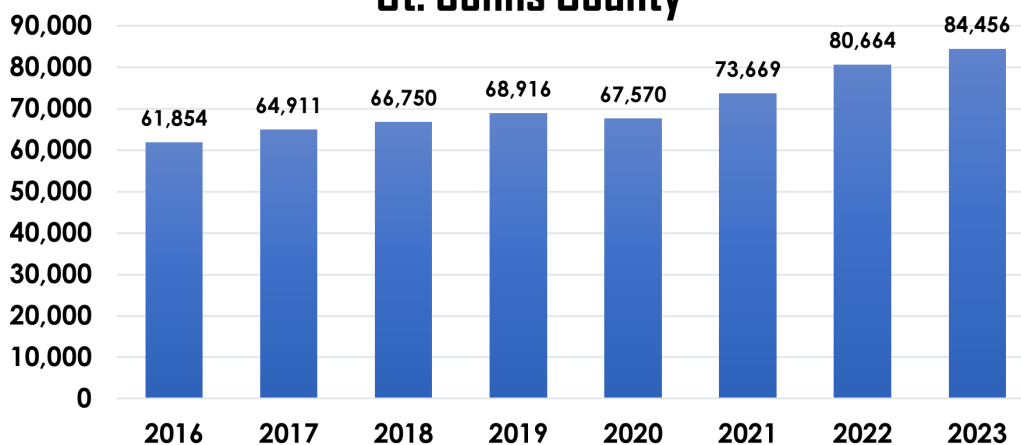
Private Sector Average Annual Wages St. Johns County



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program (QCEW).

As detailed by the above chart, average annual wages in St. Johns County have increased annually for several years. Average wages increased 5.00 percent in 2023 to almost \$59,000.

Private Sector Jobs St. Johns County

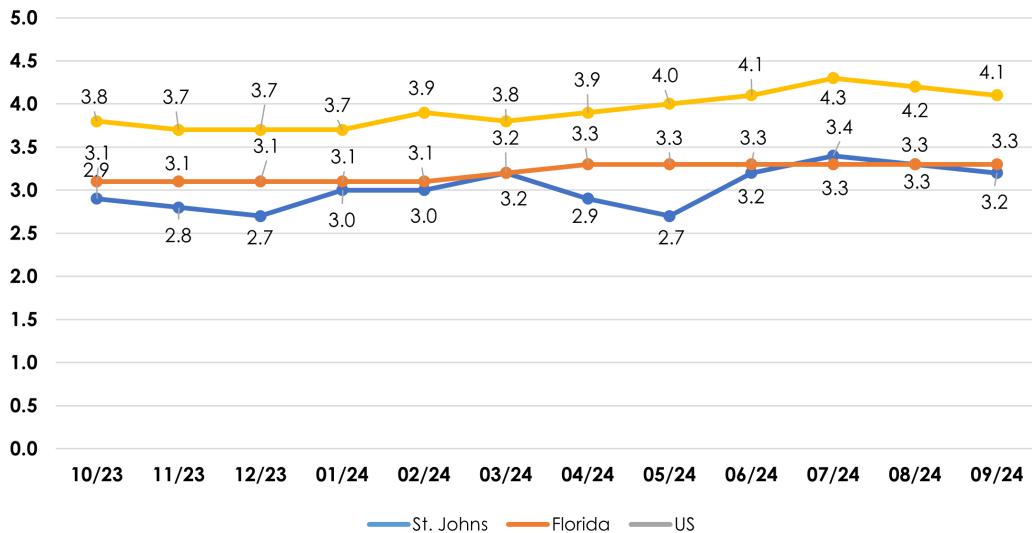


Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages

After being down 2.1% in 2020 this year brought a third year of increases. The increase of 4.7 percent is about half the 9.5 percent increase last year. As tourism has dropped slightly, this smaller increase is not surprising. The population growth has also slowed.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

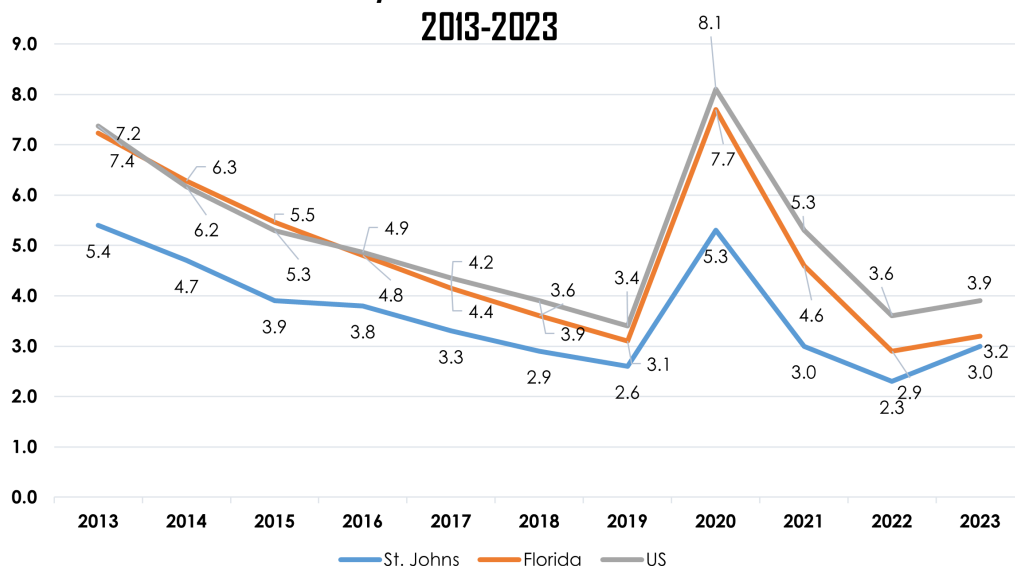
Unemployment Rate Comparison FY 23-24 St. Johns County - State of Florida - United States



Sources: Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Economic Research Division, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Rates are not seasonally adjusted.

In 2023, St. Johns County's Annual Unemployment rate increased as tourism stabilized after the post pandemic surge. St. Johns County had an annual unemployment rate of 3.0 percent, below both the state average of 3.2% and the national average of 3.9%.

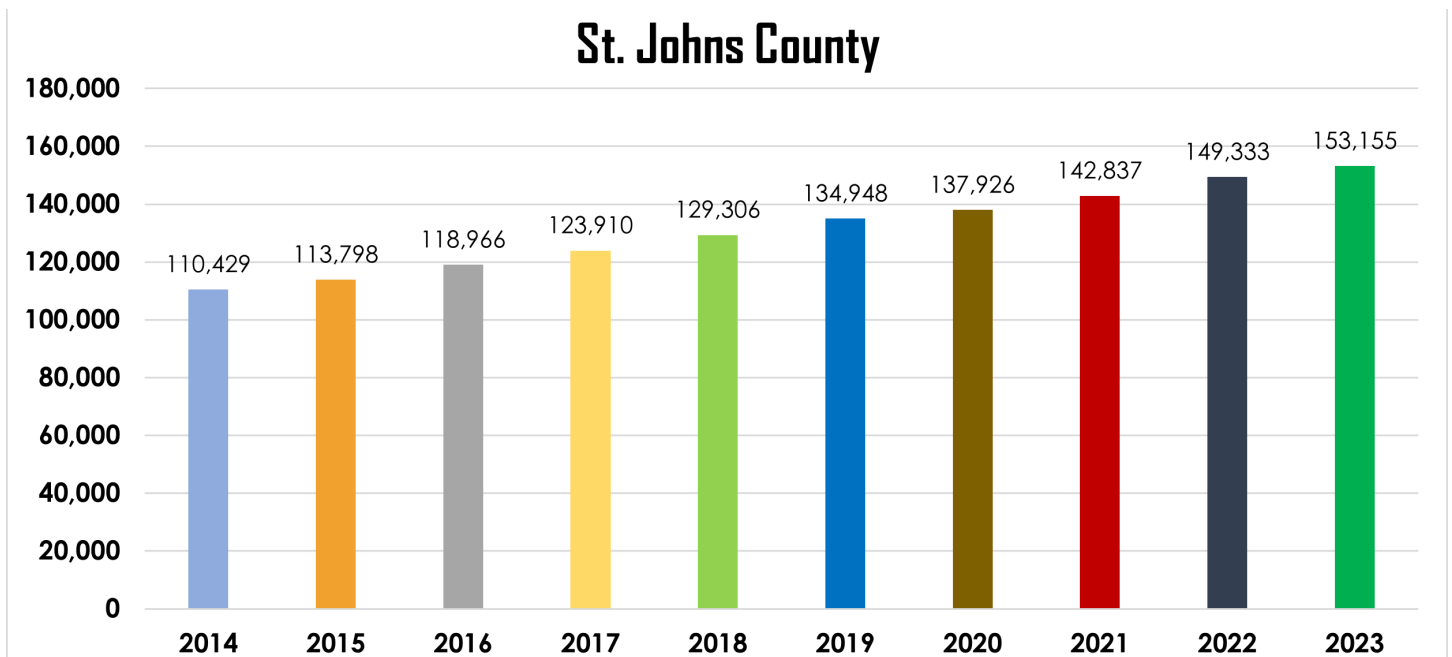
Annual Unemployment Rate Comparison St. Johns County - State of Florida - United States 2013-2023



Sources: Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Economic Research Division, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Rates are not seasonally adjusted.

