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## ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

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### Key factors behind city's growth: Vision and persistence

Milestones include 'medical city,' theme parks, basketball

Orlando Business Journal - by [Susan Lundine](#) Managing Editor

The creation of the "medical city" in southeast Orlando's Lake Nona community was top-of-mind for most *Orlando Business Journal* readers when surveyed about what events they believe affected Central Florida's growth most during the past 25 years.

"With the development of Lake Nona into a world-class center for research and collaboration, the stage is set for Orlando to be a magnet for the best and brightest minds in science, technology and medical research," said Robert Utsey, senior vice president of Skanska.

Paired with that were comments about Burnham Institute for Medical Research's decision to move here, as well as the new University of Central Florida medical school. "It is hard to argue with the establishment of a global medical cluster that has the potential to create 30,000 higher-wage jobs in just a decade," said JoAnn Newman, president and CEO of Orlando Science Center.

Several folks also mentioned the Central Florida Research Park.

"The expansion of UCF and its relationship with the research park has put Central Florida on the map for high-tech businesses," said Elaine Ingra, president of PR Works.

Utsey agreed, citing UCF's partnership with the military and its collaboration with Seminole and Valencia community colleges as pivotal to the region's growth.

Of course, no one forgot about the theme parks' impact on the region.

"The opening of Universal Studios and the expansions at Walt Disney World resort made Orlando the world's favorite family vacation destination," said Jennifer Bisbee, president of Bisbee & Co. Inc. "And the opening of soundstages at both theme parks put Orlando on the map as a destination for film, television and commercial production, enhancing our worldwide image and bringing a pool of creative talent which benefits the region to this day."

Nor would tourism on a grand scale have been possible without Orlando International Airport.

"Who remembers that plain industrial warehouse called McCoy Airport?" said Kimberly Sterling, president of Resource Consulting Group. "The carpet and walls were gray, and it felt like the leftover military facility that it was.

"Transforming it into the Orlando International Airport — an attractive airport with natural Florida landscaping — has resulted in growth and benefits for countless Central Florida businesses and individuals."

The Orlando Magic's time in the NBA Finals spotlight also brought them to the forefront of OBJ readers' minds: "The addition of an NBA franchise not only put Central Florida in front of the nation's basketball fans, but also positions Orlando among an elite group of cities," said Ingra.

Another bright spot for readers included downtown redevelopment. "I keep going back to when the SunTrust Tower was under construction and the tall cranes started to be seen with new taller buildings, circa mid-late '80s," said Sandi Saft, president of Window Interiors. "What followed was more diverse business opportunities."

The emerging digital media industry also got a nod from our readers. "The launch of Electronic Arts Tiburon turned a spotlight on this region and its strength as a growing hub for the digital media industry," said Newman.

"Globally, the move demonstrated this region's ability to build strong technology-based industries in areas ranging from modeling to simulation, software development, national security, health care and education, as well as entertainment."

All in all, *Orlando Business Journal* readers feel pretty darn good about the past 25 years, and look forward to the future. "History will show," said Jane Hames, president of Embassy Consultants LLC, "that Orlando has finally decided what it wants to be when it grows up: a safe, healthy and happy place to live where some of the world comes to visit, some of the world watches us on TV and some of the world reads about us in science journals."

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Jim Carchidi

Michael Heredia packs an Olympus X7 Immunofluorescence Microscope for its move to Burnham Institute's facility in Lake Nona.

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