

Employment

By Mark Rubin

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About the Author

Mark Rubin's research areas focus on economic development and employment geography. Mr. Rubin is currently working on two national multi-year projects, the Neighborhood Jobs Initiative and the National Neighborhood Indicators Project. Additional work includes a study on the availability of low-skilled employment in the Washington DC metropolitan region, and a survey of welfare recipients and employers to assess the barriers that prevent a successful transition from welfare to work. He has also worked on studies of empowerment zones and trade adjusted assistance.

Introduction

During the economic boom that preceded the September 11th attacks, 5.9% of the District's labor force was unemployed.¹ Within the first months following the attack, more than half of low-wage hospitality workers in the Washington, D.C. area had lost their jobs. This chapter focuses on the employment opportunities that were available in the region before the economic downturn and suggests that, now more than ever, the region and city must develop a solid safety net, living-wage jobs, and a higher skilled workforce to overcome new challenges. The prospects of Latino workers in D.C. and throughout the metropolitan area provide an important indicator to the region's overall economic health and the labor market opportunities for all entry-level workers.

Increasingly, new job growth is occurring in Washington, D.C. suburban areas, while the total number of jobs located in the central city declines. People with limited education and skills face the greatest challenges finding and keeping jobs particularly given the growth of high technology and high knowledge sectors of the economy. The long-term health of the District, therefore, requires better linkages between Latino residents—a growing segment of the District's population, who along with other low-income residents need living wage jobs—and the employment opportunities available throughout the metropolitan region.

Latino workers generally have lower levels of educational attainment than whites or African Americans. Coupled with the dramatic increases in the Latino population in the District and the entire metropolitan region, the vitality of the District's economy will depend on policy makers linking a growing Latino workforce with higher paying, higher skilled occupations in the region. A recent District survey measuring behavioral risk factors, found Latinos had an unemployment rate of over 10%—some 60% higher than African Americans and nearly five times higher than non-Latino white residents.

The Latino population in the District has grown by 37% compared with an 8.4% decrease of the non-Latino population (**Figure 6.1**). Even more impressive is the increase in the populations inside and outside the Beltway; Latinos grew by 72.6% and 131%, respectively. The demographic shift reflects the growing Latino population across the country. Nationally, 60% of Latino adults are immigrants, but a recent survey shows that three of four Latino adults in the Washington area were born outside the United States. In addition, they are recent arrivals, with most having settled in this country within the past dozen years. Washington's Latino population is therefore more likely to face language barriers than Latinos in the rest of the country.



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The importance of Latinos to the District economy is also shown in the number of businesses they own in Washington D.C. The number of firms owned by Latinos with paid employees was 377 in 1997, employing over 4,300 workers and selling more than \$600 million in goods and services. Nearly two-thirds of these enterprises were owned by Central or South Americans, and roughly the same

percentage of firms were in the service trades.

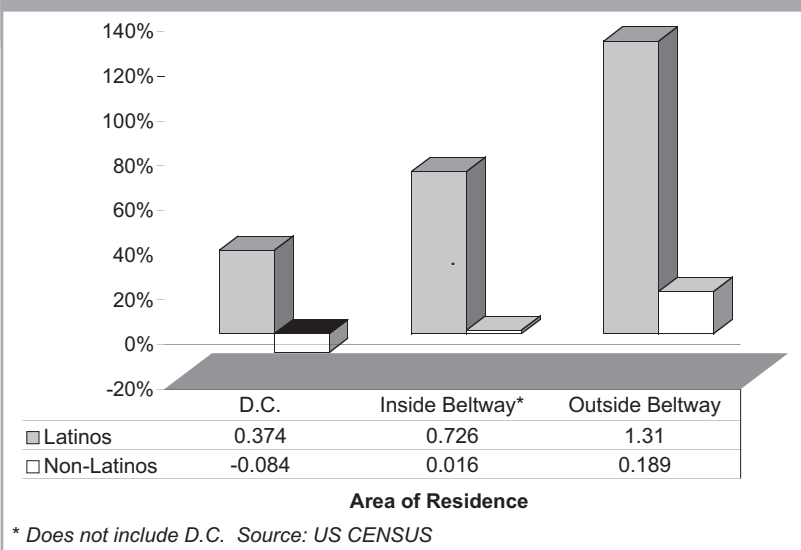
Chapter Overview

This chapter examines whether Latinos are well-positioned to take advantage of the changes in the regional economy, and whether District leaders have provided the necessary services to link Latinos to higher paying positions. The chapter is organized in the following manner:

- **Employment Characteristics of Latinos.** This section examines the jobs Latinos held in 1990 and currently hold in the District by occupation type and considers some of the reasons why the Latino occupation distribution remains relatively unchanged since 1990.
- **Regional Employment Opportunities.** The section examines the location of employment in the region and also details the industrial and occupational growth patterns in the region, with an emphasis on entry-level employment that could provide a living wage.

In interpreting the data that follow, note that statistics presented for blacks and whites represent non-Latino blacks and whites. Further, the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” will be used interchangeably throughout the chapter. “Hispanic” is used when necessary to maintain consistency with government reporting.

Figure 6.1 Intercensal Change Among Latino v. Non-Latino Population, Washington, D.C. Area



• **Linking Central City Latinos to Entry-Level Job Openings.** This section examines the challenges to link Latinos living in the District to the existing regional employment opportunities. Some of the barriers are bureaucratic in nature, but others revolve around issues

ranging from educational attainment to hiring practices and workplace discrimination.

• **Conclusion.** This part of the report offers suggestions toward helping Latino workers find and keep good-paying jobs. Latinos face unique challenges in their efforts to find well-paying work and these challenges have yet to be recognized or addressed properly by local government officials.

The primary goal of this research is to inform decision-making and action at the community, city, and metropolitan level. Workforce development and job linkage strategies must recognize and respond to the geography of employment and workers in the Washington region. Labor markets are increasingly metropolitan in scale, and District residents—at all education and skill levels—must compete with workers from the suburbs for jobs in the region.

Increasingly, entry-level jobs are located in the suburbs and central city residents—few of whom own cars—are not gaining access to the full range of opportunities that the region offers. But this report also shows that distance is not the only problem facing Latino workers in the District or the neighborhoods in which they live. Programs that target to these communities need to identify and address the full range of barriers that stand in the way of employment and upward mobility, including lack of basic skills (both hard and soft), lack of information about job openings, and discrimination. Transportation may be an important part of the problem for some Latino workers, but transportation alone will not solve the problems of unemployment and especially underemployment in the District of Columbia.



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Employment Characteristics of Latinos

I. Unemployment and Wages

Since 1990, the Latino unemployment rate has fallen from 6.8% to 5.6% in 2000. Latinos have a lower unemployment rate than African Americans (8.2%), but are twice as likely to be unemployed than white non-Latinos (2.1) in the District.

