

# Washington County Economic Events

*Updated 6/23/09*

SkyWest Inc. said it will phase out service for Midwest Airlines by 2010. Officials of St. George-based SkyWest said, don't anticipate layoffs of any of SkyWest's 14,000 employees across the United States, concentrated in Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Denver, Chicago, Atlanta and St. George. The company is actively pursuing opportunities with a couple of large national airlines and thinks they will be successful in placing the aircraft.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705309816/SkyWest-to-end-service-with-Midwest-Airlines.html>

Ground was broken for a new \$4.2-million bridge across the Santa Clara River. It will replace the one washed out in the floods of 2005 and connect the southern Green Valley section of St. George with its northern half.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_12274284](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_12274284)

The U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration announced grants of \$52,500 each to the Six County Economic Development District of Richfield, the Five County Association of Governments of St. George and the Southeastern Utah Economic Development District of Price. Each will use the funds to continue comprehensive economic development planning programs designed to boost business development and job growth, EDA said.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705300948/Utah-economic-groups-to-get-federal-grants.html>

Drinking water projects across the state received a jump-start of state funding and federal stimulus dollars to pay for nearly \$79-million worth of upgrades and new infrastructure. The authorizations made by the state Drinking Water Board tapped \$18.9 million in stimulus funding and combined it with non-stimulus funds to issue \$23.4 million in loans and another \$8.7 million in grants. Priority projects receiving funding include:

- Dixie Deer Special Service District: \$498,000 loan and \$1.4 million grant for new well and waterline
- Washington County, Quail Creek: \$4 million loan and \$1 million grant for 20 million gallon storage tank

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705300105/Money-flows-to-drinking-water-projects.html>

Work on the St. George replacement airport continues to move rapidly ahead as work on the first phase of construction, which includes rough grading and drainage, winds down. This summer there will be seven construction projects associated with the airport under way at the same time. The next phase of construction, which involves finish grading, is scheduled for a bid opening on May 5th. A main waterline that will provide water to the airport and surrounding areas will be installed concurrently. The new airport terminal building bid will be opened on

April 28th and construction is expected to begin this summer. Proposals for fixed base operations, fueling facilities and commercial hangar construction will be received in May. The airfield paving and lighting, roadways and parking are scheduled to be bid in early summer. <http://www.mainstreetbusinessjournal.com/articleview.php?articlesid=4224>

National parks will get \$750 million in federal economic stimulus money to chip into a to-do list that includes repairing historic buildings, constructing new trails and increasing renewable energy use at Utah's Zion National Park. More than 750 projects in 48 states are expected to create 30,000 to 40,000 jobs starting this summer. That includes 15,000 jobs in a 21st Century Youth Conservation Corps. The stimulus package includes \$14 million for solar panels at 26 national parks. Zion National Park in Utah will get 20 percent of its power from solar energy once panels are installed. [http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_12195685](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_12195685)

According to the Denver-based Rocky Mountain Lodging Report, hotels statewide filled 62.2 percent of their rooms nightly last month, down from 69.4 percent in March 2008. But the 7-percent decline was better than year-to-year comparisons for January and February, both of which experienced 9-percent drops. St. George hotels filled 66 percent of their rooms last month, just slightly off the year-earlier rate of 69 percent. The most vacancies were reported in Cedar City (40.8 percent nightly occupancy) and Logan (41.2 percent). [http://www.sltrib.com/business/ci\\_12185441](http://www.sltrib.com/business/ci_12185441)

Construction permit activity in Washington County continued to erode in 2008 according to data recently released by the Utah Bureau of Economic and Business Research. Overall permit values have decreased 48 percent compared to 2007. The number of new home permits declined a whopping 65 percent and the value of those home permits decreased roughly the same amount. New nonresidential permit values are down 16 percent. The only cities to show increased home permit activity were Leeds and Springdale—however, the majority of the new permits were for apartment units rather than single family homes.