Despite inflation continuing to be an issue nationwide, the unemployment rate for St. Johns County trended below the state and nation. At the end of the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year, the DEO reported an unemployment rate of 3.2% for St. Johns County as compared to Florida at 3.3% and the U.S. at 4.1%. This was an increase from the same time in 2022-23, but still remains historically low.

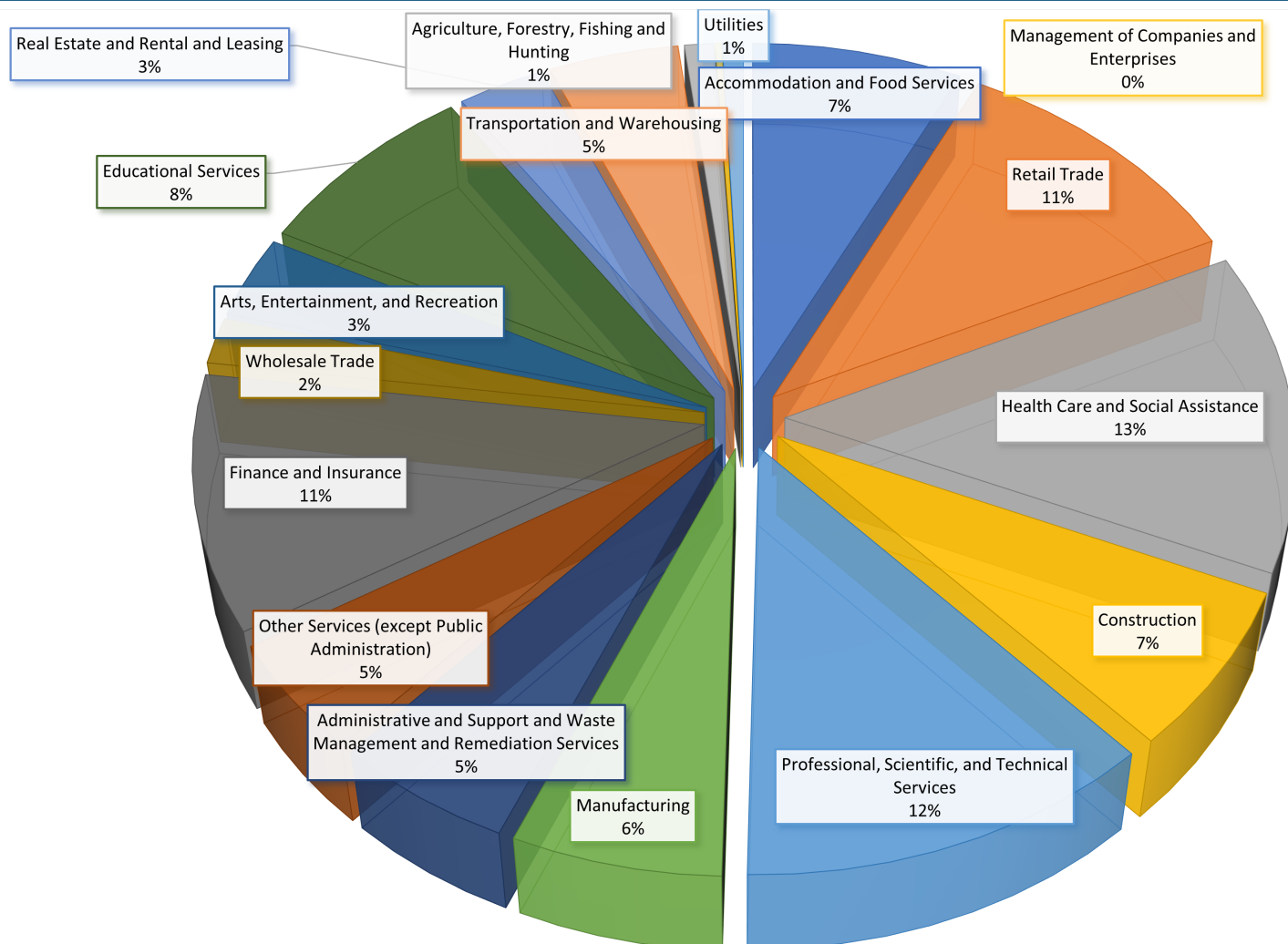
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE



Source: Economic Research Division, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

Over the last decade, St. Johns County has experienced continued growth in the civilian labor force. In 2023, the county added 3,822 civilian employees representing an increase of 2.5 percent over 2022. This is almost half the increase between 2021 and 2022.

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR



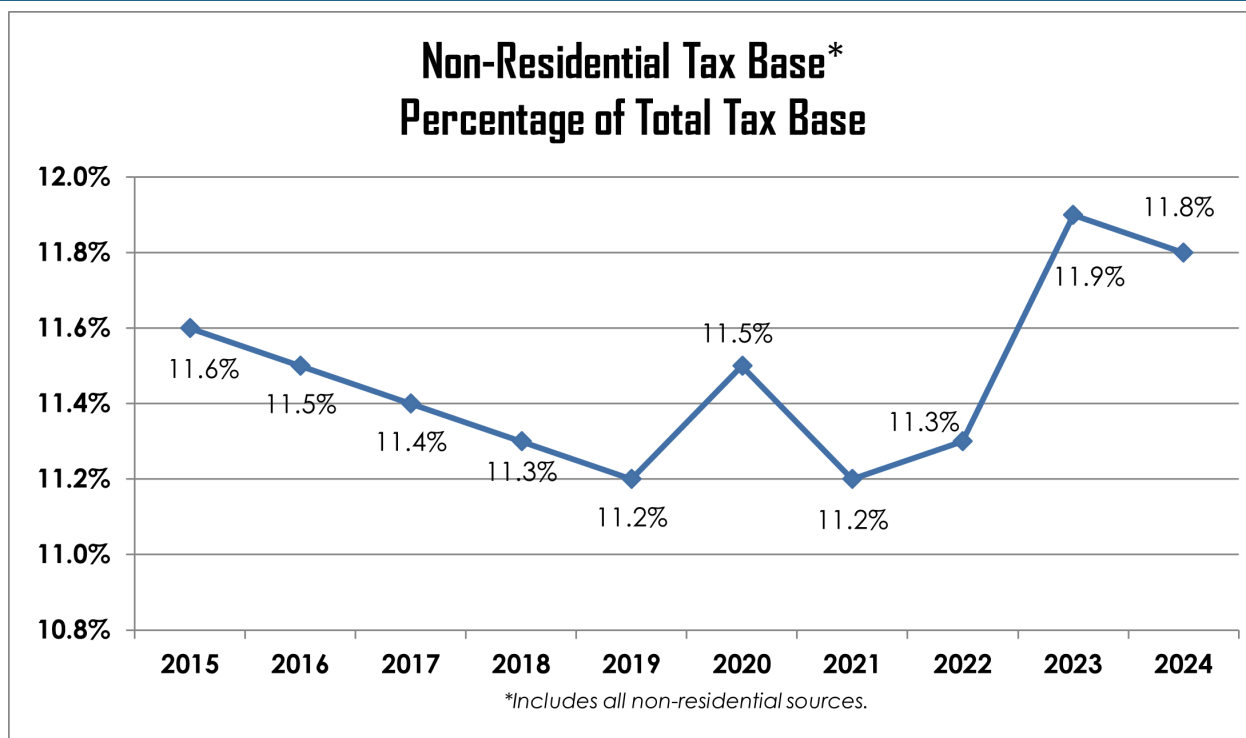
Source: [JobsEQ® & ESRI 2024](#)

