



August brings job gains to East Bay

By George Avalos
Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 09/19/2008 07:03:40 PM PDT

The East Bay's struggling economy has fended off — for now, anyway — an employment erosion that began in January by adding 1,300 new jobs in August, according to a report released Friday by state labor officials.

The August job gains, which were adjusted for seasonal changes, were a welcome contrast to the seven straight months of employment losses in the Alameda County-Contra Costa County region.

It was the best month for job gains in the East Bay since May 2007, according to seasonally adjusted data supplied by the state's Employment Development Department.

"It is too soon to say there has been an improvement" in the area's job market, said economist Jon Haveman, a partner with Beacon Economics. "Look at all the turmoil on Wall Street in the past week. What is going on with Wall Street is going to exacerbate trends that are going on with the economy."

So far in 2008, the East Bay has lost 16,400 jobs, the EDD reported.

It's possible the job losses may be more pronounced in parts of the East Bay that saw the largest building boom and the most severe spate of foreclosures.

"We have really felt the brunt of the economic

downturn in Contra Costa County," said Robert Lanter, executive director of the Workforce Development Board in the county. "Our career centers are inundated with people looking for work."

The San Mateo-San Francisco-Marín area lost 1,400 jobs in August. San Joaquin County gained 400 jobs. The numbers for both regions were adjusted for seasonal fluctuations.

The economic woes have rattled the entire state. California lost 7,700 jobs during August. The state's jobless rate increased to 7.7 percent.

Despite the one-month uptick, the East Bay over the last year has fared much worse than California overall.

During the 12 months that ended in August, the East Bay lost 19,400 jobs. That represented a 1.9 percent decline in the East Bay's payroll jobs. California job totals fell 0.5 percent during the year.

"Layoffs we're hearing about are staggering compared to last year," Lanter said.

The job losses in Contra Costa are primarily in financial services, retail and telecommunications, Lanter said.

Still, people can find work if they have the right set of skills to offer, said Colleen Craig, a regional vice president in the Walnut Creek office of Ajilon Professional Staffing.

"If a candidate's skill set is in high demand, they do not stay in our database for very long," Craig said. "We often place candidates on temporary assignments the day they come in to meet with us."

Job seekers should remember that not every industry is struggling, despite the barrage of

Advertisement

Advertisement banner for Inside Bay Area. It features the logo on the left, the phone number **(800) 755-7323** in large text on the right, and the text **Subscribe today!** with the URL www.insidebayarea.com/services below it. On the right side of the banner, there is a collage of three overlapping screenshots of the Inside Bay Area website, showing various news articles and a search bar.

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



setbacks that have jolted Wall Street and Main Street in recent days and weeks, she said.

For example, a survey of EDD data shows that of the East Bay's 25 private-sector industries, six added jobs during the last year, 15 cut jobs, and four were unchanged.

"The biggest challenge in the marketplace is there is so much focus on what is not working, that they forget about the industries that are hiring," Craig said.

The most robust East Bay industries over the last year were educational services, social assistance, architectural and engineering services, health care, transportation and warehousing, and computer systems design. Of those, the top performer was educational services, which added 600 jobs.

The region's weakest industries during the 12 months were construction, retail, finance and insurance, manufacturing and wholesale trade. The most feeble of these, construction, shed 6,500 jobs.

Some economists have begun to spot more signs of improvement, or at least, fewer signs of weakness, in the statewide job market.

Job losses in two sectors, construction and finance, that were battered by the collapse of the housing and mortgage markets have sharply slowed the rate of their erosion, said Howard Roth, chief economist with the state's finance department.


During the most recent six months, the construction industry lost jobs at a rate of 4,000 a month and during the six months before that period, construction jobs vanished at a rate of 9,200 a months in California, Roth said. Finance job losses were 2,000 a month in the most recent six months, and during the prior six-month period,

finance job losses totaled 3,500 a month.


"We're seeing some signs that things are settling down," Roth said. "The job losses have started to slow."

George Avalos covers jobs, economic development, commercial real estate, finance and oil companies. Reach him at 925-977-8477 or gavalos@bayareanewsgroup.com

Advertisement

 **(800) 755-7323**

Subscribe today!
www.insidebayarea.com/services



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™