Moreover, Latinos remain in lower paying occupations as compared with non-Latinos since 1990. A third of Latino workers living in the District in both 1990 and 2000 were found in service occupations paying only \$10.85 (as of 1998) per hour (**Figures 6.2(a) and 6.2(b)**). African Americans and whites were found in much higher paying occupations. For example over 60% of white workers in 1990 and nearly 70% in 2000 were in either executive administrator positions or professional specialty occupations.

One quarter of African Americans held clerical positions in 1990 and that remains their most common occupation at 22%. However, African Americans have increased their share of executive and professional specialty occupations from 22% to over 30% in the last ten years. Only 22% of Latinos living in the District work in the executive or professional specialty occupations. Based on the occupational distribution of workers, the average full-time hourly wage of a Latino living in the District is \$16.73 versus \$18.79 for African Americans and \$24.70 for whites.

The wage number is probably inflated for Latinos, because many workers have part-time positions that pay a lower hourly wage, and others work informally and earn a wage below the regional average.

Figure 6.2(a)

Civilian Labor Force by 1990 Employment Sector, 1998 Hourly Wages, and D.C. Hispanic, Black and White Employed Populations

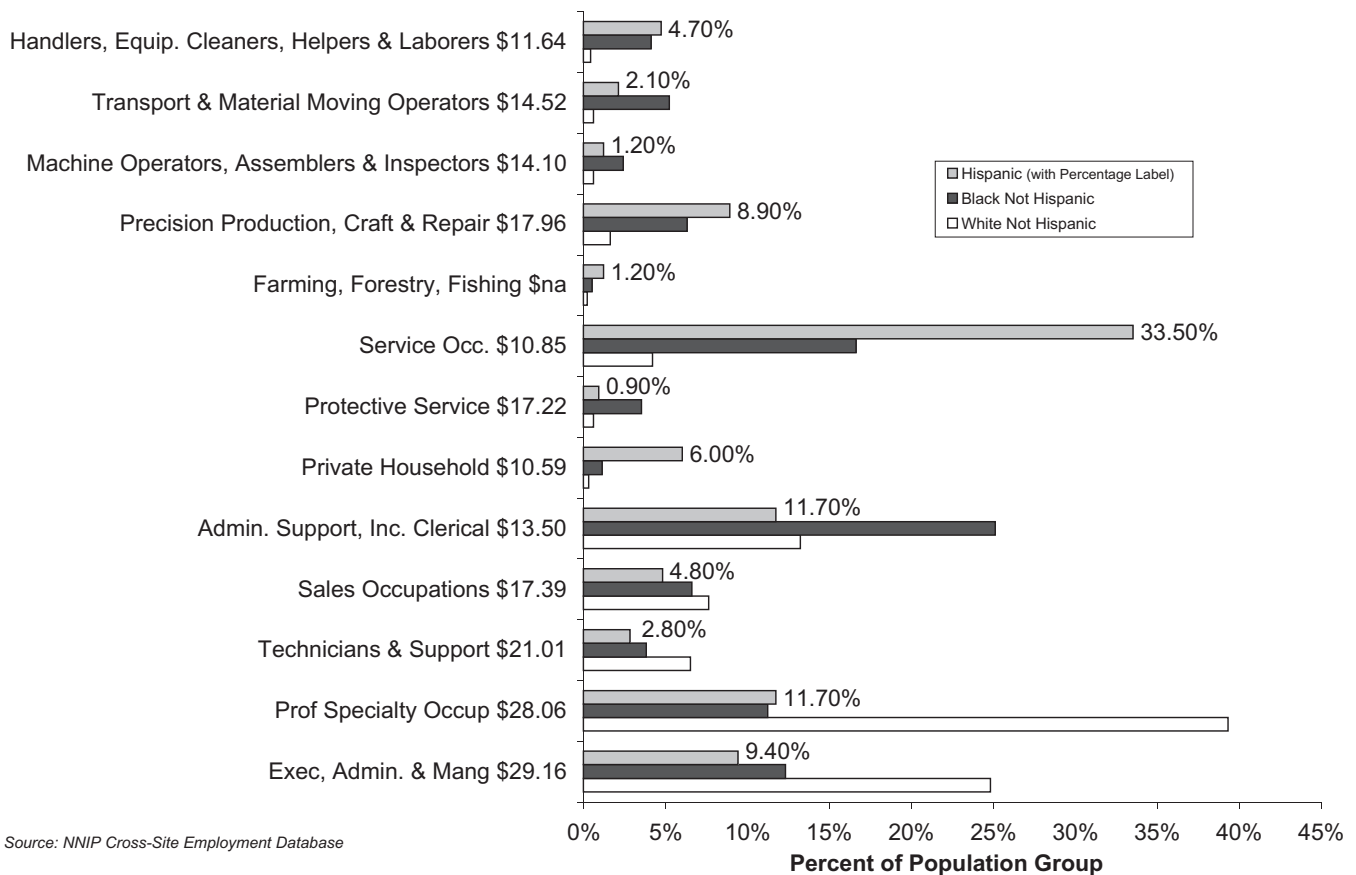
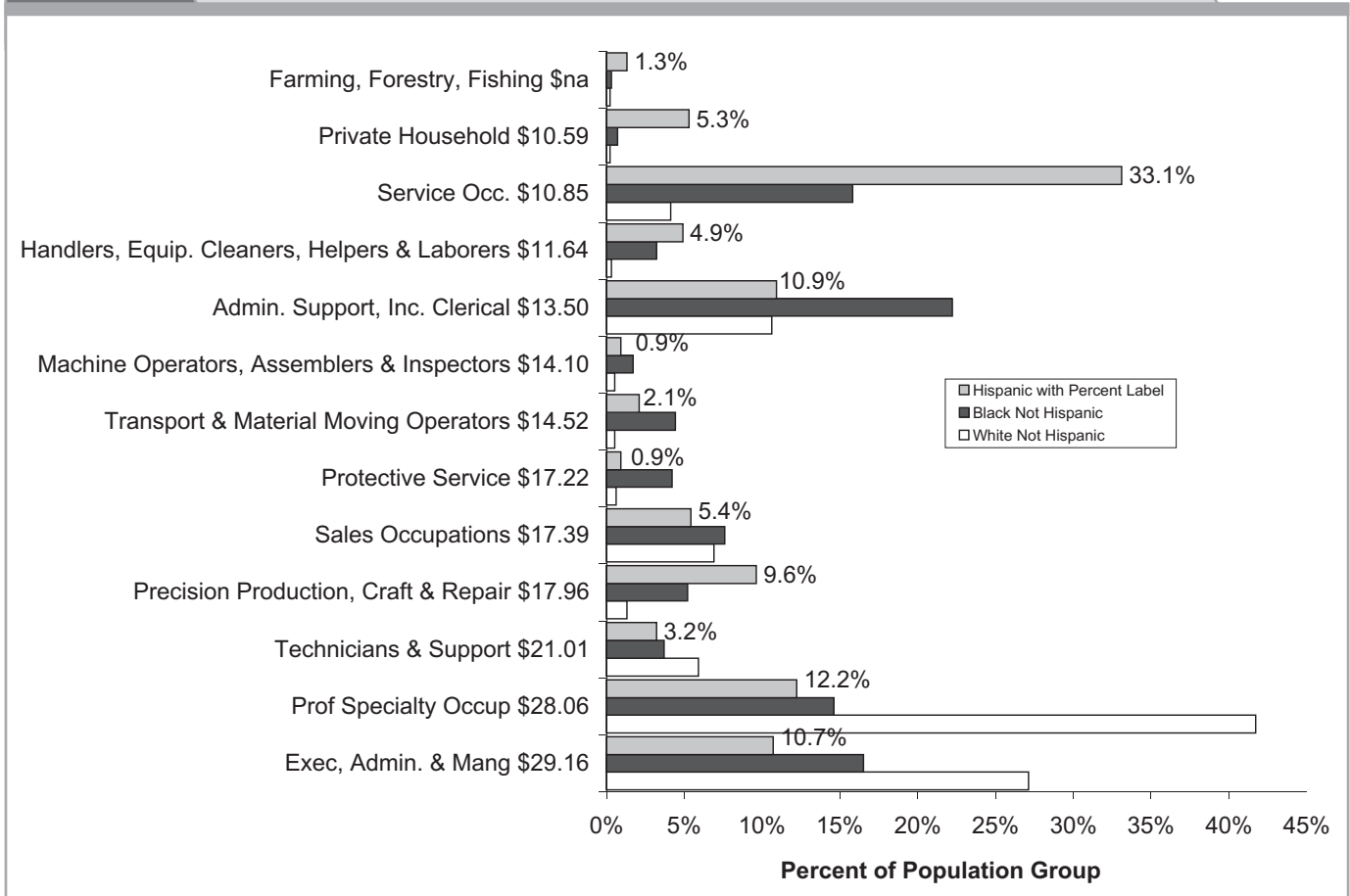


