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## **Durham economy booms in 2006 County adds nearly 4,800 jobs, the most in any year on record**

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Durham's rapidly expanding economy added almost 4,800 jobs last year, the county's best year on record for employment growth, the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina reported on Friday.

The job growth crossed a variety of sectors, from thousands of new professional positions to hundreds of manufacturing jobs, according to ESC data. The jobs were delivered by Durham newcomers such as Merck & Co. as well as longtime local companies such as Measurement Inc.

"It went across the board and there is really no indication that things are going to slow down," said Mark Vitner, a regional economist with Wachovia Securities in Charlotte. "We saw a great deal of hiring with a number of companies that expanded or relocated and there was a lot of growth in [Research Triangle Park]."

Durham County averaged 129,793 employed residents over the 12 months of 2006 -- 4,774 more than the average number of employed Durham residents in 2005, and the most ever, according to ESC statistics.

The jump in the number of employed Durham residents between 2005 and 2006 was the most since 1990, the earliest year for which comparative employment data is available from the ESC. The next most active period for job growth was 1995 to 1996 when the county added some 4,400 jobs, according to ESC data.

### Growing numbers

The job market picture for 2006 became clear on Friday after the state agency reported December employment statistics.

Durham ended the year on a positive note with the county's unemployment rate dropping to 3.7 percent from 4.0 percent in November. It was the 10th month during 2006 that Durham's jobless rate was 4.0 percent or less -- the best year since 2000, or pre-9/11, when the peak jobless rate during the year was 3.2 percent.

That was the second lowest unemployment rate among the state's 14 Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

Durham wasn't alone in good news on the jobs front in 2006.

The Durham metro area, which includes Durham, Orange, Chatham and Person counties, added almost 9,000 jobs during the year when comparing the average number of employed residents in 2005 and 2006, according to ESC data. That was the biggest gain in jobs on record for the four-county area, and the Durham metro area averaged 244,530 employed residents in 2006, according to the state agency's statistics.

The biggest job growth was in professional and business services, which added 2,600 jobs, followed by educational and health services, which added 1,100 jobs during the year, according to the ESC.

"The resurgence of RTP helped Durham, Cary and Raleigh and it was a broader range of companies, not just pharmaceutical," said Larry Parker, an ESC spokesman. "We certainly hope it's something that continues and there's no slowing in growth."

That's not very likely with a number of companies making announcements last year that they were coming to the area and bringing jobs with them. Fidelity Investments announced a new 3,000-employee campus in RTP while United Therapeutics and Stiefel Laboratories announced new operations that'll mean hundreds of new jobs in RTP.

Lucky three

The Durham metro area added the third most jobs -- 5,500 -- during 2006, trailing only the Charlotte (13,200 new jobs) and Raleigh-Cary (19,300 new jobs) metro areas, according to the ESC. Those statistics, however, do not take into account self-employed and agricultural jobs and when all jobs are considered, the Durham metro area added almost 9,000 jobs, according to the ESC.

In all, unemployment rates dropped in 72 North Carolina counties in December while 22 had increases and six remained the same, according to the ESC.

The six counties in the Durham area reported lower jobless rates in December.

Orange County had an unemployment rate of 3.1 percent in December, down from 3.4 percent in November. Chatham County's jobless rate dropped to 3.6 percent in December, from 3.8 percent in November. Person County's jobless rate was 6.7 percent in December, down from 7.0 percent the previous month. Granville County's unemployment rate was 5.0 percent in December, down from 5.4 percent in November. Vance County's rate dropped to 7.1 percent, from 7.5 percent in November.

The state added some 128,600 workers in 2006 and ended up with 4.3 million employed residents in December, according to the ESC.

"When you look at employment numbers as a whole, the state is doing much better than it was three or four years ago," Parker said. "Certainly the urban areas have really taken off, like Charlotte, Raleigh and Durham."

**BY THE NUMBERS\***

The jobless rate takes into account the county's labor force and the number of unemployed and

employed residents. The labor force is made up of residents employed or unemployed and actively seeking work. Unemployed residents are those who don't have a job but are available and actively seeking work. Employed residents are working at least one hour a week. The unemployment rate is the percentage of unemployed workers in the county's labor force. The statistics refer to residents who are at least 16 years old.

Durham Co.

December 2006

Labor force 136,499

Employed 131,451

Unemployed 5,048

Unemployment rate 3.7

November 2006

Labor force 136,551

Employed 131,114

Unemployed 5,437

Unemployment rate 4.0

December 2005

Labor force 132,010

Employed 127,030

Unemployed 4,980

Unemployment rate 3.8

\*not seasonally adjusted

Triangle\*\*

December 2006

Labor force 843,044

Employed 812,917

Unemployed 30,127

Unemployment rate 3.6

November 2006

Labor force 845,298

Employed 813,038

Unemployed 32,260

Unemployment rate 3.8

December 2005

Labor force 807,070

Employed 777,451

Unemployed 29,619

Unemployment rate 3.7

\*\*Raleigh/Durham/Cary combined

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