



# MONTHLY ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

March 6, 2026

*All data reflect the Chicago metro area geography, unless otherwise noted.  
Sources available upon request.*

## CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: WHAT TO KNOW IN MARCH 2026

▲ **Trending Upwards:** Output is projected to be up 1.2% from the prior quarter. The Chicago Business Barometer continues to rise further into expansionary territory, gaining 3.7 points to 57.7 in February. Job postings are up over January 2026, with 7% more postings in February 2026 and 2% more postings over January 2025. This is a trend throughout the region, with job postings up over the last month in all suburban collar counties. O'Hare has also regained its status as the #1 port by trade value, with \$423 billion in 2025 – 28% more than in 2024.

▼ **Trending Downwards:** As of December, employment for the Chicago metro area decreased by 0.4% to 4.738M from November 2025. Employment also decreased in all counties and peer metros between November and December 2025. Following a strong 2025, early 2026 business activity has started slower, with 21 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions recorded so far compared to 41 at this point last year.

### U.S. Macroeconomic Update:

- U.S. trade policy remains in flux following a February 2026 ruling by the Supreme Court held that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act does not authorize the president to impose sweeping tariffs. In response, the administration introduced temporary global tariffs under the Trade Act of 1974, underscoring ongoing legal and policy uncertainty around the direction of U.S. trade policy.
- The Iran war and escalating tensions have pushed global oil prices above \$90 per barrel (+37% between Feb and March), increasing the risk of higher energy costs and renewed inflationary pressure if disruptions to Middle East supply persist.

## CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: KEY MACROECONOMIC METRICS

- ▲ **Output:** Chicagoland's output for Q1 2026 was projected by Moody's Analytics to be \$967 billion, up 1.2% from Q4 2025. All four of the compared metro areas experienced an increase in output over the previous quarter.
- ▼ **Employment:** According to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for the Chicago metro area decreased by 0.4% to 4.738M from November 2025. This decrease is on par with decreases in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. Employment also decreased in all counties between November and December 2025. However, projections point to potential positive employment growth in major industries such as tech, life sciences, TD&L, food manufacturing, and professional and business services in 2026.
- = **Unemployment:** Chicagoland's unemployment rate in December 2025 remained at 4.5% compared to both November 2025 and December 2024.
- ▲ **Job Postings:** Chicagoland saw a 7% increase in active job postings between January 2026 and February 2026, to 205,272. This is also 2% more postings over January 2025. Military and Protective Service occupations saw the largest increase in job postings (56% and 19% respectively). The city of Chicago and all collar counties experienced an increase in the number of active job postings.
- ▼ **Pro-Chicagoland Decisions:** Following a strong 2025, early 2026 activity has started slower, with 21 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions recorded so far compared to 41 at this point last year. This includes 19 expansions and 2 relocations/new market entrants. Of these projects, 11 are regional investments and 10 involve projects within city limits—including 2 South/West Side investments. *PCDs are confirmed expansions, relocations, or new market entrants with at least 10 jobs or 10K square feet.*

## CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: OTHER NOTABLE UPDATES

▼ **City of Chicago Building Permits:** There were 5,344 new construction or renovation/alteration building permits applied for in the last rolling 12-month period (3/1/25-2/28/26) – representing a 26% drop when compared to the prior rolling 12-month period.

▲ **Trade:** O'Hare International Airport is the #1 port by value in 2025, with \$423 billion in trade – up 28% from 2024. O'Hare alone handled nearly 8% of U.S. trade in 2025, up from 5.5% in 2024. O'Hare's top trade categories include nuclear reactors, organic chemical, pharmaceutical products, electric machinery, and optic, photo, medical or surgical instruments. With \$72.8B in total trade value, Ireland replaced China as O'Hare's largest trading partner, driven by a \$33.7B increase in Irish imports and a \$22B decrease in Chinese imports. Organic chemical imports from Ireland accounted for 96% of O'Hare's total organic chemical imports. Other top trading partners increased trade volumes due to tariff shifts, including Taiwan (+\$17.8B), Vietnam (+\$17.4B), and India (+\$13.0B).

▲ **Chicago Fed Survey:** The *Chicago Fed Survey of Economic Conditions* Activity Index increased to +17 in February from +14 in January, suggesting that economic growth was above trend.

▲ **ISM Business Barometer:** The Business Barometer – a survey of supply chain professionals in the Chicagoland area rose +3.7 points to 57.7 in February. The index saw a second consecutive month in expansionary territory after a run of twenty-five months below the key 50 mark. According to ISM, the rise was driven by increases in Production, Employment, New Orders and Supplier Deliveries. A decline in Order Backlogs provided some offset. Read more [here](#).

