

## JOB GROWTH EXPECTED IN WEST MICHIGAN THROUGH 2015



The most recent outlook from the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research released shows that job growth should continue to remain solid through 2015 for markets in the western portion of Michigan, according to MiBiz.

There are six metropolitan markets in Western Michigan and the forecast for job growth shows 2 percent growth in 2014 and 2.1 percent growth in 2015. According to George Erickcek, the senior analyst with the Upjohn Institute, the markets of Grand Rapids-Wyoming and Holland-Grand Haven should perform the best.

The projected rates of employment growth for Western Michigan follow the 2.3 percent increase in employment numbers for the region in 2013. The numbers also compete with the growth patterns of more than a decade.

"We believe the economic fundamentals are showing that we could be back to the growth plateau that we enjoyed about 10 years ago from 2003 to 2007," Erickcek said.

Goods-producing companies in the region are expected to increase their employment by 2 percent in 2014 and then 2.1 percent in 2015, according to the Upjohn Institute. The goods-producing companies will be led by the auto industry. Economists from the University of Michigan predict that the auto industry will increase to 16 million units in 2014 from 15.5 million light vehicle sales in 2013. They also predict that the unit sales will increase to 16.3 million in 2015.

The industry of service-sector jobs is expected to grow at a faster rate than the goods-producing companies. This industry is expected to grow at a rate of 2.4 percent in 2014 and 2015, according to the Upjohn Institute. Employment in government will remain stagnant or experience a slight decline. Kent and Ottawa counties have the highest expected employment growth rates. They have the largest auto suppliers in the state. This will help the counties increase employment in manufacturing.

In 2014, the Grand Rapids-Wyoming metro area is expected to see job growth of 2.6 percent and then 2.5 percent in 2015. The forecast for the Holland-Grand Haven metro area is expected to see job growth of 2.4 percent this year and then 2.6 percent in 2015.

Erickcek said that outlook from the Upjohn Institute shows "pockets that are find of being left behind" because of the resurgence of the auto industry and them not having a supply base. He said that continued overall job growth will stay normal, but be at a lesser rate than Ottawa and Kent counties.

Erickcek did caution against people thinking the unemployment rates will decline despite the growth of employment.

"It's going to be kind of strange," Erickcek said.

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