Unemployment in Northwest Atlanta and Fulton Industrial Boulevard Area of Unincorporated Fulton County

Introduction

Unemployment in Fulton County is currently higher than both the state and national rates. According to the Georgia Department of Labor, Fulton County's overall unemployment rate is currently 10.8%, in comparison to the state rate of 10.3% and the national rate of 9.5%. In an effort to identify how a particular area within the county is being impacted by unemployment, it was essential to first define and describe the area.

Area Definition and Description

The northwestern portion of Atlanta defined for the purpose of examining unemployment in a specific area of the county includes a portion of west Atlanta and an adjacent unincorporated Fulton County area surrounding a portion of Fulton Industrial Boulevard. Boundaries of the area may be roughly defined by Northside Drive, Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Fulton Industrial Boulevard and West Paces Ferry Road. U.S. postal zip codes corresponding with the area include 30311, 30314, 30318, 30327 and a portion of 30336.

Unemployment Data-Fulton County

The U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census collects unemployment data every 10 years that is available at census tract and zip code levels. The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey is conducted annually and provides more recent data collected from population samples yielding data that may be viewed at the county level as the smallest unit of analysis. Updates to unemployment data between the decennial census counts are based upon estimates conducted annually, and the unemployment data made available annually is county level data. According to the most current U.S. Census Bureau estimates, there are approximately 37,987 unemployed persons in Fulton County (American Community Survey, 2008).

In an effort to provide a more current snapshot of unemployment data within a specified area of northwest Atlanta, a series of data points by zip code have been explored:

Georgia Department of Labor's Business Layoffs and Closure Listing (1/1/10 - 8/12/10)

Businesses within the state of Georgia are required to report layoff and closure information when it is estimated that 50 or more employees will be impacted. This information is available through the Georgia Department of Labor's Business Layoffs and Closures list, which contains information reported to the department through the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) system. Based upon this requirement, a total of fifteen (15) businesses within the five targeted zip codes either closed or laid off more than 50 employees between January 1, 2010 and August 12, 2010. This impacted a total of 1,633 individuals.

Georgia Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance Claims

In an effort to determine how residents within the targeted zip codes have been impacted by unemployment since the beginning of the year, the Georgia Department of Labor was asked to provide the county with data related to unemployment insurance claims since January 2010 for the zip codes initially targeted. In addition to 30311, 30314, 30318 and 30336, DOL was asked to also include claims data for zip code 30327, a portion of which is located in northwest Atlanta. The data is categorized by initial claims filed, continuous claims, and continuous claims that have exhausted.

Initial claims filed in the five zip codes totaled 5,119. The chart below showcases the number of initial claims filed each month, indicating that the largest number of initial claims filed was in January 2010.

Initial Claims for (30314,30318,30336,30311,30327)							
Jan-2010	Feb-2010	Mar-2010	Apr-2010	May-2010	Jun-2010	Jul-2010	Total
821	707	657	696	764	772	702	5119

Another indication of the state of unemployment is signaled by the number of claims that were filed for continued benefits, which totaled 398 between January 2010 – July 2010. Again, the majority of claims filed for continued benefits occurred during the first month of the year

Continuous Claims (Reference Week) for (30314,30318,30336,30311,30327)							
Jan-2010	Feb-2010	Mar-2010	Apr-2010	May-2010	Jun-2010	Jul-2010	Total
157	51	44	41	37	38	30	398

The Georgia Department of Labor also provided the county with the total number of claims that were exhausted between January 2010 – July 2010. The chart below, which showcases a total of 1,298 also highlights the number of individuals whose unemployment benefits exhausted each month.

