

PartnershipGwinnett

a shared vision for the future

ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE - KEY FINDINGS

This Economic and Demographic Profile sought to understand patterns of change in terms of demographic characteristics, socioeconomic well-being, employment, income, and economic structure. Through the course of this analysis, several key trends were exposed clarifying Gwinnett County's current realities compared to the Atlanta region, Georgia, and the U.S.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

- **Gwinnett's population growth shows no sign of slowing down.** Domestic migration is the top driver of population change in Gwinnett. Households moving between Gwinnett and adjacent Barrow and DeKalb counties account for the largest proportion of out-migrants and immigrants, respectively.
- **New residents continue to predominantly locate in unincorporated Gwinnett.** For the past 15 years, the proportion of residents living within the County's 15 municipalities has remained relatively consistent at about 22 percent. The County government will continue to be largely responsible for meeting the needs of Gwinnett's growing population.
- **Gwinnett is diversifying, racially and ethnically.** While minorities accounted for 10.6 percent of the County's population in 1990, they account for 42.9 percent today. In fact, over 75 percent of Gwinnett's growth since 1990 has been comprised of minorities. Diversity is an important strength of economically competitive communities. Leveraging this diversity for Gwinnett County's benefit will be a key issue for local leaders.
- **Among Atlanta metro counties, the disparity between in-migrant and outmigrant incomes is the greatest in Gwinnett.** Between 2003 and 2004, the County experienced the greatest loss in per capita adjusted gross

income of any county in the Atlanta metro area.

- **Poverty rates are on the rise.** In 2003, the County's poverty rate was 8.2 percent, up 2.8 percent over five years. Similarly, children are more likely than adults to live in poverty in Gwinnett. Child poverty rates at the metro, state, and national levels all declined while Gwinnett's rate climbed 3 percent in the same time period.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

- **Job growth has been strong and County wages are above those of the MSA and the nation.** While Gwinnett's average annual wage growth has suffered since 2001, its 3rd quarter 2005 average annual wage of \$41,239 still led those of the Atlanta MSA (\$37,371) and the nation (\$38,798).
- **Economic, as well as racial and ethnic lines, are increasingly dividing the "haves" and the "have nots" in Gwinnett County.** The proportion of minorities living in Gwinnett County has increased since 2001 while the County's real per capita income has declined. Gwinnett's poverty rate has also increased, with minorities disproportionately affected.
- **Certain workers are having difficulty finding employment and dropping out of the labor force, despite robust job growth.** Since 1990, unemployment rates have risen and labor force participation rates have declined. At the same time, Gwinnett's job growth has increased faster than the metro area, state, and nation. This indicates that (1) more workers are dropping out of the labor force and (2) more workers are having greater difficulty finding employment, despite new job creation.
- **Average wages and incomes are falling.** Gwinnett's manufacturing sector was hit hard by the 2001 recession and has been contracting since 1980. To an extent, high paying jobs are being replaced by lower-wage service industry jobs. Partially as a result, Gwinnett's real per capita income and average annual wages have decreased since 2000 after years of steady increases. Reversing these trends will be key to enhancing local wealth and increasing Gwinnett's competitive fiscal capacity.
- **Manufacturing jobs continue to be lost in favor of service sector jobs.** Between 1980 and 2000, Gwinnett's job base grew more dependent on the service sector. At the same time, manufacturing lost the economy's largest share of jobs. These high paying jobs are being lost to lower wage jobs in administrative and waste services and accommodation and food services. Certain studies have shown, however, that manufacturing employees hired as "temporary help" are actually counted as components of the administrative services sector.
- **Employment concentrations in high wage business sectors provide economic development opportunities.** Gwinnett's wholesale trade and information sectors are comparatively stronger than those of the state. These high wage sectors provide significant opportunity for strengthening and further diversifying Gwinnett's economy.
- **Gwinnett's entrepreneurial and small business dynamics are encouraging.** Between 1990 and 2004, Gwinnett closed the gap between local and state entrepreneur average annual earnings growing from \$17,428 to \$28,005. The County has higher proportions of entrepreneurs in construction, wholesale trade, professional and technical services, and administrative and waste services relative to national averages.