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2017 First Quarter



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KERN ECONOMIC JOURNAL is a quarterly publication (February, May, August, November) of California State University, Bakersfield. Its purpose is to track local trends and analyze regional, national, and global issues that affect the economic well-being of Kern County. The journal provides useful information and data that can help the community make informed economic decisions. Sources of funding for this journal include university contributions and sponsorship and subscription fees.

Editorial and analytical articles on important local, regional, national, and international issues and trends are invited for consideration of publication in the journal. Articles (not exceeding 800 words in length) must be submitted to the Managing Editor in electronic copy. Individual authors are responsible for the views and research results.

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Kern Economic Journal



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Economy at a Glance!

2017 First Quarter
by Dr. Richard S. Gearhart III and
Dr. Nyakundi M. Michieka



National Economy¹

The world's largest economy of nearly \$17 trillion, the United States, grew by an anemic 0.7 percent in the first quarter of 2017, significantly lower than growth of 2.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2016. The increase in real GDP reflected increases in business investment, exports, housing investment, and consumer spending. Notably, there were declines in private inventory investment, state and local government spending, and federal government spending.

Real disposable personal income, which is adjusted for inflation and taxes, increased by a slightly larger 0.6-percent in the first quarter of 2017. The majority of the increase was in March, with a small increase in incomes in February of 2017 and a decrease in January of 2017. Real consumer spending increased by 0.1-percent in the first quarter of 2017, highlighting that savings likely increased or debts were repaid. This is likely the mechanism via which consumers are paying down debts accumulated during the fourth quarter of 2016, which is the holiday season. This is confirmed by an increase in the personal savings rate, which increased from 5.4-percent in December of 2016 to 5.9-percent in March of 2017.

¹ U.S. economic numbers were obtained from the Bureau of Economic Analysis "U.S. Economy at a Glance". This is found at <http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/glance.htm>. The information for the Index of Leading Economic Indicators is found at <https://www.conference-board.org/data/bcicountry.cfm?cid=1>. The University of Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index is found at <http://www.sca.isr.umich.edu/tables.html>.

The Conference Board's Index of Leading Economic Indicators – a measure of future economic activity – increased each month of the first quarter of 2017, rising to 126.7 in March (rising by 0.4 percent in March, 0.5 percent in February, and 0.6 percent in January). Part of the increase likely has occurred due to anticipatory decreases in business regulation and taxes, though the slowing in the growth of the indicator bears watching, and likely reflect uncertainty as to the future direction of healthcare and economic growth.

Similarly, the University of Michigan's Consumer Sentiment Index increased from 98.5 in January of 2017 to 96.9 in March of 2017, reaching a level in January not seen since 2004. The quarterly value was 97.2 in the first quarter of 2017, compared to 91.5 four quarters ago. Notice, again, that the growth in the Consumer Sentiment Index has slowed into 2017, highlighting difficulties in implementation of various promises during the campaign season.

State Economy²

In California, the unemployment rate fell slightly in the first quarter of 2017 to 5.0 percent, down from 5.33 percent in the fourth quarter of 2016. Among counties, San Francisco (3.0 percent), Santa Clara (3.4 percent), Orange (3.7 percent), San Luis Obispo (3.8 percent), San Diego (4.2 percent), and Los Angeles

² The California economic numbers were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics "Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map". This is found at <https://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet?survey=la&map=county&seasonal=u>.

(4.3 percent), had unemployment rates below the state average. In contrast, Sacramento (5.1 percent), Riverside (5.5 percent), San Joaquin (8.3), Fresno (10.3 percent), Kings (11.2 percent), and Kern (11.2 percent) had unemployment rates above the state average.

The state's civilian labor force lost 263,667 members, where 190,000 fewer employees paying jobs (employed) and 73,667 fewer were left jobless (unemployed). While nonfarm industries hired 74,133 more workers, farming enterprises employed 11,933 more workers, in contrast to the trends found in Kern County. A wide range of industries added jobs, including construction, manufacturing, information, and health care. However, jobs were lost in retail trade, professional and business services, educational services, and local government.

Local Economy

The local economy saw a sizable decrease in its labor force, falling from 398,000 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 384,467 in the first quarter of 2017. In fact, this is lower than the labor force four quarters ago, hinting that the drop in the labor force may be more than a seasonal adjustment we see at the beginning of the year. This decrease in the labor force was largely due to a decrease in employment (slightly over 19,000 workers), while increased number of those who are unemployed contributed (5,600 workers). Positive signs of employment growth were scarce, as employees were added in food and beverage stores, clothing and clothing accessory stores, and healthcare. Jobs were lost in a number of areas, including mining and logging, construction, service providing, information, financial activities, and local government. Unfortunately, personal incomes in Kern County continued to fall, decreasing by 29.8-percent, highlighting continued troubles for business profits (falling by \$545 million) and personal incomes (falling by \$1.3 billion).

The rate of unemployment ranged from 0 percent in Inyokern to 22.6 percent in California City. No city in Kern County experienced a decrease in the unemployment rate except for Inyokern. In Bakersfield, 10.0 percent of persons in the labor force are unemployed. In fact, there were sizable increases in the unemployment rate in many rural communities in Kern County, hinting that these workers may be struggling due to some of the seasonal fluctuations found in the first quarter of a year.

The median housing price in Kern County decreased to \$207,600, a slight decline from its recent high in the

fourth quarter of 2016, though the price decrease was only 1.92-percent. This price decrease was coupled with a sizable sales increase, as 148 more houses were sold in Kern County this year than last year. Coupled with the fact that new building permits decreased by 8 units this quarter, this highlights that there may be a slowdown in the growth of demand for housing, depressing prices which will cause individuals to purchase more. Interestingly, this is happenings as 30-year mortgage rates have risen above 4-percent for the first time in years, meaning that many new homeowners were likely renters who are not worried about the long-term costs of homebuying.