Data as of 2024

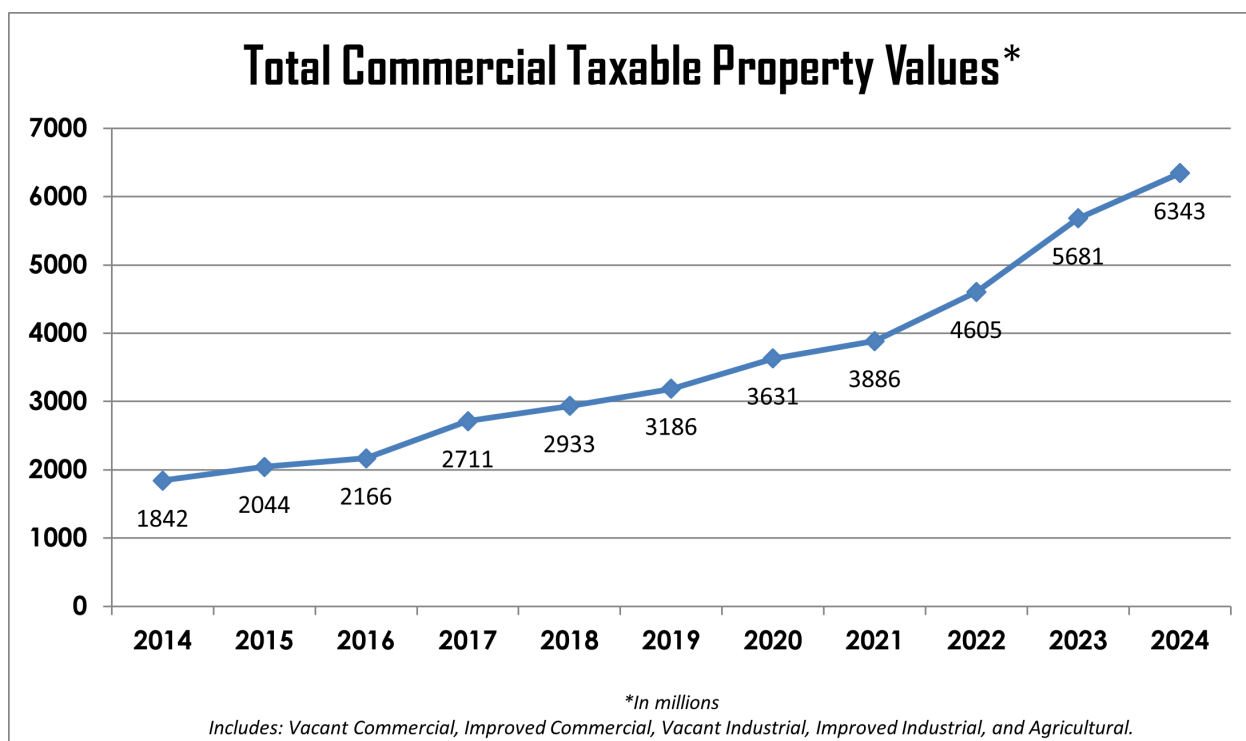
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

The above chart outlines the total employment by industry sector for St. Johns County residents based on 2023 employment data.

NON-RESIDENTIAL TAX BASE & COMMERCIAL PROPERTY VALUE



Source: St. Johns County Office of Management and Budget. See chart on following page.



Source: St. Johns County Office of Management and Budget. Values shown in millions

- A key indicator of the economic health of St. Johns County is the percentage of our tax base fueled by non-residential sources. Growing this percentage continues to be a priority of the Chamber and EDC Team. The Chamber and EDC remain focused on continuing our collaborative efforts with St. Johns County and other partners to attract new industry, retain and nurture the growth of existing businesses as well as encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.
- The percentage of the County's nonresidential tax base decreased in 2024 as residential construction and increased assessed values continued to increase. While St. Johns County continues to experience a high growth rate of residential building, it is important to note that the total value of the commercial tax base increased by 74.6% in the last 5 years.
- The value of the commercial tax base increased to \$6,343,134,668 for 2024 while the taxable property value for residential property increased to \$ 45,690,367,692.
- In 2024, St. Johns County recorded \$ 1,836,119,415 in personal property as taxable value, representing 3.4% of the total tax base. In 2023, personal property as taxable value totaled \$1,693,439,583 or 3.6% of the total tax base. Personal property tax is generated entirely by businesses.

CAREERSOURCE NORTHEAST FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP

In partnership with CareerSource Northeast Florida, Chamber staff conducted thirty (30) industry visits in FY 2023-2024. Visits were conducted in person with existing St. Johns County companies in various industries including business technology, construction, marketing, manufacturing, engineering, and tourism. Through these workforce surveys and additional conversations with businesses across the county, the Chamber collected data regarding the current and anticipated state of the local economy and workforce, the challenges businesses face recruiting and retaining team members and where additional support and training resources were needed.

The following local businesses were surveyed in FY 2023-2024:

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| • Lowe's Home Improvement St. Johns County | • Amazing Explorers Academy - Rivertown | • Vitis Energy |
| • Sonny's BBQ | • Castillo de San Marcos | • KeHE |
| • Your Health Inc | • Urgent Care Cure - Silverleaf | • Ring Power Corporation |
| • Meehan's Irish Pub | • Bozard Ford | • Ponte Vedra Wellness Center |
| • Advanced Business Solutions | • AC Designs | • Rulon International |
| • All Dry Restoration Services | • Genesis AC and Heat | • Loves Travel Shop |
| • Rockit Solutions | • Southstate Bank | • Gorman Company |
| • PuroClean St. Augustine | • Chez L'Amour | • Spectrum Thrift Stores |
| • Longleaf at St. Johns | • B & S Signs | • Scalice Land Surveying |
| | • Liberty Landscape | • Emergency Restoration Experts |
| | • ATP Americas | |

TAXABLE PROPERTY VALUES BY CATEGORY ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Tax Year:	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Residential					
Vacant	1,211,996,088	1,280,270,241	1,582,175,774	1,756,990,347	1,811,473,696
Single Family	21,749,946,516	24,032,838,973	28,466,444,253	33,063,887,793	37,519,043,301
Mobile Homes	267,052,799	293,902,867	358,203,003	411,621,178	468,931,322
Multi Family less than 10 units	503,075,384	533,686,708	623,140,849	695,148,876	760,596,853
Multi Family 10 units or more	276,437,219	370,903,319	422,813,730	572,763,228	1,032,629,521
Condominium	2,859,788,610	3,013,587,884	3,365,189,450	3,726,751,129	4,096,005,364
Retirement Homes & Miscellaneous	249,694	249,494	269,044	306,890	1,687,635
Sub total Residential	26,868,546,310	29,525,439,486	34,818,236,103	40,227,469,441	45,690,367,692
% Residential	84.8%	85.2%	85.3%	84.5%	84.8%
Business-Commercial/Industrial					
Vacant Commercial	241,515,173	324,024,356	471,348,855	671,750,331	704,223,916
Improved Commercial	2,326,482,388	2,466,649,469	2,820,144,367	3,466,168,132	3,934,440,485
Vacant Industrial	9,440,483	14,230,065	-	-	-
Improved Industrial	430,703,362	449,413,569	490,864,429	596,395,060	757,704,709
Agricultural	141,361,226	136,718,308	187,072,903	197,393,901	203,590,400
Institutional	250,614,441	254,109,925	271,972,636	352,564,823	408,756,105
Government	19,570,774	19,242,910	19,390,715	20,737,780	22,200,960
Leasehold Interest	5,581,132	5,482,226	5,628,230	6,166,909	6,331,618
Miscellaneous	32,549,856	35,397,738	36,610,545	31,604,187	34,113,897
Non-Agricultural Acreage	136,935,717	135,890,156	254,905,266	295,049,050	235,261,909
Centrally Assessed	37,238,339	38,230,616	41,422,956	43,730,637	36,510,669
Sub total Business-Commercial/Industrial	3,631,992,891	3,879,389,338	4,599,360,902	5,681,560,810	6,343,134,668
% Business-Commercial/Industrial	11.5%	11.2%	11.3%	11.9%	11.8%
Personal Property					
Personal Property	1,177,510,012	1,266,264,163	1,418,670,549	1,693,439,583	1,836,119,415
% Personal Property	3.7%	3.7%	3.5%	3.6%	3.4%
Total taxable value	31,678,049,213	34,671,092,987	40,836,267,554	47,602,469,834	53,869,621,775
Sub total exempt value	12,625,707,674	13,921,600,656	25,204,077,983	31,473,054,836	31,280,300,749
Total just value	44,303,756,887	48,592,693,643	66,040,345,537	79,075,524,670	85,149,922,524
Exempt value as % of total just value	28.5%	28.6%	38.2%	39.8%	36.7%