Figure 6.2(b)

Civilian Labor Force by 2000 Employment Sector, 1998 Wages, and D.C. Hispanic, Black and White Employed Populations



II. Factors Affecting Latino Work Conditions and Employment Opportunities

Immigration

Recent Census data suggest that there are far more undocumented immigrants in the United States than previously thought. With its thriving service economy and surging communities of legal immigrants, the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has become a residence for undocumented workers in a way that wasn't decades ago. Crude estimates reflect the region's transformation: Virginia, Maryland and the District rank in the top 20 in undocumented immigrants, according to a 1996 study by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Virginia is ninth, with 55,000; Maryland is 12th, with 44,000; and the District ranks 18th with 30,000.

The lack of education is another critical component to the lack of mobility for Latinos. In 1997, only 55% of Latinos 25 and older had graduated from high school, and 7.4% had graduated from college. A National Council of La Raza report also noted that Latinos are likely to seek employment through family and friends who tend to work in those industries that offer low wages and limited mobility—a practice that limits their opportunities for higher wages and other advancement.

The inability to move Latinos into higher paying positions reflects the lack of job training opportunities in the District, in particular the problems associated with the District's one stop system. In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which required states to streamline their job-related services such as adult education, and vocational training. July 1 marked the one-year anniversary of a fully operational One-Stop system in the District and a recent report examined the quality of service at the One-Stop centers.² The report found that individuals had a great deal of difficulty receiving "core" services. Of the 43 testers used to evaluate the centers, not one found a job as a result of visiting the One-Stops, and only one participant received training. Instead of a system that provided a full menu of services required by federal law, from orientation to individual counseling, the testers encountered a system that was often confusing, hard to navigate and occasionally hostile.

Immigrants, particularly those with limited English proficiency, received extremely limited services and were treated poorly. The One-Stops are supposed to serve all District residents who are authorized to work. In fact, the Department of Labor recently issued guidelines as to how local agencies

must serve people with limited English proficiency. These guidelines state that the D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES) must have oral language interpretation, bilingual staff, contract interpreters, telephone interpreter lines and translation of written materials.

The study found that no Latino job seeker received adequate assistance. Job Seekers found that there was very limited signage and material in Spanish and on average, they waited about 30 minutes to ask basic questions of a Spanish-speaking staff person. There are over 44,000 Latinos living in the District many of whom have limited English proficiency and are eligible for services at One-Stops. Given the problems reported in the D.C. Jobs Council study, the centers need to hire an increased number of bilingual staff members, particularly those that require extensive interaction with the public and offer materials in different languages to help serve the District's increasingly diverse community.



Criminalization of the Work Place: The Role of Employer Sanctions

Contributing to low wages for Latino workers are the effects of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). In the early 1980s, an economic recession intensified the debate on immigration. The public had come to scapegoat undocumented immigration as contributing to the erosion of labor conditions, the growth of the government deficit and the creation of what some perceived to be an untenably “multi-cultural” society.

Congress responded by passing IRCA, whose most controversial provision was the employer sanctions provision that required employers to check work authorization status at the work site, and criminalized the hiring of undocumented immigrants. Employer sanctions were based on the logic that the primary factor inducing illegal immigration was the “job magnet.” By creating an obstacle to obtaining employment, sanctions were proposed to reduce or even eliminate illegal immigration.

The impact of IRCA, especially the employer sanctions provisions, however may have actually exacerbated certain social problems. By criminalizing the hiring of undocumented workers, employer sanctions may have led to a perception among undocumented workers that their employment options have decreased. This perceived decrease in job mobility might have increased exploitation by employers. Specifically, the perception of reduced employment options may bind undocumented workers to potentially abusive employers, undermining their right to organize. Moreover, undocumented workers may have more difficulty than legal workers in securing permanent employment due to IRCA and may be

more likely to resort to temporary or subcontracted positions characterized by sub-standard working conditions.

Studies have found that since the passage of IRCA, undocumented workers have become less willing to jeopardize their job security by engaging in union activities.³ Decreased ability to unionize in the wake of IRCA has left workers less able to protect their rights and more vulnerable to workplace exploitation. However, grass-roots organizing targeting immigrant communities, and a change in the AFL-CIO's official position on employment sanctions may lead to increased unionization of immigrants. Contrary to perceptions of limited opportunity due to IRCA, workers' rights and the right to organize in a union are not contingent upon legal immigration status. Recent campaigns that have involved immigrant workers are demonstrating the power and potential of militant immigrant leadership, as demonstrated through the Justice for

Janitors campaign in D.C. and highly effective immigrant worker organizing in the service industries of Los Angeles.

Employer sanctions also seem to have increased employer use of temporary and subcontracted positions in order to minimize the risk of penalties. One study found that day labor pools, home work and contract-labor arrangements expanded with the passage of IRCA.⁴ These temporary or subcontracted positions are often characterized by sub-standard working conditions. Day laborers, for example, run increased risks of not being paid at the end of the day and of being picked up by the INS.

Authorized workers who look or sound foreign seem to have confronted increased employment discrimination due to the employer sanctions provision. Studies by public and private agencies have found evidence that a widespread pattern of employment discrimination against foreign-looking or sounding individuals exists. A 1989 Urban Institute hiring audit concluded that Latinos were “three times as likely to encounter unfavorable treatment” as whites, stating that “results show a high level of national origin discrimination.”⁵ In summary, the employer sanctions have contributed to increased worker exploitation and employment discrimination, which has had an adverse impact on wages for Latino workers in the District.

