

Busey Presents 19th Economic Outlook for McLean County

From employment and retail sales to new home construction and agricultural output, Ed Scharlau, Vice Chairman of Busey Bank, outlined the local economy during the 19th Economic Outlook for McLean County, hosted by Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington. Kyle Ham, Chief Executive Officer of Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council, also presented his views to an audience of nearly 200 guests.

“We have several reasons to be optimistic,” says Ed Scharlau, Vice Chairman of Busey Bank, “real estate sales are strong, people are spending money and agriculture is still one of the strongest industries in McLean County. The economic indicators show the hard work of various industries to increase the quality of life for our community members and our visitors.”

The county’s agricultural output totaled an estimated \$485 million in 2016, up from \$474 million the year before, and \$441 million is anticipated for 2017. When it comes to corn yields, the county had 218 bushels per acre in 2016. Citing data from Busey Ag Services, Scharlau says “McLean County produced the most corn and soybeans in Illinois and the most corn of any county across the country in 2016.” Meanwhile, values for the most productive farmland—“Class A,” as defined by soil productivity research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—is \$10,600 to \$13,000 an acre.

Moving to retail sales, they were up slightly at \$2.468 billion in 2016 from the previous year at \$2.462 billion, according to the sales tax report from the Illinois Department of Revenue. \$2.488 billion is anticipated this year. “Automobile sales are strong in McLean County,” says Scharlau, “with 18 cents of every dollar spent to buy or service vehicles.” The number of retailers in McLean County has increased. 4,114 businesses paid sales tax in Illinois last year compared to 4,080 in 2015.

Looking at the housing market, sales increased in 2016—up 2.8 percent over last year, according to the Bloomington-Normal Association of REALTORS®. The estimated average price of a home sold in Bloomington-Normal in 2017 is \$175,000 compared to \$171,000 last year. New home construction dropped slightly in 2016 with 161 homes (83 in Bloomington and 78 in Normal) built compared to 167 homes in 2015. Scharlau anticipates 165 new homes will be built in 2017.

More people are choosing to call McLean County home. According to the Census Bureau, 35,000 more people have moved to the county in the last 21 years (1995-2016) with 173,000 people living in the community today. Scharlau credits much of the growth to State Farm, “The employer has grown by 4,056 people since 1999.”



busey.com



McLean County has an unemployment rate of 3.7 percent in April of 2017—down from 4.8 percent this time last year and still lower than the state average of 4.4 percent. McLean County has a significantly lower unemployment rate compared to others in Central Illinois, such as Peoria County at 5.4 percent, Tazewell County at 5.0 percent, Macon County at 4.9 percent and Champaign County at 3.8 percent.

Guests appear optimistic about the economy this year. Here are the results of the survey taken at the outlook:

- The Dow Jones Industrial Average will be 21,542.
- The rate of inflation will be at 2.4 percent.
- Retail sales in McLean County will increase by 2.47% this year.
- The number of new single-family homes in Bloomington-Normal will be 167.

For more information on the results of the economic outlook, stop by any Busey location, visit busey.com or call **1.800.67 | Busey**.



busey.com

Busey[®]
Member FDIC