Source: St. Johns County Office of Management and Budget

POPULATION GROWTH & EDUCATION LEVELS

POPULATION

	St. Johns County	Jacksonville MSA	Florida	USA
Population				
2000 Total Population	123,135	1,122,750	15,982,378	281,421,906
2010 Total Population	190,039	1,345,996	18,801,310	308,745,538
2020 Total Population	265,512	1,704,220	21,587,015	333,793,107
2024 Total Population	320,110	1,861,118	22,114,754	333,934,112
2010-2024 Population: Annual Growth Rate	4.20%	1.60%	1.30%	0.70%
2022-2027 Population: Annual Growth Rate	2.48%	1.67%	1.33%	0.72%
Median Age	42.5	39.9	42.8	38.9

EDUCATION LEVELS

	St. Johns County	Jacksonville MSA	Florida	USA
Educational Attainment (population 25+)				
2023 Population Age 25+: Less than 9th Grade (%)	1.10%	1.60%	2.90%	2.90%
2023 Population Age 25+: 9-12th Grade/No Diploma (%)	2.20%	4.20%	4.70%	4.10%
2023 Population Age 25+: High School Diploma (%)	12.20%	16.60%	17.50%	16.00%
2023 Population Age 25+: GED/Alternative Credential (%)	2.60%	3.40%	3.10%	2.80%
2023 Population Age 25+: Some College/No Degree (%)	12.30%	13.50%	12.80%	12.60%
2023 Population Age 25+: Associate's Degree (%)	6.80%	7.70%	7.90%	6.50%
2023 Population Age 25+: Bachelor's Degree (%)	21.20%	15.10%	14.90%	15.00%
2023 Population Age 25+: Graduate/Professional Degree (%)	12.70%	8.20%	8.80%	9.30%

Source: Esri Business Analyst & US Census Bureau

RAPID POPULATION GROWTH

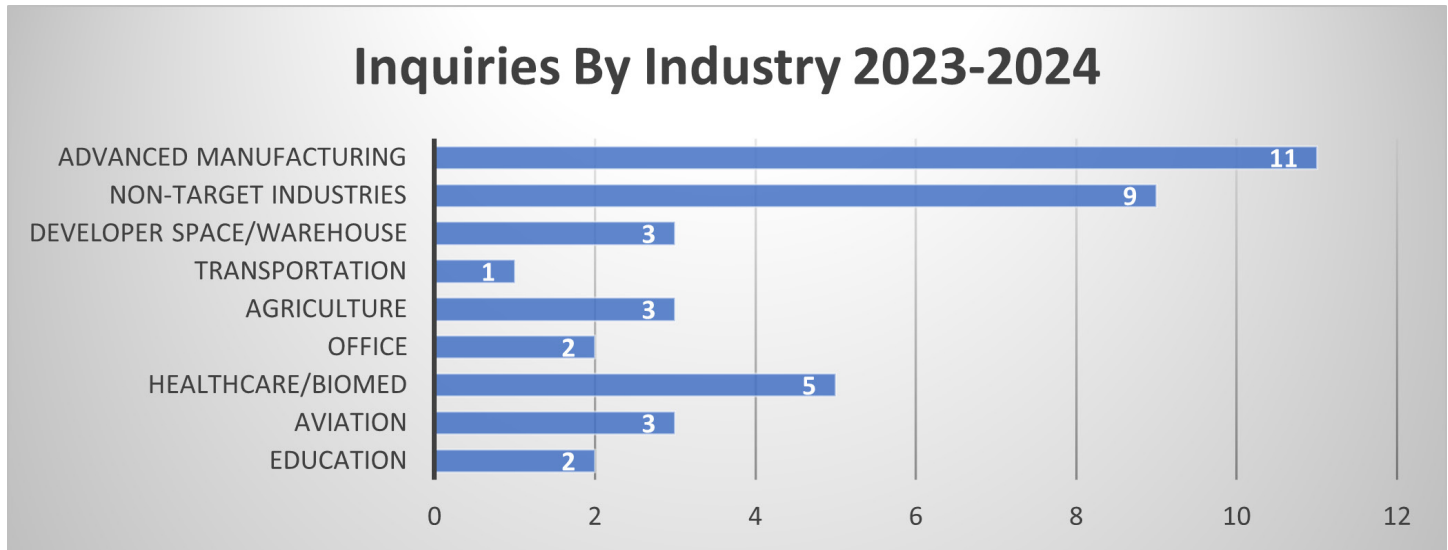
From 2010 to 2024, the population of St. Johns County grew 60%.

HIGHLY EDUCATED

95% of St. Johns County residents aged 25+ are high school graduates and 40% have earned at least a Associates Degree.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY PROJECT PIPELINE

NEW INQUIRIES FOR 2023-2024



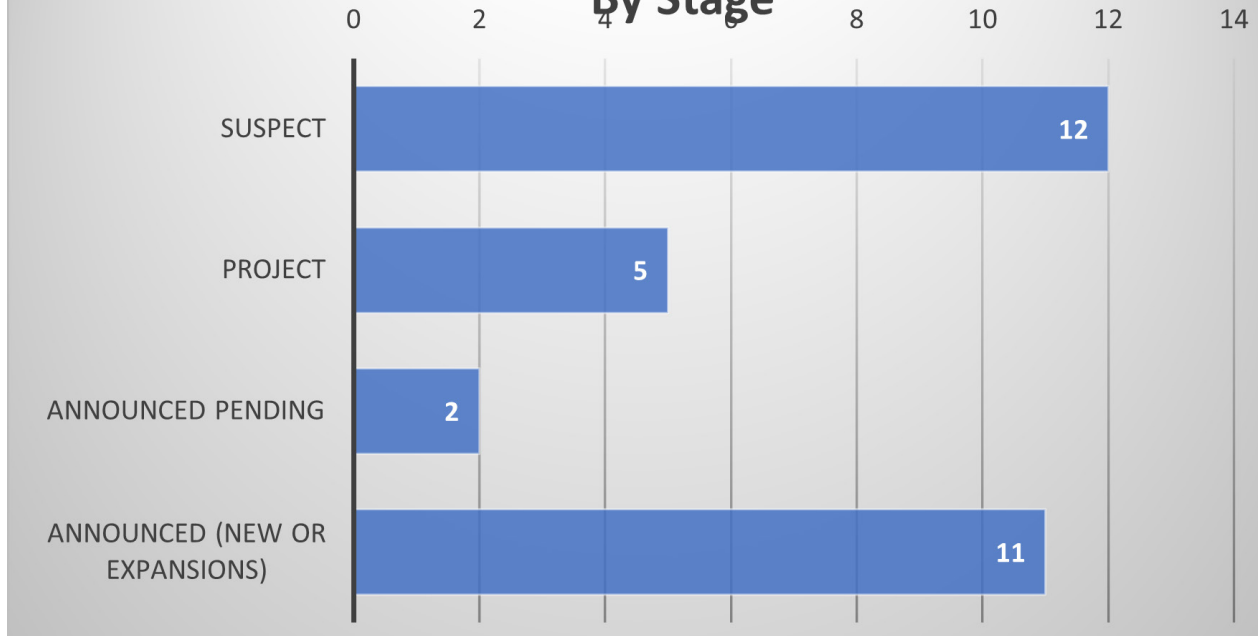
- Through the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and St. Johns County Government continued to receive and respond to inquiries from relocating, existing, and new businesses interested in expanding or starting a new venture in St. Johns County. These inquiries originated from FloridaCommerce, JAXUSA, Florida Power and Light, local referrals, or direct company outreach.
- New inquiries received for the year totaled thirty-nine (39) representing various industries including Advanced Manufacturing (11), Spec Space/Warehouse (3), Agriculture (3), Healthcare/ BioMed (5), Aviation (3), Non-Target Industries (9), and others in Transportation and Office Space.

