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**Strengths and Weaknesses
of
Regional Labor Skills**

**North End Industrial Area
Middletown, CT**

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HMA

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Strengths and Weaknesses of Regional Labor Skills

Employment Levels

Not unlike other regions in Connecticut, the Middletown Labor Market Area (LMA) has experienced a shift from the tight labor market of the 1980's to an excess labor market. In 1988 at the peak of the economic boom, the Middletown Labor Market Area had a labor force of 53,755 persons with 52,367 employed and 1,388 unemployed for an un-employment rate of 2.6 percent. In February of 1993, the un-employment rate had increased to 7.2 percent which is slightly below the statewide rate of 7.5 percent. In February 1990, there were 47,290 persons employed in the Middletown LMA. By February 1993, the number of persons employed had declined to 38,400 for a 18.8 percent decline. This decline in employment is expected to continue as a result of major cut-backs at Pratt and Whitney.

Skills of Jobseekers

The skills of those unemployed within the market area include a full range of occupation groups. Table 1 summarizes jobseekers registered with the Connecticut State Job Service in December 1992 in the Middletown Labor Market Area.

Table 1
 Middletown Labor Market Area
 Characteristics of Jobseekers Registered with the Connecticut State Job Service

<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>Total Applicants</u>	<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>Total Applicants</u>
Total -- All Occupations	2,290	Processing	18
Professional-Technical-Managerial	501	Occupations in Processing Metal	06
Architecture & Engineering Occs.	66	Proc. Chemicals, Plastics, Synthet.	07
Mechanical Engineering Occs.	15	Machine Trades	223
Medicine & health occupations	17	Metal Machining Occupations	112
Occupations in Education	20	Machinists & Related Occups.	23
College and University	00	Turning Occupations	07
Secondary School Education	07	Metal Working	09
Primary School & Kindergarten	07	Fabricating Machine Work	01
Occupations in Art	14	Forming Occupations	02
Administrative Specializations	150	Mechanics & Machinery Repairers	83
Managerial Occupations	127	Motor Vehicle Mechanics & Rprs.	46
Wholesale & Retail Trade Mgmt.	23	Bench Work	96
Service Industry Management	27	Metal Prod. Assembly & Repair	41
Misc. Managers & Officials	23	Metal Unit Assemb. & Adjusters	32
Misc. Prof., Tech. & Managerial	23	Assembly & Repair of Elec. Equip.	23
Occs. In Social & Welfare Work	17	Assembly & Repair of Elec. Comp.	16
Clerical and Sales	525	Fab. & Repair Prod. of Assd. Materials	05
Stenography, Typing & Related Occs.	177	Fab. & RPR Textile, Leather & Rel. Prd.	07
Secretaries	57	Sewing Machine Operators	03
Typing, Filing & Rel. Clerical	120	Structural Work	371
Computing & Account Recording	109	Occups. In Metal Fabrication	47
Bookkeepers	30	Welders, Flame Cutters & Rel. Occs.	21
Cashiers	43	Electricians & Related Workers	55
Electronic Data Processors	08	Painters	23
Other Comp. & Account Recording	28	Excavating, Grading & Rel. Occups.	32
Material & Production Recording	51	Other Construction Occupations	170
Shipping, Receiving & Stock Clerk	48	Carpenters & Related Occups.	62
Information & Message Distribution	41	Bricklayers & Masons	13
Misc. Clerical Occupations	36	Plmbrs, Gas, Steamfitters & Rel	08
Sales and Related Workers	111	Misc. Structural Workers	23
Service	330	Miscellaneous Occupations	188
Private Household Workers	06	Motor Freight Occupations	58
Food & Beverage Prep. & Serv.	128	Trailer-Truck Drivers	17
Waiters & Waitresses	19	Truck Drivers, Heavy	21
Chefs, Cooks, Large Hotels & Rest.	42	Truck Drivers, Light	15
Kitchen Workers	22	Transportation Workers, N.E.C.	16
Miscellaneous Personal Services	73	Packaging & Material Handling Oc.	91
Attendant, Hospital & Rel. Health Serv.	52	Packaging	13
Apparel & Furnishings Services	04	Materials Moving & Storage	23
Protective Services	41		
Security Guards & Correction Officers	28		
Building & Related Services	58		
Porters and Cleaners	49		
Agriculture, Fishery & Forestry	37		
Plant Farming Occupations	34		
Plant Life & Rel. Service Occ.	24		

Source: Connecticut Labor Department; Employment Security Division; Office of Research and Information.

