

## Local economic outlook optimistic, but guarded

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By **GEORGE KANUCK / KVUE News**

Angelos Angelou, a leading economist here in Austin, presented his 2008-2009 Austin Economic and Technology Forecast Thursday at the Austin Convention Center. The report comes amidst a turbulent time for the national economy.

His main message -- guarded optimism. **Though Austin is bucking the national economic trends, the area still feels the effects from them.**

**Angelou spoke to hundreds of Austin businessmen and women, and most of what he had to say about Austin was positive -- economic expansion that outpaced national and state growth; private sector wage increases; and there are continued increases in the population and number of jobs. He sees an expansion in every segment of the economy.**

But he also said that though these areas continue to grow against a national slump, a sluggish U.S. economy means that they will grow at a slower pace over the next couple of years.

Angelou looked towards the future of Austin and focused on the "next generation" image for our economy -- bio and nanotechnology, and most of all, clean energy.

"Austin can easily become a leading destination for renewable activities. This industry fits well with the traditional home grown culture of energy conservation and Austin's desire to fit into a culture of a reduction in global warming," he said.

Angelou also spent a large chunk of time talking about the real estate market. He said that though the market still remains strong, once again a national slump is slowing the prosperous Austin market.

**New home startups in Austin were down 31 percent last year, and that slower trend should continue this year, he says, because builders are using the national forecast to plan in Austin's unique market.**

**But he also says that because of Austin's expected population growth of almost 100,000 people and a job market that will create over 40,000 jobs locally in 2008 and 2009, that demand for housing will keep existing home prices from following the nation's freefall.**

“The predictions are down somewhat, but I think he's remaining conservative looking at the overall big picture for the state of Texas and nationally,” said Jeanne Butterfield, a Director for ReMax. “We're still above the national averages and I think we'll continue to strive and keep growing.”

“I think Austin is very unique and thank God where we are and one of the best economies in the United States.” said Rick Castleberry, realtor.

Angelou has authored the forecast since 1984.

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**