

Headquarters City, Fla.

How firms are finding “life less taxing” in South Florida’s Broward County.

“**W**ages, logistics and taxes are three big advantages for South Florida.”

With that succinct assessment, Duff & Phelps executive Greg Burkart explained why 12 corporate headquarters have either expanded or move to Broward County since 2011.

Companies like Emerson Latin America, Nyrstar and Anthem Education have banked their future success in the Americas on the work force and business climate of Greater Fort Lauderdale.

Burkart, managing director and specialty tax practice leader for the site selection and business incentive advisory services group of Duff & Phelps, says that Broward County provides the optimum mix of talented and affordable labor, low taxes and a superior transportation and logistics network.

“Those are the factors that we look at when we are advising companies where to locate their operations,”

by **RON STARNER**
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Burkart says. “The business and tax climate in Florida is one of the best. The Tax Foundation ranks Florida number five in the nation. That’s a lot better than many of the Southeast states that Florida competes against for jobs and industry.”

The second reason businesses should consider South Florida, says Burkart, is the presence of three international airports. “Access is key for any headquarters operation,” he says. “Fort Lauderdale International Airport has 64 domestic non-stop flights and 42 international non-stop flights, including 17 direct flights to Latin American cities.”

The third pivotal factor, he notes, is the work force. It is both highly skilled and affordable, he says. “For people with graduate degrees, you will pay about \$68,000 a year in South Florida, but you will pay \$70,000 a year for that same employee in Atlanta. If

you multiply that by several hundred workers, that adds up to a lot of cash on an annual basis, especially when you factor in benefits too.”

Someone who understands all of these location factors quite well is Leonardo Rodriguez, president of Latin America process management for Emerson, a \$25-billion global manufacturer and technology company. The firm last year expanded its Latin American headquarters in the Sawgrass International Corporate Park in Sunrise, a booming Fort Lauderdale suburb in western Broward County.

The 9,500-sq.-ft. expansion added 20 new employees at an average annual salary of \$96,000 and brought the company’s total work force in Broward to nearly 100.

Emerson initially moved to Broward in 2011 after considering headquarters locations in St. Louis, Dallas, Houston, Panama, Sao Paulo and Mexico City, says Rodriguez. “We narrowed our short list to Houston and South Florida. We

decided to choose Greater Fort Lauderdale, and it had nothing to do with incentives,” he says. “We needed talent, and we found tremendous talent right here in Broward County.”

Rodriguez says Emerson looked at other corporate entities already based in Greater Fort Lauderdale, as well as the competitive logistics network in the area. “With the Fort Lauderdale Airport here, we can quickly access all of our U.S.-based production divisions,” he notes. “We fly a lot. We have to respond to customers in 24 hours or less. We can go to any Latin American city direct; plus, there are 14 flights a day to Sao Paulo from nearby Miami International Airport. We don’t have to take connecting flights, and that saves us a lot of time and money.”

Time and money were also on the minds of executives at Nyrstar, an international mining and smelting company headquartered in Zurich. Known as Project Metal, the site selection process culminated last year with Nyrstar choosing Fort Lauderdale for its Americas headquarters. Nyrstar announced it would create 25 jobs paying an average annual wage of \$143,000 — a record amount for a CEO Council project in Broward.

Frank Cappadoro, deputy general manager for Nyrstar, says the company is on track to move into its new permanent home at 350 Las Olas in downtown Fort Lauderdale in March.

“We are the largest refined zinc producer in the world, and we are the first major mining company to set up shop in South Florida,” says Cappadoro. “We are hopeful that other mining companies will also choose to locate here.”

The mining segment of the company was headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, before



350 East Las Olas which Nyrstar chose for its Americas Headquarters for mining. Photo courtesy of ComReal Fort Lauderdale

moving to Broward. “We have two mines in Canada, six in Tennessee, and others in Chile, Peru and Mexico,” he adds.

Cappadoro says Nyrstar likes the direct access that the three South Florida airports give the company to its operations in Canada, the U.S., Chile, Peru and Mexico. “To travel from Vancouver to our mine in Patagonia — a three-hour flight south of Santiago, Chile — it would take almost a full 40 hours to get there,” he says. “From Miami, we can make the trip in only 15 hours, even with a layover.”

Cappadoro says Fort Lauderdale “has availability of medium-range housing options, less traffic than Miami, and a great school system. Our employees can target where to live based on access to certain schools.”

Local economic development support helped seal the deal, he adds. “Robin Ronne and his team at the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance CEO Council did a great job in fast-tracking the process,” says Cappadoro. “It was totally seamless. The City of Fort Lauderdale helped us with the

construction permits that we needed in order to build our space. We received a concierge service and our permits were done in less than two weeks. When it came time to come up to bat, the CEO Council delivered.”

Emerson and Nyrstar were joined by a parade of headquarters relocations and expansions in Broward last year, including Anthem Education, Parallon, Prolexic Technologies and Camposol Holdings PLC.

Anthem chose Fort Lauderdale as the location to expand its new consolidated North American headquarters. The 40,000-sq.-ft. office will employ 70 new workers and

retain 85 existing jobs paying an average annual salary of \$50,000.

“Greater Fort Lauderdale provides us with an expansive area that welcomes growing businesses and a rich and diverse pool of talent for future growth,” noted David Knobel, CEO of Anthem. “We appreciate the assistance provided by Gov. Rick Scott, Enterprise Florida, the City of Fort Lauderdale and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance CEO Council in our selection process.”

Burkart says that Anthem’s experience is not unusual. “We looked at Florida before Gov. Scott got there,” he says. “Candidly, about one out of 20 projects would ask about Florida and we would try to talk them out of it. Now, we try to talk them into moving there.” ▼

This Investment Profile was prepared under the auspices of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance. For more information, contact Robin Ronne, managing director of the CEO Council of the Alliance, at 954-627-0126 or email him at rronne@gflalliance.org.

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