Nonfarm jobs in Gadsden remained flat between October 2011 and October 2012, compared to the statewide increase of 0.7 percent. Goods producing industries lost 100 jobs in the natural resources, mining, and construction sector, but gained 100 in manufacturing. Retail trade and professional and business services added a total of 300 jobs, while education and health services, federal government, and other services were responsible for a loss of 300. All other sectors were flat. The employment forecast for the Gadsden metro over the coming year is positive, with the expectation of 0.3 percent growth. GDP forecasts are also encouraging, with output growth of 1.1 percent anticipated during 2012.

With a total of 42,048 Gadsden area residents employed in October 2012 versus 35,800 nonfarm jobs located in Etowah County, the metro is a net exporter of workers. Total employment was up by 0.2 percent for the preceding 12 months. The labor force expanded by 141 people, keeping unemployment flat at 8.5 percent in October 2012. The Gadsden metro area had an under-employment rate of 22.7 percent in 2011, according to a CBER survey. Applying this rate to October 2012 labor force data, there were an estimated 9,588 underemployed workers and 3,913 unemployed residents for an available labor pool of 13,471 in the metro area, 3.4 times the number of unemployed.

Manufacturing contributed 14.5 percent of area jobs in October 2012, 1.5 percentage points above the state average. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.'s Gadsden plant received praise when it was named one of 14 finalists in the large manufacturer division for the 2012 Manufacturer of the Year award by the Business Council of Alabama and the Alabama Technology Network. The plant’s employment has increased to about 1,700 from 1,400 in 2007. Ten jobs were added in 2012 when Gadsden Fabrication invested $550,000 into new markets. Decatur Plastics Products started an expansion that will result in 25 to 50 additional jobs.

The services sector remained steady from the previous year, with a few new developments. The Halifax Group, which owns The Gadsden Times expanded its reach when it purchased Freedom Communications properties in Florida and North Carolina. Area health care saw improvements this year with Gadsden Regional Medical Center acquiring Outpatient Open MRI, now called Gadsden Regional Imaging, and Riverview Regional Medical Center’s Sleep Disorders Center being granted reaccreditation. Area clinics received 12 new hemodialysis stations for more convenient treatment. Public services made some equipment improvements throughout the year. Rainbow City Police Department obtained three Humvees from the Alabama National Guard along with their acquisition of a LifeSaver helicopter ambulance. East Gadsden’s Fire Station No. 9 upgraded to a new ladder truck in April. The Etowah County Commission added to their assets when they purchased the 82 acres of land adjacent to their industrial park property at Little Canoe Creek. Local public services lost 34 employees to retirement. In a cost-saving move, the federal government decided to close Gadsden’s federal courthouse.

Several small businesses in the area received honors during 2012. Advanced Imaging of Gadsden was named Small Business of the Year with 25 or fewer employees and Devan Lowe Cadillac GMC Lincoln received the same award for businesses with 25 to 50 employees.

Retail employment saw a gain of 100 jobs for the 12 months ending in October as retail developments surged in the area, though the leisure and hospitality sector remained flat for the year despite local activity. It was all openings this year across the retail markets. Eatery options increased with a new Jack’s in East Gadsden, a Super Hibachi Buffet and Grill, Dale’s BBQ in Attalla, Sky’s Warehouse restaurant, Deorio’s Pizzeria, and a new scenic location for the Fish Market Restaurant overlooking the Coosa River. Other openings included Gadsden Pickers—a home accessories store, Amanda’s Pool Supply, Uptown Antiques in downtown Attalla, and a Dollar General Plus in Sardis City. Farmers markets in Gadsden, Attalla, Glencoe, and Rainbow City all offered residents fresh produce and local wares through the warmer months of 2012.

Area recreation was emphasized in 2012 with efforts focused on the unique aspects of the county.
Local events included Attalla’s Black History Celebration in February, along with First Saturdays throughout the summer. Other highlights of the year were the beer garden at Gadsden’s Riverfest, Glencoe’s 10th Annual Celebration in the Park, and the 29th annual Noccalula Road Run which enticed thousands to the region. Construction began on the Patriots Museum at Ola Lee Mize Patriots Park, and the new Glencoe Public Library opened for business.

Gadsden State Community College made strides towards alleviating traffic by embarking on a $1.5 million gateway project that will connect the East Broad and Wallace Drive campuses. The East Broad campus is also creating outdoor study spaces with outdoor furniture and new landscaping by way of a $10,000 grant from Home Depot.

Population in the Gadsden metro area declined by 0.1 percent for the 12-month period ending in July 2011 to an estimated 104,303 residents. New residential construction picked up during the first nine months of 2012 compared to 2011. The 47 single-family units permitted were up 20 from the same period in 2011; no multi-family units were permitted. A total of 566 homes were sold through October 2012, a rise of 7.4 percent from the same period in 2011. Home prices were flat for the year, with the area’s FHFA House Price Index posting no change in the third quarter of 2012 from a year earlier.

Gadsden saw a sharp decline in bank deposits for the year ending June 30, 2012; total deposits in FDIC-insured institutions dropped 9.7 percent, the largest percent change compared to all other metro areas in the state. However, a positive gain of 1.5 percent from FY2011 pushed median family income to $47,600. An annual increase of 2.9 percent raised 2011 per capita income to $31,844, ranking ninth among the metros. At $33,330 Gadsden’s average annual wage for all industries in 2011 amounted to 85.1 percent of the state average.