**January - December 2008**

County/City	New Dwelling		New Residential		New Nonresidential		Additions/Alterations/Repairs				Total Construction	
	Units	% Change 2007-08	Value (\$000)	% Change 2007-08	Value (\$000)	% Change 2007-08	Value (\$000)	% Change 2007-08	Value (\$000)	% Change 2007-08	Value (\$000)	% Change 2007-08
<b>Washington County</b>												
Enterprise	9	-76.9	2,436.20	-62	112.7	11.8	909	160.5	222	72.8	3,679.90	-47.4
Hurricane	80	-63.1	12,801.00	-57.2	15,617.20	-39.2	545.2	-34.2	2,890.80	222.2	31,854.20	-44.4
Ivins	49	-50.5	13,569.90	-45	3,713.20	43	615.6	38.3	0	0	17,898.70	-35.5
La Verkin	7	-81.1	1,325.00	-79.5	177	-33	558	-2.4	630	108.6	2,690.00	-64.6
Leeds	5	66.7	1,745.00	59.9	125	594.4	399	0	94.7	1252.9	2,363.70	111.8
Santa Clara	6	-91.3	1,692.50	-91.9	2,329.50	-61.8	874	13.3	0	0	4,896.00	-82.3
Springdale	26	160	3,824.30	-7.4	4,457.10	640.4	166.2	-36.8	145.2	11.2	8,592.80	67.7
St. George	281	-67.8	37,953.70	-69.8	69,675.70	-23.1	3,982.60	20.4	17,427.00	-21.1	129,039.00	-46.6
Virgin	2	-80	670	-84.5	105	19.2	10	-96.8	0	0	785	-83.4
Washington	170	-66.3	33,931.10	-68.3	21,057.40	33.1	6,775.70	301.5	516.7	-81	62,280.90	-51.1
Other Washington Co	47	-48.4	9,378.10	-53.9	3,641.50	133.3	1,306.90	25.1	188.9	0	14,515.40	-36.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>-65.1</b>	<b>119,326.80</b>	<b>-66</b>	<b>121,011.30</b>	<b>-15.6</b>	<b>16,142.20</b>	<b>68.4</b>	<b>22,115.30</b>	<b>-15.9</b>	<b>278,595.60</b>	<b>-47.5</b>

<http://www.bebr.utah.edu/CIDB.html>

St. George city has decided against using a \$40 million state bond to build its new airport — and has issued a polite denial to pay the state \$250,000 "for getting nothing." City officials maintain the city couldn't wait for internal haggling on the state level and had to move forward

alone with self-financing its share of the new airport.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,705282606,00.html>

St. George is defending a plan for a new \$168 million airport against complaints that soil at the proposed site will jeopardize the project. The city released a fact sheet aimed at dispelling what it says are unfounded rumors about the proposal. It says the project is sound and that issues with the soil have been known all along. The city says engineering detail and soils testing have been performed to ensure a safe runway. Before construction of the airport can begin, crews have to prepare 1,200 acres and about 4.7 million cubic yards of uneven soil. That includes "blue clay," an expansive soil that must be removed or mixed with other soils to ensure stability. The replacement airport has been in the works for more than 20 years.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,705273909,00.html>

According to a study by the National Park Service and Michigan State University, Zion National Park, Utah's most-visited national park in 2007, attracted 2.7 million visitors, a third of all the state's national park visitors in 2007. They spent nearly \$133 million and supported an estimated 2,843 jobs. <http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,705269053,00.html>

Washington County received \$200,000 in federal dollars to remove debris and clear flood channels at Tobin Wash Crossing, near Gunlock.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/article/20081023/NEWS01/810230333/1001/NEWS>

Officials recently held a groundbreaking party for a \$175 million airport to be built about seven miles southeast of St. George. The Federal Aviation Administration's approval of the city's plan to build a replacement airport on more than 1,400 acres included the Fed's promise of \$90 million to help fund the project. Anderson Development is buying the present airport site for \$43.96 million and another \$17 million in FAA funds was already spent on land purchases at the proposed site. A grand opening for the replacement airport is anticipated for November 2011. The city's current airport, located on a landlocked mesa top in the middle of St. George, will eventually be redeveloped with trails, parks, a variety of residential choices and commercial areas.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,705256597,00.html>

According to NAI, the last quarter saw very little space leased, more subleases, and vacancy rates jump to 14.8 percent—above the historical national range. The speculative construction started in the last half of 2007 has yet to be absorbed. Consequently, development in 2008 has been minimal compared to recent history. Vacancy on properties less than one year old stands at 58 percent and is 73 percent when the speculative 80,000+ square foot buildings in Fort Pierce and Gateway are included in the mix. For context, the 58 percent represents about 219,000 square feet of vacant industrial space that at last year's absorption rates would be leased or sold within a single quarter.

