

# Business

**DISCONNECT | B8**  
CenturyLink second-quarter profit falls by 78 percent

**CAN IT | B8**  
Anheuser-Busch unveils bolder, sleeker design for Budweiser can

**JUST MISSED IT | B8**  
Stock market gain helps to avoid the ninth straight day of losses

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| 2,693.07<br>+23.83<br>Nasdaq | 1,260.34<br>+6.29<br>S&P 500 | 11,896.44<br>+29.82<br>Dow Jones | 2,370.74<br>+2.98<br>American Stock | 772.78<br>+5.77<br>Russell 2000 | 13,291.38<br>+72.54<br>Dow Stk (Wiltshire) | \$91.93<br>\$1.86<br>Oil |
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## COMMERCIAL BUILDING: SECTOR STANDS OUT



ANDREW WEST/THE NEWS-PRESS

Viking Construction workers Gary Frazee, foreground, and Lester Bulson install a hand-rail in a once foreclosed office building that is being converted to medical offices and a bank on College Parkway. Stevens Construction is heading up the work.

# Medical property market favorable to Lee doctors

**BY DICK HOGAN**  
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Death and taxes are the only certainties — and both are driving the success of the medical-office building sector in an otherwise bleak Southwest Florida commercial property market.

One contractor, Fort Myers-based Mark Stevens of Mark Stevens construction, has thrived by making the most of medical. He recently won two statewide awards for medical renovations.

Stevens said the transition hasn't been easy: In today's lean, turbulent economy, he's had to evolve from simply doing the construction to shepherding projects from inception.

Until recently, he said, his involvement typically started when he got a call asking him to look at building plans already drawn up in a location already chosen.

"Now we get that call early on," Stevens said — allowing him to discover location and design land mines with the potential to scuttle a doctor's dream relocation.



**STEVENS**  
Contractor renovates medical space

That can be tricky in today's market, where prices for existing buildings are so low it's almost never a good idea to start any kind of commercial structure from scratch.

Still, there's been a trend of doctors trying to take advantage of the situation by buying their own property, said Mark Alexander, a Fort Myers-based commercial real estate broker who works a lot with medical leases and sales.

"Doctors who have been renting forever are either shifting to buying or, if they're lucky enough to have their leases coming up in the next year, they're renegotiating to get much better rents, or they're shifting upward. Everybody's graduating up the level of quality."

Standing, until recently, in the way of some of that mobility, Alexander said, was a sometimes prohibitive impact fee for turning a general office building into one

### AWARDS

Stevens Construction won three awards last month at the Southeast Builder's Conference, which honors the best in commercial and residential construction in a 12-state region:

- The Grand Aurora Award
- Best Healthcare division for a 10,440-square-foot medical office on Six Mile Cypress Parkway in south Fort Myers built for Dr. Michael Collins, an eye surgeon
- Renovation division for the 10,580-square-foot ambulatory eye surgery center built on U.S. 41 for Dr. Mark Gorovoy.

suitable for medical users.

"If you're the doctor looking to occupy the space, it made it horribly expensive if you had to pay this big medical impact fee on top of that," he said.

But Dec. 7, the Lee County Commission voted to cut the medical office impact fee — charged to compensate for the costs of growth — by 70 percent to \$7,400 per 1,000 cubic feet for two years.

See **STEVENS B8**