Regional Employment Opportunities

Successful labor force retention strategies need to respond not only to the characteristics and needs of the Latino population, but also to the opportunities offered by the metropolitan economy. In Washington D.C., the vast majority of jobs are now located outside the central city, posing obvious challenges for central city Latino residents. Moreover, the industrial and occupational mix varies substantially across the

region, with significant implications for the availability and location of entry-level job opportunities.

National and international forces are changing the labor market in the Washington region. Opportunities for entry-level workers are different now than they were in the past.

Technologically advanced companies, requiring workers who are well-trained in computer-based processes, are creating many of the new entry-level job opportunities. This change has accompanied the loss of more traditional manufacturing jobs, not only in the central city but in the region as a whole. As a result, many low-skilled workers are increasingly found in the low-wage service sector and in unskilled laboring jobs or have gone jobless. However, new jobs (for skilled and semi-skilled workers) are emerging in construction, telecommunications and technology. More information is needed about these jobs, and the skills that people need to qualify for them.

Regional Employment Opportunities

III. Most Jobs Are Located Outside the Central City

The labor market of the Washington D.C. metropolitan area varies greatly in size and employment growth. The total size of the entire regional labor consists of 2.8 million jobs in metropolitan Washington, D.C. In addition, many employers have left the District of Columbia for suburban locations over recent decades, and the majority of new business growth is occurring outside the city. Today, the majority of all jobs in the region are located outside the District. As of 1990, one third (33.1 percent) of all jobs in the Washington region were located in the District, compared with 28.3% in the inner suburbs and 38.7% outside the beltway. Dun & Bradstreet data (April 2001) show the number of jobs in the District under twenty five percent (22.4) of the region's total. Overall, the District's job base declined during the 1990s dropping 4% while suburban employment grew by 39%. Despite these differences, unemployment rates remain low in all sub-areas, at 6% or lower (**Figures 6.3(a), 6.3(b), and 6.3(c)**).

Metropolitan regions throughout the United States have experienced a steady trend toward suburbanization of both population and employment over the last three decades (**Figure 6.4**). The central cities' declining share of regional jobs reflects three important trends. First, many types of economic activity simply follow population, since individual households are their primary customers. Thus, as population grows in the suburbs, the number of suburban grocery stores, dry cleaners, gas stations, schools, and libraries grows as well, inevitably increasing suburban employment totals. In addition, many new businesses in urban areas have chosen to locate in the suburbs, even if they do not serve a primarily residential customer base. And finally, many established employers have left central cities for suburban locations over recent decades, some following the "pull" of residential suburbanization and others responding to perceived

Low-skilled jobs may be intermittent and unstable. Some employers hire and fire low-skilled workers as the needs of their businesses fluctuate. And some use contract employees or temporary agencies to obtain low-skilled workers on an as-needed basis. Despite these trends, new evidence suggests that many Washington area employers offer full-time permanent positions to their low-skilled and entry-level workers.⁶ Nevertheless, people with limited education and skills cannot rely on one company to provide continuous employment for them, even if they do their jobs well. Moreover, entry-level jobs in some sectors of the economy may not offer much advancement potential. Workers cannot automatically assume that they will advance to better jobs and wages simply by working hard and being reliable. They may have to develop more complicated career ladders that cross between firms—or even between sectors—in order to advance.⁷

"push" factors such as crime, burdensome regulations, high taxes, and ineffective city services. In Washington, the central District's share of entry-level jobs falls just slightly below its share of all jobs.

The economies of the District and the suburbs also differ with respect to their industrial composition, and reflect national and global economic trends. The importance of wholesale/retail trade and the service industries reflects the nationwide shift away from goods-producing industries to service-producing activities. The low percentage of retail jobs in the District is not unique to Washington, D.C. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's 1999 *State of the Cities* report indicates that, despite the gains made by cities during the economic expansion of the 1990s, the current economic boom has largely failed to improve conditions in many of the nation's inner city neighborhoods.⁸ According to HUD's 1999 *New Markets: The Untapped Retail Buying Power in America's Inner Cities*, many central city neighborhoods remain underserved. Even the "healthiest" of cities contain deep pockets of poverty that are under-retailed and have high unemployment.⁹

The Washington region also lacks manufacturing employment with fewer than 5% of Washington-area jobs in that sector. Washington reflects a unique sectoral pattern. Public administration accounts for almost 21% of all employment, and other services, which include hotels, recreation activities, legal services and management-related services account for one in four jobs in the region. These trends are exacerbated in the District where public administration accounts for nearly one-third of all positions, and other services almost 30%. Taken together, public administration and all service industries account for over 80% of the jobs in the District.

Figure 6.3(a) Total Jobs of Metropolitan Labor Market (000)

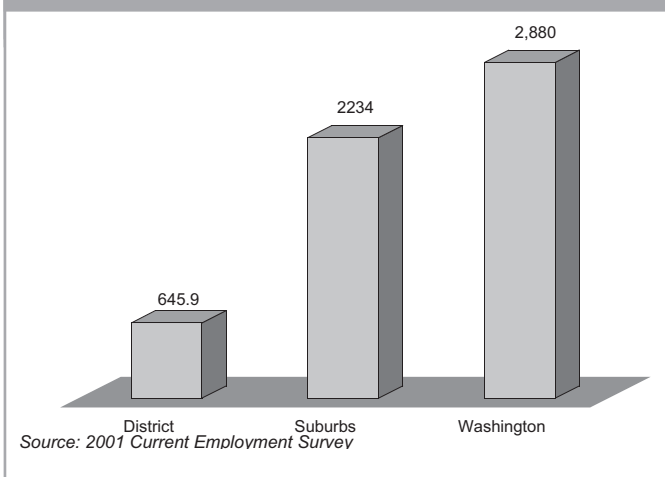


Figure 6.3(b) Metropolitan Labor Market Percent Growth (1991-2001)

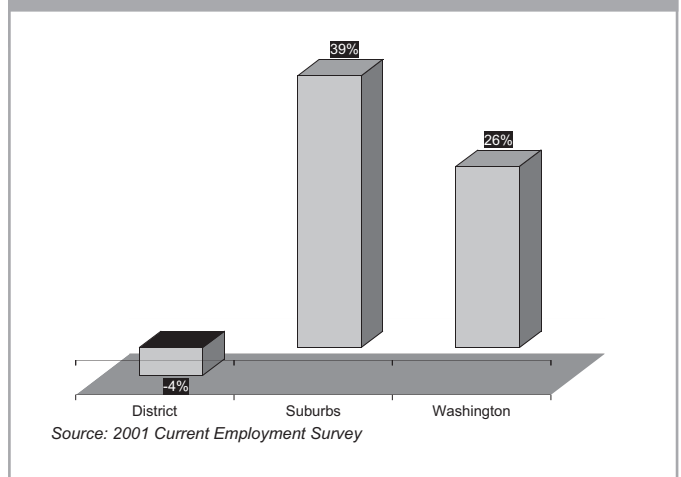


Figure 6.3(c) Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Unemployment Rates 2001