<http://www.mainstreetbusinessjournal.com/articleview.php?articlesid=3739>

Home prices in St. George have fallen by more than 4 percent during the past 12 months, according to the First American CoreLogic LoanPerformance Home Price Index. LoanPerformance HPI, which tracks price trends for repeat home sales, indicates that home

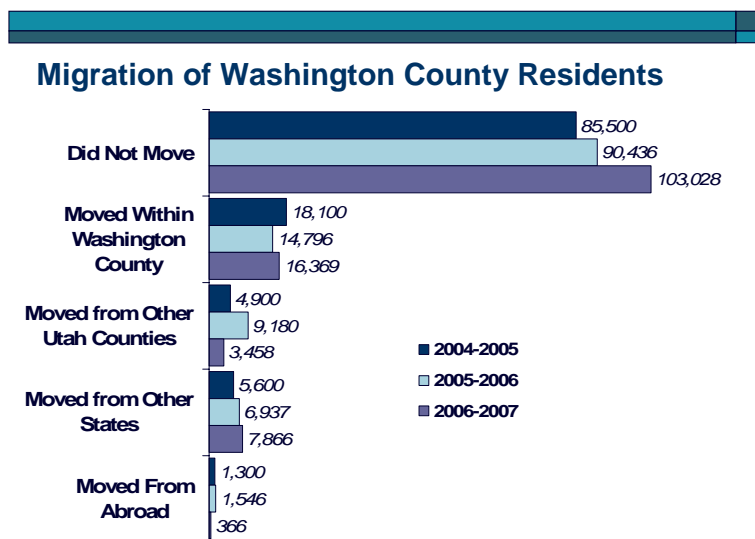
prices for the St. George area during July 2008 were down by 4.12 percent compared to July 2007. The current median price of a home in St. George is \$223,125.

<http://www.mainstreetbusinessjournal.com/articleview.php?articlesid=3661>

Foreclosure rates in St. George have increased for the month of July over the same period last year, according to First American CoreLogic, a collector of national, state and local data on home prices, foreclosure and delinquency activity, real estate sales volume and mortgage loan activity. According to recent data from First American CoreLogic on foreclosures for the St. George area, the rate of foreclosures among outstanding mortgage loans is 1.24 percent for the month of July, an increase of 0.81 percentage points compared to July of 2007 when the rate was 0.42 percent.

<http://www.mainstreetbusinessjournal.com/articleview.php?articlesid=3662>

The U.S. Census Bureau has recently released 2007 American Community Survey (ACS) data for the Washington County area. Data includes a vast array of economic, demographic, social, and housing characteristics for states and large counties across the nation. For example, ACS data for Washington County shows that 54 percent of women over the age of 16 work, 29 percent of the population is 18 years old or younger, 21 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher, workers spend an average of 19 minutes getting to work, and 7 percent of the population is below the poverty line. In addition, ACS data can tell us where our in-migrants originated (see accompanying chart). Much more data is available online at: <http://www.census.gov/acs>



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Young Electric Sign Company recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new manufacturing plant in the Fort Pierce Industrial Park. The company moved from its previous facility in March.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080917/BUSINESS/809170306/1/NEWSFRONT2>

The St. George City Council passed motions awarding bids of \$674,000 for work related to the first phase of a city solar farm project. The project's land excavation was awarded to Cindy Taylor Trucking & Construction with a bid of \$175,867, a St. George-based business. The council also approved a motion awarding a \$498,798 bid to AEE Solar for both solar panels and inverters. The first phase of the solar farm project is expected to be completed by the end of the year, and is expected to produce 100 kilowatts of power, enough to provide electricity for approximately 25 to 30 homes. The project, tentatively named Sunsmart, is planned as a collaborative effort between St. George City Energy Services and Dixie Escalante

