

Crain's: High-tech jobs lead the way for Chicago economy

By John Pletz – March 25, 2015

Job growth in high tech has far outpaced the rest of the Chicago economy since the recession, especially software coders and engineers, which have lapped the field.

Total tech jobs grew 16 percent between 2009 and mid-2014, the latest data available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, despite a sharp dropoff in computer and electronics manufacturing. That's double the overall Chicago-area job growth of 7 percent during that time.

Technology jobs, however, are just a fraction of the overall employment pie, at about 2 percent.

Computer systems design and engineering, the largest segment of tech employment, is white-hot. Total jobs in the category are up 36 percent since 2009 to more than 56,000 in Cook, DuPage, Lake and Will counties.

Data-processing, hosting and related jobs were up 4 percent to about 7,500. Employment in software publishing grew 5 percent to about 2,800.

Computer and electronics manufacturing jobs declined 14 percent to just over 21,000 jobs.

While much has been written (including by me) about tech companies migrating downtown in search of jobs, the burbs are holding their own. Tech jobs in DuPage County grew at 18 percent, compared with 14 percent for Cook County. (Cook County has a 50 percent higher total of tech jobs.)

DuPage County saw computer systems design and engineering jobs grow 35 percent, compared with 33 percent in Cook County. However, DuPage was flat during the first half of last year, while Cook grew 11 percent.