

40,000 new jobs created in area

Arundel leads gain from 2000 to 2005

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Sun reporter

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The Baltimore metropolitan area created more than 40,000 jobs in the first half of the decade, propelled largely by Anne Arundel County, new census numbers show.

Anne Arundel employers added 25,700 jobs from 2000 to 2005, well more than half the 41,700-job gain across the region. The county - home to Fort Meade and the National Security Agency - is a prime government-contracting beneficiary. But it also showed growth in a variety of other sectors, from health care to tourism.

The Census Bureau, which released the numbers yesterday, draws its data from reports employers make to the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration. The numbers do not include self-employment or most government jobs, but contractors, an important part of the region, are counted.

All told, Anne Arundel's growth rate outpaced the national average sevenfold.

"The whole BWI corridor is booming," said Richard P. Clinch, director of economic research at the University of Baltimore's Jacob France Institute.

Baltimore County and Howard County, with about 10,000 new jobs apiece, were the next largest employment creators in the metro area.

Baltimore continued to contract, according to the Census Bureau. The city shed about 17,300 jobs during the five-year period, though those losses were slowing.

Clinch said he wasn't surprised. The city has lost jobs for years, and it was hit hard by the 2001 recession though the state as a whole was not. But he's expecting better news in the near future, with office and retail space under construction downtown and elsewhere, including the expanding Harbor East.

"The city's prospects are quite good," he said. "I think you're going to see out-and-out growth in the city in the near term."

The Baltimore region's smallest employment bases - the outer counties - did well during the first half of the decade.

Harford, which like Anne Arundel benefited from homeland-security spending, added about 6,400 jobs from 2000 to 2005, a pace of growth more than five times the national average. Carroll County added nearly 5,900 jobs, its 13.5 percent growth rate just shy of Anne Arundel's.

Among the suburbs, it was the much larger Baltimore and Howard counties that faltered a bit. They grew faster than the nation over the five years but recorded job losses in 2005, the census statistics show. The number of manufacturing jobs fell in both counties.

Richard W. Story, chief executive of the Howard County Economic Development Authority,

acknowledged that 2005 was a slow year. But he attributed the 915-job loss to a statistical quirk - the government realizing that some jobs associated with an employer headquartered in the county were located elsewhere.

His early read of last year is a gain of more than 4,000 jobs.

"The numbers look very strong," he said. "And all of this is pre-BRAC," he added, referring to the base realignment and closure process expected to bring thousands of government, contractor and related jobs to the Baltimore region.

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