Electric. St. George customers of both utility companies will have the opportunity to purchase individual solar units, expected to cost approximately \$6,000 each. Solar panels will be available for purchase by the middle of November. Utility customers investing in the solar farm would receive a state tax credit for their support of renewable energy resources.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080905/NEWS01/809050308/1001/NEWS17>

St. George-based SkyWest Inc. on Wednesday reported a 10.3 percent decrease in net income for the second quarter, compared with the same period a year earlier, due to increased maintenance costs and ongoing disputes with other carriers with which SkyWest has operating agreements, including Delta Air Lines Inc. SkyWest said second-quarter profits this year were \$36.4 million, or 63 cents per share, compared with \$40.6 million, or 62 cents per share, for the same period in 2007. <http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,700248896,00.html>

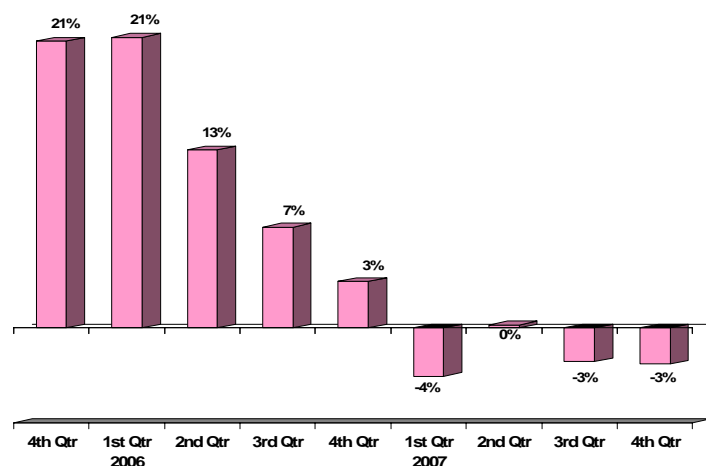
Utah's Department of Transportation has released funding to begin the design phase for a project to widen a portion of Telegraph Street in Washington City. The agency plans to widen the road to five lanes from 300 East to 500 West. Two lanes will run in each direction in addition to a separate turn lane. The agency has funded \$750,000 for the plan's design phase. Funding for any part of the project was not anticipated for several years. The multimillion-dollar project is not completely funded, and money for the next phases probably will not be available until 2012.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080801/NEWS01/808010312/1001/NEWS17>

Data recently released by the Utah State Tax Commission shows that Washington County's gross taxable sales continued to deteriorate during the fourth quarter of 2007. Between the fourth quarters of 2006 and 2007, Washington County sales decreased by 3 percent rounding out a disappointing sales year. Many retail sales categories showed substantial declines—particularly building supply/garden, motor vehicle, and furniture sales. Food store sales rose substantially. However, much of this gain is due to rising food prices rather than an increase in the amount of food sold. In addition, business investment expenditures in manufacturing and utilities decreased dramatically.

<http://tax.utah.gov/esu/sales/quarterly/index.html>

**Washington County Year-Over Change in Gross Taxable Sales**



Source: Utah State Tax Commission.

The U.S. Census Bureau has released 2007 population estimates for substate areas. Population estimates for towns in Washington County are as follows:

Enterprise—1,553  
Hildale—1,982  
Hurricane—12,896  
Ivins—7,662  
LaVerkin—4,434  
Leeds—760  
New Harmony—196  
Rockville—262  
St. George—71,161  
Santa Clara—6,662  
Springdale—565  
Toquerville—1,320  
Virgin—532  
Washington —16,656

<http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/cities.html>

According to a report from RealtyTrac, the St. George area ranked 27th among metro areas nationally for its rate of foreclosure filings in June, with one foreclosure for every 245 properties — the highest rate among cities in Utah. St. George had a 13-percent hike in foreclosure filings from May to June of 2008 and 174 percent year-over-year increase.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,700241966,00.html>

Washington County retail vacancy rates rose in the second quarter of 2008. According to the report, Washington County has a 6.4-percent stabilized vacancy rate. The rate does not include buildings less than one year old.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080710/BUSINESS/807100311/1046/CUSTOMERSERVICE02>

The Marriott TownePlace Suites, 251 S., 1470 East, in St. George, has recently opened.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080618/BUSINESS/806180330/1001/NEWS17>

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has released experimental measures of economic output produced in the Nation's metropolitan areas. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by metropolitan area is the measure of the market value of final goods and services produced within a metropolitan area in a particular period of time. GDP is BEA's preferred and most comprehensive measure of economic activity. These are prototype statistics and are being released for evaluation and comment by data users. In 2005 (the most current data available), the BEA estimates the St. George Metropolitan Statistical Area GDP at \$2,588 million. Between 2004 and 2005, the St. George MSA showed the fourth-fastest GDP growth in the nation.