Continuous Claims Exhaustees for (30314,30318,30336,30311,30327)							
Jan-2010	Feb-2010	Mar-2010	Apr-2010	May-2010	Jun-2010	Jul-2010	Total
270	158	193	189	184	156	148	1298

Number of Layoffs Within Atlanta Public Schools

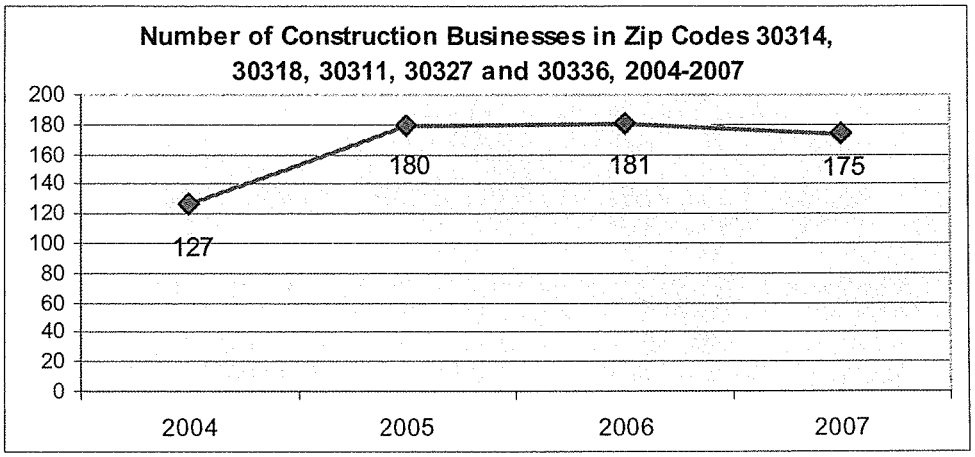
According to the Atlanta Public Schools system, within the zip codes noted, there have not been any schools affected by staff layoffs since January 2010.

2004-2007 Economic Census Industry Patterns

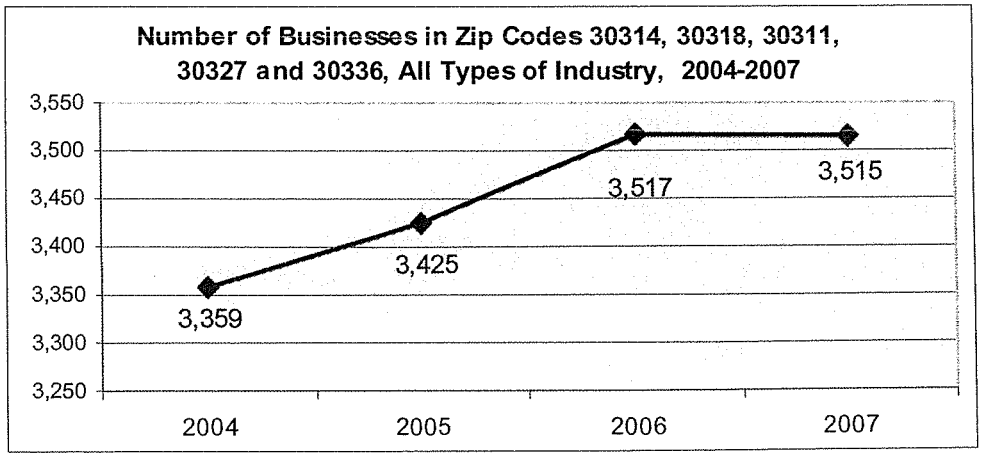
In considering other approaches to provide insight about the state of unemployment within the five zip codes of the targeted area, county business patterns provided by the U.S. Census Bureau were analyzed. These data showcase the total number of establishments, by industry and zip code, within a particular county. The most current information available highlights the number of establishments each year from 2004-2007, thus the graphs below indicate growth in some industries as well as a decline in others. It is likely that since the recent economic downturn certain businesses in the county, particularly those related to construction and real estate, have

experienced significantly higher declines than what has been captured in the graphs below. In fact, even though the Fulton County Department of Environment and Community Development has noted an increase in building permit activity over the last 6-12 months, it is reflective of singular residential building permit requests, not requests for entire residential developments/subdivisions permits, as was the case six years ago.

