

what's brewing for 2005

Prognosticators predict this year's top stories

EDITOR'S NOTE: Business writers Wayne Heilman, Rich Laden and Paul Beebe, with help from local experts, predict stories that will appear on the pages of The Gazette's Business sections in 2005.

THE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Help Wanted sign — almost an endangered species in Colorado Springs in the last four years — is likely to make a big comeback in 2005.

Job growth this year is expected to at least double last year's pace and perhaps much more, according to forecasts by economists who follow the local economy.

Optimistic projections call for the economy to add about 5,000 private and public sector jobs this year as a recovery that began in 2004 gains strength.

Fourteen businesses relocated or expanded to Colorado Springs last year and say they plan to employ more than 2,000 people over the next several years. Eight local companies also announced expansion plans that will add about 800 jobs in a few years.

Many of the jobs will be in call centers for the California State Automobile Association, Progressive Insurance and Westwood College Online. Technology jobs also will be more plentiful with Computer Generated Solutions Inc., Configuresoft Inc. and Intel Corp. hiring.

That doesn't even count the booming retail growth on Powers Boulevard and elsewhere in northeast Colorado Springs, hiring by expanding local hospitals and other employers. The arrival of more than 3,700 troops moving to Fort Carson also should give the local economy a boost.

Construction workers will have plenty of work at the Colorado Springs Airport, which plans projects totaling \$150 million over the next six years.

Work should be completed early this year on passenger terminal renovations to accommodate two new food courts and a wider corridor for the security checkpoint. The airport also plans to redesign and upgrade the rental car and short-term parking lots.

Construction is planned for later this year on a new terminal, road and taxiway improvements for private aircraft owners.

Passengers from the Springs will be able to fly nonstop to San Francisco for the first time in more than seven years, starting Feb. 15, when United Express begins twice daily flights. Delta Air Lines will end service from the Springs to Dallas on Jan. 31.

Renovation and expansion projects at three of the largest hotels in Colorado Springs are expected to be completed and open to guests this year.

The Broadmoor hotel is building a 60,000-square-foot exhibition hall to open in October as well as 160 luxury condominiums and townhouses circling the hotel property, as part of a \$160 million improvement project. The project includes additional retail space and expansion of a golf course.

The Wyndham Colorado Springs hotel soon will begin a \$15 million renovation of all guest rooms, meeting space, dining room and lobby as well as construction of an addition for executive meeting rooms. The project also is scheduled for completion in October.

The Antlers Hilton hotel plans to complete a \$7.5 million renovation of all guest rooms, meeting space, lobby and restaurants by March.

TECHNOLOGY AND

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Look for more hiring by Intel Corp. as the world's biggest chip maker continues a mammoth construction project to expand production of WiFi chips at its Colorado Springs plant.

In July, the company announced plans for several hundred new jobs and \$400 million in spending to fill out the half-empty plant on Garden of the Gods Road. Intel expects the work to be finished in 2008.

The company has hired about 80 people since the announcement.

Most of the jobs are in chip production. The company employs about 880 people here.

Technology firms such as Intelliden, Simtek, XAware and ZeeWaves have pulled in millions of dollars from venture capital investors since the dot-com bubble popped.

"2005 will be a defining year as to whether these (companies) are going to attain the goals they sold to investors," said Gary Markle, president of the Colorado Springs Technology Incubator.

"If a couple of these investments do really start to generate significant traction, that would be . . . real empirical evidence that these are homerun companies," said Markle, whose incubator on the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs campus nurtures startup companies.

Colorado Springs customers of Adelphia Communications may get a new cable television provider this year.

In September, bankrupt Adelphia said it had divided its cable systems into seven regional clusters to satisfy creditors.

Colorado Springs was lumped with Adelphia systems in Virginia, Maryland and Kentucky.

Bidders are expected to be other cable operators, companies trying to get into the cable business and private equity firms.

Time Warner, the world's largest media company, and Comcast Corp. will be allowed to bid together for Adelphia's assets.

Bids were due by Friday.

Adelphia has 107,000 subscribers in El Paso County. The company also operates a customer service center on Bijou Street that employs 833 people.

The fate of the center will depend on the buyer, Adelphia has said.

The winds of telephone deregulation in Colorado picked up strength in October when Qwest Communications International asked the