[http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp\\_metro/gdp\\_metro\\_newsrelease.htm](http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp_metro/gdp_metro_newsrelease.htm)

Two consecutive quarters of dropping home prices have labeled the St. George metropolitan area a "declining" real estate market. A federal report shows first-quarter home-sales prices for 2008 dropped 3.65 percent from the same period last year. Last month the U.S. Office of Housing Enterprise Oversight ranked the area 235 out of 292 housing markets. Mortgage lenders say many St. George-area homeowners with subprime mortgages have defaulted on loans or are poised to lose their investments. That's put St. George on the list of places where mortgage insurance companies require stricter standards for issuing loan insurance.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_9446707](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_9446707)

Wal-Mart has broken ground on a new store to serve the Hurricane Valley. Construction on the site at 3700 West and State Route 9 is expected to be finished by early next year. The store should be open in the spring of 2009. The Wal-Mart store is just one of several commercial projects planned for the SR-9 corridor between the Virgin River and downtown Hurricane. Also in the works near the Wal-Mart site are a Maverick super store and a retail commercial center.

<http://www.mainstreetbusinessjournal.com/articleview.php?articlesid=3188>

An 18-hole championship golf course being developed as part of the Sand Hollow Resort Project is scheduled to open around Labor Day, resort officials say. The course is one of two planned for Sand Hollow Resort, located between Sand Hollow Reservoir and State Route 9 in Hurricane. A 9-hole walking course is included in plans for the resort.

<http://www.mainstreetbusinessjournal.com/articleview.php?articlesid=3189>

The St. George Barnes & Noble, in Red Cliffs Mall recently opened. It will stock about 200,000 book, music, magazine and movie titles, according to a statement from the company. The bookstore also has a large-scale children's department with about 15,000 titles, according to the company's statement. The store also has a cafe serving Starbucks' coffee, Cheesecake Factory sweets and Godiva chocolates. Wireless Internet is also available.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080527/MOMS/80527002/1046/CUSTOMERSERVICE02>

After more than two years of expanding and remodeling, RAM Company will officially celebrated the grand re-opening of its manufacturing facility at 3172 E. Deseret Drive South in St. George. RAM Company, which has been locally owned and operated since 1975 by the Ganowsky family, recently expanded its manufacturing plant by 33,000 square feet. RAM also underwent a complete remodel of the rest of its facility, which has been in its current location in the Millcreek Industrial Park since 1990.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080528/BUSINESS/805280329/-1/NEWSFRONT2>

The Rocky Mountain Power Foundation awarded a \$10,000 grant to Tuacahn Center for the Arts to help support the Summer Theatre Institute and its 2008 Broadway in the Desert theater season.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080513/NEWS01/805130304/-1/NEWSFRONT2>

Officials from Next Entertainment announced acquisition of 2,700 acres in Apple Valley Wednesday where they plan to build Sky of Dreams Ranch, a proposed housing, resort and entertainment industry complex. Sky of Dreams Ranch will include a film production facility, a hotel and spa, single-family homes and other attractions. The exact date the company will break ground on the project has not been determined,  
<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080508/BUSINESS/805080316/1046/CUSTOMERSERVICE02>

Last week, crews knocked down the walls of West Elementary in St. George to make way for a 5th District Court building to serve booming southwestern Utah. Scheduled for completion by fall 2009, the new courthouse will more than double the number of courtrooms—from three to eight—and also have room for a federal magistrate. Four judges share three courtrooms in the current building, which opened in 1981 and was supposed to last 50 years. The Legislature pegged \$29 million for the new courthouse, which will be built so courtrooms can be added in the future.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_9091631](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_9091631)

