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## Area job market called one of best in U.S.

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The Hinesville/Fort Stewart community has zoomed from 20th to fourth place in the Milken Institute's ranking of best performing small cities.

Employment in the heavy and civil engineering/construction sector grew dramatically last year, boosting the area's rating for 2007. The institute said activity connected with the MidCoast Regional Airport at Wright Army Airfield was one possible factor. The airport is scheduled to open next month. Ron Tolley, CEO of the Liberty County Development Authority, one of the partners in the joint use civilian/military airfield, said the information was a good indicator of general economic strength. "Infrastructure or vertical construction on post will contribute to the number of people in our area. This will spin off many benefits, the Hinesville retail sector, for example."

The Milken report notes employment in the Hinesville area is not as diverse as the national average, being strongly dependent on Fort Stewart.

Bend, Ore., St. George, Utah and Midland, Texas, topped Hinesville in the Milken rating.

In addition to ranking 179 smaller metropolitan areas like Hinesville, the institute lists 200 larger cities in order of performance. Savannah is one of these and it moved from 78th to 34th.

Job growth, wages and salaries, and measurement of technology growth are factors considered by Milken in rating the cities.

Warner Robins, also home of a large military base, made the top 10 list this year. The Middle Georgia city moved from 25th to 10th.

The metropolitan area of Atlanta, including areas like Sandy Springs and Marietta, ranked sixth among the top 10 largest cities. The Atlanta area was 86th in the top 100 listing.

The Augusta-Richmond County area dropped 53 places, from 110 to 163.

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