The weighted price index for the five publicly traded companies doing business in Kern County (Sierra Bancorp, Tejon Ranch Company, Chevron Corporation U.S., Granite Construction, and Wells Fargo Company) decreased slightly from 121.4 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 116.8 in the first quarter of 2017, a decrease of 4.6 percentage points from the previous quarter. Only Sierra Bancorp (2.1-percent) showed an increase in stock prices, as Chevron (3.6 percent), Tejon Ranch (7.4 percent), Granite Construction (10.6 percent), and Wells Fargo (1.2 percent) all experienced a decrease in share prices from their recent highs. This is likely related to the fact that the market often corrects after a Presidential bump in the quarter of the election.

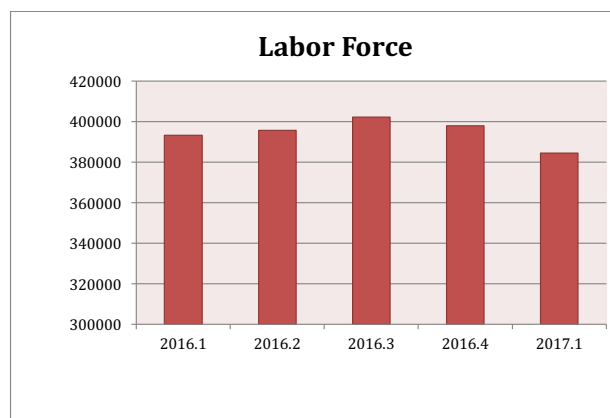
With the continued stagnation in oil prices, gas prices increased slightly, up \$0.15 per gallon since the last quarter, averaging \$2.90 a gallon. The unit price of California's Class III milk also increased, quit substantially, from \$14.03 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to \$14.99 in the first quarter of 2017. Farmers in Kern County benefited, as the index of prices received for the products that they sell rose by 6.7 percentage points, while prices paid for their inputs rose by only 1.8 percentage points, meaning that net revenues for farmers increased by nearly 5-percent. A sizable fraction of this is likely related to water rights for farmers after an exceptionally wet winter in California.

Tracking Kern's Economy¹

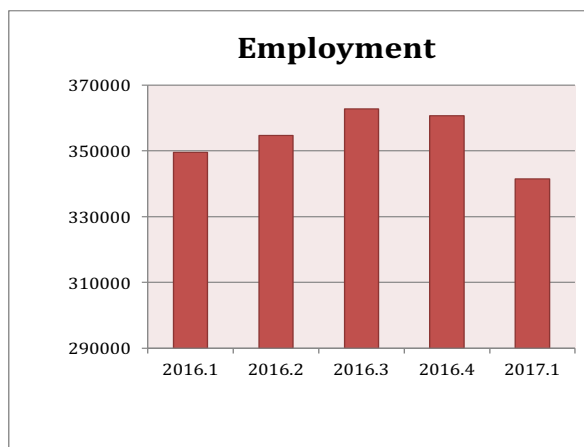
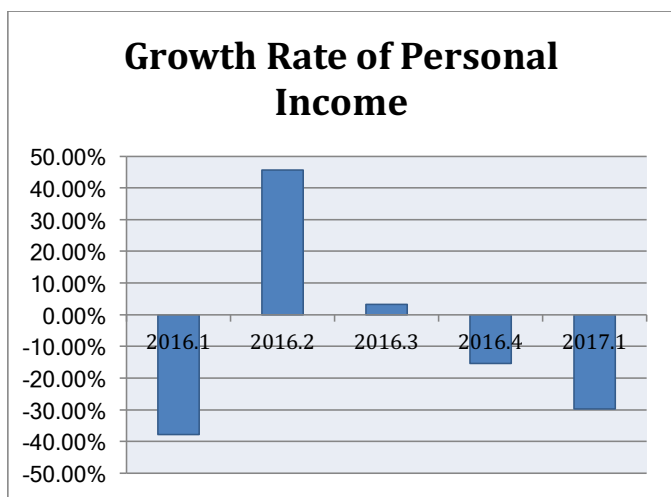
by Dr. Richard S. Gearhart III and
Dr. Nyakundi M. Michieka

Growth of Personal Income – Even with oil prices stabilizing and anticipations of reduced business regulation and tax burdens on consumers and households, Kern County faces a second consecutive quarter of a decrease in personal income, with personal incomes falling by nearly \$2 billion. The downturn has been exacerbated by a decrease, of \$1.3 billion in labor incomes, largely due to reductions in median household income and a massive decrease in the number of employed in Kern County. This was coupled with a decrease, of \$545 million, in profit for businesses. Part of this may be due to businesses altering their cost structures in anticipation of statewide regulatory impacts that will increase costs (minimum wages), but also in anticipation of increased tax breaks. These losses were mitigated by an increase, of about \$23 million, in property incomes, largely from a nearly 200 unit increase in the number of new houses sold. On an annual basis, in the first quarter of 2017, personal incomes fell by 29.8-percent, compared to the fourth quarter of 2016.

account workers employed in the “informal” market (i.e., self-employed labor and those who work outside their county of residence). Finally, we adjusted quarterly data for the effects of seasonal variations.



Labor Force - The civilian labor force decreased by 13,533 members from 398,000 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 384,467 in the first quarter of 2017. This is a sizable fall in the labor force, to a level not seen since 2014, after several quarters of a constant labor force in Kern County. There are also 8,700 fewer individuals in the labor market this quarter, compared to the first quarter of 2016. Even though some of this decrease may seasonal, this is an adjustment not seen for several years.