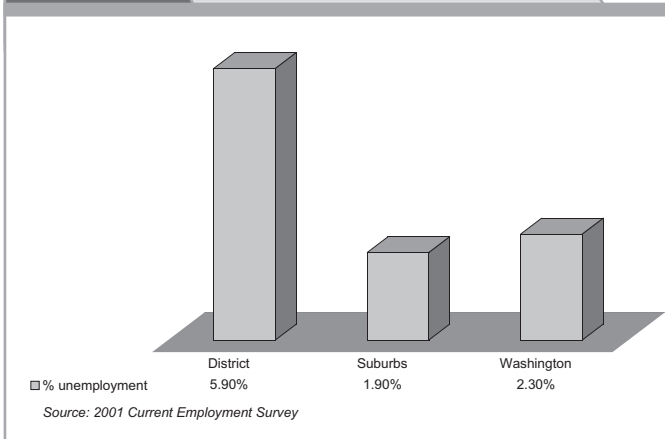


Figure 6.4 Distribution of Washington, D.C. Area Jobs by Industry 2001

| | District | Suburbs | Wash. MSA |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| Agric & Mining | 0.01% | 0 | 0.04% |
| Construction | 1.70% | 6.70% | 5.57% |
| Manufacturing | 1.80% | 4.10% | 3.61% |
| Transportation & Communication | 3.00% | 5.60% | 5.00% |
| Trade | 7.50% | 20.20% | 17.36% |
| FIRE* | 4.90% | 5.50% | 5.39% |
| Personal Svcs | 0.64% | 1.00% | 0.89% |
| Business Svcs | 3.68% | 7.40% | 6.59% |
| Health Svcs | 5.36% | 3.50% | 3.90% |
| Educ Svcs | 5.64% | 2.70% | 3.38% |
| Social Svcs | 2.10% | 1.30% | 1.47% |
| Public Admn | 34.00% | 18.40% | 21.86% |
| Other Svcs | 29.68% | 23.60% | 24.98% |

*FIRE is an abbreviation for Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate.

IV. Latinos Underrepresented in All District Government Public Administration Jobs

Despite the large presence of public administration jobs, Latinos are severely underrepresented in all District government agencies. There are only 624 Latino employees out of 35,145 District government workers, which puts D.C. government in non-compliance with the Bilingual and Multicultural Government Personnel Act of 1994. That act requires each agency to review its representation of bilingual

personnel and assure proper representation of communities. Moreover, most Latino employees were at the DS-09 level or below and severely underrepresented at the DS-13 level or above (policy level positions). The lack of Latino policy makers has had a profound impact on addressing the difficulties linking Latino residents to better paying jobs in the District.¹⁰

V. Entry-Level Jobs Represent a Small Share of All Employment Opportunities

Because of the differences between metro areas in industry composition, the occupational mix varies as well. Data on the distribution of jobs by industrial sector were used to estimate the distribution of jobs by occupational category, using a three-step process. First, we converted four-digit Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) categories into three-digit

Census Industrial Classification (CIC) codes using a concordance file that matches each SIC code to the corresponding CIC code. Then we constructed an industry-occupation matrix for each region, using 1990 Census Public Use Microdata files (PUMS). For each industry category, this matrix reports the percentage of employees in each occupa-

Figure 6.5(a) Distribution of Washington, D.C. Area Jobs by Occupation, 2001

| | The District | Suburbs | Wash. MSA |
|----------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|
| Exec & Admn | 25.50% | 0.2 | 21.30% |
| Prof Specialty | 24.20% | 20.90% | 21.70% |
| Technicians | 5.60% | 4.60% | 4.80% |
| Sales | 4.87% | 9.50% | 8.40% |
| Admin Supp, Clerical | 21.80% | 15.30% | 16.80% |
| Service | 11.20% | 12.20% | 12.00% |
| Agricultural | 0.20% | 4.80% | 3.70% |
| Prod, Craft & Repair | 3.10% | 7.20% | 6.10% |
| Operators, Laborers | 3.40% | 5.40% | 4.90% |

Source: NNIP Cross-Site Employment Database

Figure 6.6 Entry Level Jobs as Percent of All Jobs by Washington, D.C. Region, 2001

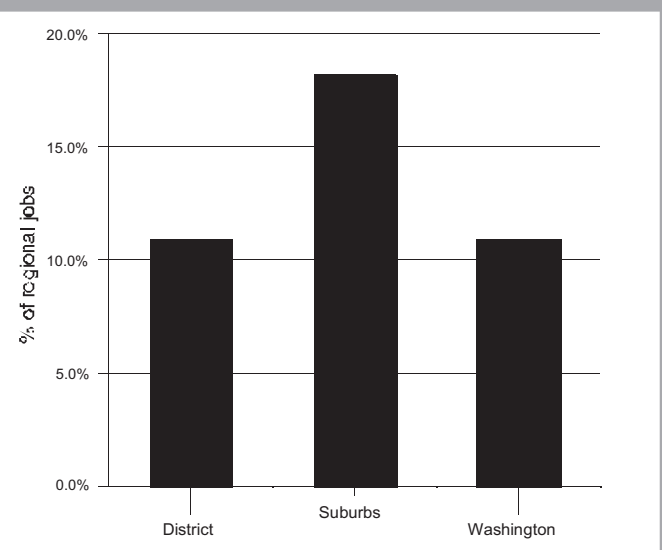
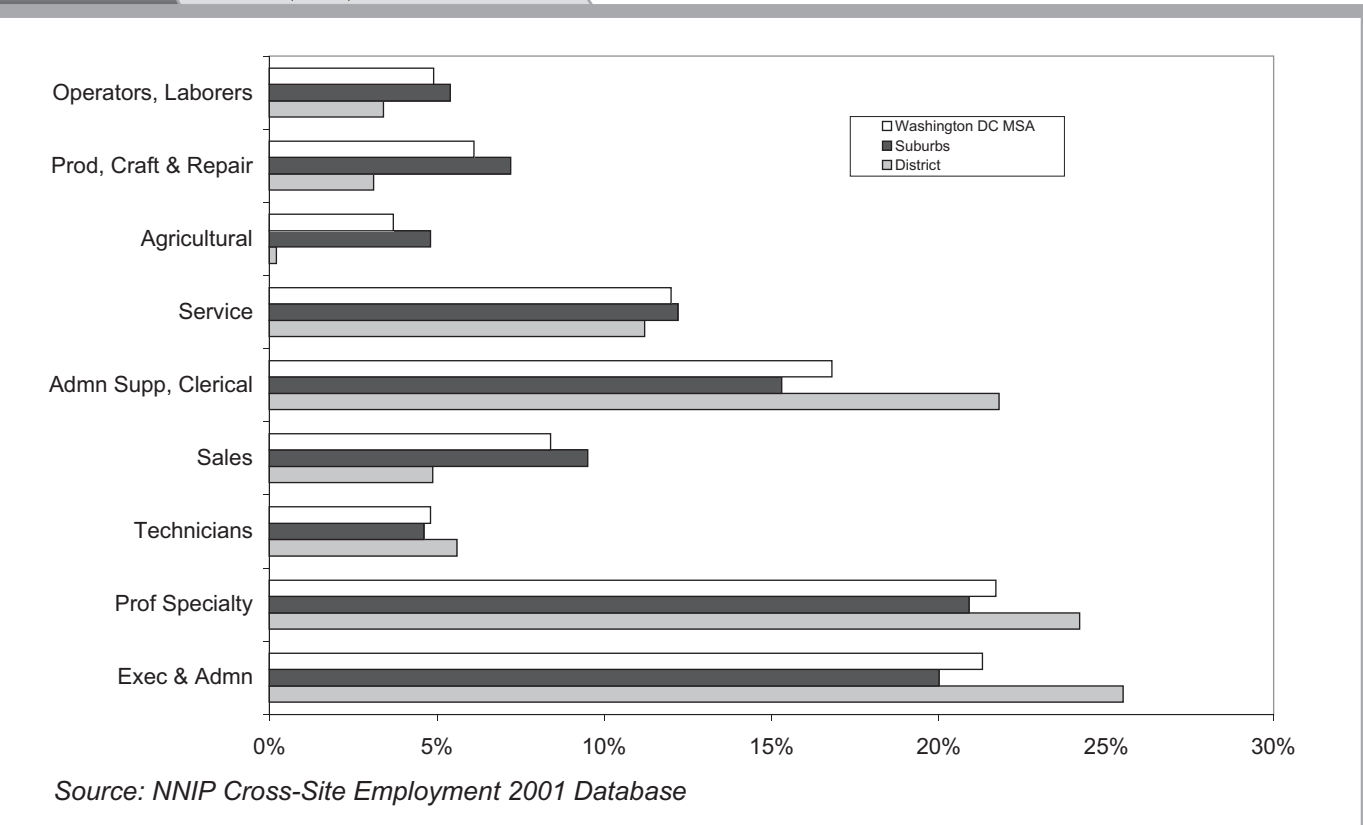