As can be seen from a review of this table, the largest group of jobseekers is in the clerical and sales category (525) with professional -technical-managerial (501) a close second. In total, these two categories represent almost 50 percent of all jobseekers. This can be attributed to the white collar nature of the recent recession. The structural work category with 371 jobseekers includes those primarily involved in the building trades and reflects the impact of the recession on construction activities. Three other categories; processing, machine trades and bench work total 337 jobseekers. These categories can be considered manufacturing sector jobs.

Future Employment Needs

In order to examine trends for future employment needs, the 1992-1993 Planning Guide prepared by the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Research was reviewed. This document contains an estimate of the employment needs in the Meriden-Middletown Service Delivery Area in various industry sectors for 1995 and measures the increase over 1990 employment in these various sectors. Table 2 summarizes this material.

Table 2
 Estimated Employment by Industry: Change & Rate
 Meriden-Middlesex SDA

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>% Change</u>
All Industries	90,637	94,975	4.79
Agriculture	898	940	4.68
Construction & Mining	3,801	4,188	10.18
Manufacturing	19,119	19,224	0.55
Durable	14,380	14,620	1.67
Non-Durable	4,739	4,604	-2.85
Trans, Comm, Utilities	4,281	4,498	5.07
Trans	1,417	1,592	12.35
Comm. & Utilities	2,864	2,906	1.47
Trade	17,137	17,969	4.85
Wholesale	2,763	2,965	7.31
Retail	14,374	15,004	4.38
FIRE	9,721	10,280	5.75
Finance	1,730	1,844	6.59
Ins. & by Agents	7,326	7,668	4.67
R.E. R.E. Law	665	768	15.49
Services	25,972	27,813	7.09
Bus & Prof	3,019	3,641	20.60
Health	9,719	10,253	5.49
Legal	460	530	15.22
Educational	6,050	5,924	-2.08
All Other	8,724	7,465	11.02
Government	5,477	5,509	.58
Federal & P.O.	487	497	2.05
State & Local	4,990	5,012	.44

Source: Planning Guide 1992-199³ Meriden-Middlesex Service Delivery Area.

It should be noted that the Meriden-Middletown Service Delivery Area is somewhat larger than the Middletown Labor Market Area in that it also includes Meriden, Chester, Deep River, Essex, Westbrook and Old Saybrook. As it is, when one compares the estimated employment needs with the number of jobseekers listed in Table 1, there is clearly not a substantial excess of employment opportunities over available jobseekers. For example, the manufacturing sector shows a modest increase of 5 jobs by 1995 and there are currently 337 jobseekers in the manufacturing sector in the Middletown Labor Market Area alone. In addition, the present number of jobseekers in the manufacturing sector

does not reflect the potential increase from planned reductions at Pratt and Whitney and other related industries.

Employer Perceptions of Skill Needs

Recently, the Meriden-Middlesex Private Industry Council conducted a survey of employers to determine their requirements regarding employee attributes and skills. The results of this survey were used to recommend program activities for the PIC for the 1993-1994 Program Year. The survey asked employers to rate a series of attributes/skills as Not Important, Important or Essential. The attributes/skills were divided into four categories: Personal Attributes, Education Levels, Cognitive Skills and Technical Skills.

Conclusions drawn from the survey and published in Employee Attributes and Skills Profile Report; Private Industry Council of the Meriden-Middlesex Service Delivery Area were as follows:

- Personal Attributes and Cognitive Skills of potential employees are more important to area employers than are Occupation/Job Specific Skills.
- U.S. Citizenship is important to area employers only for those occupations which require citizenship as a bona fide condition of employment, e.g., Government Defense Contract occupations.
- Basic literacy skills are essential to area employers.

- Minimum acceptable education level for area employers is high school graduate.
- Area employers are looking for potential employees who are trainable in occupation/job specific skills.
- Area employers would like potential employees to possess writing, documentation, and basic office skills.
- Specific occupation/job skills commonly identified as desirable by area employers are computer literacy skills; word processing skills; computer software skills including Wordperfect, LOTUS, DOS; clerical skills including use of standard office equipment; writing skills including report writing, memorandum writing, and editing; Certified Nurses Assistant skills.

It is clear from the conclusions that area employers are prepared to train employees in the job specific skills needed for their particular business. The greater need is for basic educational levels and personnel attributes which will allow this job specific training. This need for basic skills was also expressed by various business people interviewed as part of the market research for the North End Industrial Area.

Conclusion

Based upon the number and skill range of jobseekers currently in the marketplace combined with continued reductions by major employees such as Pratt and Whitney it can be concluded that a labor surplus will continue for the foreseeable future. This is

particularly true when one examines the Department of Labor estimates for future needs. Therefore, it is concluded that the availability of labor skills will not be a deterrent to development in the North End Industrial Area.