- In February, the Business Barometer asked: “*Will A.I. and technology changes shift which skills are most important in 2026?*” Responses were: 39% “Yes, but changes will be moderate,” 36% “No, skill importance will stay about the same,” 19% “Yes, some skills will be more/much more in demand,” 6% “Unsure.”

## PRO-CHICAGOLAND DECISIONS

as of March 5, 2026

Companies making a known pro-Chicagoland decision in 2026

# 21

19 Expansions  
2 Relocations/New Market Entrants

10 city investments, including 2 on the S/W Sides  
11 suburban investments

### 223 PCDs in 2025

140 PCDs in 2024  
163 PCDs in 2023  
180 PCDs in 2022

## SPENDING & ACTIVITY

	CONSUMER PRICE INDEX METRO AREA Jan 2026 12 month % change, all items	TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES METRO AREA 2025	WEEKLY OFFICE OCCUPANCY METRO AREA Week of Feb. 4	PUBLIC TRANSIT Feb. 22 – Feb. 28 Benchmark: Dec. 2019	AVG. DAILY FLIGHTS Dec. 2025
<b>CHI</b>	+1.3%	\$403B (+2.5% from 2024)	57.4%	-34% (CTA)   -35% (Metra)	2,236 (ORD)   449 (MDW)
<b>NYC</b>	+2.9%	\$959B (+5.0% from 2024)	59.0%	-9% (MTA)   -6% (LIRR)	1,163 (JFK)   959 (LGA)
<b>LA</b>	+3.0%	\$537B (+2.3% from 2024)	48.5%	-25%	1,491
<b>HOU</b>	+1.6% (Dec. 2026)	\$290B (+4.3% from 2024)	64.8%	-16%	1,236

## CHICAGO FED SURVEY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS METRO AREA



# +17

**Feb. 2026**  
Suggests economic growth was above trend

# +3

from Jan. 2026

## CHICAGO BUSINESS BAROMETER METRO AREA



# 57.7

**Feb. 2026**

# +3.7

from Jan. 2026

## HOUSING

### NEW PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL PERMITS METRO AREA 1/1/25 – 11/30/25

15,014

-8.1%  
FROM YTD 2024

#17  
METRO RANK

### ALL BUILDING PERMITS CITY ONLY 3/1/25 – 2/28/26

5,344

-26%  
CHANGE FROM 3/1/24 – 2/28/25

## TRADE & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

	TRADE VALUE 2025	HOTEL OCCUPANCY CITY (CBD) ONLY Jan. 2026	OPENTABLE RESERVATIONS CITY ONLY Feb. 2026 Benchmark: Feb. 2025	BUSINESS LICENSE APPLICATIONS CITY ONLY 3/1/25-2/28/26
<b>CHI</b>	\$423.2B <i>O'Hare Airport</i>	40.6%	+12%	6,040
<b>NYC</b>	\$383.5B <i>JFK Airport</i>	60.6%	+12%	N/A
<b>LA</b>	\$301.1B <i>Port of LA</i>	72.1%	+10%	N/A
<b>HOU</b>	\$206.9B <i>Part of Houston</i>	N/A	+9%	N/A

## INNOVATION – METRO AREA

Q4 2025	GROWTH CAPITAL (PRE-VC, VC + PE) RAISED			
	VC	PE	VC + PE	Change from Q4 2024
<b>SF</b>	\$41.43B	\$306M	\$41.74B	-18%▼
<b>NYC</b>	\$21.98B	\$2.82B	\$25.0B	116%▲
<b>BOS</b>	\$4.28B	\$622M	\$5.81B	51%▲
<b>LA</b>	\$3.99B	\$2.93B	\$7.15B	111%▲
<b>SEA</b>	\$1.5B	\$100M	\$1.61B	109%▲
<b>CHI</b>	\$1.08B	\$1.66B	\$2.73B	146%▲

## INNOVATION – CITY & COUNTIES

Q4 2025	GROWTH CAPITAL RAISED	
	CAPITAL RAISED	DEAL COUNT
<b>CHICAGO CITY</b>	\$1.14B	89
<b>COOK SUBURBS</b>	\$35.35M	15
<b>DUPAGE</b>	\$39.87M	9
<b>KANE</b>	N/A (undisclosed)	1
<b>KENDALL</b>	\$0	0
<b>LAKE</b>	\$0.63M	3
<b>MCHENRY</b>	\$5.2M	2
<b>WILL</b>	N/A (undisclosed)	2

