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Money Magazine names Lee County among the nation's top 25 job markets  
Lee County achieved 56.6% job growth over eight-year period

FORT MYERS, Fla. (July 20, 2009) – Money Magazine placed Lee County 23rd on its recently published list of the top 25 best counties in the nation to land a job. The ranking is based on a 56.6 percent job growth rate from 2000-2008 in Lee County. The article also cites affordable commercial real estate, low corporate taxes and tax incentives in Lee County as contributing to job growth.

Although the job growth rate used in the Money Magazine article doesn't account for the general deterioration of economic conditions in 2009, experts point to promising advancements in job growth during the current calendar year that also indicate a healthy job market.

"Even in these tough economic times, Lee County has not taken the position of hunkering down and circling the wagons," said Lee County Commission Chairman Ray Judah. "We have been very assertive, positive and progressive on a number of fronts."

For example, three major companies have announced plans to expand in Lee County in the last six months. Gartner Inc. plans to build a new 70,000-square-foot facility in Lee County to accommodate the planned addition of 200 new employees over the next five years. NeoGenomics is expanding their corporate headquarters in the county and plans to add 75 new positions over three years, and Paramount Transportation Logistics recently announced its decision to move its headquarters and service center to Fort Myers, adding 100 new jobs.

Lee County commissioners approved incentives for all three companies as part of the \$25-million FIRST Initiative incentive program, which is performance-based. Commissioners created the incentive program to encourage business growth and community development. The 375 jobs created by the three companies, with an average wage of more than \$54,000, have a combined economic impact on the community of nearly \$193 million. Negotiations are underway with additional companies that could bring up to an additional 540 jobs and \$161 million in economic impact.

"The fact that companies are investing in Lee County and are optimistic about their future growth here shows the job market is likely to continue to improve," says James W. Moore, director of the Lee County EDO. "Although jobs have been lost in some sectors, key industries like science and

technology are growing and expanding in Lee County, which is in line with our goal to build a stronger and more diversified economy.”

Judah agrees that the efforts today will only enhance the job market for Lee County in the future. Lee County is on the forefront of alternative energy technologies, planning a business park adjacent to the new Boston Red Sox stadium, developing successful partnerships with new and growing businesses and is benefiting from fiscally conservative county government that has built up enough reserves that made the incentive program possible.

“This all translates into a very promising future,” Judah added.

About the Lee County Office of Economic Development:

The Economic Development Office of Lee County in Southwest Florida works to attract new and diversified businesses resulting in high-wage, high-skilled jobs; retains and encourages the expansion of existing businesses and improves the overall business environment in Lee County. Lee County is a thriving business community with a highly regarded airport, significant corporate development and ample real estate opportunities. The area is attracting, retaining and growing high-value businesses with a unique blend of an outstanding business climate and superior quality of life. The county is home to five vibrant cities--Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Fort Myers Beach, Cape Coral, and Sanibel--and is the heart of Southwest Florida. For more information, visit [www.leecountybusiness.com](http://www.leecountybusiness.com).