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Logan Ranked Number One Small U.S. City for Technology and Business

By Steve Eaton

For the second year in a row, Logan was named as the best-performing small city in the country by the nonprofit Milken Institute. The prize is calling attention to the growing number of international high-tech firms attracted to Logan and Cache Valley.

The Milken Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank. Its annual survey compared 179 small cities before giving Logan its number one ranking, crediting the city with having a “thriving technology sector.” The study evaluates job growth, wages, salaries, and technology output to come up with the rankings.



Logan and Cache Valley are attracting more high-tech and

international firms.

“This year, better performance in short-term technology output and wage increases drove the results—it was employment growth in 2011,” the report says of Logan. “Due to the stable state budget, Utah State University, Logan’s primary employer, saw its finances improve and continued to expand its research capacity.”

In addition to the Milken Institute’s ranking, CQ Press, a publisher of reference books, ranked Logan, Utah, as the safest metropolitan area in the United States in 2012. And Cache County is the second healthiest county in Utah, according to County Health Rankings and Roadmaps.

Those tasked with fueling the right kinds of economic development in northern Utah said that Cache Valley offers benefits to those who would move or expand their businesses here.

Sandy Emile, CEO and president of The Cache Chamber of Commerce, said all of Cache Valley has access to high speed internet, state and county roads, and that’s all they may need to set up shop in Cache County. Studies have shown people are now choosing where they would like to live first and then looking for a job there or a place to open a business, she said.

“Cache Valley immediately moves way up the totem pole based on what it offers,” Ms. Emile said. “We have healthy lifestyles, excellent outdoor recreation, and high family values, which gives us a strong family environment.”

She said many people don’t realize the number of world-class high-tech firms that are in Cache Valley already, such as Ophir-Spiricon, Campbell Scientific, Inovar, and Apogee Instruments.

Brian Carver, community and economic development director for the Bear River Association of Governments, said in addition to encouraging new business to locate in Cache, Box Elder, and Rich counties, his organization tries to help businesses that are already here to expand and grow.

“We’ve got great assets here,” he said. “The university gives us a highly educated, highly skilled work force. One of the things that people from out of state are always telling us is that our employee base is not only a little more highly educated than average, but they have a good work ethic, too.”

Kirk Jensen, economic development director for Logan, said the business school’s connection to Jon Huntsman and the work it did with the late Stephen R. Covey, the Jon M. Huntsman Presidential Chair in Leadership, has raised its profile.

Utah State University is “really part of the definition of who we are and what this valley is,” he said. “Were it not for Utah State, this community would look much different today than it does.”

Mike Young, assistant director of Logan’s Small Business Development Center, ’08, finance and economics, ’10, master’s degree, said that there is a life-balance benefit in the valley due, in part, to shorter commute times than those of some who work in larger cities.

“Even though the valley is growing, it still has a small feel to it, and that’s very attractive to many people,” he said.