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NEWS

Triad's growth industry through 2020? Temp jobs

By **Matt Evans**

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What industry will create the most new jobs in the Triad between now and 2020? Biotechnology? Logistics? Advanced manufacturing?

None of those actually, at least not according to the projections included in the N.C. Department of Commerce's 2011 State of the Workforce Report.

That report, based on analyses of current trends and surveys of employers, says



Smith

“temporary help services” will have the biggest expected employment increase of 9,737 jobs in the region between 2010 and 2020, outpacing the 7,446 expected new jobs in the “offices of physicians” category.

Most economic developers — and job hunters, for that matter — probably wouldn't be too excited to learn of a coming boom in a sector where average annual wages in 2010 were just \$20,102, according to that same report.

But the news may not be as bad as it seems, said Beth Lucas, director for policy and governance in the Workforce Division of the Department of

Gloomy outlook

Fastest-declining industries in the Triad, 2010-2020

Industry	Expected employment decrease	Average wages, 2010
Textile & fabric finishing	2,510	\$35,018
Tobacco product manufacturing	2,052	\$87,762
Fiber, yarn & thread mills	1,693	\$28,059

SOURCE: N.C. Department of Commerce

Commerce.

That's because a lot of different kinds of jobs could be hiding in that “temp” category, she said. Most of the job losses in the region in recent years have been in the manufacturing sector, which still accounts for 15 percent of the regional economy.

Manufacturers and other employers in sectors such as logistics may be expecting to make more use of temp agencies in years to come because of the unease they have about the economy now.

“When companies are unsure or hesitant to invest, or have a question about the direction of the economy, then when they do begin to hire back they often start out with temporary employment services,” she said.

Also, she said the temp jobs of the future may not conform to the low-pay, low-benefits character of the past. As manufacturers make more use of

technology, the workers they hire will need more skills, temporary or not. Recent data suggests that manufacturing wages in the region are rising.

The report also predicts the fastest declining industries of the next decade for the Triad, and manufacturing still dominates that list.

The shift is only in which part of the region's traditional economic base will shrink the fastest, with textile and fabric finishing expected to have the biggest employment decrease of 2,510 workers. Tobacco products and fiber, yarn and thread mills are also expected to lose substantial employment.

Furniture manufacturing lost the most jobs from 2005 to 2010, but the pace of that sector's losses is expected to slow in the coming decade. That may be primarily because relatively few jobs are left to lose compared to past years.

Also, it's important to note that the region's manufactur-

ing base is greatly diversified beyond its traditional industries. Sectors such as plastics, chemicals, electronics, building supplies, machine parts and aviation are all growing sectors.

Ken Smith, who tracks furniture industry employment for High Point accounting and consulting firm Smith Leonard, said from down near the bottom, there may be no place to go but up.

“There's still a demand for domestic product,” he said, citing recent local manufacturing programs at companies such as Paul Brayton, Timberlake and Linwood.

“It's not to say we won't still lose some jobs because some companies have really been hurt by the recession, but many of those that have lasted this long have a good chance of surviving,” he said.

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