



**CHARLOTTE COUNTY**  
Economic Development

# WEEKEND WAVE



## Friday Economic Roundup

### **AREA NEWS**

#### **Punta Gorda's airport only one with big gain**

By Josh Salman Herald-Tribune

Passenger traffic has grown dramatically at the Punta Gorda Airport in the past year -- including in July -- as carrier Allegiant Air has ramped up the number of cities it serves from Charlotte County to nearly two dozen.

But the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, still recovering from the exit of AirTran Airways

two years ago and industry consolidation, has not experienced the same spike.

In July, 53,826 passengers flew into, or out of, Punta Gorda, a 63 percent surge compared with the same month a year ago, according to the Charlotte County Airport Authority.

Through seven months of this year, passenger counts there were up 134 percent, to 409,648, versus the same period in 2013.

The increase stemmed from additional flights begun this year by Las Vegas-based Allegiant, the airport's lone carrier, which began flying from Southwest Florida in June 2012. Allegiant now serves 23 cities from Punta Gorda.

"The continued growth of the airport is providing jobs, resulting in spending and investment in our community," Charlotte County Airport Authority chairman Don Lee said, in a statement.

The July passenger count also was the latest in a series of gains for the airport.

In February and March, Punta Gorda Airport set records, with March's total more than doubling the number of travelers it had had in the same month the year before.

At Sarasota-Bradenton, passenger traffic was down 2.5 percent from the same month in 2013, to 85,092.

But the 743,644 travelers who used the regional airport so far this year remains slightly ahead of the first seven months of 2013, records show.

Sarasota-Bradenton chief executive Fredrick "Rick" Piccolo said he's pleased with the airport's summer traffic, especially because AirTran flew nonstop to cities such as Baltimore that were key feeders for Southwest Florida. AirTran departed in August 2012 in the wake of a merger with Southwest Airlines.

"The numbers are coming back, and we're expecting a strong winter," Piccolo said. "We're optimistic. Airports our size have been hit really hard, but we're still doing well."

## North Port shopping center for \$7 million

By Michael Braga Herald-Tribune

Equity One (Florida Portfolio) Inc., sold a five-building, 87,000-square-foot shopping center at 14809 S Tamiami Trail in North Port to North Port OMV II LLC, a Tampa company managed by Dharma Malempati, for \$7 million.

The previous owner, The Shoppes of North Port Ltd., paid \$7.25 million for the 23-year-old mall in December 2000.

Malempati's company financed the purchase with a \$5.7 million loan from Citigroup Global Markets.

## DR Horton picks up 14 acres on Hi Hat Ranch

By Michael Braga Herald-Tribune

Sugarbowl Development Co. Inc., a Sarasota company managed by Richard E. Turner Jr., sold four parcels of vacant land totaling 14 acres at 9363 Swaying Branch Drive in east Sarasota to Texas homebuilder DR Horton Inc. for \$534,600.

The land in the Forest at Hi Hat Ranch subdivision had been valued at \$1.35 million at the height of the boom in 2005.

## FLORIDA ECONOMIC NEWS

- [Syd Kitson tries to seize power in Babcock Ranch \(Herald-Tribune\)](#)
- [How Florida is stealing commerce away from Wisconsin \(South Florida Business Journal\)](#)

## **US ECONOMIC NEWS**

- Back in the USA: Call center jobs return ([Florida Today](#))
- U.S. small business sentiment rises in July ([Reuters](#))
- US job openings in June hit 13-year-plus high ([AP](#))
- Walmart tests ideas, and learns as it goes ([AP](#))
- Brazil tourism to US to increase 50 percent by 2018 ([World Property Channel](#))
- Jobs openings at their highest level in over a decade ([Miami Herald](#))

## **ENTREPRENEUR NEWS**

- Transform your business by answering these 7 simple questions ([Florida Trend](#))
- 10 ways to use Twitter's new analytics tool to market your business online ([Miami Herald](#))
- Time off is essential to health off small business, owners ([Herald Mail Media](#))

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