Labor Market

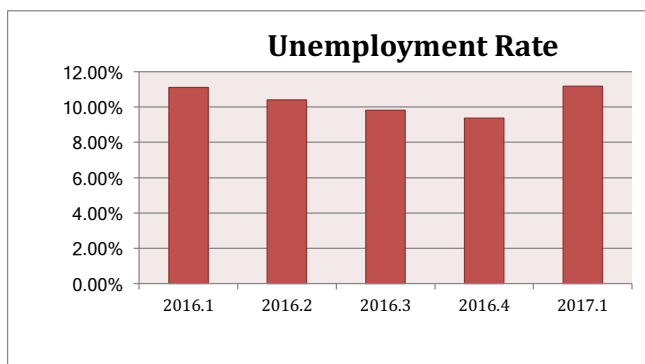
We adjust published data in three ways. Firstly, we averaged monthly data to calculate quarterly data. Secondly, we recalculated quarterly data to take into

Employment –In the first quarter of 2017, Kern County hired 19,267 fewer workers as total employment decreased from 360,700 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 341,433 in the first quarter of

2017. Though part of this employment drop may be a seasonal adjustment, this is one of the largest decreases in recent history (nearly double the size of the drop between the fourth quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016).



Unemployment – In the meantime, 5,600 more workers were unemployed, as the number of jobless workers increased from 37,367 to 42,967. This may highlight movement away from Kern County from discouraged oil workers or migrating farmworkers, but it also hints at perhaps distressed economic outcomes locally from uncertainty about the direction of the economy under a new presidential administration. Fortunately, there are still 600 fewer unemployed this quarter, compared to four quarters ago



Unemployment Rate – Unfortunately, Kern County’s unemployment rate increased in the first quarter of 2017, increasing by 1.8 percentage points from 9.37 percent in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 11.17 percent in the first quarter of 2017. This increase in the unemployment rate is similar to the increase four quarters ago, highlighting how seasonal adjustments to the labor market can rapidly alter unemployment and employment rates around Kern County. Though

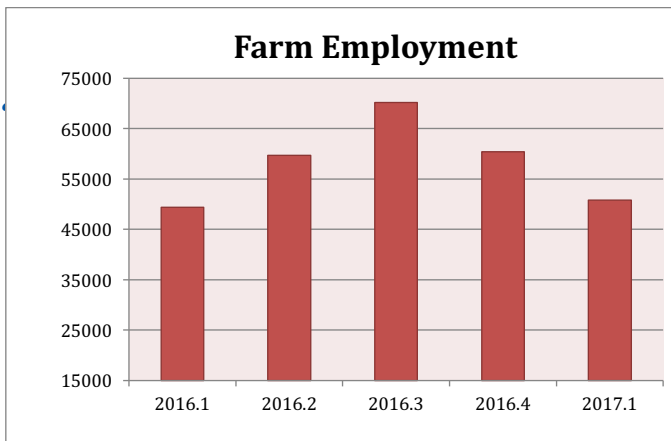
the unemployment rate is still lower than that in the early part of this decade, it bears watching.

Location	Unemployment Rate (%)	Location	Unemployment Rate (%)
Inyokern	0	Edwards	11.57
Taft	7.3	Rosamond	12.37
Lamont	9.37	Oildale	12.77
Ridgecrest	7.57	Arvin	13
Tehachapi	8.57	Delano	13.37
Frazier Park	9.53	Wasco	14.77
Shafter	9.60	McFarland	17.23
Bakersfield	10	Mojave	18.33
Lake Isabella	10.13	California City	22.6

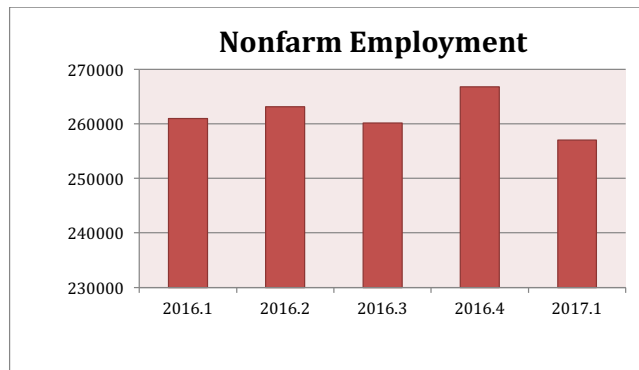
Note: City-level data are not adjusted for seasonality and “informal” market workers.

The rate of unemployment varied considerably across cities. Among cities shown below, the unemployment rate varied between 0 percent in Inyokern to 22.6 percent in California City. Except for Edwards and Inyokern (where Edwards was likely buoyed by the expectation of higher defense spending), all cities in Kern County showed an increase in the unemployment rate except for Inyokern, with the biggest increases occurring in Rosamond and California City, highlighting the seasonal impacts on more remote locations in Kern County. In Bakersfield, the rate of unemployment was 10 percent, an increase of 1.6-percentage points from the fourth quarter of 2016.

Farm Employment – In the first quarter of 2017, Kern County hired 9,600 fewer farm workers. As a result, farm employment decreased from 60,433 to 50,833. Though this is the cyclical nature of farm employment, this accounts for about half of the decrease in employment and the labor force. This may highlight the unexpected nature of precipitation in California, as California was far wetter this year than in previous years.



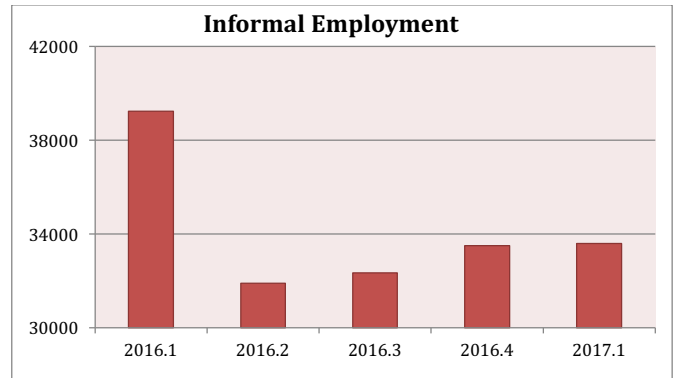
Nonfarm Employment – Local nonfarm industries employed 9,767 fewer workers this quarter. Hence, the number of nonfarm workers decreased from 266,767 to 257,000. Similarly, nonfarm industries hired 3,967 fewer workers than four quarters ago. This highlights a worrying trend, as seasonality should impact agriculture more than nonfarm employment. This may highlight a slowing down of Kern County’s economy.