### MACROECONOMIC

	NOMINAL GDP (PROJECTED)		BUSINESS COUNT		EMPLOYMENT		UNEMPLOYMENT			ACTIVE JOB POSTINGS	
	Q1 2026	PRIOR QUARTER CHANGE	Q2 2025	PRIOR QUARTER CHANGE	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	CHANGE FROM Dec. 2024	Feb. 2026 <small>As of Mar. 4</small>	PRIOR MONTH CHANGE
<b>CHI</b>	\$967B	1.2% ▲	249,612	1.0% ▲	4,738,013	0.4% ▼	4.5%	0.0pp =	0.0pp =	205,272	7% ▲
<b>NYC</b>	\$2,598B	1.3% ▲	670,257	0.2% ▲	9,847,143	0.3% ▼	4.5%	0.2pp ▼	0.2pp ▲	350,796	5% ▲
<b>LA</b>	\$1,605B	1.3% ▲	741,023	0.6% ▲	6,467,919	0.5% ▼	4.8%	0.5pp ▼	0.4pp ▼	211,155	5% ▲
<b>HOU</b>	\$806B	1.6% ▲	173,138	0.5% ▼	3,741,135	0.3% ▼	4.2%	0.3pp ▼	0.2pp ▲	118,353	4% ▲

### WHO'S HIRING (FEB. 2026)

COMPANY	UNIQUE JOB POSTINGS
University of Chicago	1,877
Northwestern Memorial Healthcare	1,667
Advocate Aurora Health	1,348
Northshore University Health System CDC	1,208
Walgreens Boots Alliance	1,122
CVS Health	1,022
Endeavor Health	996

### EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (Q1 2026, PROJECTED)

	<b>TECH</b>	<b>QUARTERLY CHANGE</b>	<b>LIFE SCIENCES</b>	<b>QUARTERLY CHANGE</b>	<b>TD&amp;L</b>	<b>QUARTERLY CHANGE</b>	<b>MFG</b>	<b>QUARTERLY CHANGE</b>	<b>BUS. &amp; PRO. SERVICES</b>	<b>QUARTERLY CHANGE</b>	<b>FOOD MFG</b>	<b>QUARTERLY CHANGE</b>
<b>CHI</b>	245,411	0.3% ▲	93,541	0.2% ▲	266,822	0.2% ▲	401,565	0.0% =	394,498	0.3% ▲	71,555	0.1% ▲
<b>NYC</b>	575,304	0.3% ▲	193,782	0.2% ▲	381,020	0.1% ▲	329,796	0.1% ▼	855,705	0.2% ▲	65,363	0.1% ▼
<b>LA</b>	296,109	0.2% ▲	126,138	0.2% ▲	240,319	0.0% =	447,885	0.2% ▼	440,669	0.0% =	53,694	0.3% ▲
<b>HOU</b>	126,641	0.4% ▲	63,695	0.3% ▲	173,972	0.3% ▲	237,874	0.1% ▲	280,442	0.4% ▲	18,002	0.1% ▲

### COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE (Q4 2025, CBRE)

	ABSORPTION/DEMAND (YTD)	AVAILABILITY	QUARTERLY CHANGE	VACANCY	QUARTERLY CHANGE
<b>OFFICE MARKET (CBD)</b>	(116,797 sqft)	30.9%	▲ 2.9 pp	26.6%	▲ 0.1 pp
<b>OFFICE MARKET (SUBURBAN)</b>	142,389 sqft	31.0%	▼ 2.9 pp	28.2%	▲ 0.9 pp
<b>INDUSTRIAL MARKET (METRO AREA)</b>	5,654,037 sqft	9.0%	▲ 0.5 pp	5.4%	▲ 0.1 pp

