



Business

Census figures confirm Inland growth

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By **KIMBERLY PIERCEALL**
The Press-Enterprise

Two years ago, the Inland economy growled with near constant construction. Real estate agents optimistically unfurled for sale and sold signs and businesses stepped in to serve the growing population.

So authorities were not surprised by the U.S. Census report Thursday noting the number of businesses in Riverside County grew by 1,832, or 5.9 percent, a rate unmatched by any of the other 49 counties nationwide that boast the most employees.

San Bernardino County added 1,129 new businesses in that time.

According to the annual County Business Patterns survey, of the 112,000 new businesses with a payroll that were opened nationwide in 2005, Riverside and San Bernardino counties added 2,961.

Riverside County grew most in the real estate, construction and professional services sectors.

Manufacturing, management companies and mining all dropped slightly.

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2006 / The Press-Enterprise
New homes in 2006 are shown in the Alberhill development in Lake Elsinore. The real estate sector was an Inland leader until recently.

"It is kind of like looking in the rearview mirror," said Jack Kyser, chief economist with the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. "This is always an important report to us because it's detailed information and it validates what we know ... you had rapid population

In light of the real estate slump and exodus of some national builders from areas of the Inland region, Kyser expects the 2006 and 2007 figures to be less impressive and perhaps decline.

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2005 / The Business Press

A worker cuts some metal framing at Modtech's Perris plant. Economists expect growth figures in Riverside County to be lower this year.

Of the top 50 counties nationwide with the largest number of employees in 2005, California had nine, including both Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

"We know (California) is a difficult business environment and it's growing more difficult day by day," Kyser said. But the state's population, diversity and international influence still makes it attractive to businesses. "You sort of have to be here. You may grit your teeth but you have to stay here."

The number of businesses added in Riverside County was the most in eight years of Census data.

The closest year was in 2002, when 1,721 new employers opened their doors.

The surveys don't include businesses whose employees are self-employed, farm laborers, railroad workers and most government employees.

Amro Albanna, chief executive officer of Q Motions in Riverside, said the county's attributes -- schools, real estate, labor force and quality of life -- still lends itself to attracting businesses.

"Every time you turn around, another project is coming on. It's pretty promising," he said.

Open for Business

Riverside County's growth rate in 2005, adding 5.9 percent more businesses, was the largest among 50 counties boasting the most employees nationwide.

Riverside County businesses

2005: 32,825

2004: 30,993

San Bernardino County businesses

2005: 31,273

2004: 30,144

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; County Business Patterns 2005
