

# WEEKEND WAVE

2-6-15



## Friday Economic Roundup

### U.S. budget plan has money to study dredging Port Manatee

By Michael Pollick, STAFF WRITER Sarasota Herald-Tribune

MANATEE COUNTY - Port Manatee could eventually be deepened to handle additional ship traffic after President Barrack Obama included \$700,000 in funding for a dredging feasibility study in his 2016 federal budget.

Manatee Harbor, where the port is located, was one of only 10 waterways nationwide in the U.S. identified for possible deepening.

Port officials hope to increase its depth to 45 feet -- from 40 feet now.

"It puts us up there in front on the Gulf of Mexico in Florida as the leading port for expansion," said Carlos Buqueras, Port Manatee's executive director.

"We are thrilled at the prospects of being able to serve larger ships for generations to come."

The Southwest Florida port is the closest U.S. deep-water port to the Panama Canal, where a larger and deeper channel is slated to open in early 2016.

To get to 45 feet would require some eight years of work and millions of dollars in additional funding, officials acknowledge.

But the additional depth would open considerable possibilities for Port Manatee.

"It would allow us to accommodate the majority of vessels transiting the expanded Panama Canal," Buqueras said.

The feasibility study would likely begin a seven- or eight-year process, Buqueras said.

Forty feet, the current depth, has been the port industry's standard depth for decades.

But when the new channel of the Panama Canal opens, it will have a depth of 50 feet, allowing ships with nearly that depth to move through it.

Under the president's new budget, unveiled Monday, the Army Corps of Engineers would fully fund the feasibility study. The budget also includes \$300,000 for maintenance and \$100,000 for the continued operation of Manatee Harbor.

## Southwest Florida has third-best construction job gains in state

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Nearly 19,000 construction workers were employed in the North Port-Bradenton-Sarasota metropolitan area at the end 2014, according to an analysis of federal data by the Associated General Contractors of America trade group.

That was 1,700 more workers than at the same time in 2013 and represented one of the largest year-over-year gains in the state.

The 10 percent gain in the region was beat by only the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford and Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin markets, both with a 12 percent rise in the number of workers.

Charlotte County had 3,100 workers in December, a 7 percent gain from the same time in 2013, according to the association's analysis.

Construction employment expanded in 257 Florida metro areas, declined in 43 and was stagnant in 39 for the 12-month period.

Association officials said the construction industry should continue to expand in 2015, noting that 80 percent of contractors reported plans to add new employees this year.

"While weather patterns certainly had an impact on construction employment during the past year, there is little doubt that the construction sector is in recovery mode in most parts of the country," association chief economist Ken Simonson said. "The industry should continue to add jobs in 2015 as private- and public-sector demand continues to grow."

Dallas-Plano-Irving, Texas, added the largest number of jobs in the past year, with 15,200, or a 13 percent increase. The largest percentage gain occurred in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where the 3,300 jobs added represented a 38 percent increase.

The largest job loss from December 2013 to December 2014 was in Bethesda-Rockville-Frederick, Maryland, which had a drop of 3,900 jobs, or 12 percent. The largest percentage decline was in Steubenville-Weirton, Ohio-West Virginia, where a loss of 900 jobs represented a 41 percent drop.

## Roper Industries buys two medical-software companies

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

LAKEWOOD RANCH - Sarasota-based Roper Industries Inc. is acquiring two medical software companies, Data Innovations LLC and SoftWriters Inc., for \$450 million.

Financial terms were not disclosed.

The Lakewood Ranch-based Roper said Data Innovations provides "middleware software" for hospital and reference laboratories around the world.

The Burlington, Vermont-based company "has the world's largest library of proprietary interfaces and drivers that support over 1,000 different lab instruments in over 80 countries serving over 4,500 customers," Roper said.

The Data Innovations management team will remain in place.

Pittsburgh-based SoftWriters provides operating software and solutions for long-term-care pharmacies. Its management team also will remain in place.