Q4 – ALL PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY STAGES OF A PROJECT IN THE PIPELINE

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Suspect	EFI referrals, JAXUSA referrals, Chamber Member/Local Referrals, and Direct Inquiries with at least a 10% potential of moving forward.
Project	The project has real potential to select St. Johns County for new business, relocation, or expansion. The representative either has an existing business, has visited, or plans to visit St. Johns County.
Imminent	St. Johns County has been shortlisted among other potential locations.
Announced Pending	The project has selected St. Johns County and awaiting final approvals from County and other agencies to move forward.
Announced	The project has selected St. Johns County and all final approvals are complete.

2023-2024 Year End Prospects in the Pipeline

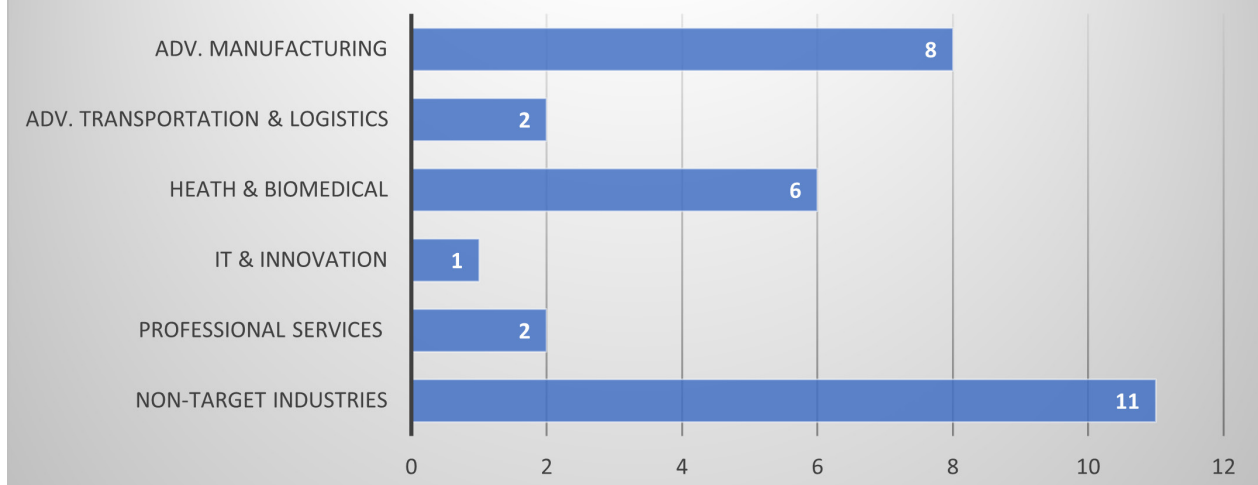
By Stage



- At the end of the fiscal year 2023-2024, there were a total of 30 active businesses in the pipeline. These included new businesses along with several existing businesses that were seeking to expand.
- Announced projects this year included a variety of healthcare projects. UF Health St. Johns broke ground on a 156-bed hospital, Acadia Health was awarded incentives for a 104-bed behavioral health facility, and TyME and Advent Health announced new projects as well.
- The county also saw expansions from Rulon International and QPAC as both worked to secure additional space.

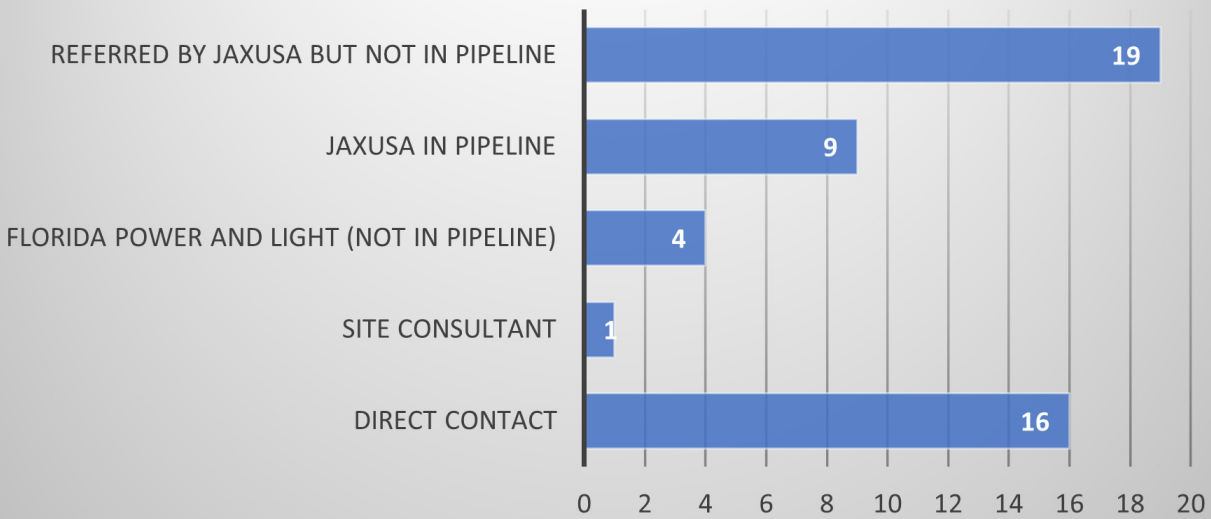
2023-2024 Year End Prospects in the Pipeline

By Industry



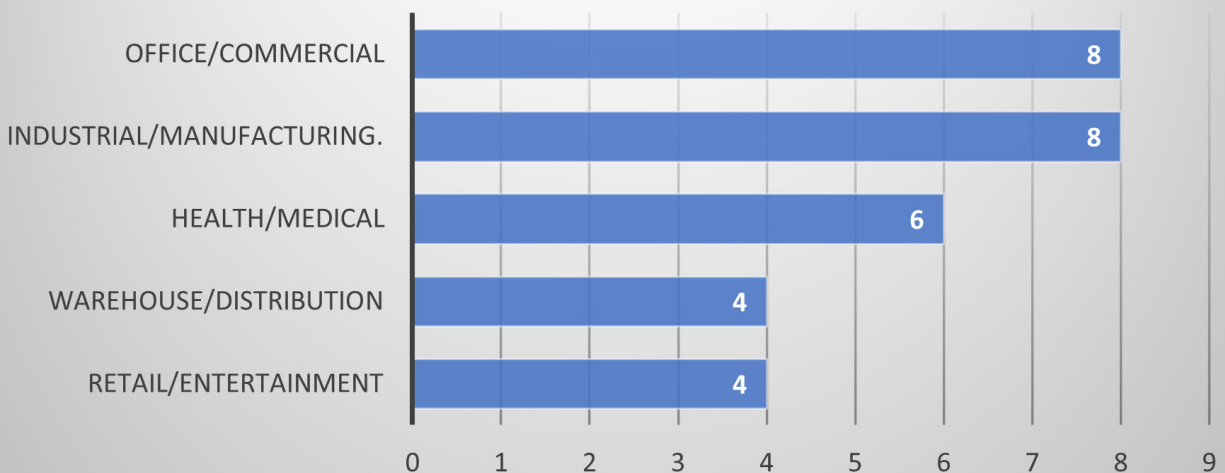
- Non-target industries and advanced manufacturing represent the majority of the current projects in the pipeline with 11 projects.
- There are a total of thirteen (19) businesses in the pipeline for the target industries of Advanced Manufacturing (8 projects), Advanced Logistics (2 projects), Health and Biomedical (6 projects), IT & Innovation (1 project), and Professional Services HQ (2 projects).