Figure 6.5(b) Chart View, Distribution of Washington, D.C. Area Jobs by Occupation



tional category. Finally, this industry-occupation matrix was applied to the most current available data on employment by industry category to yield estimated counts of employment by occupational category (**Figures 6.5(a) and 6.5(b)**).

In the Washington metropolitan area, almost one in four jobs are executive or managerial, consistent with the important role of public administration in the regional economy. As

American cities have transformed themselves from industrial centers into knowledge centers, the need for highly educated workers has increased. Thus, the occupational categories with the highest percentage of jobs tend to be professions requiring higher-level degrees. Professional specialty positions make up another fifth of the workforce, and these positions require the highest level of education. Even administrative support positions require at least a high school diploma and

some level of training, especially in computers. Some of the blue collar occupations, production, craft & repair, and the operators division make up a little more than 10% of the workforce, but they are found primarily in the suburbs.

Building upon our estimates of jobs by occupational category, we calculated the number and share of entry-level jobs in the District and the suburbs. These represent jobs for which significant numbers of lower skilled workers are most likely to be qualified. The methodology for estimating entry-level jobs was developed by Laura Leete and Neil Bania at Case

Western Reserve University.¹¹ They constructed a job content index based on education, training, and experience requirements, ranked occupations according to this index, and established a set of four basic skill categories. Entry-level jobs constitute the lowest category in this ranking scheme, and include jobs that require less than a high school diploma, little or no experience, limited reading and math proficiency, and less than six months of specialized training. In the Washington metropolitan area, where public administration and high-tech service occupations predominate, only 11% of jobs are classified as entry-level (**Figure 6.6**).

VI. Services and Trade Are the Primary Sources of Entry-Level Job Growth

Over the next decade, the creation of significant numbers of new entry-level jobs is expected. Rubin estimated the number of new entry-level job openings based on regional industry growth estimates from the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis. (**Figure 6.7**) Each state's expected growth rate was applied to industry job totals to estimate new openings by industry. We then used our estimates of skill levels by industry category to forecast the number of new entry-level jobs created annually in the region. It is important to note that these forecasts **do not** include estimates of expected turnover in the existing pool of jobs, which represents an important source of job openings. Thus, these estimates do not reflect the total number of entry-level jobs likely to open up annually. But they do reflect the net growth in entry-level employment expected for each region.

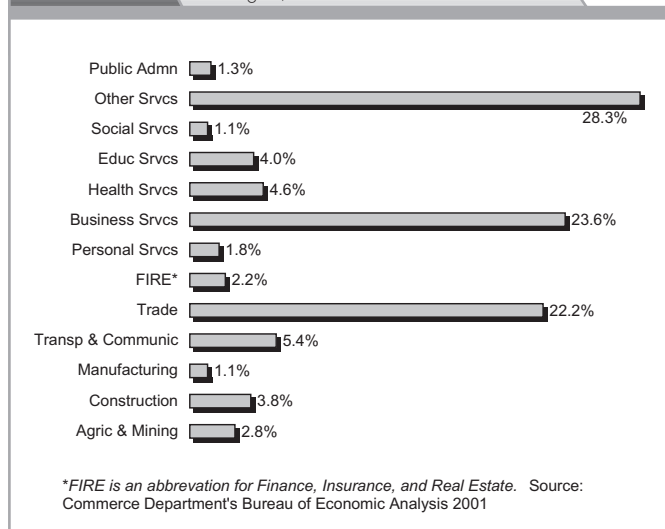
In Washington D.C., the trade and service sectors constitute the major sources of new entry-level jobs. As shown in this exhibit, manufacturing industries are generally not experiencing significant growth and should not be seen as the source of large numbers of new entry-level employment opportunities. In fact, manufacturing is forecast to *lose* entry-level jobs during the early part of this decade. The emergence of flexible manufacturing systems has created a demand for technicians, engineers, and programmers who are familiar with the latest computer technology. It has also spawned an increase in temporary help supply services, as firms seek to increase their hiring flexibility.¹²

In contrast to the manufacturing sector, wholesale and retail trade consistently accounts for a substantial proportion of new entry-level jobs. Business services and other services (which include legal, entertainment, and repair firms) are also expected to generate significant shares of new entry-level jobs. Overall, half of all new entry-level jobs are forecast for these two sectors in the Washington metropolitan area. Although firms in these sectors are typically seen as employing highly skilled workers, they also generate jobs for many low-skilled employees. For example, medical centers and universities employ physical plant workers, security guards, food-service workers, and cleaning workers. Downtown office complexes

employ janitors and repair workers as well as transportation workers (truck drivers, cab drivers, messengers). Non-profit and for-profit service enterprises also stimulate other businesses, such as hotels and restaurants that employ large numbers of food-service and cleaning service workers.¹³

With most growth occurring in the service producing industries and advanced technologies becoming more commonplace, occupations found in those sectors are more likely to require advanced education and/or strong "people" skills. Computer scientists, computer engineers, system analysts, database administrators and computer support specialists are among the list of the fastest growing 20 occupations. However, occupational projections also show that there will be job openings in virtually all occupations, even those occupations that are declining. The paradox of job openings occurring in declining occupations is the result of the need to replace workers who retire, leave the area, or leave the labor market for some other reason. One example is secretaries, not including legal and medical secretaries. This occupation is expected to lose, on average, 348 jobs a year between 1996-

Figure 6.7 Distribution of New Entry-Level Jobs by Industry
Washington, D.C. Area



2006. However, demographic and other trends suggest that the District will have to replace an average of 515 secretaries each year during the same period.