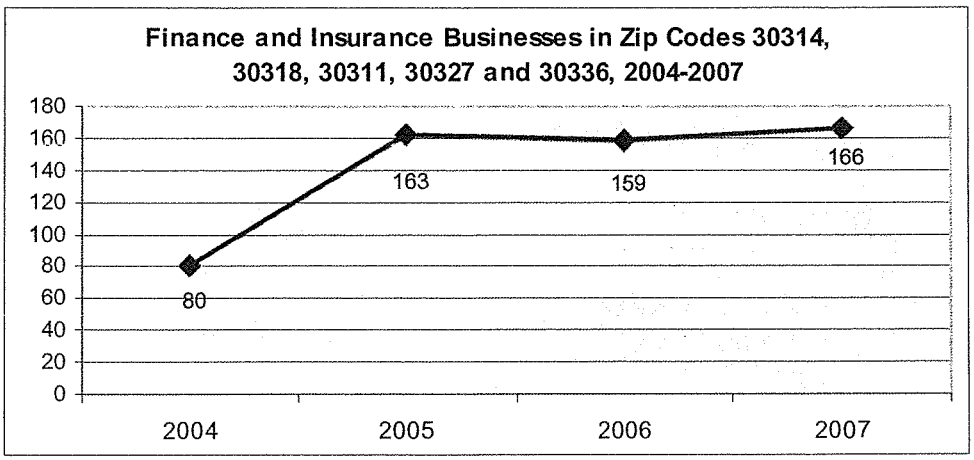
According to the U.S. Census, between 2004 and 2006, the number of construction businesses continued to increase from 127 to 181 within the five zip codes, then decreased by 6 between 2006 and 2007.



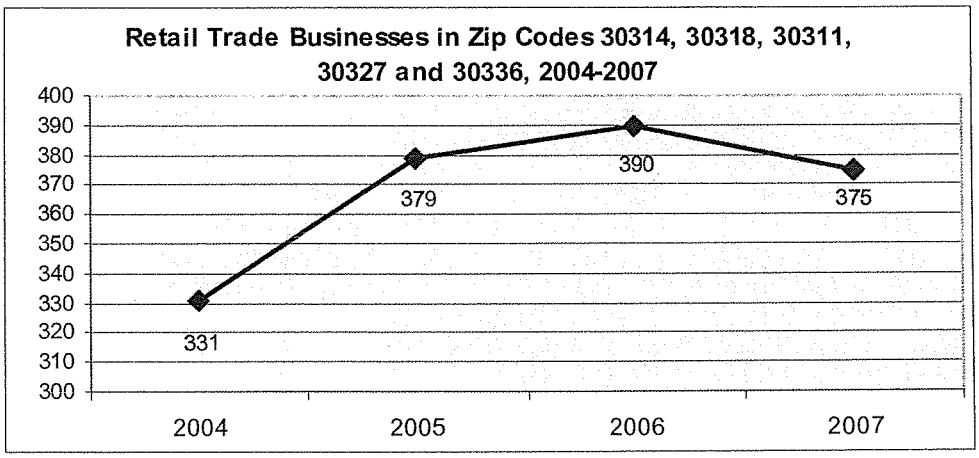
Following three yearly increases from 2004 to 2006, the total number of businesses in the defined area of Fulton County decreased by 2 between 2006 and 2007.



The number of businesses in the Finance and Insurance industry doubled between 2004 and 2005, decreased by four between 2005 and 2006, then increased by seven between 2006 and 2007.



Retail trade businesses were one of the industry types to experience a steady increase in the defined area between 2004 and 2006, then decreased by 15 between 2006 and 2007.



Number of Residents Seeking Workforce Services at Atlanta and Fulton County Workforce Development Offices

The Fulton County Office of Workforce Development offers an array of services to the unemployed and underemployed of Fulton County. Core or basic services are available to any county resident however more intensive services and training opportunities are restricted to county residents who do not reside in the city of Atlanta, and to out-of-county residents who have been dislocated from an employer located within the county. In the first two quarters of this year, 801 residents from 30311, 30314, 30318, 30327 and 30336 sought services within the county's workforce development offices.

County residents who live within the city of Atlanta that are in need of more intensive or training services are referred by the county's workforce office to the city of Atlanta's workforce development office. According to the city of Atlanta, a total of 4,134 county residents from the targeted zip codes were served by the city's workforce development office between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010.