2023-2024 Prospects in the Pipeline By Source



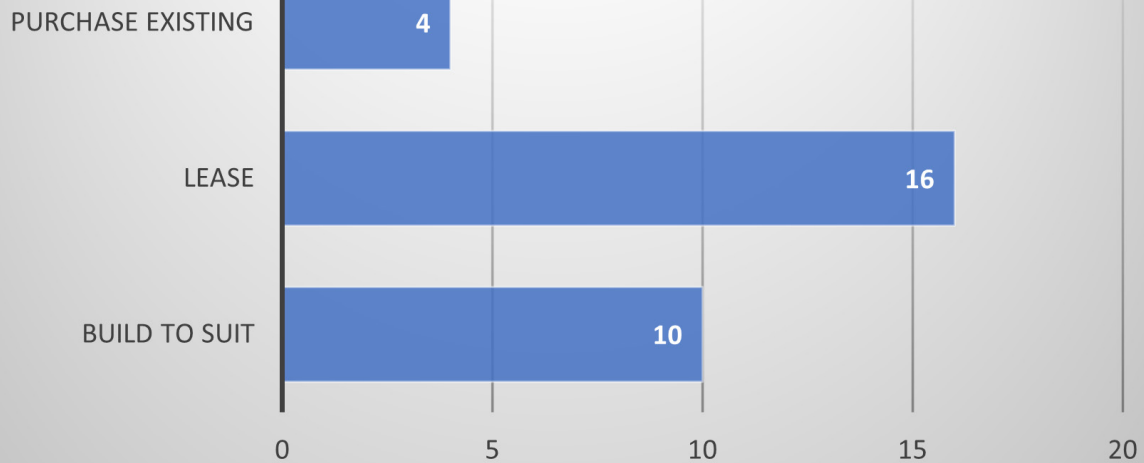
- There were 23 projects referred this year from JaxUSA and Florida Power and Light that we were unable to pursue due to a lack of site-ready land, existing spec space, or not meeting all the referral requirements. There will be additional space coming online in 2024-2025 that will make St. Johns County more competitive in responding to inquiries.
- Thirty (30) projects remained in the pipeline.

2023-2024 Prospects in the Pipeline By Facility Function



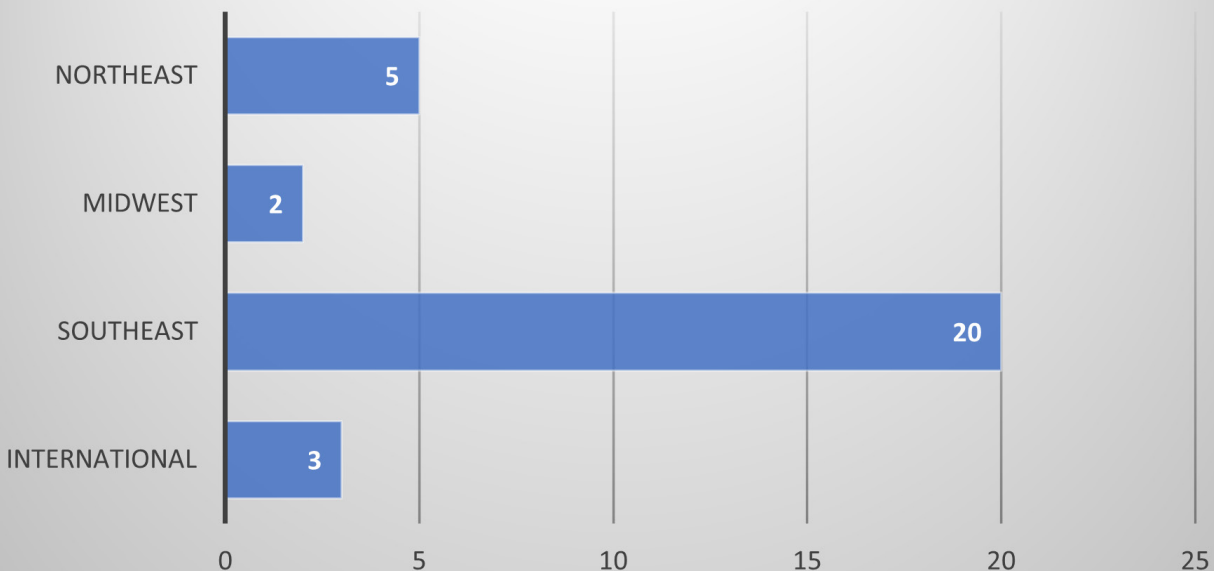
- Current projects in the pipeline seek office or commercial space (8 projects), industrial or manufacturing space (8 projects), health or medical facilities (6 projects), warehouse/distribution (4 projects), and retail space (4 projects).

2023-2024 Prospects in Pipeline By Occupancy Needs



- The majority of the current projects in the pipeline seek to build-to-suit (10 projects) or lease existing space (16 projects). Four projects indicated an interest in purchasing an existing building in St. Johns County.

2023-2024 Prospects in the Pipeline By Geographic Location



- Most of the projects (20 projects) in the pipeline originate from the Southeast. Five (5) projects originate from the Northeast including New York and New Jersey. Two (2) projects originate from the Midwest and three were international in origin.
- Most listed a project's site location, workforce, quality of education, and quality of life as critical factors for considering or selecting St. Johns County.

BUSINESS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Part of the EDC's mission is supporting workforce development and providing professional development opportunities for our members. The Chamber and its partners hosted over 100 educational and networking workshops for St. Johns County Businesses. The EDC Quarterly Breakfast and Legislative Update Series features professional programming by industry experts, business leaders, and public policy experts. This year's series provided a diverse look at issues facing our community, specifically focusing on the workforce.

DECEMBER 2023

This EDC Breakfast focused on our relationship with the JAXUSA Partnership and how our local economic development goals align with their new strategic plan. Dr. Anna Lebesch, senior vice president for strategy and talent development at JAXUSA, briefed chamber members and guests on the finer points of the economic development agency's new strategic plan for the 7-county region it represents. "This is a regional strategic plan, not a JAXUSA plan," Lebesch said. The JAXUSA Partnership encompasses 4,400 square miles with

a population of 1.9 million people in the seven-member counties, including St. Johns, and its mission, according to Lebesch, "is economic growth for the entire region." The plan aims to increase competitiveness, regionalism, economic mobility, innovation, and resilience across the member counties under four main goals.

- Talent Development
- Business Development
- Quality of Place
- Infrastructure Networks

JAXUSA developed the new strategic plan through workshops, county tours, interviews with community leaders, and 18 roundtable discussions across the region.





Joy Andrews, St. Johns County Administrator

This quarter's EDC Breakfast featured St. Johns County Administrator Joy Andrews presenting on infrastructure improvements and the comprehensive plan update. Andrews provided insight regarding the County's infrastructure upgrades and how those improvements factor into the long-range plans for growth management. St. Johns County continues to be one of the fastest-growing counties in the state, presenting new opportunities and challenges.

"It is so important for us to have an informed community," Andrews said. "We want the community to tell us what they want their County government and home to look like. The only way to have that authentic, meaningful dialogue is when they are informed. It is on us, county staff, and myself to go around this community and make sure that our neighbors are in the know."

The key components of the presentation focused on growth and infrastructure, financial stewardship, open governance and transparency, and economic resiliency, all of which are important to Chamber members. The County has created an Office of Performance and Transparency and a [Comprehensive Plan website](#) to obtain citizen input.



Legislative Update Panel

There was a strong turnout for the SJC Chamber Annual Legislative Update this year.



Paul Renner

The Chamber welcomed Paul Renner, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives; Sarah Arnold, SJC Commission Chair, Mayor Nancy Sikes Kline, City of St. Augustine; Mayor Dylan Rumrell, City of St. Augustine Beach; Shorty Robbins, Legislative Aide to Representative Cyndi Stevenson; and Craft Talbot, Legislative Aide for Senator Travis Hutson. Each provided a detailed update on their accomplishments and challenges this past year. Each speaker highlighted their part of the 108 million dollars in appropriations allocated to St. Johns County from the legislators.



Craft Talbot

Paul Renner, Speaker of the House of Representatives, stated, “State Legislators work hard to balance the budget. This year, we actually paid down debt early and maintained one of the lowest debt ratios of any state in the country. With that, we are still investing record amounts in roads, land conservation, the environment, and our teachers and educational institutions.

Craft Talbot, Senator Travis Hutson’s legislative aide, echoed that. She also pointed out the 7.5 million designated for the Regional Fire Training Center and Unified Command Center and another 7.5 million for a new public safety center. This investment in our first responders highlights the legislators’ focus on public safety.



Sarah Arnold

Commissioner Arnold provided updates on the County’s legislative priorities, including initiatives to address the recruitment, retention, and long-term care for emergency responders and critical transportation projects that will provide traffic relief along I-95 and US 1. A video produced by the County’s Office of Public Affairs captured the event’s highlights.

As this session ended, each of the other speakers provided detailed updates for their specific areas and thanked the local delegation for all they had done for the region.



Tim Forson, Superintendent of St. Johns County School District

This quarter's EDC Breakfast featured Tim Forson, Superintendent of the St. Johns County School District. Mr. Forson presented information on the district's two proposed tax referendums for the November ballot. These two proposals include continuing the half-cent sales tax and a 1-mill increase in property taxes. By law, each referendum would be required to fund specific areas within the district's budget and would only exist for a specific number of years.

