

Bardstown honored as one of best small towns

Second year for national distinction

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**— Kim Huston,
NCEDA president**

For the second year in a row, Bardstown has been named in the top 30 small towns in the United States for new and expanded facilities.

Site Selection Magazine, “the Wall Street Journal of manufacturing publications,” according to Nelson County Economic Development Agency president Kim Huston, ranked Bardstown 27th of 100 top U.S. cities.

“It’s been good for Bardstown,” Huston said.

“For communities in the economic development circle, this is certainly a bragging right.”

The magazine ranks cities based on information provided by state economic development cabinets, Huston said.

Kentucky had the third highest number of cities in the “best small towns,” category, with 12. Of those, Bowling Green ranked No.3 and Frankfort was No. 22.

Industrial development has been a key component in helping Bardstown achieve a spot in the magazine’s top 30 for the second year in a row.

“Three or four plants added a lot of employment last year,” Huston said. The number of new jobs in Nelson County exceeded 200 in 2003. One local company, ARMAG Corporation, doubled the size of its facility, adding more than 10 jobs.

Co-owned by the Haydon and Nally families, ARMAG manufactures storage magazines for explosives.

“They’re used in commercial business for storing explosives primarily by construction companies,” Paul Haydon said. “And also for government use, for storage of weapons and ammunition for police and military.”

ARMAG has been a Bardstown business for nearly 40 years.

When the company decided to expand two years ago, it considered other central Kentucky locations outside Nelson County. The final decision kept the company in Bardstown.

“Our business is Bardstown-based. We’re Bardstown citizens, our employees are mostly from Bardstown,” Haydon said. “And, here, we’re closer to the interstates, which is better for distribution.”

It’s factors like that Huston hopes potential new industry will see in Bardstown.

“We’re not only growing in numbers,” Huston said, “we’re growing in the services we offer.”

Another factor heavily weighed in the manufacturing publication ranking is quality of life.

That includes schools, infrastructure and a steady unemployment rate.

“We typify the rural work ethic,” Huston said. “We have a good labor force, good quality of life, less crime, affordable housing. Bardstown exemplifies the charm of living in a small community.”

It’s hard to tell what will come alongside national distinction such as this, Huston said.

“It certainly brings more attention,” she said. “It could mean more visits, more prospects.”

Currently, however, the city and county’s primary focus is to ensure industries that are in Bardstown and Nelson County stay here.

Being ranked the 27th top small town in the country, Huston hopes, will encourage existing industry to consider staying and growing in Nelson County.