In Bakersfield, most nonfarm industries lost jobs: the biggest losses continued to be felt in mining and logging, which lost 600 jobs, construction, which lost 3,067 jobs, service providing, which lost nearly 6,000 jobs, and general merchandise stores, which lost 600 jobs. Growth continues to be robust in the healthcare sector, which gained 800 jobs, as well as food and beverage stores, which gained 133 jobs.

Informal Employment - Informal employment is the difference between total employment and industry employment. It accounts for self-employed workers and workers employed outside their county of residence. In the first quarter of 2017, the number of informal workers increased by 100 from 33,500 to

33,600, which is still much lower than earlier in the decade. Conversely, 5,633 fewer informal workers were hired this quarter relative to the first quarter of last year. This may potentially highlight uncertainty about immigration standards in this year, and may highlight pressures placed on businesses by the federal government to follow more strictly immigration laws.

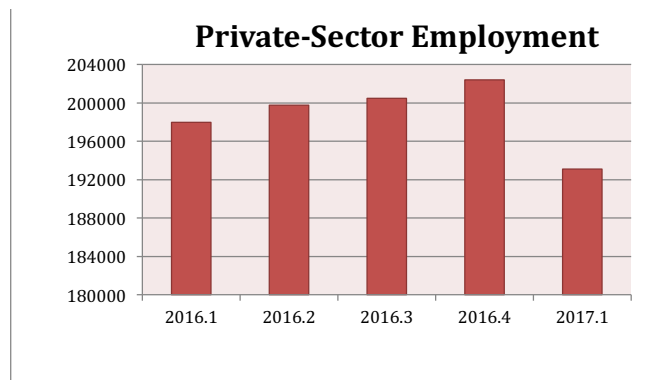


Private-Sector Employment - Nonfarm employment is comprised of private-sector employment and public-sector employment. In the first quarter of 2017, private companies hired 9,300 fewer workers as their employment decreased from 202,400 to 193,100. Similarly, the private sector employed 4,867 fewer workers this quarter than four quarters ago. This hints at a tremendous slowdown in growth in Kern County, highlighting potential recessionary conditions.



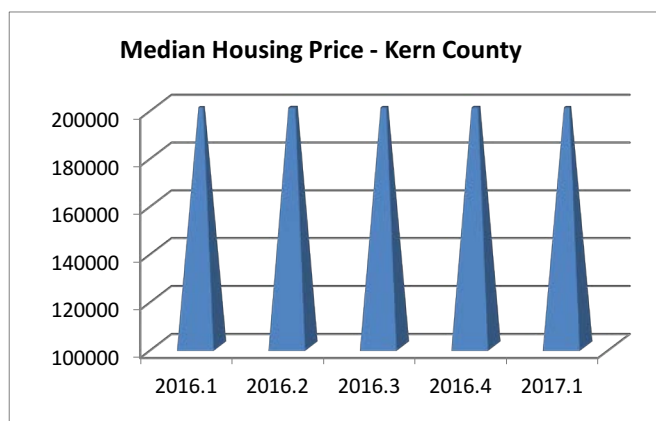
Public-Sector Employment – The public sector consists of federal, state, and local government agencies. The local government labor market includes county and city agencies and public education. In the first quarter of 2017, government agencies hired 467 fewer workers as their employment decreased from 64,367 to 63,900; this is intriguing, though it may reflect on the recent presidential election and

the government “churn” that occurs as appointments come and go. However, there are still 900 more public sector employees this quarter than four quarters ago, hinting at the difficulty in firing workers in the public sector.



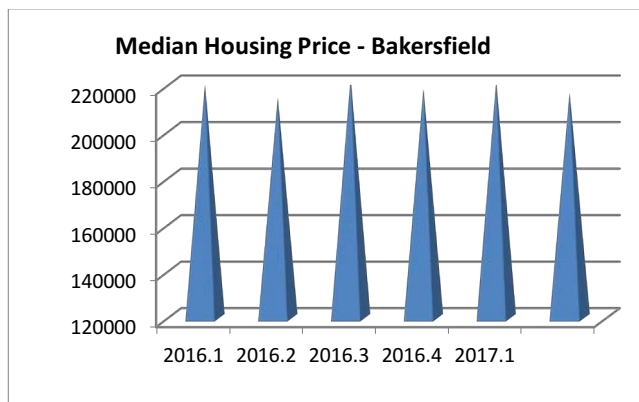
Housing Market

Housing Price - In the first quarter of 2017, Kern County’s housing prices decreased moderately, by slightly over \$4000, hinting that the labor market tightening may be impacting housing prices, and what homeowners are willing to accept for their house. The median sales price for all residential units decreased from \$211,667 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to \$207,600 in the first quarter of 2017. Importantly, the county’s median sales prices are \$9,638 higher (or 4.9 percent) than they were four quarters ago.



In Bakersfield, the median housing price fell in price by \$4,833 (or 2.2 percent) from the fourth quarter of 2016, which hints at labor market troubles for workers, as they may be forced to sell given their budgets or employment opportunities in the local area. The city’s median sales price has appreciated

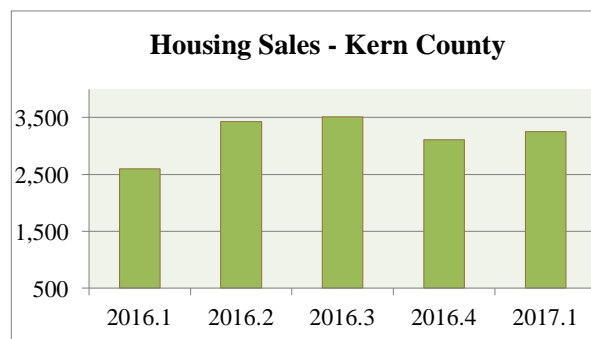
\$2,000 (or 0.9 percent) since the first quarter of 2016.