The top ten occupations in terms of projected annual openings in the District are systems analysts, lawyers, general managers and top executives, general office clerks, secretaries (except

legal and medical), janitors and cleaners, clerical supervisors, waiter and waitresses, guards and reception/information clerks. Half of these occupations require only short-term on-the-job training. General office clerks and secretaries are the only declining occupations. The large base and therefore high replacement needs account for the high number of annual openings for these two occupations.

Linking Central City Latinos to Entry-Level Job Openings

Today, entry-level workers throughout the United States face increasing pressure to find and keep jobs. Despite booming economic growth in most parts of the country over the last decade, the demands of welfare reform and the recent slow-down of the economy pose real challenges for many families who may have limited education, job skills, or work experience. In the early years of welfare reform, central city caseloads have been declining less rapidly than suburban and rural caseloads, suggesting that central city welfare recipients face particularly daunting barriers to getting and keeping jobs.¹⁴ The suburbanization of entry-level employment opportunities in most metropolitan areas certainly contributes to these barriers, although discrimination, poor education and training, lack of affordable child care, limited substance abuse treatment opportunities, and lack of fluency in English are all important factors as well. Initiatives that improve informational and transportation linkages between central city residents and entry-level employment opportunities in the suburbs have an important role to play in regional welfare-to-work strategies. But they should not be viewed as the whole solution to the challenge of helping large numbers of central city families find well-paying work. Moreover, D.C. Latino households make up only 1% of TANF recipients, so the majority of Latinos are not going to directly benefit from welfare- to- work placements.

Latinos face a number of challenges in gaining higher-paying jobs. Many of the Latino job seekers in the District have low literacy levels, are not computer literate, and regard English as a second language. The District’s Department of Employment Services is often the first government agency that assesses these challenges, but recent studies suggest they are not doing all they can to help Latinos.

A 1998 study found that Latinos constituted only 2% of the District’s Office of Employment Services, despite being nearly 10% of the population.¹⁵ As mentioned before, a more recent study was undertaken to assess how the One-Stop centers are serving unemployed and underemployed residents in terms of providing assistance with job placement, skills training and support services. The testers were told repeatedly that if they didn’t speak English and have legal status, they could not receive any services. One tester with work authorization papers was told to take her documentation to the unemployment insurance and welfare offices and was not provided with job assistance. Another tester (with work authorization papers) was asked by a staff person to prove her residence status. The bottom line was that no Spanish-speaking testers received any employment services.

Figure 6.8(a) Educational Attainment for Ages 25-34 by White, Black, Latino, Gender and D.C., 1998

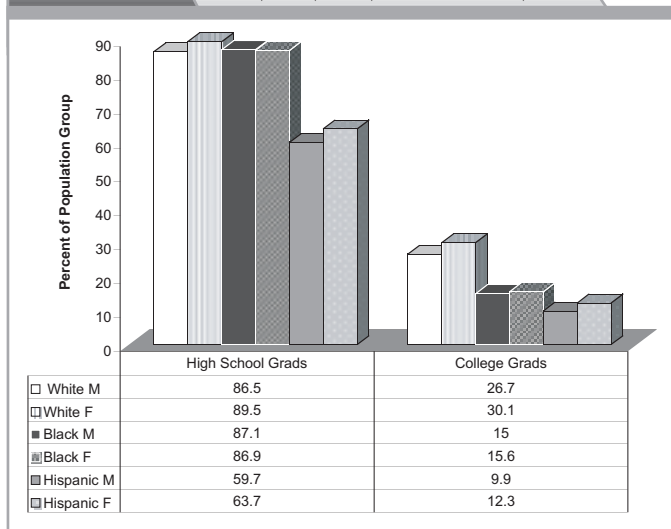
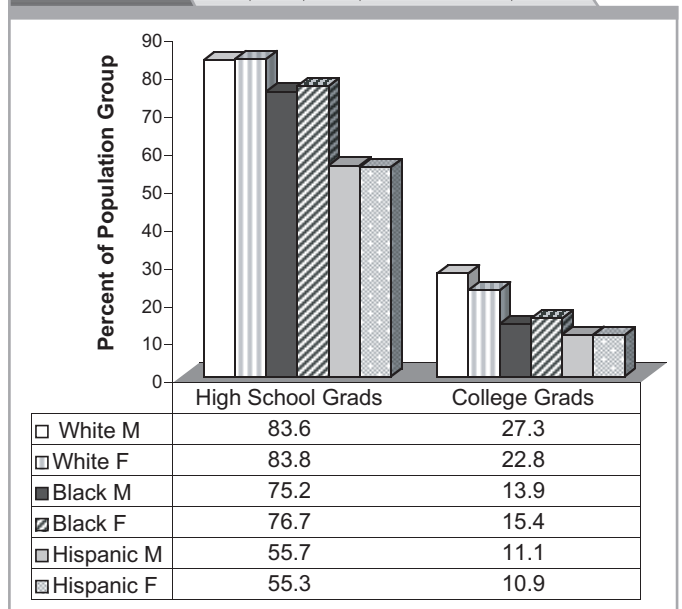


Figure 6.8(b) Educational Attainment for Age 25 by White, Black, Latino, Gender and D.C., 1998



Another problem faced by the testers was when they tried to make an appointment with job counselors. Staffers told testers to make an appointment and did not provide any additional assistance. Some testers were told they could not do anything without first seeing a counselor. If the tester was able to make an appointment, they often had to wait for long periods of time. One tester waited an hour and a half for her appointment and then left without seeing a job counselor. When she asked the receptionist about her appointment, she was told there are only two counselors: one works only with veterans and the other was busy. Other testers were seen one to two hours late.

The problem linking Latinos to well-paying work, however, cannot be placed solely at the feet of DOES. As mentioned earlier the educational attainment of Latinos in the U.S. continues to lag behind non-Latino white and black residents (**Figures 6.8(a) and 6.8(b)**).

