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[ONLINE VERSION AT FLORIDABUSINESS.ORG](https://www.floridabusiness.org)

NATIONWIDE 4Q'19 COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LENDING UP 7% – The latest report from the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) shows that overall, commercial real estate lending was up in the fourth quarter, climbing 7% over the previous year. The fourth quarter saw a 33% year-over-year increase in the dollar volume of loans for health care properties, a 29% increase for office properties, a 67% increase for industrial properties, and a 13% increase for retail properties. Originations fell for two segments: multifamily properties (down 4%) and hotel properties (down 25%). [Download the full 4Q'19 report via MBA's webpage.](#)

SCORE WEBINAR: BUSINESS SUCCESSION PLANNING – Business succession planning is not just about planning for when someone dies. It could be about selling your business, planning your retirement, transferring to a family member, or moving out of the area. Whatever the reason, planning for a seamless transition protects you and your business. In this presentation, Jeanette Armbrust, chair of the National Association of Women Business Owners Board, will share the importance of succession planning in your business including how to make it a seamless transition when the time comes. [This free one-hour webinar will be held at 2 p.m. Mar. 24.](#)

VOLUSIA COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS – According to the latest U.S. Census QuickFacts data for Volusia County, total population grew by 10.7% rising from 494,596 in 2010 to 547,538 in 2018. The overall number of households in the 2014 to 2018 period was 212,985 with an average person per household of 2.43 persons. Concerning education, 90% of persons aged 25 and over were high school graduates or higher. Those with bachelor degrees or higher amounted to 23.6%. Regarding the daily commuting experience, the mean or average travel time to work for the years 2014-2018 was 25.7 minutes. [Visit this U.S. Census data summary](#) for more Volusia County QuickFacts.

U.S. TRADE DEFICIT POSTS FIRST DECREASE SINCE 2013 – The U.S. goods and services trade deficit declined 1.7% to \$616.8 billion in 2019, the first annual decrease since 2013, according to new U.S. Census Bureau annual data on the international trade balance. Some of the primary aspects of this trade activity between the United States and its partners over the last year occurred in crude oil, according to the U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services report released this month. A sharp decline in crude oil imports, accompanied by a significant rise in exports has played a notable role in lowering the overall U.S. trade deficit. Crude oil exports increased 35.5% or \$17.1 billion compared to the same period in 2018, while crude oil imports decreased 19.3% or \$30.3 billion over the prior year. For more, [view the U.S. Census Bureau news release.](#)

LABOR SHORTAGE REMAINS TOP CONCERN FOR HOME BUILDERS – According to a recent survey of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) members that ran in the monthly NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index, the cost and availability of labor continues to stand out as the most significant challenge that builders will face in 2020. More than four out of five builders – 85% – expect to face serious challenges regarding the cost and availability of labor this year, down slightly from the 87% who rated this issue as their top concern in 2019. In addition, building material prices and the cost and availability of lots were tied as the No. 2 expected problem in 2020, with these issues cited by 66% of the survey respondents. [Read the full article on NAHB's webpage.](#)

2019 SMALLSAT LAUNCH HIGHLIGHTS – As recently reported by Bryce Space and Technology, 2019 witnessed a significant number of small satellite or “smallsat” launches. Smallsats were defined as those weighing 600 kg and under which reflects the five smallest mass classes defined by the FAA. There were 389 smallsats launched during the year, 37% of which were for communications purposes, 32% for technology development and 26% for remote sensing. From 2012 to 2019, more than 1,700 smallsats were launched. In that period, the share of smallsats providing commercial services grew substantially from 6% in 2012 to 62% in 2019. [Read the full Bryce and Space Technology Smallsats report.](#)

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH COVID-19 VIRUS INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE – The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. The website offers access to Center for Disease Control and World Health Organization related information on the COVID-19 virus. In addition, there are frequently asked questions and guidance tools for individuals, businesses, travelers and health professionals. [For complete information on COVID-19, click here.](#)

U.S. CENSUS CONTINUES TO RECRUIT POSITIONS FOR CENSUS 2020 – The 2020 Census is more than a population count, it's an opportunity to shape the future of your community. [There is still time to apply for a temporary part-time position.](#) Positions offer competitive pay, flexible hours, paid training and weekly paychecks. Any person age 18 and older, such as recent high school graduates, college students, veterans, retirees, military spouses, seasonal workers and people who are bilingual are highly encouraged to apply. People who already have jobs and want to earn extra income evenings and weekends are also encouraged to apply. Every 10 years since 1790, the United States has undertaken the momentous task of counting its population. This is your chance to play a role.

NEWS ITEMS WANTED! – Please send your business news items to Joanne Magley at jmagley@volusia.org. If you wish to be removed from this weekly broadcast, please let us know.