

Tennessee makes 'big deal' Top 10

Chattanooga & Cleveland Beneficiaries

In a time of smaller business investment nationwide, Tennessee is leading the country in landing the biggest business deals.

Among the top 10 biggest business announcements in North America last year, two were in Tennessee, according to the annual report of such deals by Site Selection magazine.

The \$1 billion Volkswagen auto assembly plant in Chattanooga announced in July and the \$1.2 billion Hemlock Semiconductor Corp. polysilicon plant, which will make solar-panel components in Clarksville, Tennessee, announced in December were among only three billion-dollar business deals on the Site Selection list for 2008.

The February announcement of **another \$1 billion polysilicon plant by Wacker Chemical Corp. in Bradley County was the first \$1 billion new business investment in 2009.**

"There are fewer projects going forward in the current economy," said Adam Bruns, managing editor for Site Selection, a trade publication that tracks business locations and major deals. "But there are still some big projects being announced, and Tennessee seems to be very successful right now in getting some of those."

None of the top business deals in 2008 were in Georgia. After landing the \$1.2 billion Kia car plant in 2006, Georgia has not had a top deal in Site Selection's annual list.

But Georgia and Tennessee should reap dividends from major new Tennessee projects even during the worst economic downturn in a generation, according to Tennessee's chief industrial recruiter.

"We're very fortunate to have had successes like Volkswagen, Hemlock and Wacker that now afford us the chance to recruit the suppliers to these plants and the downstream businesses they generate," said Matt Kisber, Tennessee's commissioner for Economic and Community Development. "We're seeing a lot of activity in those areas even though manufacturing overall is certainly down."