During the past two decades, the gaps in earnings between more- and less-educated workers have risen quite dramatically while less-educated males have experienced large wage losses. Since African Americans and Latinos are more heavily concentrated than whites among these less-educated groups, these groups certainly have suffered disproportionately from the earnings losses experienced by less-educated workers.¹⁶

Another problem impacting on Latinos' ability to find well paying jobs is the effect of residential segregation. Segregation by income group seems to have risen over the past few decades, even while racial segregation has been declining.¹⁷ Thus, while middle-class African Americans increasingly relocate to moderately integrated city or suburban neighborhoods, the tendency of poor African Americans and Latinos to live in predominantly poor neighborhoods, where they are relatively isolated from middle-class residents, has been rising.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The continued economic growth coupled with the slow population decline in the District presents an opportunity to help individuals to successfully enter and/or advance in the labor market—people who have had difficulty doing so in the past. Latinos have high employment levels, but are often stuck in low-wage positions. The expected openings in many occupations that do not require high levels of education could offer Latinos an opportunity to higher paying positions.

Research suggests that the career employment prospects of less-educated minorities are impaired by a variety of problems, such as: 1) Poor quantity and quality of education in many low-income areas; 2) The limited early work experience of young minorities; 3) Their limited access to jobs in suburban areas; and 4) Continuing discrimination (especially in small establishments or those with mostly white customers). The residence of many young minorities in highly segregated and isolated poor neighborhoods compounds all

An economic strategy for the District needs to complement the many programs designed to increase human capital and meet the basic human needs of disadvantaged populations. Employment opportunities are a linchpin for the success of virtually all other programs designed to improve human capabilities, values, and attitudes in distressed communities.

Another effect of residential segregation is known as “spatial mismatch” - i.e., the tendency for jobs to be increasingly located in outlying suburban areas (often exacerbated by a lack of metropolitan-wide economic development policies) while at least some minorities remain concentrated in inner-city areas due to residential segregation. The latter are presumably disadvantaged in the process of seeking suburban employment, partly because of transportation difficulties (especially for those who lack their own automobiles), and partly due to limited information about opportunities in those outlying areas.¹⁸

The “spatial mismatch hypothesis” has been heavily debated for over 30 years, but most of the recent evidence suggest that these mismatches do limit employment opportunities for inner-city minorities (e.g., Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998). Relatively few opportunities for employment exist within predominantly poor and minority neighborhoods, and a variety of barriers limit employment options for minority and poor individuals in other neighborhoods.¹⁹

Spatial mismatch, poor education attainment levels, and a workforce development system that is not responsive to Latino needs continue to pose barriers for workers seeking higher paying jobs. These problems suggest that a multi-faceted strategy is needed that incorporates bilingual educational opportunities with new transportation linkages.

of these difficulties. The limited access of many low-income young women to adequate childcare no doubt exacerbates their problems as well.

Although inner-city populations present many workforce readiness challenges, inner-city residents can also be an attractive labor pool for businesses that rely on a loyal, modestly skilled workforce. There is the potential to build on these resources, with new approaches to education, job placement, and training.

Researchers have found that across the country, the link between school and careers is largely absent for many high school students.²⁰ Students rarely have a good idea about a wide range of middle-level careers and the skills needed to succeed in those careers. The District School Board has tried to address this concern by starting the School-to-Careers program, which combines classroom learning with learning about the world of work.

High school students will follow one of five career pathways: business/marketing, health/human services, arts/communication, engineering/science or industrial technology. Each pathway includes numerous career opportunities, as well as a rigorous academic program that will prepare students for college.

Such a program is a good first step to developing a workforce that meets the needs of the changing economy. Local Community Development Corporations can also play a role by working with companies to develop tailored workforce development programs to supply employers with a trained and dependable labor force.

Over the past few years D.C. government has significantly increased its attention on workforce development. However, despite the many gains made by the District, a number of barriers hindering workforce development activities remain. Here are some recommendations that DOES should consider as it moves forward on its work:

Make One-Stop centers bilingual and customer-friendly. All One-Stops should have bilingual staff to help job seekers for whom English is a second language. Moreover, materials should be in multiple languages and easily accessible. There is no reason why a job seeker should have to wait longer than 15 minutes for help from staff, especially if they have made an appointment. The One-Stops need to remember job seekers are the customers and should be treated with courtesy and respect.

Actively pursue work opportunities for individuals without a high school diploma/GED or literacy skills. Visitors to the One-Stop centers do not report much success in finding jobs that are appropriate to their skill/education level. There is a common belief that the One-Stop centers do not have any jobs for those without a diploma or basic literacy skills; and therefore do not access the One-Stop system. Job training programs, either through the One-Stop Center or otherwise, often have minimum reading levels for enrollment. Access to job training for low-literacy clients must be available. DOES should focus efforts on identifying pockets of opportunity for low-skill job seekers. Given the dynamic nature of the local economy, DOES should also be providing an up-to-date labor market analysis that identifies the types of job openings and the location of such jobs. It is clear, that many of the occupations that have high numbers of job openings in the near future require at most on-the-job training, and many pay around \$10 per hour. DOES should actively seek to place Latinos and workers who may not have the requisite English language skills in such positions where possible.

D.C. elected officials should advocate to the federal government to repeal employer sanctions, which undermine worker organizing.

Monitoring and enforcement of labor law and workers rights by the Department of Labor should replace enforcement of

immigration law at the work site by the Immigration and Naturalization Services. The Department of Labor and the Immigration and Naturalization Services should not collaborate in immigration enforcement. Employers use INS enforcement activities to undermine worker organizing; effectually, immigration enforcement at the work site drives wages down and helps to maintain substandard work conditions. D.C. government should advocate against employer sanctions.

DOES should stop using Social Security numbers as a means to obtain services. If the services are to be available to all potential job seekers, the Virtual One-Stop system must stop using social security numbers as a means of accessing the system. Using social security numbers is in general a bad idea, given the possibility of fraud and identity theft if the number, along with lots of personal information required by the Virtual One-Stop falls into the wrong hands. Furthermore, using social security numbers is illegal under the federal law that supports literacy funding. The Virtual One Stop system should allow users to create their own log-in names, as do many other web sites.

Elected officials and key city agencies should develop an immediate and long term plan to strengthen the safety net for low income workers laid-off or vulnerable to job loss based on the post- September 11th economic down turn. Immediate relief to low-wage workers and their families will impact the short and long term stability of D.C.

- Enact emergency and temporary legislation to create a General Relief program to provide six months of cash assistance for laid-off workers for residents who don't qualify for TANF because they are single or unqualified legal immigrants.
- Amend the unemployment compensation act to include a worker's recent earnings in calculating whether the worker is eligible for unemployment.
- When the employer has not paid properly into the unemployment compensation system, the worker should not be the one to suffer. In this case the Department of Employment Services should pay benefits first and then conduct an investigation of the employer to recoup the money.
- Use the National Emergency Grant authorized by the Workforce Investment Act. Under the grant D.C. can support workers who are in training with needs-related payments.

Now more than ever before, low-income Latinos' access to and participation in post-secondary education and training is key to the achievement of long-term economic self-sufficien-

cy. The District of Columbia needs to ensure that all its residents have the opportunity to participate and flourish in the development of its city. Such an effort requires creating alternative strategies that serve populations with very low-grade

levels, poor literacy, learning disabilities and other academic issues. Moreover, it would recognize the changing face of the District of Columbia: a city that is both multilingual as well as multiethnic.

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