In their meeting the week after the breakfast, the Board of Directors of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce voted to support the continued and new taxes proposed by the school board. The board stated that these are crucial investments in our schools and in our youth, and an educated workforce is one of the greatest assets to any community.



*Isabelle Renault,
CEO & Chairman*

The Chamber is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that does not endorse political candidates but does weigh in on specific issues that can impact the business community. "Any new or additional tax increases the potential burden on businesses in St. Johns County, and raising taxes is never the first choice for revenue, but the chamber views these taxes as an investment in our economy," said Isabelle Renault, president and CEO of the Chamber. "Our schools are an economic engine for the County. Employees seek to live in areas with great schools, and employers will follow the talent."

Both referendums ultimately passed in the November election.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY AND THE SJC CHAMBER HOST ROUNDTABLE SERIES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS ROUNDTABLE



The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and St. Johns County hosted a series of community roundtables throughout 2023-2024. This year's series focused on locally made products, health and wellness, and manufacturing and technology. Each roundtable is designed to attract leaders within the specific industry to discuss challenges and opportunities they see on a day-to-day basis and in the future.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS ROUNDTABLE

The Health and Wellness Roundtable provided an opportunity to gather local leaders in the field to share insights and challenges each of their industry segments is facing. Last year's meeting identified several points of concern, including:

- Workforce/Education
- Mental Health
- Collaboration Opportunities
- Housing/Transportation
- Technology

Workforce shortages were the number one concern, with many participants struggling to find nurses, surgical technicians, respiratory technicians, pharmaceutical technicians, and certified nursing assistants. Many medical facilities still relied on travel nurses or temp agencies to provide personnel.

Despite the challenges, there are promising developments on the horizon. St. Johns River State College, Jacksonville University, and First Coast Technical College have either expanded their healthcare programs or are in the process of doing so. However, this expansion must be accelerated by recruiting more instructors and students. UF Health is also looking to broaden its apprenticeship program to include Pharmaceutical Technicians and Respiratory Technicians, offering a potential solution to the workforce shortage.

Since last year:

- Baptist South/Wolfson Children's Emergency Room and Imaging Center opened
- UF Health St. Johns held a groundbreaking for a 156-bed hospital, medical offices & YMCA
- Acadia Health announced a 104-bed behavioral health facility
- TyMe announced a new Cancer Treatment Center and Research facility
- Urgent Care Cure opened a facility in Silverleaf

This year, some challenges remained the same while others have seen some relief. Most facilities no longer use temp staff and have now recruited permanent nurses. Workforce challenges still exist, and with the additional medical facilities coming online in the coming years, that need will grow by 2,000 – 2,500 new employees. Apprenticeship options will also increase as some facilities provide educational opportunities independently. Work/life balance has also become an area of focus for many participants. There was a strong sense that individuals were now seeking an environment where they could grow and thrive instead of looking to change jobs when something better came along. Nationally, research has shown that the “Great Resignation” employees are now more often seeking stability in the workplace.

Another key point that emerged was the importance of collaboration among vendors. The smaller employers in the room offered specialized services that many larger employers and hospitals needed. The roundtable served as a platform for these groups to meet, network, and establish new business relationships, fostering a sense of community and mutual support in the healthcare industry.

MANUFACTURER AND TECHNOLOGY ROUNDTABLE



Participants attending the Manufacturer and Technology Roundtable discussed issues our local manufacturers are facing and areas of potential collaboration. In addition to a strong representation from local companies, representatives from the St. Johns County School District's Career and Technical Education program, First Coast Technical College (FCTC), St. Johns River State College, the First Coast Manufacturers Association, and JAXUSA were also in attendance. Scott Maynard, Sr. Vice President of Economic Development for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, said, “It was extremely beneficial for us to gather this group. Hearing and understanding our manufacturers’ issues and concerns helps us and the County address the challenges head-on and communicate those thoughts back to the policy and decision-makers.”

One of the top issues discussed was workforce development. Many of the organizations represented are not only seeking to fill current open positions but have plans to expand soon.

Each educational institution discussed new programs they have started to address these needs, demonstrating a proactive and optimistic approach. The school district also provided insight into how companies can provide job shadow and internship opportunities for students to introduce them to the possibilities in the County. FCTC and St. Johns River State College also discussed program expansion, and the new programs slated to begin this year. FCTC is starting the renovation of the old Hastings High School to open a second campus in that part of the County.

Another area addressed was the need for attainable workforce housing in the region. Currently, 42,000 people commute daily to the County to work. Many of those would choose to live locally if there were more affordable housing options. The County and the City of St. Augustine have begun to address this need, but the process is slow, and the number of units available falls way short of the demand. The Chamber will continue to focus on this issue.

LOCALLY MADE ROUNDTABLE

This roundtable was designed for creators, manufacturers, and sellers of Locally Made



products and services to share input on how the Chamber could better support these businesses and entrepreneurs. Supporting local artisans and product creators is essential for fostering economic growth and promoting unique handmade goods. Scott Maynard, vice president of Economic Development with the Chamber, said, “Our goal is to significantly contribute to the

growth and success of local artisans and product creators, enriching the local economy and cultural landscape.”

From the discussion, it was clear that St. Augustine and St. Johns County strongly support the arts, but there needs to be more communication between the different organizations. One need is to identify a central point of focus where information can be gathered and exchanged on the services, programs, and events taking place. There is a need for performance space for all genres, affordable studio and classroom space, maker space for developing products, and places to display and sell locally made products.

Other ideas included:

- Setting aside space in the Visitors Center for locally made products.
- Creating a “Locally Made” seal or tag to identify and brand locally made products. and
- Building a website to feature these goods and services.

Implementing these ideas also allows tourists to identify which products are certified as locally made quickly. The Chamber is excited to continue hosting these events to learn more about each group’s challenges.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION EFFORTS



Attainable Housing Coalition

OF THE ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce started an Attainable Workforce Housing Coalition to build support and educate the public on the vital need. Attracting and retaining a qualified workforce is critical to sustaining the local economy in St. Johns County. The essential members of that workforce support the quality of life in St. Johns County — they protect us and keep us safe, care for our health, educate our children, and are the faces we see in the businesses we frequent. Unfortunately, many of these essential workers in our community cannot afford to live here due to the lack of available housing at attainable prices. The Workforce Housing Coalition of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce encouraged local businesses to advocate for incorporating sustainable solutions into the St. Johns County Comprehensive Plan to ensure more opportunities for attainable workforce housing.

When evaluating solutions for attainable workforce housing, we can explore a range of options for both short-term and long-term solutions, considering financial resources, local market conditions, and community support. The current gap between the median home price and what one essential worker could afford is insurmountable. For example, a St. Johns County teacher would need to earn more than three times their average wage to afford a home at the median price of more than \$500,000.

Additionally, the inventory of homes for sale and rent is low across the county. This shortage forces essential workers to find housing outside the county and commute daily, causing increased traffic and wear on the major transportation arteries. It also places an additional burden on those needing dependent care.

While there is no single solution to this issue, several communities around Florida and the United States have implemented new policies and incentives to address their attainable housing challenges, and St. Johns County can look to these for examples of solutions to execute locally. A comprehensive approach will involve a combination of options tailored to our community's specific context and requirements, and for solutions to be sustainable, they must become the cornerstone of the county's Comprehensive Plan.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Attainable Housing Coalition is committed to working with builders and developers, local business leaders, financial institutions, and government partners to address the needs of our essential workers now and into the future. To learn more and sign the business or individual coalition letter, visit the [Attainable Workforce Housing Website](#).

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CONTINUES TO GROW AS A MEDICAL HUB IN FLORIDA

Once again, there were a number of new healthcare facilities that were announced or opened during this year. This followed the merger of UF Health and Flagler Health in 2023. This growth continues to have a positive impact but also brings workforce challenges that must be addressed to ensure these facilities are adequately staffed.

UF HEALTH ST. JOHNS ANNOUNCES NEW HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL COMPLEX IN DURBIN PARK



UFHealth : **DURBIN PARK**

It was a transformational day in St. Johns County as UF Health St. Johns announced the construction of a 150-bed hospital and medical office complex on a 42.5-acre site in Durbin Park. Mori Hosseini, Chair of the University of Florida Board of Trustees, said, “Today is just the beginning. We are here because the University of Florida has a bold vision for Northeast Florida. Today we advance an agenda where we provide somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 new jobs right here. At that point, UF Health will have over 12,000 employees in Northeast Florida to go with a one-billion-dollar investment.” UF Health St. Johns knows healthcare is evolving at a rapid pace and they are committed to staying ahead of the curve. This expansion will be a significant part of that commitment.