## MACROECONOMIC – CITY OF CHICAGO AND GCEP COUNTIES

	NOMINAL GDP (ESTIMATE)		BUSINESS COUNT		EMPLOYMENT		UNEMPLOYMENT		ACTIVE JOB POSTINGS		
	2025	CHANGE FROM 2024	Q2 2025	CHANGE FROM Q1 2025	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	CHANGE FROM Dec. 2024	Feb. 2026 As of Mar. 4	CHANGE FROM Jan. 2026
<b>CHICAGO CITY</b>					1,400,751	0.3% ▼	4.6%	0.3pp ▼	0.0pp =	63,639	7% ▲
<b>COOK SUBURBS</b>	\$517.2B	4.3% ▲	137,044	1.1% ▲	1,215,581	0.3% ▼	4.5%	0.1pp ▼	0.0pp =	54,207	9% ▲
<b>DUPAGE</b>	\$112.1B	2.8% ▲	33,639	0.9% ▲	496,833	0.3% ▼	3.7%	0.2pp ▼	0.1pp ▲	26,951	8% ▲
<b>KANE</b>	\$31.1B	2.3% ▲	12,889	1.2% ▲	253,536	1.2% ▼	5.8%	1.2pp ▲	1.4pp ▲	9,570	6% ▲
<b>KENDALL</b>	\$4.0B	1.1% ▲	2,428	1.4% ▲	70,523	1.2% ▼	5.1%	0.9pp ▲	1.3pp ▲	1,448	4% ▲
<b>LAKE</b>	\$89.2B	1.9% ▲	19,717	1.1% ▲	340,180	1.2% ▼	5.8%	1.2pp ▲	1.3pp ▲	18,302	7% ▲
<b>MCHENRY</b>	\$13.3B	4.0% ▲	7,808	1.3% ▲	171,845	0.3% ▼	4.1%	0.2pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	4,783	2% ▲
<b>WILL</b>	\$40.7B	3.3% ▲	15,717	1.2% ▲	372,481	0.3% ▼	4.5%	0.2pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	13,246	1% ▲
<b>METRO AREA</b>	<b>\$862.2B</b>	<b>3.7% ▲</b>	<b>249,612</b>	<b>1.0% ▲</b>	<b>4,738,013</b>	<b>0.4% ▼</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>0.0pp =</b>	<b>0.0pp =</b>	<b>205,272</b>	<b>7% ▲</b>

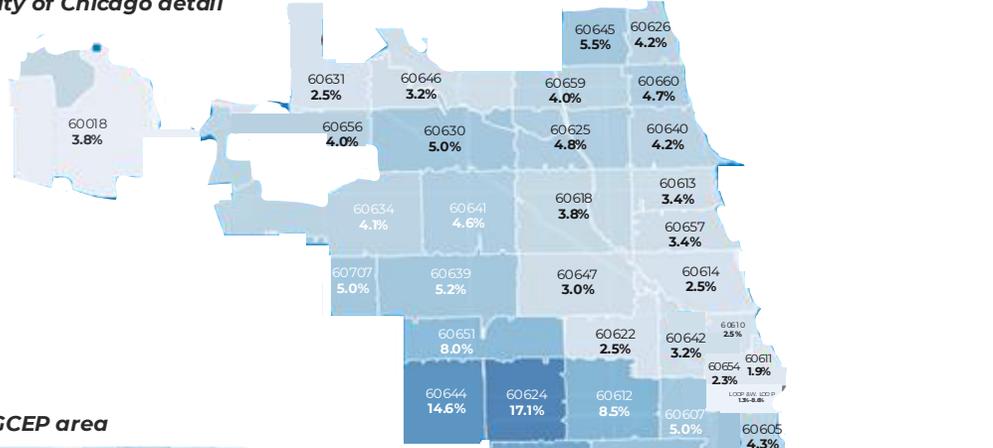
## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (2026, PROJECTED) – CITY OF CHICAGO AND GCEP COUNTIES

	<b>TECH</b>	<b>CHANGE FROM 2025</b>	<b>LIFE SCIENCES</b>	<b>CHANGE FROM 2025</b>	<b>TDL</b>	<b>CHANGE FROM 2025</b>	<b>MFG</b>	<b>CHANGE FROM 2025</b>	<b>BUS. &amp; PRO. SERVICES</b>	<b>CHANGE FROM 2025</b>	<b>FOOD MFG</b>	<b>CHANGE FROM 2025</b>
<b>CHICAGO CITY</b>	49,143	1.0% ▲	12,563	0.1% ▲	59,395	1.2% ▲	69,777	1.0% ▼	183,859	0.5% ▲	26,857	1.3% ▲
<b>COOK SUBURBS</b>	15,227	0.2% ▼	20,887	2.0% ▲	113,042	0.7% ▲	111,284	1.1% ▼	77,157	0.0% =	15,077	2.1% ▲
<b>DUPAGE</b>	25,018	1.4% ▼	13,961	0.5% ▲	39,050	2.3% ▲	61,804	1.1% ▲	58,437	0.5% ▼	8,743	4.8% ▲
<b>KANE</b>	3,756	2.7% ▲	4,143	4.3% ▲	8,031	3.4% ▲	33,979	1.6% ▲	11,409	0.7% ▲	5,973	7.6% ▲
<b>KENDALL</b>	302	3.8% ▲	116	6.4% ▲	2,720	0.0% =	3,087	1.4% ▲	1,420	1.4% ▲	716	3.8% ▲
<b>LAKE</b>	4,345	3.7% ▼	27,973	0.0% =	10,621	2.9% ▲	51,446	0.4% ▲	21,705	1.2% ▼	2,429	3.7% ▲
<b>MCHENRY</b>	566	0.9% ▼	616	1.1% ▼	2,330	0.3% ▼	12,174	1.1% ▼	4,983	0.9% ▲	1,195	2.1% ▲
<b>WILL</b>	3,251	4.7% ▲	3,108	1.5% ▲	43,662	4.0% ▲	25,439	2.7% ▲	12,016	1.2% ▲	5,858	6.5% ▲