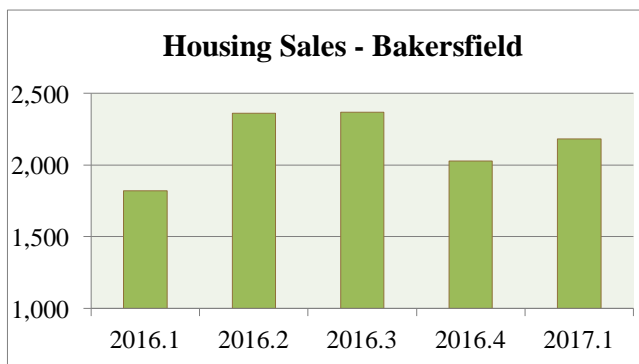
Housing prices varied across the county. Within the previous four quarters (2016 first quarter to 2017 first quarter), the median sales price increased in all the major cities of Kern County except Taft. In dollar value, Rosamond had the largest price increase of \$54,333.

Location	Median Price 2017.1.	Median Price 2016.1	Price Change 2016.1 to 2017.1	% Price Change 2016.1 to 2017.1
Kern County	207,600	197,917	9,683.33	4.9
Bakersfield	216,667	214,667	2,000.00	0.9
California City	108,333	92,833	15,500.00	16.7
Delano	225,667	175,000	50,666.67	29.0
Ridgecrest	167,417	160,500	6,916.67	4.3
Rosamond	229,333	175,000	54,333.33	31.0
Taft	99,167	115,750	16,583.33	-14.3
Tehachapi	248,000	221,167	26,833.33	12.1

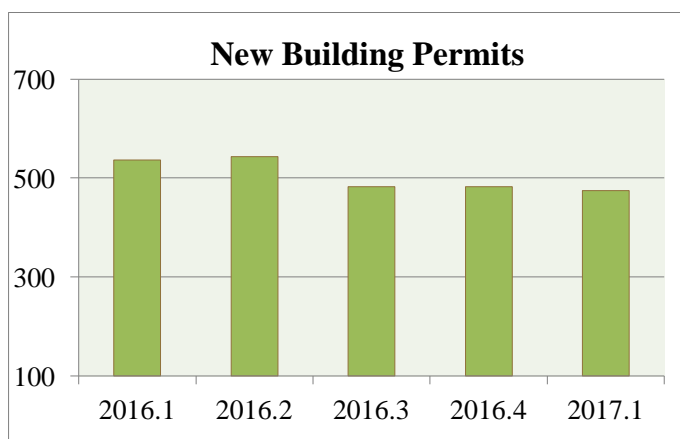
Housing Sales – In the first quarter of 2017, prices decreasing from the prior quarter was accompanied by an increase in sales, perhaps highlighting that there are many available houses on the market creating an environment of intense competition. In Kern County, 148 more homes were sold as total sales increased from 3,106 to 3,254. Compared to four quarters ago, there are still 658 more units being sold. This hints that long-term unemployed oil and gas extraction workers may be seeking alternatives elsewhere.



In Bakersfield, sales of residential units increased by 155 units, from 2,027 in the fourth quarter of 2016 to 2,182 in the first quarter of 2017. This means that a majority of the increase in housing sales in Kern County was located in Bakersfield. While this hints at quite sizable churn in the market as many long-time unemployed leave, perhaps renters are taking an opportunity to buy in the depressed market

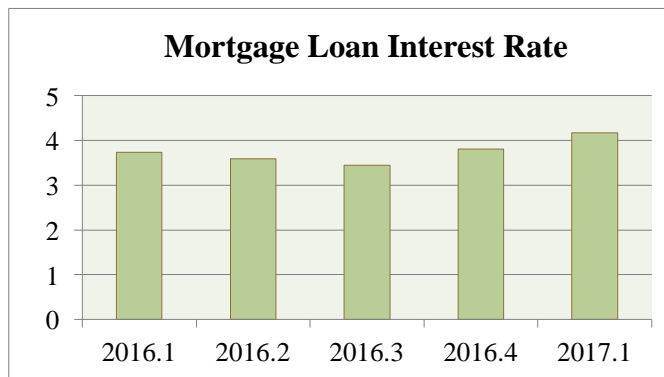


New Building Permits – In the first quarter of 2017, Kern County issued 8 fewer permits for construction of new privately-owned dwelling units compared to the fourth quarter of 2016, issuing 475 total permits (where there were 483 permits issued in the fourth quarter of 2016). The county issued 537 four quarters ago, showing that if there are more houses on the market, future buildings may be depressed. Conversely, this could speak to lowered economic expectations for the near future for Kern County’s economy.

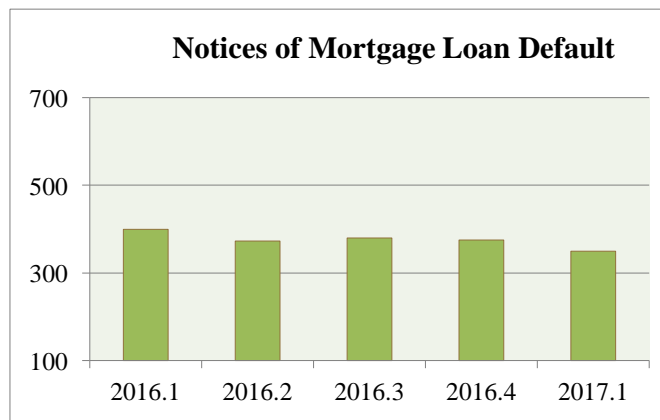


Mortgage Interest Rate – In the first quarter of 2017, the interest rate on thirty-year conventional mortgage loans increased from 3.81 percent to 4.17 percent,

highlighting housing purchases increased in spite of the mortgage rate increase, likely meaning that renters have accumulated enough savings to offset the slightly higher long-term costs of buying.



