

newsworthy trends

What Does Florida Think? Ask Tampa Bay

(NAPSA)—In the 1947 film *Magic Town*, pollster Jimmy Stewart finds the perfect town, where opinions mirror that of the rest of the country. Many are saying the same thing about the Tampa Bay area in Florida.

Though not as high profiled as the Miami and Orlando areas, Tampa Bay's diverse population gives it a distinct edge for businesses testing new products and politicians trying to gauge their campaigns. In fact, according to a new study, Tampa Bay has the largest population of any media market in the state.

The word is that if you understand Tampa Bay, you understand the new Florida. More specifically, if you win in Tampa Bay, you win in Florida, and if you sell in Tampa Bay, you sell in Florida (largest retail market in the state). What it all means is that Tampa Bay is likely to increase in importance.

The area is also on a pace to expand its job base to 1.59 million by 2015, according to recent research. In comparison, Miami will have 1.16 million jobs; Orlando will have 1.28 million. Income growth is also in the lead. Cumulative income for 2002 is projected at close to \$76 billion compared to \$64 billion for Miami and \$51 billion for Orlando.

This is not surprising because according to another study, Tampa Bay's image as a vibrant business community in the eyes of corporate decision makers throughout the U.S. has dramatically improved.

The survey indicates that perceptions of Tampa Bay are markedly more favorable, particularly in what companies consider four primary criteria:



WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?
Increasingly, businesses and politicians are heading to the Tampa Bay area to find out what Florida is thinking.

- Quality of workforce
- Cost of living
- Number of companies in their industry (a cluster)
- Number of employers who hire employees with similar technical skills and educational backgrounds

Other factors getting higher ratings are: average salaries, quality of public education, comparatively low property taxes, quick government permitting, cost of construction, the absence of state and local income taxes, weather, costs of utilities, colleges and universities, access to international airports, seaports and beaches, air quality, and cultural activities.

Also, survey findings revealed a significant link between tourism and relocation decisions, with nearly three-quarters of company executives saying that personal experiences, such as vacations and golf trips, influence whether they are considering establishing operations.

More information is available by visiting the area's Web site at www.TampaBay.org.