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## From tech jobs to nuke plants, what's hot and what's not in Tampa Bay for 2012

By Robert Trigaux, Times Business Columnist

*A look at what's hot - and not - as the year gets rolling.*

Let's plunge that economic thermometer into the heart of the Tampa Bay business community and look at what's hot and what's not at the start of 2012.

**Hot: Technology jobs.** Yes, certain kinds are blossoming even here in Tampa Bay. If you have tech skills in mobile apps and social media, you're golden. (Tell your children.)

**Not:** Once mighty **St. Joe Co.**, a big Florida land owner, on Friday said it will sell many of its properties in bulk and at sale prices. St. Joe was so influential in developing the Panhandle that it rebranded the area "Florida's Great Northwest" and subsidized Southwest Airlines to service the area's new airport - built on land volunteered by St. Joe.

**Hot: Tampa's Northstar Bank and TCM Bank.** Bauer Financial gave them both 5 stars, its top rating for financial health.

**Not: First Home Bank** in Seminole, **Florida Bank** in Tampa and **Heritage Bank of Florida** in Lutz. All received zero stars, the weakest ranking by Bauer Financial.

**Hot: Michael Maltzan**, the Los Angeles architect whose firm's submission of "The Lens" won the international competition for the new Pier in St. Petersburg.

**Not: Doug Darling**, who just resigned less than a year after accepting the position as head of Florida Gov. Rick Scott's new Department of Economic Opportunity.

**Hot: Raymond James Financial**, now in the early throes of making its biggest acquisition ever - Memphis brokerage Morgan Keegan - a smooth addition to its expanding nationwide network of financial advisers.

**Not: Media General**, the Virginia parent company of the *Tampa Tribune* and WFLA-TV, after warnings last week on its quarterly conference call that it is "uncomfortable with its ability to remain in compliance" with the terms of hundreds of millions in debt that expire in March 2013. For all of 2011, the company lost \$74 million.

**Hot: Wells Fargo**, one of the nation's biggest banks and a recent entry into Florida by acquiring Wachovia, which boasts a market value of more than \$150 billion.

**Not: Bank of America**, one of the nation's biggest banks, whose reverse Midas touch has it struggling on many customer service fronts. Its market value has drooped to less than \$80 billion.

**Hot: Jabil Circuit**, on course for a third consecutive year of record revenues. Not bad for a St. Petersburg-based electronics manufacturer operating in 25 countries with 120,000 employees.

**Not: Southwest Airlines**, which is cutting back at Tampa International Airport. The discount airline is trimming 12 weekday flights from its summer schedule. So long to nonstop flights to Jacksonville and Milwaukee.

**Hot: Lakewood Ranch**, the 8,500-acre master-planned community in Manatee County with 391 home sales in 2011, which was named one of the top 10 best-selling master-planned communities in the nation. So says the annual list compiled by John Burns Consulting.

**Not: Sears and Kmart**, whose stores are selectively closing in Florida and across the United States after a weak holiday season.

**Hot: Publix Super Markets**, still No. 1 in Florida and now pushing into the Charlotte, N.C., market.

**Not: Winn-Dixie**, never able to gain momentum after coming out of bankruptcy, which was sold to Bi-Lo.

**Hot: Call centers.** Tampa Bay once cringed to be called the call center capital of America. But now the title is back, and the job-weak region is delighted. Recently, Matrix Medical Network, TruGreen, PODS, Progressive Insurance, Time Warner, OneTouch Direct, USAA and Humana all unveiled plans for major hiring.

**Not: Crystal River 3**, Progress Energy's one and only nuclear power plant in Florida, which has been shuttered and broken since the fall of 2009. Now the power company ponders whether it makes sense to fix it or just shut it down completely.

**Hot: Property insurance companies** in Florida, delighted to watch Tallahassee state leaders orchestrate big run-ups in the price of homeowners insurance at state-run Citizens Property. That makes it easier for private insurers to jack up their rates.

**Not: Florida homeowners.** As if a 45 percent drop in housing prices since 2006 is not devastating enough, rising insurance prices of homeowners policies make owning a home in the state even less palatable.

**Hot: Downtown Tampa.** Well maybe not *hot* yet, but it's warming as more residences are filled and more signs of post-5-p.m. activity are starting to materialize.

**Not: Imported Brazilian orange juice.** Carbendazim, a fungicide not approved for use in citrus in the United States, continues to be found. That's not helping Florida's citrus image, either.

**Hot: State cheerleading for improving education.** Gov. Scott is gung-ho about a new legislative push that would send an additional \$1 billion to public schools.

**Not: Educational reality.** Last year, the same folks cut the education budget by \$1.3 billion. Why are we cheering when we're not even replacing what we chopped away? That's called "treading water."

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