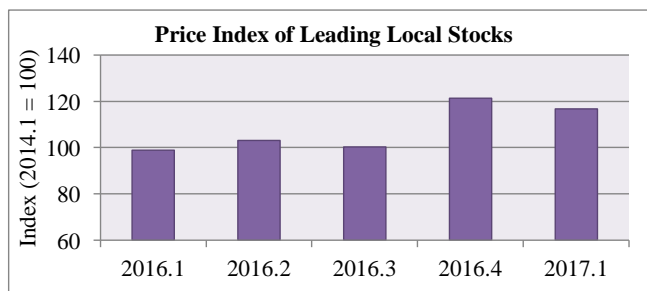
Housing Foreclosure Activity – Kern County has reached a 10-year low in foreclosure activity, as the number of new foreclosures decreased slightly from the fourth quarter of 2016, to 350 new foreclosures in the first quarter of 2017. The number of default notices is 50 units lower than what it was four quarters ago. Even with a slightly depressed labor market, it appears that many households have acquired enough savings to withstand temporary business cycle fluctuations.



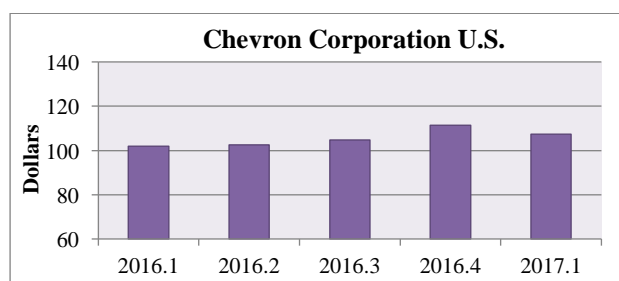
Stock Market

In the first quarter of 2017, the composite price index (2014.1=100) of the five publically traded companies doing business in Kern County has decreased slightly from its most recent high, falling by 4.6 percentage points from the previous quarter, from 121.4 to 116.8. The index is still 17.9 percentage points higher than that of four quarters ago. Average “close” prices were

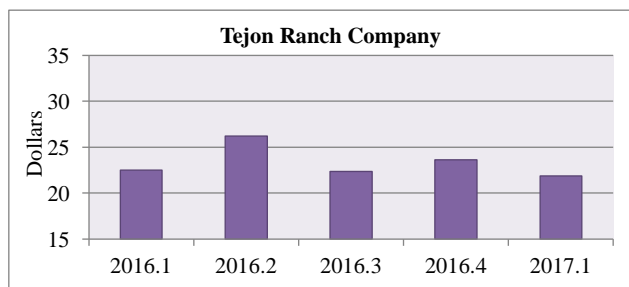
measured for five local market-movers: Chevron Corporation U.S., Tejon Ranch Company, Granite Construction, Wells Fargo Company, and Sierra Bancorp.



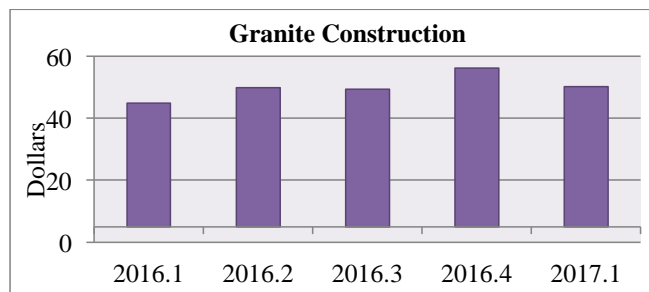
Chevron Corporation U.S.: CVX lost \$3.98 (or 3.6 percent) per share as its price decreased from \$111.35 to \$107.37. Relative to the first quarter of 2016, CVX was up \$5.54 (or 5.4 percent).



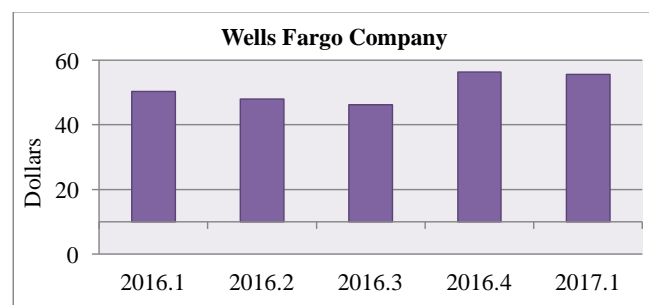
Tejon Ranch Company: TRC lost \$1.74 (or 7.4 percent) per share as its stock price decreased from \$23.63 to \$21.89. Similarly, TRC was down \$0.62 (or 2.8 percent) relative to the first quarter of 2016.



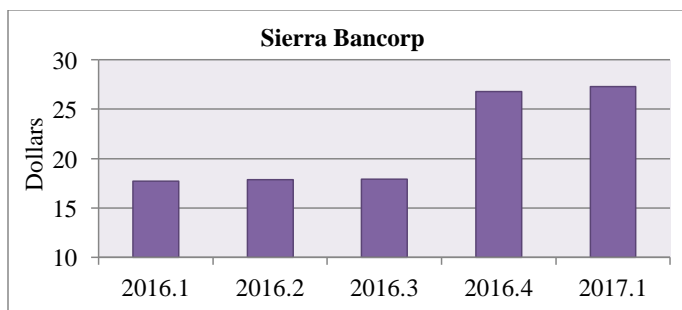
Granite Construction: GVA lost \$5.94 (or 10.6 percent) per share as its stock price decreased from \$56.13 to \$50.19. Conversely, GVA has increased \$5.42 (or 12.1 percent) since the first quarter of 2016.