"Both Data Innovations and SoftWriters have market-leading technology and terrific leadership teams," Roper CEO Brian Jellison said.

Roper said the newly acquired companies, plus recent acquisition Strata Decision Technology, would contribute about \$100 million of annual revenue and provide more than \$110 million of gross cash tax benefits.

Roper's shares, which trade on the New York Stock Exchange, were selling Thursday afternoon for \$161.49, up \$3.37, or 2.1 percent.

## Bradenton, Sarasota among 'nerdiest' small cities

By TIFFANY TOMPKINS-CONDIE, BRADENTON HERALD WRITER

BRADENTON - Bradenton is the No. 6 "nerdiest" small city in the United States, according to a real estate website that came up with the somewhat subjective ranking by counting the number of certain businesses within city limits.

Sarasota was ranked No. 2 among cities with populations of between 50,000 and 60,000. From Florida, Pensacola and Ocala also made the Top 10. The businesses and other attractions counted were: comic book stores; video game stores; hobby shops, computer stores; bookstores; and museums.

"Each one represents a different facet of the multifaceted diamond that is the crown of nerdiness," the editors of Movoto.com wrote on their website.

"We then took how many people each city had per the quantity of location in each category, and ranked them accordingly.

"For our last category we wanted to include an important part of nerddom: conventions. Using upcomingcons.com and Google Maps, we looked at how close each city was to a convention and factored that into the results as well."

This is what Movoto.com wrote about Bradenton: "Bradenton's best showing was in hobby shops, where it placed third out of all of the cities that we looked at, not just in the top 10. Bradenton had 4,223 people for every hobby shop.

"Bradenton also ranked in the top 10 overall for both computer stores and book stores, where it ranked eighth and ninth, respectively."

As for Sarasota, it "placed first with its number of bookstores (7,544 people for every store) and second in two categories, computer stores and hobby shops."

Rounding out the Top 10 were:

1. Marietta, Ga.
2. Sarasota, Fla.
3. Pensacola, Fla.
4. San Marcos, Texas
5. La Mesa, Calif.
6. Bradenton, Fla.
7. Harrisonburg, Va.
8. Ocala, Fla.
9. Gardena, Calif.
10. Lancaster, Pa.

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## FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

- Florida Realtors announces new CEO ([Orlando Business Journal](#))
- Florida exports up 3.6% in November ([Orlando Business Journal](#))
- South Florida construction contracts surge 52% in 2014 ([South Florida Business Journal](#))
- Enterprise Zones fill a vital need in deteriorating communities ([Florida Trend](#))
- December's home prices 5.8% higher than in 2013 ([Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#))
- Florida is home to 2.2 million small businesses ([Orlando Business Journal](#))
- IRS offers all Florida taxpayers extra identity theft protection ([Tampa Bay Times](#))
- Construction jobs growing as economy rebounds ([South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#))

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## US ECONOMIC NEWS

- Consumers feeling best about economy since recession ([South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#))
- Consumers fuel steady U.S. economy as rest of world struggles ([AP](#))
- US businesses post steady job gain in January ([AP](#))
- Small-business owners' optimism highest since 2008 ([Gallup](#))

- U.S. adds 257,000 jobs in January ([CNBC](#))

## **ENTREPRENEUR NEWS**

- How to know exactly what your customers want ([Ron Stein](#))
- A surge in entrepreneurial thinking ([Florida Trend](#))
- Venture capitalists predict strong a year ahead ([Miami Herald](#))
- The growing number of older entrepreneurs ([Gallup](#))
- Entrepreneurship bounces back from recession ([Forbes](#))
- Why more millennials are bullish on entrepreneurship ([CNBC](#))
- LaunchPad for student ventures ([Florida Trends](#))
- 8 Deadly Ways to Kill Employee Motivation ([Inc.](#))
- An opportunity for veteran entrepreneurs ([Forbes](#))

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