

Economic conference comes at critical time

Wichita Business Journal - by [Mark Story](#)

The question whether the U.S. is headed for recession or recovery is likely to dominate the Economic Outlook Conference next month in Wichita.

"The national economy is in a state of flux," says Janet Harrah, director of the Center for Economic Development and Business Research at **Wichita State University**. "Economic indicators are at odds with one another, some are up and some down. The all-important, upcoming fourth-quarter retail season will likely determine whether the U.S. heads into 2002 looking forward to a recovery or a recession."

Around 400 business leaders are expected to participate in the 22nd Annual **Wichita Area Economic Outlook Conference**, which is set for 7:30-11 a.m. Oct. 17 at the Wichita Marriott. Tickets are \$70 each. For more information, call 978-3225.

Sponsors for the event include the W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University, the Wichita Business Journal, KGE, The Wichita Area Chamber of Commerce and Koch Industries.

Fact-finding

More fact-finding than strategic, the conference focuses on key issues companies will wrestle with as they do business over the next 12 months. Events are divided between keynote speakers and panel discussions.

This year's keynote speaker is Robert Bach, national director for market analysis with Chicago-based real estate firm Grubb & Ellis Co. With about a quarter century's experience in real estate market research, consulting and city planning, Bach is charged with preparing the company's "Market Trends" and "Capital Market Reports." His national economic outlook will include trends in new construction, vacancy rates, employment levels and forecasts for interest rates.

Following Bach's one-hour presentation, set to begin at 8:05 a.m., is the first of two one-hour panel discussions. Moderated by Randy Brown, WSU visiting assistant professor in communications, the first panel discussion looks at the long-term economic vision for Wichita and south central Kansas.

Business leaders on panel

A panel of Wichita business leaders will include Jack DeBoer, chairman and CEO, Candlewood Hotel Co.; Bob Landers, Bank of America-Kansas president; Marlon Dauner, president and CEO, Preferred Health Systems; Steven Martens, president, Grubb & Ellis/Martens Commercial Group; and Michael Pompeo,

CEO, Thayer Aerospace. The panel will take a retrospective look at Wichita's future after a decade of significant growth.

Based on broader industry forecasts, the second panel discussion -- set for 10:05 to 11 a.m. -- will make a 12-month forecast for the local economy. The panelists and the areas they'll address are: Steve Perkins, CEO, Wichita Clinic, on health care; Jim Farrell, vice president of marketing with Farmers National Co., on agriculture; Jerry Jones, vice president for commercial development, Slawson Cos., on retail development; Linda Guerra, vice president, Perfekta Inc., on manufacturing; and Janet Harrah with the area's overall forecast.

REACH MARK STORY at 266-6172 or on the Web site at mstory@bizjournals.com.