

Greensboro economy still dragging, survey finds

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Greensboro's economy is still "less than robust" because of deteriorating wages and slow job growth, according to a new survey being released today by the Greensboro Partnership.

The economic development group compares Greensboro with nine other cities chosen for their population or geographic location, and those comparisons show Greensboro is lagging behind in many categories.

The study, which used 2008 data, was researched and written by Keith Debbage, a professor of urban development in the UNCG Department of Geography, and Suzanne Gallaway, a doctoral candidate in the department.

In addition to Greensboro, the cities included were Raleigh; Durham; Charlotte; Winston-Salem; Columbia, S.C.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Greenville, S.C.; Richmond, Va.; and Louisville, Ky.

The report covers four categories: economic growth and jobs; population and demographics; education; and health and wellness.

Economic growth, jobs

Greensboro ranked seventh among the 10 cities in median earnings at \$24,855. That figure was below the average of \$25,729 and significantly lower than No. 1 Charlotte's figure at \$31,526.

"Median earnings are an excellent measure of the overall skill level of the community and the quality of jobs being created in an area," the report says.

Retail jobs, for example, are low-skill, low-wage jobs. Greensboro ranks at the top of the 10 cities with 15.8 percent of its work force in such jobs.

Conversely, professional, scientific and management jobs require high levels of education and skill and pay higher wages. But Greensboro ranked at the bottom of the list with 8.2 percent of its work force in these jobs.

Transportation, logistics and warehousing are expected to become big employers in the Triad, and the survey shows that Greensboro ranks second among the cities with 6 percent of its work force employed in those areas.

Population and demographics

Greensboro ranked seventh among the cities in population growth, having grown by 8 percent between 2005 and 2008. Raleigh ranked first with 15 percent growth. Winston-Salem ranked third with 12.3 percent growth.

Greensboro's bright spot may be its population of young people. People ages 20-34 make up 23.5 percent of the population.

"Only Columbia, S.C., and Raleigh reported a higher percentage ... perhaps suggesting the important role that colleges and universities play in all three cities," according to the report.

Educational attainment

Greensboro ranks in the middle of cities regarding education.

It is sixth on the list of cities ranked by percent of population over age 25 with bachelor's degrees or higher.

Health and wellness

Greensboro has a high infant mortality rate of 9.9 per 1,000 live births. Columbia had the lowest infant mortality with a 5.7 rate, and Winston-Salem had the highest rate of 12 per 1,000 births.

Greensboro scored well with a low teenage pregnancy rate, however, with 53 for 1,000 females age 15-19. It ranked third on the list.

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