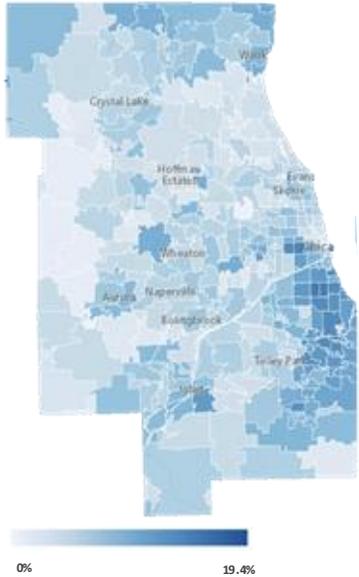
### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE MAP

Estimated unemployment rates by zip code, 2025 (updated yearly)

City of Chicago detail



GCEP area



Unemployment rates can be provided for any geographical area in the Chicago metro. Please contact the WBC Research Center for more details.

### JOB POSTINGS & OPPORTUNITY ZIP CODES

HIGH DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

UNIQUE JOB POSTINGS METRO AREA

HIGH OPPORTUNITY ZIP CODES IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Occupations with the most unique job postings	Feb. 2026	PRIOR MONTH CHANGE	TOP ZIP CODES FOR RECRUITMENT Zip codes in Chicago with the highest concentrations of residents in high demand occupations				
Management	26,032	7%▲	Downtown Station	Fort Dearborn	Main Post Office	Edge-Brook	Norwood Park
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	24,841	7%▲	North Loop	Chestnut Street	Main Post Office	Fort Dearborn	South Loop
Sales and Related	22,968	2%▲	Chestnut Street	South Inner Loop	Lincoln Park	South Loop	Main Post Office
Business and Financial Operations	16,915	10%▲	Main Post Office	Main Post Office	Chestnut Street	Lincoln Park	Chestnut Street
Transportation and Material Moving	14,655	10%▲	Riverdale	South Shore	Roseland	Hegewisch	Grand Crossing

### HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT ZIP CODES (PROJECTED 2025 RATES)

Zip	City of Chicago Neighborhood	2025	Change from 2024	Zip	Chicagoland Suburb	2025	Change from 2024
60621	Englewood	19.4%	▲0.3pp	60419	Dolton	14.3%	▲0.2pp
60636	West Englewood	18.6%	▲0.2pp	60428	Markham	13.7%	▲0.2pp
60624	West Garfield Park	17.1%	▲0.2pp	60433	Joliet	12.6%	▲0.5pp
60827	Riverdale	15.4%	▲0.2pp	60471	Richton Park	12.5%	▲0.2pp
60628	Pullman, Roseland	15.0%	▲0.2pp	60472	Robbins	12.4%	▲0.8pp
60653	Bronzeville	14.8%	▲0.4pp	60473	South Holland	11.4%	▼0.1pp
60620	Auburn Gresham	14.6%	▲0.2pp	60426	Harvey	11.3%	▲0.1pp
60644	Austin	14.6%	▲0.2pp	60409	Calumet City	10.6%	▲0.1pp
60637	Woodlawn	14.2%	▲0.2pp	60429	Hazel Crest	10.5%	=0.0pp
60649	South Shore	13.2%	▲0.2pp	60155	Broadview	10.4%	▲0.1pp
60619	Chatham, Grand Crossing	12.6%	▲0.2pp	60406	Blue Island	10.2%	▲0.1pp
60629	West Lawn, Chicago Lawn	11.4%	▲0.3pp	60141	Hines	10.1%	▲1.6pp