When St. Peters Mayor Len Pagano’s phone rang in September 2017, it was Money magazine calling to let Mayor Pagano know that St. Peters had been ranked No. 15 in its Top 100 Best Places to Live in America for 2017. It’s the fourth time the City has been placed on this list, and this year marks the highest ranking for the City. Money magazine said “St. Peters is an ideal place to start a family in the St. Louis area,” and Mayor Pagano couldn’t agree more. “This was fantastic news!” said Pagano. “Money Magazine noted our great schools, our Cultural Arts Centre, free concerts and festivals, our beautiful park system and our St. Peters Rec-Plex.”

St. Peters is entering the new year with tremendous momentum as more and more businesses choose to open or expand businesses in the area. More than 2 million square feet of office, retail and light industrial space has opened in the last year, with more planned in 2018.

Most of that space (approximately 1.3 million square feet) includes four, large projects at Premier 370 Business Park. Another retail project, The Shoppes of Mid Rivers, a 250,000-square-foot development, opened for the 2017 holiday shopping season. All of these projects have brought hundreds of new jobs to the area, with further growth expected.

St. Peters has built a national reputation as a great place to do business, ranked by Wallethub among the top 30 small cities to start a business. Analysts for Wallethub compared 1,261 cities with populations between 25,000-100,000, looking at each city’s business environment, access to resources and business costs. After crunching the numbers, St. Peters ranked as the nation’s 28th best city.

What is the St. Peters secret? It is the way the City works with businesses and companies that are looking for sites; they are placed on the FasTrac:

**The FasTrac:**
- Pulls together experts for a project;
- Expedites projects with a “one stop” permitting process; and
- Stays in touch with businesses through the process and after the ribbon cutting.

FasTrac works by assigning each project to a planner, engineer and inspector who work together to facilitate a project and track it through the approval process. This FasTrac team brings projects to the land use process early in the timeline for discussion with
staff from all aspects of the project: engineering, planning, streets, utilities, solid waste and the elected officials from that ward. Concerns and zoning requirements can be addressed before moving to the engineering/design phase, eliminating costly surprises and potential delays.

A recent project highlights how a growing business in St. Peters truly is on the FasTrac. RB, formerly Reckitt Benckiser, a major consumer goods company, had a significant operation in St. Peters in the Arrowhead Industrial Park with nearly 600 workers. The company sought a new location to add a warehouse, custom manufacturing and repackaging operations, with another 350+ workers. A site was chosen in the new Premier 370 development for a new 715,000-square-foot distribution center. The permitting and approval process moved quickly for the facility, the biggest building in the city of St. Peters. Plans were submitted in December 2015 and a building permit was issued in April 2016.

“Business is booming in St. Peters!” said Mayor Pagano. “People who start businesses in St. Peters find out that they get the benefit of experts from our City team who can help them cut through red tape.” Pagano explained that it is all part of the welcoming, “family” attitude in St. Peters. No matter the size of the business, the FasTrac goal is to be hospitable to new or expanding companies, just like neighbors greet new residents in a St. Peters neighborhood. As part of the booming business climate in St. Peters, businesses and their employees get benefits like reduced rates at the St. Peters Rec-Plex, whether or not they are residents. Branding messages reinforce this goal: “Join the St. Peters Family – Be a Part of the Boom.”

One of the companies that expanded to St. Peters in the fall of 2017 went even further. Saia LTL Freight recently completed a new 51,260-square-foot, cross-dock logistics facility at the Premier 70 Business Park. Brett Rabe, senior real estate manager for Saia, explained that nationally, the company had 11 facility openings or relocations in 2017 and St. Peters, by far, really stepped up to the plate. “We’re used to a 12- to 16-month permit process.
Realistically, we were moving dirt about three months after closing and that’s unheard of.”

Two more projects were completed in Premier 370 in 2017: Best Buy built a 252,000-square-foot warehouse/distribution center and Duke Realty built a 300,000-square-foot spec warehouse building to draw more tenants to the business park.

Citywide, other commercial projects including manufacturing, health care, retail, restaurants and hospitality were completed, with more in process for 2018. It is a diverse economic development portfolio facilitated by the City’s FasTrac philosophy.

“We have staff here who help you during the opening process all the way beyond the ribbon cutting,” said Russ Batzel, St. Peters city administrator. “It's important to us that our businesses get the attention they need and have the best chance for success.” Batzel also noted that city staff have been repeatedly recognized by national professional organizations for their outstanding service to the residents and businesses in St. Peters.

Along with the FasTrac philosophy, the city of St. Peters has low fees; abundant, low-cost water resources; and one of the few municipal recycling and solid waste programs in the region. The City is proud of its professional, cost-effective track record for city services.

As Money magazine detailed, quality of life is a big reason for St. Peters ranking high on their “Best Places to Live” list. That focus by city leaders is motivating new residents in their choice to move to St. Peters and for existing residents to stay. After more than 30 years of residential expansion, major single-family land neighborhood development is not the primary focus as the final developable properties are built. Still, according to the St. Louis Business Journal, St. Peters is leading the St. Louis region in single-home sales, with 1,317 sold in 2016 at the fourth-fastest rate (43 median days on the market).

Amateur athletes, especially high school swimmers and divers from across Missouri, travel to the St. Peters Rec-Plex every year for the annual Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) state championships. It is one of numerous tournaments, games and events held at the 236,000-square-foot recreational complex each year. More than a million people visit the complex for water sports, swimming, ice skating, hockey, fitness classes, weights and cardio equipment. In addition, more than 2,000 active older adults have chosen the St. Peters Rec-Plex as their fitness home for the SilverSneakers program.

St. Peters is the only city in St. Charles County with a municipal golf course. Outdoor amenities also include 25 parks totaling 1,300 acres and more than 20 miles of paved trails. The City’s largest park, 370 Lakeside Park, has a 140-acre lake, dog park, archery range and RV campgrounds, with nearly 17,000 site reservations in 2017. The park has hosted visitors from all 50 states and several Canadian provinces.

Great schools and area universities, affordable housing, wonderful services and amenities, a world-class work force and Midwestern charm truly make St. Peters a great place to live, work, play and visit. It all adds up to national recognition in Money magazine and a bright future for St. Peters in 2018.