

Bay Area adds 8,700 jobs in November, led by strong gains in South Bay and San Francisco area

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The Bay Area job market is back on track, posting a robust gain of 8,700 jobs in November, state labor officials reported Friday.

The surge included 3,200 new jobs in Santa Clara County and 4,100 in the San Francisco-San Mateo-Marín region, the state Employment Development Department reported. The East Bay job market continued to struggle and added only 100 jobs in November.

"There has been a nice pickup in recent months and the area is gaining steam again," said Scott Anderson, chief economist with San Francisco-based Bank of the West.

In the first seven months of the year, the Bay Area added an average of 2,400 jobs a month. But over the most recent four months, average gains totaled 10,400 a month -- more than four times the pace of the first seven months, this newspaper's analysis of the EDD seasonally adjusted figures shows. The last time the Bay Area lost jobs was in July.

"This is solid growth," said Steve Levy, director of the Palo Alto-based Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy. "Tech companies are continuing to expand in the South Bay, on the Peninsula and in San Francisco. We also believe the first-half numbers will be revised higher for the Bay Area. We think the job growth is even stronger" than what has been officially reported so far by the EDD. The state agency undertakes a full revision of its job estimates once a year.

Santa Clara County employment gains in November were bolstered by 1,000 new manufacturing jobs -- a sector that for the South Bay contains numerous technology jobs, according to an analysis of the EDD numbers that was conducted by Beacon Economics. The county also gained 500 information services and products jobs. The strongest industry in the region was restaurants and hotels, which added 1,300 jobs, the Beacon analysis shows.

In the San Francisco-San Mateo-Marín area, the strongest industry was restaurants and hotels, up 1,600 jobs.

Perhaps signaling a strong holiday shopping seasons, retailers in Santa Clara County added 300 jobs above the normal levels for last month, while the San Francisco metro area added 500 jobs above the norm for November, the Beacon report disclosed.

And while the East Bay gained only 100 jobs, Beacon economist Jordan Levine pointed out that the East Bay gained 1,100 private sector jobs, but also lost 1,000 government jobs.

The strong gains in the Bay Area paralleled a solid performance in California, which added 44,300 jobs in November, the EDD reported. The jobless rate in California improved to 8.5 percent in November, down from 8.7 percent in October, according to the EDD.

Jobless rates improved throughout the Bay Area during November compared with October. The East Bay

posted a jobless rate of 6.9 percent, down from 7 percent in October. The South Bay had a 6.4 percent jobless rate, down from 6.5 percent. The San Francisco metro area had a 5.1 percent jobless rate, down from 5.2 percent.

Levine said he thinks the recovery will continue in the Bay Area because the region's core strengths are being bolstered by a growing array of industries.

"We are very optimistic about the Bay Area," Levine said. "The tech sector is staying strong and will remain so. Tourism is getting stronger. You will see industries such as retail and construction start to add more jobs at a greater pace. Health care will do well."

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