UF Health ranks in the top 2, with Mayo Clinic as the top healthcare provider in the state with both having a presence in Northeast Florida. UF Health Durbin Park will be a full-service community hospital with a focus on Orthopedic, Neurosurgery, Cardiology and Women’s Services. The UF Health College of Medicine is ranked number one in the state and the Neurosurgery Department is ranked number two in the United States. UF Health is the nation’s premier program for liver, lung, and kidney transplants.

The hospital is expected to open in late 2025

BAPTIST HEALTH / WOLFSON'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OPEN DUAL EMERGENCY ROOM AND IMAGING CENTER



An excited crowd gathered on April 30 for the ribbon cutting at the new Baptist Health / Wolfson Children's Dual Emergency Center. "There's been a lot of excitement about this new facility from St. Augustine residents following the original purchase in 2021," said Matthew Zuino, FACHE, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Baptist Health. "Baptist Health has always been committed to meeting the health care needs of residents in St. Johns County and this is one important part of that strategy."

The 23,879-square-foot emergency center features two emergency centers under one roof –Baptist Emergency Center for adults and Wolfson Children's Emergency Center, designed specifically for patients ages 0 to 17. In addition, with the opening of this campus, families in St. Johns County will have easier access to the specialized pediatric care of Wolfson Children's, the only full-service children's hospital in the region and the only state-designated Pediatric Trauma Center in Northeast Florida.

The emergency facility will have an adjoining imaging center for outpatient imaging, equipped with the latest technology to provide X-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans, mammography, and bone density screenings. There will be a total of 250 employees when the facility is fully staffed. The building is designed with opportunities for 5,000 square feet on the south end of the emergency department and up to 70,000 square feet of physician office or outpatient procedural space to the north.

TYME



*Sarah Arnold, Chair, Board of
County Commissioners*

The TyME institute will develop more than 30,000 square feet of space for a cancer prevention clinic. This includes a future cancer research laboratory and small-scale cancer drug manufacturing facility. "The TyME Institute is dedicated to combating cancer with innovation, partnerships, and prevention methodologies that have yet to be undertaken by the research or healthcare industries. This is more than an investment in bricks and buildings; it is an investment in health and life," BOCC Chair Sarah Arnold, who represents District 2, the future location of TyMe Institute said.

The county projects 54 new, high-wage jobs will be created. While an estimated \$621,031 will come from the incentive agreement, TyMe Institute's land, building, and equipment investments toward the project are estimated to be \$20.5 million. The TyMe Institute is anticipated to open in the fourth quarter of 2025 in The Fountains at St. Johns, located on CR 210.

ADVENTHEALTH EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

AdventHealth has announced the first phase of plans for 10.75 acres in St. Johns County. The health care system will build a 12-bed off-site emergency department (OSED) to expand services in the rapidly growing area. Located east of I-95, near the intersection of State Road 207 and Wildwood Drive, construction is anticipated to begin in 2025 and be completed by early 2026. “Our new facility will give residents and visitors greater



access to emergency medical care close to home,” said Audrey Gregory, Ph.D., RN, executive vice president and CEO of the AdventHealth East Florida Division. “As an organization, AdventHealth has robust expansion plans, and this latest step forward is an important part of our organization’s long-term vision for growth and our mission to extend the healing ministry of Christ.”

AdventHealth’s expansion into St. Johns County builds on the organization’s roots in neighboring Flagler County, where it has cared for the community for over two decades and employs nearly 1,800 people. Within the past year, AdventHealth has invested over \$200 million in regional health care infrastructure, including opening the county’s second hospital, building the Freytag Cancer Center, and bringing eight new physicians to the area.

“Health care has become the largest job creator in Flagler County, and we are proud of our role in reaching this new milestone,” said Denyse Bales-Chubb, president/CEO of the AdventHealth market in Flagler and St. Johns counties. “As our communities grow, we have been growing right alongside them, and we are excited to do the same in St. Johns County.”

ACADIA HEALTHCARE

Indianapolis-based Acadia Healthcare Company is planning a 104-bed behavioral health hospital in St. Johns County that will include a facility of almost 100,000 square feet and more than 200 full-time jobs with an average salary of \$75,000. The new facility will be built near the intersection of County Road 210 and Moon Bay Parkway. The company is a behavioral healthcare service provider that offers inpatient, outpatient, detoxification and residential treatment. The

The expected capital outlay by Acadia is expected to be approximately \$76.7 million, county documents show.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

ST. JOHNS AND DUVAL COUNTY EMPLOYERS PRESENT AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Tim Hinson, Miller Electric, Scott Maynard, St. Johns County Chamber, Donna Wagner, UF Health St. Johns & Doreen Lund, CareerSource Northeast Florida

The Cooperative Education and Internship Association recently held their 61st annual conference in Tampa, Florida. St. Johns County and Duval County were well represented at the event. Doreen Lund, Apprenticeship Manager with CareerSource Northeast Florida moderated the panel of local employers featured at the keynote luncheon. The panel discussed apprenticeship programs at Miller Electric, UF Health St. Johns, and Northrop Grumman sharing their challenges and successes.

UF Health St. Johns operates a successful apprenticeship program for surgical technicians. The hospital-based training program includes classroom and practical clinical instruction designed to prepare participants for a career as a Surgical Technologist with U.F. Health St. Johns upon completion. Donna Wagner, Chief Nursing Officer, said, “By establishing an apprenticeship program, participants can earn money while they are in training, learn a new skill, and help us fill this need in the future.”

Miller Electric has operated a successful apprenticeship program for years. Recently they have expanded their traditional program to now include cybersecurity. The Electrical Training Alliance is a state registered apprenticeship program – meaning accepted applicants will receive a combination of formal training and on-the-job experience. Students attend classes

two evenings a week which focus on electrical theory, how to use tools, safety and hands-on practice in a lab environment. Upon graduation, these students are well-rounded, qualified electricians, eligible to work anywhere in the country. The best part is, they are generally earning the same amount as a college graduate, with no college debts or student loans to repay, because the program is completely free.

Northrop Grumman's St. Augustine, Florida, site determined that the best way to meet the increasing demand for E-2D technicians was to turn to the talent in their communities, specifically to local school districts. Collaborating with Human Resources, Legal, and Global Corporate Responsibility, they designed a year-long, half-day internship program targeted to high school seniors. The program was designed to teach aircraft fabrication skills in a step-by-step format. Each week, an instructor from Northrop Grumman's Aeronautics Systems Training for Advanced Refinement program, known as ASTAR, teaches the students a new skill, typically related to aircraft structure work. Later in the week, students practiced the skill, first in the lab then on the shop floor. They have support from a cadre of mentors with a combined 238 years of experience.

Doreen Lund, CareerSource Northeast Florida Manager of Apprenticeship, said, "The program that funds the apprenticeships is open to other employers in Florida. The customized training program is designed to help companies introduce new technologies or upgrade workers to new jobs." This is another way employers can encourage and support new talent coming into their companies while at the same time offering an 'earn-as-you-learn' opportunity for job seekers." For more information on apprenticeships contact CareerSource Northeast Florida.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2024 PITCH FACTORY HAS TREMENDOUS IMPACT



The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Pitch Factory concluded this summer's program on August 13. This cohort had over 21 participants, and 6 competed in the final pitches. After the final pitch, participants received valuable feedback from the judges and developed knowledge and confidence to take their business to the next level. Mentorship continues throughout the year. This year's winners included Sarah Pinasco (Trucking Company) first place, Hinda Pugh (Candle Company) second, and Teresa Kennedy (Hor's D'Vours) third place.

The Chamber is honored to partner with the Women's Business Center and the JAX Chamber to bring an exciting opportunity for entrepreneurs in St. Johns County. Inspired by the JAX Bridges program, "The Pitch Factory" is a six-week workshop that will prepare entrepreneurs to bring their businesses to the next level by helping to develop and refine their pitches and strategy.

Through a Women's Business Center grant and our generous sponsor, North Avenue Capital, this program is offered free of charge to allow everyone the opportunity to participate. Thank you to Ascension St. Vincent's Hospital for hosting this year's classes in their training space.