St. George officials accepted Anderson Development's bid of \$43.96 million for the land, which sits on a mesa overlooking downtown St. George, Santa Clara and the Virgin River. Anderson Development's vision for developing the existing airport property is described as a "multi-use concept" similar to one outlined in a 2000 study commissioned by St. George officials. The firm's vision includes a variety of residential neighborhoods with large estate lots, town homes, and affordable houses meant for young families or retired couples. Trails, open green spaces, and room for churches, schools or other public-use facilities are also included in the plan. A distinctive town center with retail shops and a possible amphitheater park on the northeast margin of the site are also included in the conceptual design. Before any of that happens, however, a final contract between Anderson and St. George City must be signed by April 30. Neither side has voiced worries that the deal could fall through.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/content/mobile/0,5223,695266677,00.html>

The Boyer Co. and landowner Shan Gubler are developing the first phase of a shopping center in Santa Clara, Washington County. The district will be anchored by a new, 72,063-square-foot Harmons grocery store at the intersection of Pioneer Parkway and Rachael Drive. The first phase also will include additional space for smaller retailers, financial institutions and restaurants. Construction will begin later this year, and store is expected to open in 2009.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695258402,00.html>

St. George City has accepted a nearly \$44 million bid from Anderson Development Services Inc., a Sandy development firm, for the purchase of the existing 274-acre airport site. Five bids were received and evaluated before Anderson was selected. Anderson agreed to put \$1 million down and pay the balance at the end of 2010, adding it is too early in the process to know what he will do with the land in the long term. The existing St. George airport sits on top of a mesa downtown and can't be extended, making it impossible to fly larger aircraft into the landlocked location. Plans to build a \$190 million replacement airport on more than 1,400 acres about seven miles southeast of town have been approved by the Federal Aviation Administration. The federal government already has spent \$17.2 million on the new airport site

and promised to spend another \$90 million. But St. George officials say they need the state's help during the transition period.

<http://deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695258476,00.html>

The Washington City Council and the Municipal Building Authority passed resolutions to bond \$8.5 million with Zions Bank to complete the community center. The city planned to pay for the community center with money from sold land. But when the real estate market began to plummet, the council decided to hold onto the remaining land and sell it in a stronger market. Council members believe they will make more money than the 3.91 percent interest rate on the bonds by selling the remaining land in a stronger market.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080214/NEWS01/802140337/1002>

A Salt Lake City-based film production company and an investment partner announced their purchase of 1,700 acres near Snow Canyon State Park for a master-planned community and filming facility. Next Entertainment and Celerity Investments will break ground for Sky of Dreams Ranch, a developing arts and entertainment community, this year. The 50-acre production campus will include two sound stages with green screen capability, a computer graphics, animation and special effects facility, as well as room for post-production work.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080206/BUSINESS/802060324/1046/CUSTOMERSERVICE02>

The city of St. George has received word that it will get \$90 million from the Federal Aviation Administration for the new airport. The grant is spread out over eight years, through 2015, according to the Letter of Intent. The new airport, which will have a 9,300-foot runway and will cost about \$170 million to construct, will allow for regional jet service. The airport is expected to open in early 2011. The new site is located in the southeast part of the city. The \$90 million will go toward land acquisition as well as design and construction of the new airport.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080112/NEWS01/801120307/1002/>

Construction has started on the Southern Parkway, a project that's initial phase includes building the Atkinville Interchange and a highway out to River Road in St. George. The first phase project will consist of building an interchange at Mile Marker 2. A road will be built from Mile Marker 2 to River Road. A connection to the SunRiver community is included. The current construction project—building the Atkinville Interchange and a four-lane highway out to River Road—is about \$45 million. Construction of the initial phase of Southern Parkway should be completed in fall 2009.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071210/NEWS01/712100319>

A new, homegrown community bank is about to open its doors in St. George. The state-chartered bank, to be known as Town and Country Bank, will open first in temporary quarters just west of the Summit Athletic Club near the intersection of River Road and 1450 South until permanent offices near the same site are designed and constructed. Town & Country Bank will be the first St. George-headquartered bank to open in six years and will join SunFirst Bank and The Village Bank as the only Washington County-based banks.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071207/BUSINESS/712070311/1046/CUSTOMERSERVICE02>