Wells Fargo Company: WFC lost \$0.67 (or 1.2 percent) per share as its stock price decreased from \$56.33 to \$55.66. Relative to one year ago, WFC is up \$5.38 (or 10.7 percent).

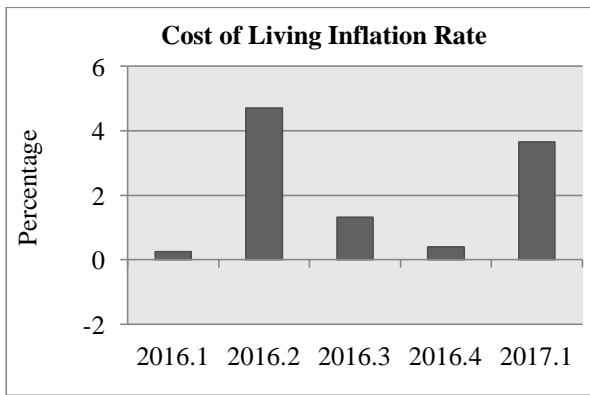


Sierra Bancorp: BSRR gained \$0.55 (or 2.1 percent) per share as its price increased from \$26.76 to \$27.31. Similarly, BSRR has gained \$9.59 (or 54.1 percent) since the first quarter of 2016.

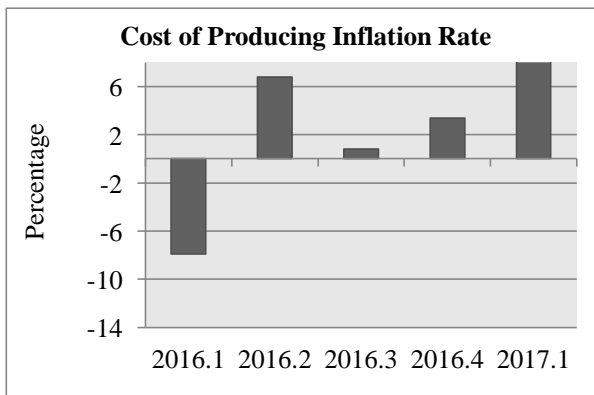


Inflation

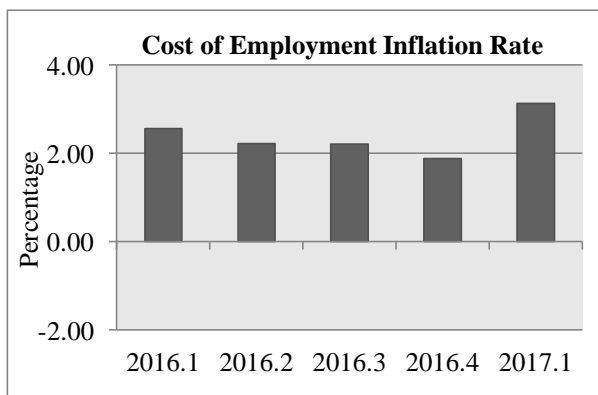
Cost of Living –In the first quarter of 2017, the Consumer Price Index for all urban areas (1982-84 = 100) increased slightly from 241.21 to 243.41. As a result, inflation for the cost of living increased at an annual rate of 3.65 percent. The cost of living inflation rate was 0.40 percent last quarter and 0.24 percent a year ago.



Cost of Production – The Producer Price Index for all commodities (1982 =100) increased from 187.17 to 191.00. As a result, the cost of production increased at an annual rate of 8.19 percent. The cost of production inflation rate was 3.38 percent last quarter and -7.89 percent four quarters ago.

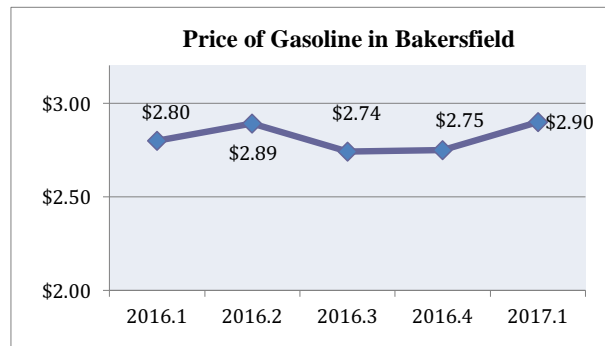


Cost of Employment - The Employment Cost Index (December 2005 = 100) for all civilian workers increased from 128.00 to 129.00. As a result, the cost of employment grew at an annual rate of 3.13 percent. The cost of employment inflation rate was 1.88 percent last quarter and 2.56 percent four quarters ago.



Commodity Prices

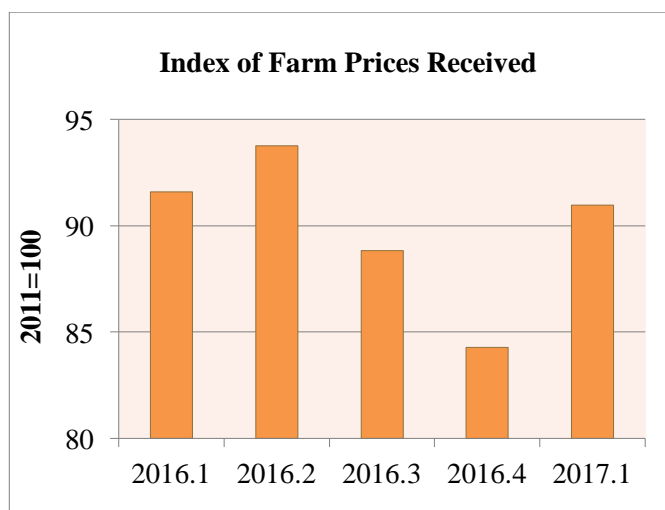
Price of Gasoline - In the Bakersfield metropolitan area, the average retail price of regular gasoline increased \$0.15 per gallon from \$2.75 to \$2.90. Compared with the first quarter of last year, the average gasoline price is up \$0.10.



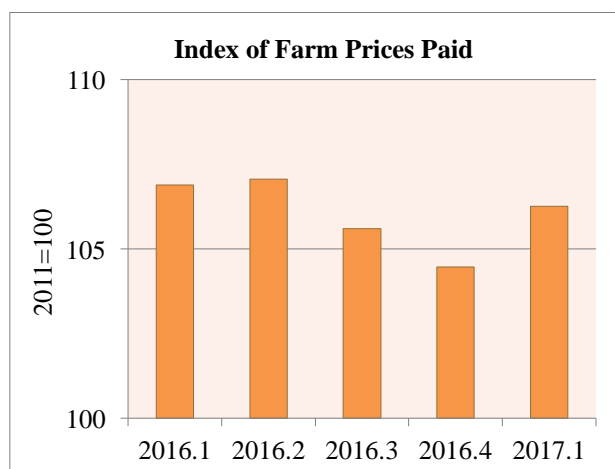
Price of Milk – The unit price of California’s Class III milk continued to increase, rising \$0.96 (or 6.8 percent) from \$14.03 to \$14.99, slowly increasing to since it’s precipitous drop from \$22.72 in the first quarter of 2014. Noticeably, the price increased substantially from January to February, increasing from \$13.78 to \$15.60, while stagnating between February and March. Even more noticeably, the price is still down since the first quarter of last year, falling by \$0.04 (or 0.2 percent).



Farm Prices – In the first quarter of 2017, the national Index of Prices Received by Farmers for all farm products (2011 = 100) increased substantially, rising by 6.7 points from 84.27 to 90.97. The index was 91.6 four quarters ago.



Meanwhile, the national Index of Prices Paid by Farmers for commodities, services, interest, taxes, wages, and rents rose slightly by 1.8 points to reach 106.27, rising slower than the increase in revenues for farmers. The index was 106.9 four quarters ago.



We measure the Index of Farm Price Parity as the ratio Index of Prices Received to the Index of Prices Paid. In the first quarter of 2017, the gap between prices paid and prices received fell slightly, as the Index of Farm Price Parity increased to 86.0 percent. This hints that revenues for farmers have been growing faster than the increased costs, likely highlighting that some of the water costs may be lower than expected, and that farmers may have priced in wage increases in previous quarters. Four quarters ago, the price ratio was 85.7 percent, meaning that conditions for farmers are still slightly better than they have been in the past few quarters.

¹ Source - Online databases: labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, bakersfieldgasprices.com, dqnews.com, economagic.com, bea.gov, bls.com, gpoaccess.gov, dairy.nu, msn.com, census.gov, kerndata.com, and bry.com

How Well Do Kern County's Healthcare Providers Perform?

A Reassessment of Common Beliefs

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Kern County is plagued by a number of issues, among which are a number of unfavorable. Included in these are both healthcare outcomes and healthcare resources available to the community. According to the County Health Rankings, provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in 2017 Kern County finished 53rd (out of 58 counties) for health outcomes and 55th (out of 58 counties) for health factors (resources or inputs).

However, these common healthcare rankings often involve a number of methodological flaws which limit their overall usefulness. For instance, health outcomes (such as life expectancy, the number of healthy days in a month for a given population, morbidity statistics, etc.) are useless without looking at the healthcare resources used to "create" them. Consider, for instance, the fact that Kern County has significantly worse air quality when looking at lung conditions. Similarly, healthcare factors (resources) are useless without considering how they are turned into healthcare outcomes.

The underlying message is that both healthcare resources and healthcare outcomes must be considered simultaneously to assess the state of a healthcare system. While Kern County continuously receives low grades for its healthcare productivity, consider the fact that over 25-percent of the county as a whole does not have a high school diploma. Consider the considerable healthcare provider shortages that Kern County faces on a daily basis. Consider the number of individuals in poverty, the types of jobs available to an everyday workers, and a number of other factors when looking at healthcare productivity. In other words, Kern County's healthcare is not unproductive because our healthcare providers and healthcare systems are failing us; on the contrary, it is often the demographics, behaviors, and socioeconomics of the county that work against us.

Consider the following table.

VARIABLE	KERN COUNTY	CALIFORNIA
% of Fair/Poor Health Days	23.43	17.35
% Smokers	16.77	14.23
% Obese	28.74	24.29
% Physically Inactive on a Daily Basis	22.86	17.86
Chlamydia Rate	692.02	321.98
Teen Birth Rate	62.63	35.24
Doctors per 100,000 Citizens	53.64	75.56
HS Graduation Rate	77.47	82.35
Unemployment Rate	12.98	11.28
% Single Parent Households	36.96	31.52
Violent Crime Rate	569.21	416.65
% Not Proficient in English	13.17	9.16
% Diabetic	8.41	8.36
HIV Prevalence Rate	263.39	199.19



These indicators, which do not represent how effective our healthcare sector is, point out the tremendous hurdle that our healthcare providers face on a daily basis before they see patients. These behavioral, demographic, and socioeconomic factors play an incredibly large role in the provision of healthcare. A doctor can provide healthy eating advice to a patient, but if that patient goes out and purchases a meal from a fast food restaurant, the resulting health issues should not be laid at the feet of the healthcare sector, but instead at the individual themselves.

These issues will be presented in much greater detail at the Kern Economic Summit in 2018.



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KERN ECONOMIC JOURNAL is a quarterly publication of California State University, Bakersfield. Its purpose is to track local trends and analyze regional, national, and global issues that affect the well-being of Kern County. The journal provides useful information and data that can help the community make informed economic decisions. Please visit <http://www.csu.edu/kej> for more information.